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**THEOLOGICAL RENEWAL AND THE ROLE
OF THE CHURCH IN THE SOCIAL
RECONSTRUCTION OF ZAMBIA**

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A Dissertation Submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts in the Department of Religious Studies at the University of Cape Town.

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ABSTRACT

This study is about the renewal of theology and the role of the church in the social reconstruction of Zambia. It proceeds from the understanding that theology has and always will have a crucial task to perform in Zambia, a nation that professes itself to be Christian. This potential to contribute to public life, unless otherwise, demonstrates that theology is not primarily an abstract talk or a description about God-in-himself. Rather, it is an attempt to reflect critically on, and to express in the most clearest and coherent language possible, what it means to be involved by God in the divine creative and redemptive process of transforming the world into his reign.

To examine this question, the study engages an inter-disciplinary theoretical approach, making use of various sources. It has drawn on liberation and post-liberation theories, popular language and sociolinguistics.

The thesis examines the context of contemporary Zambia, analysing the social, economic and political situation for the past thirty-four years. This analysis is linked to the ecclesiastical history of Zambia. Particular attention is given to the mainline Protestant Churches. Directed towards bringing to realisation the vision of God's reign on earth today, imperatively, God's reign is defined. The definition sees reign from two dimensions: as a future hope and as earthly utopia. An interpretive link is then made between God's reign and concrete utopia.

To root the theological argument, some theological currents operative in Zambia are examined. This analysis is necessary as it serves as part of the strategy to see the typology of theology in Zambia and how, need be, this theology can be renewed.

The thesis ends with some theological propositions for re-imagining God's reign on earth today. Although they are not novel suggestions in theological method, to bring attention to these propositions in this study at the dawn of the new millennium, the church and theology in Zambia are offered yet another chance to reconsider their position so that they may live up to the challenge of their existence.

ABBREVIATIONS

BBC	British Broadcasting Co-operation
CCAR	Church of Central Africa in Rhodesia
CCP	Copperbelt Christian Publications
CCZ	Christian Council of Zambia
CWM	Council for World Mission
DRC	Dutch Reformed Church
ECZ	Episcopal Conference of Zambia
EFZ	Evangelical Fellowship of Zambia
LMS	London Missionary Society
MMD	Movement for Multi-Party Democracy
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
PEMS	Paris Evangelical Missionary Society
RCZ	Reformed Church in Zambia
UCCAR	United Church of Central Africa in Rhodesia
UCZ	United Church of Zambia
UMCA	Universities Mission to Central Africa
UNIP	United National Independence Party
WCC	World Council of Churches
ZEC	Zambia Episcopal Conference

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INTRODUCTION

Is this not the kind of fasting I have chosen: to loose the chains of injustice and untie the cords of the yoke; to set the oppressed free and break every yoke? Is it not to share your food with the hungry and to provide the poor wanderer with shelter – when you see the naked, to clothe him, and not to turn away from your own flesh and blood?¹

This dissertation is a theological contribution towards the *construction* of a just and humane society. It is not a sociological, economic or political study. Neither is it an economic, social or a political blueprint for a new society. That would be presumptuous in a distant hanger-on to the discipline. It is important to make this point clear at the outset. The study is primarily about the role of the Church or Christian theology in the *social reconstruction of Zambia*. Set in the light of the Zambian quest for socio-economic and political reconstruction, it seeks to establish an order and system which approximates to the values and ethos of the gospel; an ethos that gives our individual and social life a just and humane form. It envisages to show how a faith-enlightened understanding and praxis can heal and transform social and political living in order to construct a just and humane society; a better society for all – vis-à-vis God's reign or Kingdom.

This task is motivated by four factors. First and most obvious, the task is motivated by the failures of technology, science, socio-political and global economic models to create a world order that is new. On the eve of the new millennium, the old assumption that technology, science and the global economic system were the necessary means to a just society has lost much of its persuasiveness. Instead, other disciplines/models, amongst which, is theology, which would discern positive trends for better quality of life in the world are being sought to further effort in this direction.

Second, as a result of the global context of crisis, to which, directly or indirectly, Zambia is connected, an analysis and evaluation of Zambia's own context can be defined as a struggle for a just and humane society. After nearly thirty-five years of independence, the future of Zambia looks sombre. Politically, there is lack of genuine democracy. Economically, Zambia is bankrupt. What used to be one of Africa's richest countries

¹ Isaiah 58: 6-7

with its copper mines and other resources is now an economic basket case. Socially, as a result of the above, poverty, illiteracy, crime, etc. have reached unprecedented levels. For the majority of Zambians therefore, it is simply disillusion and despair. In light of this desperate picture of life, it therefore suffices to say that clearly a theological task, in tandem with the responsibility of the church, is imperatively called for; for national reconstruction and democratic transformation. Theology has a vision that can contribute significantly to this quest. This is so because its power lies in the fact that it is holistic and all encompassing.

Third, this study also gives theology in Zambia an opportunity to evaluate itself concerning its role in society. Given the fact that Zambia is constitutionally a Christian nation, one could expect that the impact of theology upon society is most widespread and by nature, has a unique contribution to make to the struggle for peace and justice in Zambia. Generally speaking, theology in Zambia has made some strides here and there, a role, which can move one to celebrate considering the political environment of the times. However, this notwithstanding, one can detect a gaping lacuna in them. It appears as if the church in Zambia has stopped theologically at the point at which its parent missionary church left it, even though the parent churches themselves have subsequently moved on. That is, the church and theology in Zambia have not been able to make a fundamental paradigm shift which is required in the changing context. They have not creatively internalised in their praxis the fact of the people's struggle. The church, for instance, still lives on *historically stale* confessions that were formulated elsewhere and a long time ago. This aspect has resulted in seeing the church as a private institution and theology as a private discipline whose tasks are only to win souls and individuals for Christ. They are not considered as "forces" that can play a greater role in social liberation, in reconstruction or in historical redress.

In this essay, I am, however, motivated to engage the church and theology in the reconstruction of Zambia. The church and theology have a special contribution to make in Zambia. If only appropriately engaged and effectively used, these resources can play a dynamic and significant motivational and explanatory role in fostering and or enhancing the divine positive alteration of all the structures and factors that impede the experience of life in its abundance (John 10:10).

Four, the subject of this dissertation is also of personal interest to me. It gives me another avenue to explore something that has been bothering me for some time now – precisely since my involvement with church ministry in the mid 1980s. During this time, I have worked among both the affluent and poor communities. In my work, especially among the poor, one most important thing that has happened is to discover that I have been pushed toward a radical transformation of my whole theological thinking and approach. Today, I love to see justice done and people liberated. I am committed to human development and improving the quality of life of people. This passion for liberation and justice has become a part of me in my ministry. This work then represents a sort of testimony and report on my own spiritual and theological explorations back and forth across the spectrum treated here. It is a fruit of many years of my observation, participation and reflection on church and society.

That said, let me stress the point that this approach is neither a remedy for the ills of the church nor a tool to fix society. Rather, it is what persuades us to acknowledge what is wrong in our management of our society, our relationship with one another and our need of God.

In the pages of this dissertation, two words or themes surface again and again: *construction* with its co-ordinate *reconstruction* and *Reign of God*. No doubt, they are concepts influenced for me by the works of two South African theologians: Charles Villa-Vicencio and John de Gruchy.

The term *construction* and *reconstruction*, as Mugambi writes, “belong to engineering vocabulary. An engineer *constructs* a complex according to specifications in the available designs. *Reconstruction* is done when an existing complex becomes dysfunctional, for whatever reason, and the user still requires using it. New specifications may be made in the new designs, while some aspects of the old complex are retained in the new.”² *Social reconstruction* is therefore a concept within the social sciences, which involves “re-organisation of some aspect of a society in order to make it more responsive to changed circumstances.”³ This meaning of the term makes the concept of interest to theologians as well as sociologists, economists and political scientists. In theological undertakings, it

² Mugambi J.N.K. 1995. *From Liberation to Reconstruction: African Christian Theology after the Cold War*. Nairobi: East African Educational Publishers Ltd. Pg.12

³ Ibid.

means to build on and to develop such presuppositions that theologically contribute to the creation of a new, just order. It is, therefore, this multi-disciplinary appeal of *reconstruction*, which makes the whole concept functionally useful as a new thematic focus for reflection.

The other theme is that of the *Reign of God*. By building this dissertation on this theme, we are not just looking at one among the many theological/biblical ideas. We are not interested in concepts except as they serve to guide us toward salvation – real, concrete historical salvation. In other words, what we are seeking here is rather to know how such a fundamental notion could guide us toward a free, just and humane society.

Of course, there are critical altercations on just how earthly the *Reign of God* is supposed to be. Those who are powerful or content here and now prefer a kingdom to come that will not alter our earthly reality very soon or very much. For them, it is better the way it is now. The disinherited, on the other hand, have frequently insisted on a much more straight forward reading of what Jesus was saying and doing: “thy Kingdom on earth.” They perceive the *kingdom* or *reign* as something that is not solely in the future but as something that is supposed to be working as leaven in the world now. To them, the *reign of God* is a “counter system” – a way of conceiving and organising society that is counter to its dooming form at present. It is a reality and set of values to be lived out now, in the present order, in radical obedience to the gospel and in opposition to the powers of the present age.

Nonetheless, as the title suggests, this dissertation is built on the understanding that *God's reign* is only meaningful when there is concrete involvement in societal affairs, socialising actions to create more humane relationships and, of course, political engagement. Thus, the talk of *God's reign* implies a collective reality in which the justice of God reigns supreme. It implies an ethic, which allows the poor, and the marginalised access to live qualitatively new and fulfilling lives. It is not something solely referring to a futuristic event at the end of time. Rather, it is a *reign*, which, from its futurity, paradoxically extends its operations into the present. In this sense, the *Reign of God* is already dynamically within our hearts (Luke 17:21) and therefore, as Christians, we are “construction workers” and “co-workers” with Christ for the divine transformation of the present world.

SIGNIFICANCE AND VALUE OF A THEOLOGICAL APPROACH IN THE RECONSTRUCTION OF SOCIETY

The choice of theology in the reconstruction of Zambia signifies a very important step in the development of both the church and theology itself in Zambia. The motivation of the essay, as described above, describes and explains this reality. Christian theological reflection, especially its engagement in society, is essential for the healthy development of any church. Before we, however, analyse the value of the theological approach, it is necessary that we begin with the definition of the term 'theology'.

Unlike some other scientific disciplines, theology has, however, proved to be a very difficult term to define, as there is simply no agreed definition on the word or on the subject matter it covers. The word means different things to different people – each one stressing the aspect that fits their scheme. For some therefore, it is simply talking about God; for others it is reflection upon the word of God; for others it is critical reflection upon human experience from a Christian perspective.

From whatever description or definition the term takes, it is imperative that it is understood from its higher and broader meaning rather than from its lower and narrower meaning. That is, the definition must be able to include belief and truth as well as the social and political aspects of human existence. It must be "concerned about the intellectual credibility of a particular praxis of Christian faith, hope, and love, directed to the creation of a better world in the name of the Kingdom of God announced by Jesus Christ."⁴

Given this, this thesis adopts the understanding that theology is "the science, which treats God and man [sic] in all their known relations to each other."⁵

This relationship does not entail belittling God or making God after the human image. It is, rather, to assert that out of this felt kinship relationship with God, humanity recognises God's greatness or God's all sufficiency. It is out of this relationship that we

⁴ Lane Dermot. 1984. *Foundations for a Social Theology: Praxis, Process and Salvation*. New York: Paulist Press. Pg.30

⁵ Josaiia J. Rayawa. "Pacific Theology". In *South Pacific Theology: Papers from the consultation on Pacific Theology*. Papua New Guinea, January 1986. Oxford: Regnum Books. Pg.19

gain the knowledge of God as both transcendent and immanent. To have no felt kinship relationship with God, God would remain but a philosophical concept logically deduced. From this definition, theology overcomes the temptation of being entirely the result of one's experience of God and being based entirely on the scripture without discovering the relevance of its teaching. "OT and NT writings are not simply documents of human religion, but a historical process."⁶ In this definition thus, theology is understood and experienced from one's context and as touching one's authentic life.

It is, thus, this practical character that registers theology to a new understanding of its critical functions; the tasks that, subsequently, make us take on this approach. These include:

1. The *transformative* task. Theology can be a discipline for the transformation of society. It could be an active and dynamic principle of social reconstruction. It can be a principle that can bring about a world of peace, justice and harmony, now within history. This *transforming* power of theology thus, spells out what it means to be involved in the divine redemptive dynamics of transforming the world into God's Kingdom. It defines the perimeters to that which promotes social justice and human dignity. Oftenly, theology takes sides in the promotion of certain courses of action, while it also opposes activities that are inimical to the realisation of human freedom. In so doing, theology functions as an effective weapon that can be used for "facilitating, promoting, and supporting such actions that make and sustain human life in the best possible manner."⁷

2. The *constructive* task. Reference has already been made to the concept of *construction*. Further, Gordon Kaufman has stated that "theology is fundamentally an activity of [human] construction (and reconstruction), not of description or exposition as it has been ordinarily understood in the past . . ."⁸ It is involved in the construction of a picture of God, of human life and a humane picture of the society; a picture that should be able to function as a utopian vision. In this regard, "it is a source of creative and imaginative solutions, seeking to translate into constructive proposals the implicit and latent ideals of the gospel."⁹ It reminds us that it is our primary human responsibility to

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Charles Villa-Vicencio. 1992. *The Theology of Reconstruction: National-Building and Human Rights*. Cambridge University. Pg.274

⁸ Gordon Kaufman. 1975. *An Essay on Theological Method*. Missoula: Scholar Press. Pg.X

⁹ Charles Villa-Vicencio. Op cit. Pg.278

construct, reconstruct, nurture and change social structures and symbols so that they might make and serve the world and human needs meaningfully.

3. The *liberatory* task. In essence, theology is critical of the dominant powers and structures in its context: political and economic elite, patriarchies, defenders of ill-founded privileges. By this implication or proclamation, therefore, theology states its solidarity with and passionate concern *for* those who are poor, oppressed, exploited and or marginalised.¹⁰ I have stressed the term '*for*'. This is so for two reasons. Firstly, if theology is to reflect the interests of the majority of the world's population, who in this case are the poor, it must be done from their perspective. This is, of course, not to suggest that "the spiritual or moral insight of the poor is superior to that of others." It is rather that "the poor see reality from a different perspective."¹¹ They provide a perspective from the 'underside' of society which theologians cannot afford to ignore. Secondly, we can add that it is too much to expect the poor to solely take charge of their liberation - lest we abdicate our responsibility. As Villa-Vicencio argues:

It is often difficult for the exploited and impoverished in society to articulate their understanding of social problems, their ethical goals and projected political solutions. To the extent that their views are ignored, however to that extent the engagement of theology into this context becomes imperative, at least to challenge the limited insights and prejudices of the powerful and dominant players in society. To the extent that it fails to do so, it faces distinctive dangers - of irrelevance, ignorance and illegitimacy. It constitutes yet a further brand of opium.¹²

4. The task of "*critical reflection on praxis*." Since Gutierrez described theology as a "critical reflection on Christian praxis in the light of the word,"¹³ praxis in theology has assumed almost dominant proportions in some circles. It has utilised this social science category in order to bring about a deeper understanding and clarify the meaning of theological discourse.

¹⁰ See John de Gruchy. 1995. *Christianity and Democracy*. Cape Town: David Philip. Pg.11. According to De Gruchy, this factor derives from the prophetic tradition especially as expressed in the ministry of Jesus and his teaching about the reign of God. The prophetic tradition is based on Israel's liberation from slavery in Egypt, and the awareness that Yahweh has a particular predilection for the poor, the oppressed, and for other victims of society. This divine partiality does not mean a lack of love for other people, but a concern to overcome social injustices and thus bring about a society in which all people are equally respected as bearers' of God's image.

¹¹ Miguez J. Bonino. 1983. *Toward a Christian Political Ethics*. Philadelphia: Fortress Press. Pg.43

¹² Villa-Vicencio Charles. Op Cit. Pg.280

The term "*praxis*" combines theory (word) and action. It is committed to creative action, inspired by critical reflection, which gives rise to both social change and insight. Through praxis, theology extends to economic, social, political, cultural issues, society and church, all together in the perspective of the need for social change. Briefly stated thus, praxis in theology is designed to assist those rooted in the faith to discover the tools necessary to make sense of their faith in the face of human estrangement and social injustice. That is, firstly, it puts a lie to the idea that religion is the opium of the people and asserts that there is nothing intrinsic to religion that makes it ineffectual or disinterested when it comes to human oppression, social injustices or marginalisation. Secondly, it transforms our theological ideas and radicalises them because traditional doctrine is being interrogated as a result of the faith and the experience of marginalisation. Thirdly, such an interrogation, out of commitment, leads to participation in the processes of change recognising that nothing human is without the possibility of change and redemption.

Finally, the adoption of a "theological approach" in this study shall provide us with an opportunity to critically reflect on the strategies we use in an attempt to meet our need for justice. It is intended to inspire and motivate Zambian Christians in a way that they will, in turn, identify themselves in it and find themselves participating in it. Such an approach is bound to lead all the faithful beyond themselves so as to visualise a better future in which they all have a part in constructing. Inevitably, it is to be a role and theology for all.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This dissertation is fundamentally a theological study and an understanding of Christian faith. As a theological study, it, therefore, involves a reflection on scripture and formulation of its message in a more systematic way so that it can articulate with greater precision the challenges society poses for the proclamation of the gospel and thus for theological reflection. However, the fact that the study focuses on society also means that other concepts in social sciences can be considered. From the social sciences therefore, the theory of *sociolinguistic tools of analysis* is applied. What this means is that I have taken into account some of the sentiments that have been expressed by the church through pulpits and publications and the sentiments of ordinary people (popular

¹³ Gustavo Gutiérrez. 1973. *A Theology of Liberation*. Maryknoll: Orbis. Pg.11

language), especially language of the poor, the marginalised, the civil servants etc. Taking into account such language in a theological study clearly indicates an application of sociolinguistics. So, what does this concept mean?

In essence, *Sociolinguistics* looks at connections between language and society. Language is a social and cultural phenomenon shaped by the values and norms of society and is used as a reservoir to construct social reality.¹⁴ More than simple mixing of linguistics and sociology, this concept relates language and society to theories that throw light on the interaction of linguistics and social structures.¹⁵ It is part of the social scientific methodology, which has made a profound impact on theological studies research. "Social scientific methods are a departure from the positivist empiricism of the historical critical method."¹⁶ As much as the historical critical method was useful in demythologising the bible, it was however historicist. That is, it concentrated on the history and religion of Ancient Israel, New Testament and the early Church. The twentieth century, however, saw the emergence of the social scientific tools. Some theological scholars quickly adopted these in their work.

The social scientific tools have proved to be useful because they have thrown new light on some aspects of the scriptures. Scholars have started looking at culture, society, economics and politics; issues around which the bible was written. Models from anthropology, sociology, psychology, linguistics and others have also been adopted. Chapters 3 and 4 of this thesis are classic examples.

Effectively, thus, this has fundamental consequences for the understanding of the *epistemological break*¹⁷, since they provide one with a variety of tools to unearth some significant information from the biblical and other related texts.

¹⁴ Peter Trudgill. 1983. *Sociolinguistics: An Introduction to Language and Society*. London: Penguin. Pg.13

¹⁵ See Ronald Wardhaugh. 1986. *An Introduction to Sociolinguistics*. New York: Basil Blackwell.

¹⁶ Mosala Itumeleng J. 1989. *Biblical Hermeneutics and Black Theology in South Africa*. Grand Rapids; W.B. Eerdmans. Pg.55

¹⁷ The term *epistemological break* was reportedly introduced by Gaston Bachelard but obviously with a different meaning from what the Ecumenical Association of Third World Theologians meant at their first meeting in Dar es Salaam. Similarly, Gutierrez in his *Theology of Liberation*, Pg.29, uses the phrase with reference to Bachelard to characterise the shift in methodology proposed by Marx in *Theses on Feuerbach*. Cited in Per Frostin. 1988. *Liberation Theology in Tanzania and South Africa: A First World Interpretation*. Lund: Lund University Press. Pg.200

Since its major focus is the relationship between language and society, for sociolinguistics to be effective in theological interpretation, it has to help discover the language of the under-classes.

However, it is a known fact that as a tool to construct social reality, the powerful or the upper classes decide on what standard language should be. As Marx and Engels said: "in every epoch the dominant ideas in society are the ideas of the ruling class."¹⁸ In any case, this does not mean that the language of ordinary people dies. It is only that the dominant culture of society revolves around standard language. To help discover the language of the under-classes therefore, an ethic, which is seriously committed to concrete forms of social renewal, must, of necessity, be committed to a social analysis, which uncovers all that which are responsible for marginalisation and exclusion. Though brief, I have attempted to uncover this in the first and second chapters.

In Zambia, one would say that sociolinguistics has become one of the active tools in attempts towards changing dominant systems. The interpretation of scripture in churches in 1990 and 1991, subsequently leading to the change of government, and similarly, the means the church has taken to express their dissatisfaction of the Movement for Multi-party Democracy (MMD) regime today, are classic application of sociolinguistics.

In addition to *sociolinguistics*, this study adopts also use of written sources (texts). For an inter-discipline study like this to succeed, it must be deeply enriched by insights as well as by analytical methodology from other sources. These sources will, therefore, aid us in our theological explorations as well as in our in-depth understanding of the subject itself.

DELIMITATION

To conveniently place the perspectives of this study, the dissertation is divided into six parts. *Chapter 1* will analyse the social, economic and political context of Zambia. Though the chapter may not trace all the issues of this debate, the intention is for us to place our discussion in a context that is analytically defined so as to provide a backdrop

¹⁸ Marx Karl and Engels Frederick. 1968. *Marx and Engels: Selected Works*. Moscow: Progress Publishers. Pg.51

against which we can view what theology or the church might contribute. In doing so, we will be enhancing the relevance of our contribution.

To have distinct Christian approach and perspective, we need some knowledge of the history of the church in Zambia. *Chapter 2*, therefore, examines the history and development of the church in Zambia. It starts with the history of Christian missions, then moves to the development of these missions into churches. The role the church has played in Zambia since 1964 is also discussed here. Our focus is on the Protestant Church in Zambia even though, if we consider Zambian Christianity in general, it is so evident that the most significant feature is genuine ecumenism. Zambian Christianity is always spoken of in terms of three 'mother bodies' – the Catholics (referred to as the Episcopal Conference of Zambia), the Christian Council of Zambia and the Evangelical Fellowship of Zambia. In this regard, the three 'bodies' have tended to co-operate very closely in many areas. As a result, the Roman Catholic Church has, in many cases, been a partner. After all, the current socio-political and economic climate in the country, requires all churches, regardless of their traditions, to work together to transform the nation. Especially at this juncture, no one church in Zambia can afford to stand and work in isolation. Partnership is imperative.

Chapter 3 is on our understanding of *God's reign*. Various complex issues that go with the definition of the Reign of God are observed. The chapter then analyses two notions: the *Reign of God as future hope* and *reign as earthly "utopia"*. The chapter, however, builds on the conviction that God's reign should be concrete and real – a notion that guides us towards a free, just and humane society.

Chapter 4 is a reflection on some parameters for a just and humane society from a theological perspective. Being a theological undertaking, *Chapter 5* is then devoted to an analysis of some theologies and their role in the reconstruction of Zambia if any. Missionary theology, contextual theology – particularly Kenneth Kaunda's "theology of humanism"¹⁹ are discussed. Also to be discussed in this chapter is African Theology. What emerges is the awareness of some lacuna in these theologies to come to grips with

¹⁹ For the suggestion of Kaunda's ideology of humanism as a "theology see Mijere M. "The Theology of Zambian Humanism and its Implications for the Local Church". In *African Ecclesiastical Review (AFER)* 20, No. 6, 1978. Pg.349-57

the Zambian reality; a trend that, in turn, makes them not very relevant to the needs of the people.

This leads us to *Chapter 6*. Tested against the parameters in Chapter 4 and the theological formulations in chapter 5, here we suggest some key theological propositions necessary for reconstructing a just and humane society.

Of necessity the study is not concluded. This is out of an understanding that the study about transforming society cannot be conclusive. It is an ongoing reflection. It is an ongoing quest because socio-economic planning and policy decisions are matters that depend upon a wide variety of ever fluctuating factors and a scientific approach to their solution requires a continual openness to the empirical data in question. In this regard therefore, it needs only to be completed by the struggle for meaningful life and justice for people; when the people especially the victims of circumstances have attained that meaningful life; when that struggle and that alone, has shown whether God's reign is a hopeful promise or a dangerous illusion.

CHAPTER 1

DEFINING THE CONTEXT: THE SOCIO-ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL CONTEXT OF ZAMBIA

One's social and historical context decides not only questions we address to God but also the mode or forms of the answers given to the question. It is one's life situation, which determines his or her thoughts, his or her understanding of who God is and what he or she expects from Him in so far as his or her situation is concerned.²⁰

This chapter critically analyses the social, economic and political context of Zambia. The aim is to arrive at an informed understanding of the social reality, and to come up with informed theological suggestions for a just and humane approach to Christian public praxis.

Our special interest is the period in Zambia from 1964 to 1998. There are two reasons for choosing this period. Firstly, in 1964, Zambia became independent. In 1972, considered as "Second Republic", Zambia changed from a multi-party to a single-party state. In 1991, considered as "Third Republic", Zambia reverted to a multi-party system. In all the "republics", there have been different economic policies, which, subsequently, have had impact even on the social context. The second reason is, thus, that, throughout this period, the church has been part and parcel of the political situation. It has participated in the changes; it has shared in the enjoyments and sufferings as a constituent member of the nation of these political experiences undergone by the country.

That said, I must hasten to mention that the data chosen to illustrate this contemporary scene are my own selection as a committed participant in it. There is a bulk of issues that may be equally important to discuss here but we are limited in the requirement of the study itself. I only hope that the selection will suggest the scale and proportions of the issues discussed.

In Zambia, the context today can be defined in many different ways depending on one's social class, one's gender as well as where one stands in relation to the political system.

²⁰ James H. Cone, 1975. *God of the Oppressed*. Minneapolis: Seabury Press. Pg.15

How that context is characterised also depends on the tools of analysis one uses. For those excluded from the dominant structures of society; the marginalised; people who in most circumstances do not use any scientific tools of analysis, this context is popularly defined as a *struggle*; a struggle against "the system" - a system which has negated their being as humans, a system which has threatened their lives. To these people, that meaningful life, life of hope, security and human rights is not theirs. For them, Zambia no longer connotes an experience of nationalistic pride. The present political dispensation means a life of humiliation, material deprivation, fear and intimidation. And whether one agrees with them or not, one thing stands out quite conspicuously for them - namely the concept of struggle.²¹

As a British colony, Zambia attained her independence in 1964. For twenty-seven years, the United National Independence Party (hereafter UNIP), under the presidency of Dr. Kenneth Kaunda led the country. Politically, the UNIP government, right at the beginning had shown some tendencies towards authoritarianism. Ironically, it was authoritarianism not by a class but largely by Kaunda who actually saw himself as the personification of the nation. To obliterate any other form of opposition, the constitution made provisions for a strong chief executive, a unitary state and a cabinet, which was responsible only to the president.

Before we leave this issue, it is however, imperative to see the reasons behind this move. What is it that led to the constitution making such provisions?

Zambia had just attained independence. The birth of the new state was an event of crucial importance. After years of colonial exploitation, neglect and humiliating subjection to the colour bar, Africans had successfully asserted their own dignity as human beings. However, this victory was only the beginning of yet another struggle.

In a young Zambia, as in other new states, it proved hard to sustain the unity engendered by the struggle to overthrow colonial rule. While national unity seemed essential, it was, however, not at all easy to give substance to the new state's cry of "One Zambia, One Nation." Reasons for this sad development were among others, the

²¹ Struggle is an important concept to keep in mind when one discusses a contribution to the just and humane society. The concept suggests that there are at concrete level in every day life opposing sides and that they consist of "pro-system" versus "anti-system", for example, pro-capitalists versus anti-capitalists.

imbalances in the national economy. Economic inequality continued to increase, as a result, regional divisions and tribalism were also exacerbated. Politically, the parties took on tribal character. Many prominent politicians, once colleagues in arms in dismantling colonial rule, resigned from the ruling party to form new parties – a situation which also resulted in severe conflicts and violence. These events fuelled pessimism concerning the future of democracy in Zambia – a thing that was so much needed after independence. For all these, a political solution was thus, inevitable. It needed someone with a political will and power to bring all the factions together. At the time, for the United National Independence Party and just many other ordinary citizens, Kaunda epitomised that unity in Zambia.

The provisions of the constitution therefore, meant, among other things, the abolition of all forms of discrimination and segregation based on race, tribe, creed et al. It sought to maintain, protect and promote understanding and unity among the people of Zambia by removing cultural, social, political and material barriers that had started manifesting through sharp divisions. Thus, according to Kaunda, generally considered then as the epitome of unity, if peace and unity were to be attained, it was only necessary to have a constitutionally strong and effective executive and indeed a unitary state. Not surprising therefore, a few months later, he even openly stated that he favoured a one-party state.²² For him, a multi-party political system was a luxury the new state could not afford. He strongly argued that multi-party politics unnecessarily divided people, thus impeded nation-building and nation development. Uttered in the 1960s, these sentiments found many disciples and reflected the general thinking of many people.

Thus, to pursue his ideals and sustain the UNIP leadership in power, in addition to empowerment by the constitution, Kaunda and his UNIP government also came up with the ideology of “*Humanism*.” Propounded and officially launched by Kaunda in 1967, *humanism* was to be the national philosophy and ‘*socialism*’ the “instrument for building a humanist society.”²³ Its main objectives as he spelled it out, included the socialisation of the Zambian economy by the instrument of state control; greater social security to Zambians; abolition of exploitation and victimisation; a fair principle of distribution of wealth; social justice; increased Zambian participation “in and control of their economy thereby putting the destiny of the nation in the hands of its citizens”; free

²² *Keesings Contemporary Archives*, 15 (1965 – 66), 21511

education, to enable every Zambian to receive an education; free medical service; transformation of the armed forces – from forces to service; construction of infrastructure; rural development and the guarantee of a peaceful and just future for all Zambians under the leadership of the party.²⁴

To concretise this ideology, UNIP moved further by declaring the ideology of *communocracy*. Communocracy was defined as “the control of the economy and social services by the whole community; a step to a government of all the people, by all the people, and for all the people.”²⁵

As much as these political ideologies sounded impressive, their greatest indictment was the terrible conditions of living, the vulnerability of the economy, and the general state of decay and instability of the nation after twenty-seven years of UNIP’s rule of the country. Year after year, distortions and differentiation along gender, class, regional and power lines continued to deepen in the country. Neither humanism nor communocracy could halt the slide into economic crisis, redress gross inequalities, or prevent the abuse of power, corruption, and human rights abuses. Many Zambians became poorer in spite of the abundant resources of the country.

On the socio-economic front, as alluded to in my introduction, the Zambian economy at independence, despite economic inequalities, had been one of the most buoyant in Africa. In the first ten years of political independence, the country was marked with relative prosperity. The economy was relatively buoyant.

But ten years after independence things began to change. Firstly, as a demonstration of its economic nationalism and determination to wrest control of the economy from foreigners, as early as 1968, the UNIP government had begun carrying out extensive nationalisation and economic reforms. Secondly, the government also used every opportunity to criticise foreign controlled companies, especially in the mining sector for their massive repatriation of capital and for not investing sufficiently in the local economy.

²³ Kaunda Kenneth. Opening address to the ninth National Council of UNIP, 20 September 1976.

²⁴ *ibid.*

²⁵ Kaunda Kenneth. Address to the leaders seminar of UNIP, 14 September 1976, Kabwe.

Rather than strengthen the economy, this extensive state intervention in the economy and the reliance on state corporations for accumulation laid the foundation for the continuing weakness of the elite, and for unbridled corruption, waste and mismanagement. And in any case, the parastatal system became the foundation for the patron-client politics of UNIP. In other words, excessive state intervention and a robust patronage system simply reproduced its weakness and generally created an unproductive disposition. The euphoria, which had accompanied the attainment of independence, was not carried over to the process of building the market.

By the middle of 1970, the Zambian economy had started going down. Towards the end of 1970 through mid 1980s, it was clear that the Zambian economy was in crisis. It had been hopelessly mismanaged and derailed, and possibilities for recovery were dim. A growing number of Zambians became impoverished: salaries could not be paid, the country's foreign debt was piling up, essential goods became scanty, the infant mortality rate escalated, there were no investments as the national currency declined in value daily. Meanwhile, in spite of this crisis, the rich minority was living conspicuously rich and extravagant life-styles.

This state of affairs created 'anti-language' in many sectors of society against the UNIP government. The church, on its part, started to attack the government constantly through the pulpits and pastoral letters. Intellectuals, students, rural people, Non-Governmental Organisations and human rights activists, all began to blame UNIP openly for the numerous problems of the country. Thus, between 1985 and 1991, the country was locked with strikes and riots. As Hamalengwa notes:

In March 1985: There were strikes and riots against the failure of government economic policies.

In December 1986: There were massive nation wide riots against desubsidization on mealie meal. Massive destruction of property and loss of lives occurred and the Government was forced to reintroduce the subsidy.

In 1989: Several strikes led by the Zambia Congress of Trade Unions, Mines Union of Zambia, teachers and students took place.

In June 1990: Riots led by University of Zambia students against among others, Mealie meal price increments and shortages. Ordinary people joined the riots. Thirty rioters were killed.

In July 1990: There was a coup attempt led by Lieutenant Mwamba Luchembe. The coup was supported countrywide.²⁶

At first, this state of affairs forced the increasingly desperate state to become more intolerant. It introduced draconian labour laws, emergency powers and other manipulative methods to contain popular protests and opposition. However, the June 1990 riots and the subsequent abortive coup put enormous pressure on the government to change its stance. Zambians had overwhelmingly rejected the one-party state. The UNIP government was finished. It had failed ideologically, politically, morally and economically. The march towards democracy became practically unstoppable. In August 1990, UNIP held a National Council at which the party agreed to hold multi-party elections in 1991. This was followed by the amendment of the Zambian Constitution by Parliament in December 1990 to legalise opposition parties. In March 1991, the Movement for Multi-party Democracy (MMD) was formally constituted to challenge UNIP in the October 1991 elections.

In October 1991, Zambia witnessed the monumental routing of UNIP by the MMD. If anything, these elections also ushered in the very first democratic transition from authoritarian rule in Anglophone Africa.

It is correct to say that the deepening crisis of the economy led to power being snatched from the UNIP government by the MMD. Yet this is not as straightforward as it is often presented. It is important to go beyond the aforementioned forces and factors, beyond the disillusionment of the people and beyond the new desire for freedom and democracy. It is important to see also the role of western nations, donors, and other external interests in the establishment of liberal democratic politics, institutions, and relations of power.

²⁶ Hamalengwa Munyonzwe. 1992. *Class Struggles in Zambia: 1889 - 1989* and *The Fall of Kenneth Kaunda: 1990 - 1991*. Lanham: University Press of America. Pages 130 & 135 respectively.

When Michael Gorbachev, the prime architect of the global political change, announced his *glasnost* and *perestroika* for the Soviet Union in 1989, no one anticipated that it was going to result in the kind of wide ranging reforms not only in the Soviet Union but also in the communist countries of Eastern Europe as well as in the "Third World". Behind these reforms was the goal to bring to an end to the monopoly on power the Communist party had in the past. Multi-party democracy and market economy were other important new developments. *Glasnost* and *Perestroika* was thus seen as a way to achieve the freedom of people from the oppressive yoke of state bureaucracy. It was seen as a democratic transformation towards peace with justice. This turn towards democracy after decades of authoritarianism was enthusiastically applauded by democrats world-wide. It fostered hopes that both the Soviet Union and the "Third World", in this respect, would get back on their feet before the end of the twentieth century. Thus writing later, Francis Fukuyama even declared: "we had arrived at the 'end of history', the end point of mankind's ideological evolution and the final form of human government."²⁷

Undoubtedly, like in other parts of Africa and the "Third world" in general, this collapse and disintegration of the Soviet Block and the ascendancy of the "western concepts of democracy and the free market" in 1989 were decisive in reshaping the political and economic developments in Zambia. From mid 1990 to 1991, watching the events on television, and reading the daily newspapers, Zambians became certain that this was the genesis of the new era, a new social order, and a new society. They believed that the new age had dawned. As it is in most circumstances, habits of the mind persist in thinking that what is new is better or at least important despite doubts about the future. In 1991, 'new' therefore became a buzzword in Zambia. Because for a long period, people had longed for something new – certainly a new society; a reconstructed society, nearly every street and home was thus, littered with talk about "new": *new* politics, *new* government, *new* culture, *new* political movements, *new* democracy, et al.

But while some were rejoicing in the turn of events both in the Soviet Union and the "Third World", cynics viewed the whole process of such democratisation with suspicion - especially that it was to mean extension of North America's power and influence in

²⁷ Francis Fukuyama. 1992. *The End of History and the Last Man*. New York: The Free Press. In John de Gruchy, Op cit. Pg.3. See also Lloyd Sachikonye (ed.). 1995. *Democracy, Civil Society and the State*. Harare: Sapes Books. Pg.2

global economics and politics. Among them was UNIP president Kenneth Kaunda. Kaunda was dismissive in his assessment of the impact of *Perestroika* and *Glasnost* on Zambia: "I see no adjustment on society."²⁸ At the beginning, the UNIP government thought it could ride the storm. But before long, Kaunda and his government realised that they could not resist the changes that were coming upon the world. Pressure from the international donor community mounted to force a change of mind on the part of government. As de Gruchy argues, "one of the major reasons for this turn to multi-party democracy was to attract western development assistance."²⁹ Thus, as already noted, in October 1991 elections were held. UNIP was defeated by the MMD.

The assumption of power by the MMD government in 1991 re-kindled the long forgotten hopes of better life for millions of Zambians. A deep and terrifying shadow was passing away. A new life of peace, freedom, democracy and justice seemed just around the corner. The MMD had campaigned on the platform of transparency, democracy, participation, accountability, social justice and human rights. "We are an open government; a government of the people, for the people." The people would get on with their lives "without fear of harassment, without government interference, without government excuses."³⁰ In spite of the economic difficulties, the new party and government promised all Zambians an "equitable distribution through a democratic way." The people were promised food, clothing, medicine, education, and jobs.³¹

After eight years in government, the MMD has not succeeded on any front. Their tenure of office has not only been a lost development opportunity but also has proved to be a time of growing despair and hopelessness, creating "more disorder than order."³² President Chiluba himself, a former trade union leader has fallen out of workers' support, which he enjoyed prior to the 1991 national elections. Thus, more than an issue of academic debate, the situation has continued, if not turned out, to be a gruesome reality because even all that the founding figures put in place to sustain the life of the poor and all those who find themselves thrown out of the main stream of life, has been lost in the *new* dispensation. All this despair starts with the national economy.

²⁸ Kenneth Kaunda. Opening address to the Fifth National Convention held at Mulungushi Conference Centre, Lusaka, 14th - 16th March 1990.

²⁹ John de Gruchy. Op Cit. Pg.179

³⁰ Frederick Chiluba. Opening Speech to Parliament, 20 November 1991.

³¹ *ibid.*

³² Ross Kinsler. "The New World Economic Order: Challenge to Theological Education". In *Ministerial Formation*, July 1995. Geneva: WCC. Pg.7-14

Immediately the MMD took power, they swiftly went for liberalisation and everything that was deemed to be the necessity of “modernity”. Unfortunately, these moves have not worked. While not all ills can, of course, be placed at the door of government policies, the Chiluba administration must, in any case, take the lion’s share of the blame.

Contrary to their promises, the national currency continues to depreciate to unprecedented levels. Inflation remains high. There has been unprecedented concentration of wealth and intensification of poverty. The promise of economic justice seems overwhelmed by the awful contrast between the luxury of the few rich and the poverty of the majority old and poor. Plunder of public resources, under the guise of economic liberalisation has continued unabated. Like their predecessors, within the cauldron of shattered utopias, abject poverty and starvation, those in the corridors of power (top politicians and ministers) continue to live in opulence. All business is in the hands of this wealthy minority.

On the political front, the bureaucracy is still riddled with corruption and mismanagement. There is an absence of political tolerance and worse still, failure to respect dissenting views. There is simply no accountability. To use Gorbachev’s words: “the New Order that we envisioned, has dissolved so quickly and abjectly in the New Disorder.”³³ Inefficiency, intolerance and contradictory statements have come to dominate the MMD politics.

As for democracy and indeed living in a constitutional multi-party state, it is right to say that the period between 1991-1998 has not seen much more than trappings of democracy and even that, painstakingly slow. We have witnessed several steps back into the prehistory of democracy, peace and development. Of course we know too well that all modern democracies are limited in the extent to which they are democratic. After all, contextual needs and realities may require that the specific character and shape of democracy vary.

However, in Zambia, something has gone terribly wrong. The conduct of politics has been very much similar to that of a legislated one-party political system. There are human rights abuses, unjustified political detentions and so forth. The abuse of the

³³ Mikhail Gorbachev, “Bringing Order to New World Disorder”, In *Indian Express*, September 1995. Pg.1

judicial process has continued at an even higher and brutal rate. Worse though, the manner in which the poor have been expected to bear the burden of the economic restructuring programme is even raising questions about democratic procedures and the political system itself. In short, the vestiges of a one party state have continued. The political establishment has conveniently ignored the constitutional reforms which many people in Zambia would have wanted to see effected. In essence, all these illustrate the fragile nature of Zambia's democratisation process.

In the face of this increasing desperation and disillusionment, again, like in Kaunda's regime, anti-government sentiments have dominated the Zambian society.

Paradoxically, even religion, which has all along been promising to take humans to the Promised Land of milk and honey, also seems to have failed in meeting the needs of humanity. Churches, for instance, coming to the common market place to sell their goods, compete with one another, often discrediting each other. Their claims of universal love and humanhood, equality and justice, peace and harmony all seem to be rhetoric with little practical substance. Instead of uniting and empowering people, the churches, because of their internal squabbles, and manipulation by the state have divided and weakened them.

To the downtrodden therefore, instead of looking to the church with hopes of "better life for all", the sordid reality is one of disappointed hopes, frustration and despair. To these people, to a greater extent, life is meaningless. Even the biblical idiom of hope has become a foreign language. To be born is sin. At least, as far as their future is concerned, all that is left for them is void, despair and hopelessness. Each passing day, they are asking about the promises of Canaan, the land of milk and honey; what it has for them. They are asking what the liberation brought by Jesus means for them, whether they share in it or not. As Leonardo Boff puts it:

These human beings cannot help but ask: is the liberation brought by Jesus Christ only for the end of the world and the afterlife? Does it transport us beyond our conflict-ridden world, only to leave this world abandoned to the mechanism of its own peculiar laws? . . . Are we to believe that it is not fleshed out in those historical mediations that open the way for more freedom, more justice, more participation, more human dignity and equality, and thus for the

progressive building up and establishment of what we call the 'Kingdom of God'?"³⁴

This analysis and description of the contemporary situation in Zambia, contrasts starkly with the notion of a "just and humane society". It contrasts starkly with the biblical idea of the "new earth" vis-à-vis *God's Reign*. The promises of the MMD to reconstruct the country have not materialised. The *new* that people had hoped for, has not been achieved.³⁵

My critique of the MMD government is in their assumption that the collapse of the Soviet-style economies (communism/socialism) and the rise of the new dispensation - liberal democratic economies (capitalism) - had immediate significance for ordinary Zambians and that the so called "new political dispensation" was truly 'new' and was to immediately redress gross inequalities or prevent the abuse of power, corruption and human rights abuses. This has not been the case. Chiluba's MMD government appears to have underrated the problem.

It is, therefore, against this backdrop of the grim realities of our day, of the shattered dreams of the "New Order" and the growing yearning for a common life based on justice, well-being and human dignity, that has motivated me to engage possible perspectives in Christian theology. Though theology at this point must accept with humility that it is no different in this respect from any other form of knowledge, nevertheless, theology can play a vital role in national life especially in national efforts towards reconstruction and development. It does construct a way of seeing the world and the human being, which is in continuity with experience and reflection on the human condition. "This kind of reflection is transcendental at the core, always searching for that abundance of life and redemption of human being whose imaging enables a critique of the present and an anticipatory modelling of the future. This suggests that theology has the capacity to

³⁴ Leonardo Boff. "Christ's Liberation via Oppression". In Gibellini Rosino (ed.). 1983. *Frontiers of Theology in Latin America*. Maryknoll: Orbis. Pg.101

³⁵ On 22 January 1999, President Frederick Chiluba opened the 1999 session of Zambian Parliament. In his address, he made an unreserved apology to the people of Zambia for the deteriorated quality of life. "Since 1991, the Movement for Multi-party Democracy government has embarked on a number of programmes aimed at improving the lives of the people through efforts to increase access to food, good health services, education, employment, housing and good roads. Unfortunately, despite putting in place all these, not much has been achieved. Along the way, we have made mistakes. We have seen serious deterioration in the quality of human life. For that I apologise to the Zambian people." Frederick Chiluba. Opening address: to Zambian Parliamentary session, 22 January 1999. Full coverage of the President's speech can be found in the *Times of Zambia* of 23 January 1999.

strengthen the human spirit in the face of adversity, scarcity and forces of death."³⁶ It plays a major task in the transformation of society; in the mission of God to make all things new.

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³⁶ James R. Cochrane. "Theological reflection on public policy: the church and the reconstruction of South African society." In *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa*, No. 97, March 1997. Pg.7

CHAPTER II

THE HISTORY AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE CHURCH IN ZAMBIA

The question of the nature of the church is the decisive question for theology, and also for every system of theological ethics. It is through this belief in the church that faith is able to influence world history at any particular time.

Emil Brunner.³⁸

In the previous chapter, we established that the contemporary situation in Zambia contrasts starkly with the idea of the reign of God. This context presents a challenge to the Church, as the role of the Church in the public sphere is to strive for the realisation of God's reign, by working for the promotion of, *inter alia*, justice and peace. This chapter analyses the ecclesiastical history of Zambia. This information is useful, firstly, in understanding the church, its nature, and its role in the public sphere. Secondly, it is also a way of allowing the church to understand itself by learning from the past. As its past and its involvement in public sphere are examined, it may see where its voice has been fractured and where achievements have been made, and thirdly, it prepares us to know the nature or 'types' of theological currents operative in Zambia, the subject we examine in Chapter 5.

The chapter sets out to achieve this task in three stages. Firstly, it will analyse the history of Christian missions in Zambia. This part will trace the history of the Christian church in Zambia – beginning around the 1880s to the present. In the nature of things however, I will not examine the history of all the churches here. My area of interest is to engage in critical reflection with only a few major or mainline Christian churches.

Secondly, the chapter will then examine the development of the missions into churches. And lastly, the role of the church in the public sphere from 1964 to 1998 will be discussed.

³⁸ Quoted in Bonganjalo Goba. 1988. *An Agenda for Black Theology: Hermeneutics for Social Change*. Johannesburg: Skotaville Publishers. Pg.43

A HISTORY OF CHRISTIAN MISSIONS IN ZAMBIA

The church in Zambia claims a membership of "about 75%"³⁹ of the population of the country drawn from across the social strata.

Though the origins of the church in Africa are lost in obscurity, biblical and historical traditions trace the introduction of Christianity in Africa back to the earliest times. A strong tradition indicates that St. Mark introduced the Christian faith into Egypt in the first century (cf. Acts 8:22ff) and certainly towards the end of the second century AD, the North African church entered the light of Christian history with thinkers such as Tertullian, Cyprian and Augustine.⁴⁰ With this, it could undoubtedly be argued that Christianity is a 'traditional' African religion. While it is of course true that North Africa was by then properly part of the Mediterranean world, rather than of 'Black Africa', it is also the case that by the middle of the sixth century, the Christian faith had penetrated southwards as far as Ethiopia.

The beginnings of the great thrust of Protestant missions into the interior of Africa only occurred in the nineteenth century. Since then the focus of Christian Church growth has been moving steadily from Europe and America to new centres in the "Third World". Writing in 1976, Andrew Walls even wrote that "within the last three centuries the position of Christianity had changed from being a kind of 'tribal religion' of the Caucasian peoples' to becoming a truly world religion."⁴¹ Today, the greatest areas of Christian strength are no longer in the west. In Europe in particular, Christianity is, in Walls' words, "in marked recession, losing in adhesion, respect and influence."⁴² Its strength lies now in Latin America, Africa and the Pacific, where it has most adherents and where its impact upon society has become most widespread.

In Zambia, the Christian presence dates back to the 1880s beginning with the death of David Livingstone. Livingstone's death in 1873 gave an immense impetus to several

³⁹ Paul Gifford. 1998. *African Christianity: Its Public Role*. London: Hurst & Company. Pg.183

⁴⁰ Eusebius. *Church History*. II. XVI. See also Adrian Hastings. 1994. *The Church in Africa: 1450-1950*. Oxford: Clarendon Press. Pg.62-67

⁴¹ Andrew Walls. "Towards an understanding of Africa's Place in Christian History". In John Pobee (ed.). 1976. *Religion in a Pluralistic Society*. Leiden. Pg.180

⁴² Ibid.

different missionary societies. Devoted to the alleviation of human suffering and to enter Central Africa, in 1857 Livingstone had said:

I know that in a few years I shall be cut off in that country (Africa), which is now open: do not let it be shut again! I go back to Africa to make an open path for commerce and Christianity.⁴³

Twenty five years later, responding to Livingstone's challenge, the first missionary to make a sustained attempt at Christian evangelism in the future Zambia was a Scot named Frederick Stanley Arnot of the Plymouth Brethren, who had been brought up alongside Livingstone's children. Arnot arrived in the Lozi's Barotseland (present Western Province of Zambia) in December 1882.⁴⁴ He obtained permission to remain there until the Coillards should arrive. He stayed for almost a year and a half. During that time he opened a school for the sons of the chiefs, in which the future King Yeta III and his chief minister, both outstanding Christians in later years, first learned the rudiments of the Christian faith. In his mid-twenties and new to Africa, Arnot soon found that the difficulties of the work were too formidable for a solitary man. Even in a way of visible results, he realised he was achieving little. In 1884, he therefore but wisely decided to leave the field for the party led by the more experienced Francois Coillard.

Arnot's importance, however, lies in the fact that he did something to pave the way for those who followed, and particularly for the missionary body of his own denomination – the Christian Mission in Many Lands, which later established strong roots among the Lovale – Lunda of North Western Zambia.

In August 1884,⁴⁵ Coillard, a French Calvinist missionary in the employ of the Paris Evangelical Missionary Society (PEMS) (*Societe des Missions Evangeliques de Paris*) reached the Zambezi and set up the first mission station at Sesheke in 1885, advancing to a second station at Seŋula in 1887.⁴⁶ Building on the foundation Arnot had laid, the Coillards were able to concentrate their work upon the royal enclosure and the

⁴³ David Livingstone, 1857. In Peter Bolink. 1967. *Towards Church Union in Zambia*. Franeker: T. Wever. Pg.8. See also John Baur. 1994. *2000 Years of Christianity in Africa: An African History 62-1992*. Nairobi: Paulines. Pg.198

⁴⁴ John Baur. 1994. *2000 Years of Christianity in Africa: An African History 62-1992*. Nairobi: Paulines. Pg.205

⁴⁵ Peter Bolink. 1967. *Towards Church Union in Zambia*. Franeker: T. Wever. Pg.52

⁴⁶ Ibid.

aristocracy of the Lozi tribe. Coillard died in 1904. It was not until after Coillard's death that the most spectacular progress was made. The mission managed to maintain nine stations and two or three outstations. Its great weakness, however, was its lack of African teachers and evangelists. As a result, when the First World War broke out, European staff could no longer man some stations because French missionaries were summoned to serve in the army. Apart from this however, another milestone was the passing away of King Lewanika in 1916. His son Litia who took the name of Yeta III succeeded him.⁴⁷ He was a Christian. This awoke in the hearts of the missionaries a new hope that now the Barotse nation was on the threshold of a great change into new life. In 1917,⁴⁸ the new king called a conference. The holding of the conference proved to the missionaries and their supporters that the influence of the gospel had made its mark in Barotseland. It was a recompense for the faithful toil of missionaries for almost thirty years.

The second missionary society to be established in the future Zambia after Livingstone's death was the London Missionary Society (LMS). Its beginnings around Lake Tanganyika was, apart from the explorations of Burton Speke and Stanley, particularly due to the deeply revived popular interest in Africa caused by the story of Livingstone's last journeys and heroic end. Livingstone's death prompted the great British missionary societies in the mid 1870s to claim these regions for Christ. The LMS in particular, had received in its "Instructions" the position on the map of the geographical area "desirable to be held as connecting with the operation of other societies and helping to form a network of Christian effort."⁴⁹ The first leader of this new venture was the Rev. Roger Price, a survivor of the London Missionary Society's ill-fated attempt to establish Christianity among the Kololo in 1859.⁵⁰ The new project, too, swiftly ran into disaster. Many areas along Lake Tanganyika were fever ridden, and the mission suffered heavy casualties.

In 1885 however, the LMS accepted an invitation which made this mission's future much more secure. Mr. J. Stevenson, a member of the Livingstonia Mission Committee and promoter of the African Lakes Company had proposed the building of a road linking the northern end of Lake Malawi with the southern end of Lake Tanganyika by

⁴⁷ Mackintosh C.W. 1937. *Yeta III, Paramount Chief of the Barotse*. London.

⁴⁸ Peter Bolink. Op cit. Pg.55

⁴⁹ Hore E.C. 1892. *Tanganyika. Eleven Years in Central Africa*. London. Pg.6

the construction of the so called Stevenson Road. In this proposal, the LMS was to establish a station at the latter point, which would act as a port for a boat on that lake.⁵¹ So in the same year, 1885, the first LMS's station in northern Zambia was founded at Niamukolo among the Lungu people. Soon after Niamukolo Mission was founded, invitations came from neighbouring tribes, inviting the establishment of further stations. In 1887, one was opened among the Mambwe at Fwambo, about 100 kilometres to the south-east; later to be moved to Kawimbe in 1891. In 1894, a third station was set up at Kambole.⁵²

Unlike the PEMS, the development of the church under the LMS was fast. One major reason, which had nothing to do with religion, accounted for this. The Lungu, like other local tribes, lived in fear of the Bemba. Warriors from this formidable tribe made frequent raids upon their weaker neighbours. The presence of missionaries, it was therefore hoped, would provide an effective protection from these attacks. As Weller argues: "the missionaries were put under pressure to build stockades around these stations, and when they did so, people came in considerable numbers to build houses which took advantage of this protection; they were then willing to listen to what the newcomers had to say."⁵³ After Kambole Mission, further stations were opened at Senga-Hill, Kashinda and in the Luapula Province of Zambia at Mbereshi and Kafulwe.

After the LMS, came the Church of Scotland (Presbyterians) in the north-eastern Zambia. The mission of the Free Church of Scotland was the first to settle permanently on the shores of Lake Malawi. It played a major role in the evangelisation of both today's Malawi and parts of Zambia. The beginnings of the Church of Scotland's mission in these countries are found in Dr. James Stewart's notable speech at the General Assembly of the Free Church of Scotland in 1874. In it, he proposed that the explorer should be commemorated by a new mission, which would be named *Livingstonia* in David Livingstone's honour:

I would humbly suggest, as the truest memorial of Livingstone, the establishment by this church . . . of an institution . . . to teach the truths of the

⁵⁰ John Baur. Op cit.

⁵¹ Weller J and J. Linden (eds.). 1984. *Mainstream Christianity to 1980 in Malawi, Zambia and Zimbabwe*. Gweru: Mambo Press. Pg. 98

⁵² John Baur. Op cit.

⁵³ Weller J and J Linden. Op cit.

gospel . . . which shall be placed in a carefully selected and commanding spot in Central Africa. And this I would call Livingstonia.⁵⁴

In 1894, the first station within the future territory of Zambia was opened at Musanza, later to be moved to Mwenzo in 1895 under the leadership of Alexander Dewar and a Malawi Tonga Christian, John Banda.⁵⁵ At the beginning of the century, teams of students started making evangelistic journeys into Zambia. Amongst them in the 1904 team was a remarkable man David Julizya Kaunda.⁵⁶ Kaunda made a good impression on his visit to Zambia. So in 1905, he was invited to Chinsali where he founded Lubwa Mission. In 1907, Dr. Malcolm Moffat, a grandson of Livingstone,⁵⁷ opened a third station at Chitambo – about sixty miles from the place where Livingstone had died.

While the London Missionary Society and Presbyterian missions were becoming established in the north-east of the country, the Paris Evangelical Missionary Society in the west, the Methodists, despite many setbacks, were making progress in the centre. The party of missionaries, whom King Lewanika had allowed to settle among the Ila, established themselves at Nkhala early in 1894.⁵⁸ At last the Methodist Mission in Zambia was founded. But difficulties and often-heartbreaking years lay ahead. Notably, immediately following the opening of Nkhala, the leader, the Rev. H. Buckenham died, and it was left to reinforcements, which came to include two very capable teacher-evangelists from South Africa to get the mission established. The best known of the missionaries to serve during the early years of the Primitive Methodists work in Zambia was the Rev. Edwin Smith.⁵⁹ Smith quickly realised the importance of using the vernacular. In this respect, he first reduced the local language (Ila) to writing and then produced bible translations and a hymnbook for converts to use.

The Primitive Methodists were not the only missionaries in the Methodist tradition to open the stations in Zambia. There were still several Methodist bodies who were not yet united, and these included amongst them the Wesleyans – who had missions in South Africa and Zimbabwe but not yet in Zambia. In 1912, the Wesleyan Methodists extended their activities northward from Zimbabwe in response to an invitation from a

⁵⁴ In Peter Bolink. Op. Cit. Pg.21

⁵⁵ Weller J and J Linden. Op cit. Pg.141

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Peter Falk. 1979. *The Growth of the Church in Africa*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan. Pg.199

⁵⁸ Ibid. Pg.143

chief who had become a Christian while working in the mines in Zimbabwe.⁶⁰ Founding their first mission at Chipembi, they extended their ministry to Broken Hill (present Kabwe), and in the Luano Valley and to the Zambezi River to the south. By the time of the First World War, both branches of Methodism were comparatively well established in Zambia. In 1932, a synod was created to combine the ministries of the Primitive and the Wesleyan Methodists in Zambia.⁶¹

The other mainline Protestant mission to operate in Zambia was the Dutch Reformed Church (DRC). The missionary work of the 'Adaci', the 'Dutch' as they are still known in the Eastern Province was started in July 1899 at Magwero and from there soon expanded westwards.⁶² The first years did not, however, see much extension. The Anglo-Boer war loomed large on the mission's home front. Only in the course of 1901 did Rev. J. M. Hofmeyr with a senior colleague from Malawi make an exploratory trip as far as the Luangwa. The missionary committee (Orange Free State Mission Council) in South Africa contended that extension was not feasible for the moment. At Magwero, however, work went on.

In 1902, the first church building was inaugurated. In 1903, three missionaries: F. J. van Eeden, Revs. Charlie M. Hofmeyr and J. H. van Schalkwyk arrived at Magwero. Mr. van Eeden was a missionary farmer. The same year he started a farm at Magwero. Hofmeyr and van Schalkwyk were for extension work. In August 1903, they opened a second station at Madzimoyo. In 1905, Nyanje mission in Petauke was founded. In the same year, a permanent European missionary was posted at Fort Jameson. In 1908, Nsadzu mission, among the Chewa, was opened. Hofmeyr and Merwe missions were founded in 1916 and 1924 respectively.⁶³

By 1924, a chain of missions throughout the Eastern Province had been formed, stretching from Magwero to Hofmeyr with out-stations reaching the Luangwa. Madzimoyo became the headquarters of this chain of missions. Outside the boundary of

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ Ibid. Pg.202

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² Gardien Verstraalen-Gilhuis. 1982. *From Dutch Mission Church to Reformed Church in Zambia*. Franeker: T. Wever. Pg.45

⁶³ Ibid. Pg.47

Eastern Province, it was only in 1921 that a first station was opened at Broken Hill (now Kabwe). Since then, several stations in various parts of the country were opened.

Twenty-one years after the LMS had first established themselves in the north-east of the country and Coillard in the south-west, and also preceded by the DRC by several years, the first Anglican Church was consecrated at Chipata in Eastern Province. This was intended mainly for a settler congregation and formed part of the Diocese of the then Nyasaland (today's Malawi). It was a full quarter-century before there was a separate diocese with its own bishop and a small staff of local people appointed to work among missionaries. Today, although it has spread across the country, the Anglican Church in Zambia is a comparatively small one. It is the fourth after the Roman Catholic Church, the United Church of Zambia and the Reformed Church in Zambia.

The Anglican Church in Zambia started with a great deal of enthusiasm. In 1907, a meeting was held in the Senate House of Cambridge University to commemorate the one held in the same place in 1857, which Livingstone had addressed.⁶⁴ The earlier meeting had led directly to the formation of the Universities Mission to Central Africa (UMCA). This mission had given birth to the dioceses of Zanzibar and Nyasaland and the decision was now made to form a third diocese in Zambia. This announcement was received with loud applause.⁶⁵ Dr. J.E. Hine was appointed first Bishop of the new Diocese. He entered his new diocese at Livingstone in May 1910. His first official act was the laying of the foundation stone of the church of St. Andrew, a 'Livingstone Memorial Church'.⁶⁶

Immediately after this occasion, in June, Hine set out on an extensive tour of exploration through out his diocese. Resulting from this tour, in January 1911, the UMCA station was opened at Msoro in the Eastern Province of Zambia. In March 1911, another mission station was opened at Mapanza in Southern Province. In 1915, Chipili mission station in Luapula Province was opened. Thus, by the outbreak of the First World War, the UMCA had three stations. In 1918, a fourth mission was opened right in the centre of the territory at Mkushi – though just after a year, in 1919, it was closed due to shortage of staff. It was re-opened only in 1924 with the new name

⁶⁴ Peter Bolink. Op cit. Pg.100

⁶⁵ Blood A.G. 1957. *History of the Universities' Mission to Central Africa*, II. London. Pg.2

⁶⁶ Ibid. Pg.101

Fiwila.⁶⁷ Up until 1967, only a few more congregations in Lusaka and on the Copperbelt were added to the four mission districts in which the UMCA worked.

Despite these different missionary societies coming from different countries, traditions, theologies and communions, there was considerable similarity in their means of evangelism. Committed to the vision of the task of missions, which included the reconstruction of the country for the benefit of the "heathens", and of transforming all phases of life, missionaries believed that one of the keys to accomplishing this goal was through education and health. When and wherever possible, the mission station included a school, a hospital or dispensary. Missionaries believed that it was the responsibility of the church to teach every believer to read the bible. Reading the bible in accordance with western standards of education, for the missionaries, came to mean, in effect, civilisation of this non-western world, in keeping with the motto made famous by David Livingstone concerning the double aims of "*commerce*" and "*Christianity*".

In medical work, missions had the field to themselves. In this respect, missionary physicians pioneered in the fields of medical education, leprosy and humanitarian service during plagues and famines.

We can only conclude by saying that, although disruptive to the local culture, the influence of mission schools and hospitals was eminently helpful to evangelise the Zambian people.

This section brings us to the end of Christian missionary history in Zambia. Again, as indicated above, for obvious reasons, this analysis has not covered all Protestant missionary societies in Zambia. The intention has been to analyse mainline Protestant missionary societies only. In the next section, we continue to pursue the issue of church history in Zambia though now we analyse the move from missionary societies to churches.

FROM MISSION TO CHURCH

The 1960s did not only see the rapid growth and development of the church in Zambia. These years also signalled the end of missions. This meant that the juridical autonomy of

⁶⁷ Blood A. G. Op cit. Pg.45, 193

the local church was being established hand in hand with the Africanisation or Zambianisation of highest positions of leadership. The prevailing aim of this policy was to establish national churches to which 'missions' were somehow subject. This was inevitable since the nation was in the process of becoming autonomous. Though many missions seemed not in any hurry, the achievement of autonomy was, however, relatively easy to acquire as the relationships with the former missionary societies was something that had to be negotiated.

The country became independent on 24th October 1964. Before that date few missionary societies had become united. The Presbyterians of the north-east (Church of Scotland) had united with the London Missionary Society and the African Union Church of the Copperbelt in 1945 – to form the Church of Central Africa in Rhodesia (CCAR).⁶⁸ Soon after the CCAR was formed, the suggestion was made that the Central Free Church Council, which co-ordinated the European congregations, should merge with the new body. Though no theological problems were foreseen, there were, however, delicate racial problems in adding a number of white congregations to a church which was almost entirely African. The leadership of the CCAR was by now to a large extent in black Zambian hands. Agreeing to retain the parallel structure, the union took place on 26th July 1958 to form the United Church of Central Africa in Rhodesia (UCCAR).⁶⁹

With the formation of UCCAR, further negotiations began in earnest. A union between the Methodists and the CCAR had previously been considered, but there had been hesitations on both sides partly because of the problems of combining a multiracial church with one consisting almost entirely of Africans. The formation of the UCCAR, however, removed this obstacle. In 1963, the union between the Methodist Church and the UCCAR became imminent. When union was imminent, a third major church, Church of the Barotseland (formerly Paris Evangelical Missionary Society) asked to be included in the forthcoming union. The Church of the Barotseland had been independent of missionary control since 1962. The request was accepted, so as to bring the number to three now coming together in union. With the encouragement of

⁶⁸ Adrian Hastings. 1979. *A History of African Christianity. 1950-1975*. London: CUP. Pg.161. Why the name CCAR? It should be remembered that the Presbyterian churches in Malawi were already federated and formed the Church of Central Africa Presbyterian (CCAP). The CCAR (union of the London Missionary Society, African Copperbelt United Church and the Presbyterian Church in Northern Rhodesia) was thus to distinguish itself from the Church of Central Africa in Malawi and so to have a distinctly Rhodesian (Northern) name. See also John Baur. Op cit. Pg.433

⁶⁹ Hastings Adrian. Ibid.

President Kenneth Kaunda, on 16th January 1965, less than three months after independence, the United Church of Zambia (UCZ) was born. This new church brought together Presbyterian, Congregational and Methodist traditions in what was certainly a wise, fairly broad-based move to create a middle-size church.

There can be little doubt that it was the arrival of political independence that conquered the waverers and brought the union into being. Two things should be noted about this union. Firstly, the significant feature of the UCZ was not only the merger of denominations but also the coming together of white and African churches into a self-governing structure in which African leadership was going to dominate.

It should be remembered that the first eight years of the union saw the church under the leadership of a Methodist missionary, the Rev. Colin Morris. Though Morris had some difficulties in extricating himself from the post because of his popularity,⁷⁰ at the synod meeting of 1972, he, however, voluntarily stepped down to pave way for the Zambian leader. In my view, it is not so much the voluntary stepping down that makes Colin Morris significant here. It is rather his strong desire to establish a "Christian church, not only free from the control of Europeans, but rather, a church with a truly African character."⁷¹ For Morris, freedom was fundamental to the establishment of a truly African church, and he saw that as contingent upon leaving the leadership of the church to indigenous Zambians.

Secondly, on the political front, the new government was just adopting the slogan of "One Zambia, One Nation." It was, thus, clear that a church which united a considerable number of tribes would be in a much better position to contribute to nation building than a number of smaller ones, based for the most part on single tribes.

The United Church of Zambia, however, proved to be the exception, not the rule. When the leaders of this new church made approaches to the Anglican Church about a possible further union, the request was turned down. The Anglicans, brought up in the UMCA tradition stressing the catholic nature of their church, were not attracted by a body that was clearly Protestant, and was moreover confined to a single nation. As a

⁷⁰ Note: it is Colin who travelled to London to persuade the Methodist Conference that the district of the Methodist Church in Zambia should join the union.

⁷¹ United Church of Zambia Synod Minutes, 1972.

result, they preferred to remain outside the union and retain the name of Anglican. After all, the church had been under Zambian leadership earlier than the birth of the United Church Zambia.

In 1968 the Reformed Church also ceased to be the Dutch Reformed Church or African Reformed Church and became the Reformed Church in Zambia.⁷² According to Verstraelen-Gilhuis, "the main motive for the change of name was the wish [of the Zambian people] to belong to a multi-racial church, that would fit into the new Zambia which had to be a multi-racial society according to the philosophy of Zambia Humanism."⁷³ Although this change, it did not, however, mean a rupture with the mission. The 'new' church – Reformed Church in Zambia – continued to rely on financial and personnel assistance from the "Mother Church" [the DRC] in South Africa.

The Catholic Church can never be said to be autonomous in the same sense as other churches are. It has to be under the authority of the Pope, hence, all important decisions affecting the religious life of the Catholic people must be decided in Rome. Catholic dioceses, however, can be said to have a certain measure of independence in the sense that the bishop of a diocese makes decisions that affect his diocese and is responsible only to the Pope. In Catholic tradition, a diocese or a church is independent in so far as it is self-sufficient in personnel and financial support. Generally speaking, the Catholic Church refused to be stampeded by the arrival of independence. Even though the first Catholic Bishop, Clement Chabukasansa, was consecrated in 1959, by 1973 there were only five Zambian bishops out of the country's nine bishops. Like many Protestant churches, the Catholic Church in Zambia has equally done well in this area. Today, the church counts two metropolitan sees together with seven suffragan dioceses, all in the hands of local bishops.

Other major Churches that were founded by foreign missions have taken virtually the same road towards autonomy. The African Methodist Episcopal, the Baptist Churches,

⁷² Minutes Synod 1968/15. The matter was prepared in the report of the Actuary. According to F.D. Sakala, the Moderator of the 1968 Synod, the name was first suggested by the Kabwe Church elder a Mr. E.F. Tembo. The small nuance 'in Zambia' instead of 'of Zambia' shows missionary influence. In Gerdien Verstraelen-Gilhuis. 1982. *From Dutch Mission Church to Reformed Church in Zambia*. Franeker: T. Wever. Pg.295

⁷³ Gerdien Verstraelen-Gilhuis. 1982. *Ibid.* Pg.296

the Pentecostal Churches, the Church of God, the Salvation Army and the Seventh Day Adventists have developed local leadership and indigenous ministry. So, the church in Zambia has been localised while still retaining an ecumenical link with Churches from other parts of the world. This ecumenical link portrays the image of a church that is not only national but also universal in outlook.

CHURCH AND POLITICS IN ZAMBIA

The effectiveness of the church regarding its mission in the public sphere depends on its conceptualisation of its mission. A pertinent task, in this case, rests on what Stackhouse notes as the "*theme of vocation*."⁷⁴ This theme starts on the premise that all of us are created in the image of God and that each of us has a role to play in fulfilling God's purpose. Furthermore, "the chief end of our lives is to serve God through the actualisation of the purposes for which we are created."⁷⁵ The church cannot be an exception to this challenge. Faith communities and individuals "are called to fulfil certain functions of and for humanity, and they must do so with excellence and clarity of purpose, or [else] they are subject to either critique or transformation or destruction."⁷⁶

From this perspective then, the question worth exploring in the context of Zambia is: Has the church actualised this role? In other words, what or how has been the public role of the church in Zambia? This is the question we analyse here.

The church in Zambia has, ever since its inception, featured prominently in national politics. Like in many other parts of Africa, Christianity came to Zambia as the religion of European colonists. Religion, politics and commercial interests were interwoven.⁷⁷ This continued to be the trend for a considerable period of time.

Of course, though the church in colonial times can be criticised for this trend, it would be a gross misrepresentation to say that missionaries were simply colonial agents. If anything, missionaries did not accept the views of colonial authorities. But while they were anxious to protect the Africans from injustice, sometimes they did not just know

⁷⁴ Max Stackhouse. 1987. *Public Theology and Political Economy: Christian Stewardship in Modern Society*. Grand Rapids: W.B. Eerdmans

⁷⁵ Ibid. Pg.24

⁷⁶ Ibid. Pg.25

how to do it. Being part of the colonial enterprise, they had to find ways of playing it safe between the colonial administrators and the Africans. They were often caught in cross fire in the midst of the struggle between African nationalists and the colonial government. This stand, in fact, made it even easier that when the nationalists struggle against colonialism erupted towards the end of the 1950s, Christianity, which had been seen earlier as giving ideological support to colonialism, became a religion of that emerging African nationalist resistance against colonialism. It gave legitimation and necessary support (logistical support included) to the liberation movements during the struggle for independence. This made African nationalists cultivate deep relationships and trust with and in the missionaries. Notable among the missionaries was the Rev. Colin Morris, a Methodist Minister. Morris was very influential and instrumental when it came to the liberation of Africans. In one of the interviews with the British Broadcasting Co-operation, it was said that he used to secretly arrange meetings with Kenneth Kaunda and other members of the liberation movement in the offices or classrooms at the Theological College of the United Church of Zambia at Mindolo. When these underground meetings got to the attention of the security forces, they would change venue and gather in the vestry of Mindolo UCZ Congregation.⁷⁸

However, each epoch imposes its prescriptions and challenges. The role of the church did not end at independence. The church now faced with new challenges of an independent nation, its role had to develop in new directions. The theological task had to shift from resistance to critical solidarity with the new government.

After independence, because of the relationship established with liberation movements during the struggle against colonialism, the church was closely aligned to the political establishment. President Kaunda never developed an ideology or a practical policy that alienated the churches. He trusted them even though he also expected their close co-operation. He had regular six-monthly suppers with church leaders; a move which gave the leaders a chance to approach the President directly. No doubt, this relationship, at first, rendered the Church an uncritical servant of the state. For instance, the *quid pro quo* of the meetings and suppers themselves demanded that the Church never speak out publicly in criticism. The Church had been gently harnessed to the ruling system. One

⁷⁷ See Livingstone's comment in footnote 42.

⁷⁸ Colin Morris in broadcast interviews by the BBC in 1992. Copy of the manuscript at the UCZ Theological College Archives.

Catholic Bishop even agreed to serve as a member of the commission for instituting a one-party state.⁷⁹

It took considerable time for the church to break free from the negative image of being seen as a state instrument to become a church in its own right. However, by 1976, the close relationship between the church and the state began to sour. As earlier stated, in the mid 1970s, conditions in Zambia had begun to change. UNIP rule had started showing its oppressive features. Living conditions were falling. The educational system was collapsing. Political and government leaders were increasingly becoming corrupt and UNIP had embarked on the deliberate intimidation of non-party members. The church didn't have any alternative but to become critical of the government. Through the well-informed and organised Zambia Episcopal Conference, Christian Council of Zambia, and Evangelical Fellowship of Zambia, church leaders started expressing criticism of the government's political, economic and other excesses.⁸⁰

In 1988, the church, together with other agents of civil society, led the way to calls for democratisation and social justice. Through their pastoral letters and other church publications, the church made clear its pastoral duty to help bring about change in Zambia.⁸¹ At one point this demand for a return to democracy so infuriated Kaunda that he even threatened to "deal with" the church should he retain his presidency. However, the calls were unstoppable. This is probably the reason that after the 1991 elections, Kaunda bemoaned that the church had betrayed him.⁸²

Between 1989 and 1991, the ground for democratic change deepened. Consequently, the role of the church became even more crucial. The church's primary contribution to democratisation was undoubtedly its ability to mediate between warring parties and to facilitate national reconciliation. During the run up to elections, there was so much acrimony that it was feared the electoral process might break down resulting in bloodshed. Mediation by the church played an indispensable role. Under the

⁷⁹ Adrian Hastings. *Op cit.* Pg.188

⁸⁰ There was, for instance, considerable church resistance to the introduction of "scientific socialism" into the school curriculum. After discussions with President Kaunda in 1982, the churches indicated that, while they rejected Marxist humanism, they were prepared to accept Kaunda's understanding of 'Zambian humanism' and the socialism which was based on it because they were consonant with Christian faith. In John de Gruchy. 1995. *Op cit.* Pg.176. See also "Christian Liberation, Justice and Development", 1987 Pastoral Statement of the CCZ, EFZ and ZEC.

⁸¹ *National Mirror*, 7-14 October 1988

chairmanship of the Anglican Bishop, the church hosted reconciliation talks at Lusaka's Cathedral of the Holy Cross. The talks brought together the top leadership of the main parties and contenders – the MMD and UNIP. The church (though Kaunda had personal reservations about its neutrality), was acceptable to the disputants because it was perceived to be an impartial, credible and reliable institution.⁸³ And at elections, to ensure a fair outcome, the church was actively involved through its constituted body – the Elections Monitoring Co-ordinating Committee. It placed election monitors throughout the country.

But history repeats itself. As de Gruchy writes, “ambitious politicians are only too ready to use the church for their purposes, and church leaders find patronage a beguiling option.”⁸⁴ When the MMD came to power, the new government's relations towards the church improved drastically. As in early days of independence, the church and the government became too close, so close that some of the church leaders even voiced concern that the relationship had become too friendly. On one hand, many prominent politicians, party loyalists and businessmen and women became “overnight Christians” and “born again” Christians in order to get close to the government. President Chiluba himself was installed at the Cathedral of the Holy Cross – in a move that was deemed a “recognition of the government by the Church”. On the other hand, church leaders also became sycophants to the authorities. As the *Post* reported in 1993, it was either they became so or gave up their status and gifts.

Counting on this relationship and influence from some Pentecostal churches,⁸⁵ on 29th December 1991, Chiluba declared Zambia a Christian Nation. Though perhaps well meant, analysed from the perspective of church history, this was a miscalculation. It immediately turned out to be the beginning of another divorce and sour relationship between the church and the state. For some time, it even divided the church itself: on one side, the Roman Catholic Church and member denominations of the Christian Council of Zambia and the conservative evangelical, fundamentalist and Pentecostal

⁸² “Kaunda cries foul”, *Nation Mirror*, 13-19 March 1993.

⁸³ Fred Mutesa, *Peace and Conflict in a Multi-Party Democracy: Lessons from Zambia's Past 1991 Experiences*. Paper presented at the Dag Hammarskjöld Conference at Mindolo Ecumenical Foundation, Kirwe. 18-19 September 1997.

⁸⁴ John de Gruchy. Op cit. Pg.182

⁸⁵ Although Chiluba has this influence from the Pentecostal churches, it must be noted that himself belongs to the UCZ, an orthodox and more conservative church. This relationship has at many times

groups on the other. While the former rejected the declaration, the latter group supported it and President Chiluba. President Chiluba met the rejection by the mainline churches with reproach. To let it be known that he had influence and power, he later ensured it was enshrined in the Republican Constitution. Today, although Zambia is constitutionally a Christian Nation, the State-Church relationship has never been all that cordial. He has constantly attacked the church, at times even claiming, "the church has become sick."⁸⁶

Indeed, despite the *crossovers* between the state and the church and vice-versa, some churches and individual church leaders being too close to the government, considering the current socio-political and economic environment in the country, the church, in general, has not failed in its task. On many occasions, all churches, through the three groups: Zambia Episcopal Conference, Christian Council of Zambia, and Evangelical Fellowship of Zambia, have co-operated in opposing state abuses. Through these bodies, church leaders have been quite outspoken and instrumental in denouncing the government over the rapid growing level of poverty, the widening gap between rich and poor, corruption among leaders, lack of morality, human rights and power abuses and other vices.⁸⁷

From this analysis, it may sound as if there has not been anything that the state has done to warrant appreciation or co-operation from the church. Contrary to the perception, the church is called not merely to condemn but to engage in a constructive criticism of those controlling the reigns of government. It should acknowledge and give encouragement when the political leadership has done well so that it may do even much better. I must hasten and say that, in Zambia, there are many areas in which the Church has co-operated with and or supported the state. It has, for instance, endeavoured to spearhead education. Today, the Church provides some of the best schools in the country, transit homes for the aged and street children. A good number of hospitals and clinics in the rural areas fall under the ambit of the church. In most of these, if not all,

raised questions regarding his commitment to the UCZ. At times it has even created tensions between the UCZ and Pentecostal churches.

⁸⁶ "The Church has become Sick", *The Post*, May 4, 1998.

⁸⁷ See *The Post*, September 18, 1998: "Churches not opposed to airing Channel 0." The State banned this programme from the State owned ZNBC television, alleging lack of morality in it. The churches reacted against the ban arguing there was more immorality in other sectors than in the alleged programme. See also "Christian Nation Idea a Flop", *Times of Zambia*, May 15, 1993.

the two institutions work together. The church is undoubtedly a partner with government in helping to alleviate human suffering.

However, the church also has a critical role to play in society. Firstly, the church must strengthen the sense of a common morality in society, the moral values or basic human decencies. That is, the church should be able to mould moral and national consciousness. Secondly, the church should be able to expose the foundations on which all political choices must rest, even as it insists that all political choices are temporary constructions more or less adequate to the very structures on which they rest. And thirdly, the church must ensure the state is accountable to the norms of justice and equity.

Having said that, in the end, the role the church has played in Zambia as described here can, to a large extent, move one to celebrate. Considering the social-economic and political environment of the time, it is a compassionate and persuasive task. It must be accepted as such. Nevertheless, strengths notwithstanding, it is also true that there is a gaping lacuna in these roles.

First of all, the very marriage of the state and church (controversial it may be), leading to the subsequential declaration of Zambia as a Christian nation through a state instrument such as the Republican Constitution, has had some serious repercussions on the church's effectiveness in its operations. As much as politicians can talk about its independence, the Church's independence has been compromised, thus fracturing the voice of the church.

Secondly, as a consequence of the declaration, the state has co-opted the church. Most of those responsible for the articulation of theological ideals [the professional theologians, seminary-educated ministers, pastors or priests and or religious functionaries] are mostly or exclusively members of the dominant class. To a greater or lesser degree, they have been beneficiaries of the state. Some have been appointed to government posts, while others have been beneficiaries of the state's "donations". This development has rendered them to become so aligned to the state or the ruling political party that the only thing they can do is to maintain the privileged location of their particular religious institutions within the ruling-class structures. Hence, there is lack of

trust in the church by ordinary persons; a situation that, unfortunately, has rendered the mission of the church incapacitated. When these pastors/priests speak, people only see as if it is the state or ruling party hiding behind the colours of the church.

Thirdly, because of this, the very efforts of the church to contribute to the construction of society are inadequate. They are inadequate because they fail to address the total reality of the Zambian context. To an extent the leaders are trapped within the limitations of the existing order they can no longer see new visions. Having no reason to "hunger and thirst" for what is essentially different, their dreams are limited and contained by the dominant order.

Fourthly, it therefore goes without saying that the church has betrayed the people. It has not internalised in its praxis the fact of the people's struggle. As indicated above, these roles are carried out at the higher echelons of the church. Little attention is paid to who the dominant actors for change should be. At the grassroots, the church is more confined to biblical exposition and or explication.

In all these, a lot should be done for and by the church in Zambia to prise itself out of the clutches of intellectualism and also to salvage itself from the appendage of the state. The church must indeed scrutinise itself. This is all so that it may fulfil its gospel mandate of building a just and humane society.

CHAPTER III

THE REIGN OF GOD: A THEOLOGICAL INTERPRETATION

God is the power of the future and is believed in as a creator of a New World. Out of this qualitative new future, new power already forces its way into the present, so that man can find possibilities for rebirth and renewal, personal and revolutionary social change.

Jurgen Moltmann.⁸⁸

In the previous chapter, an attempt was made to put together the ecclesiastical history of the church in Zambia. Our primary task was to map out a history which has helped us to understand the nature of the church and what its role in the public sphere since the country's independence has been. The role of the church, as can be seen from chapter two, is to contribute to the transformation of society into a just society or what we refer to here as "*God's reign*"

The reference to society as "*God's reign*", however, raises to this study a very critical question as it touches on the heart of the study itself. When we talk about the role of the church being, among others, to strive to build the "*kingdom of God here on earth*" (Matthew 6:10); when we ask and work towards the end to all that destroys life in the world, to all that forces human beings to live like animals, to the violence of the socio-political and economic structures, when we talk about the church's role being about a vision to transform social and political living in order to construct a just and humane society, what does this actually mean? In other words, what do we mean by the phrase "*Reign of God*"?

This chapter aims to develop an interpretation of the metaphor "*reign*" of God. A correct understanding of the phrase is of great importance for this study.

⁸⁸ Quoted in Bonganjalo Goba. 1988. Op Cit. Pg.69

To examine this theme, we begin from Jesus' teaching about God's reign in the New Testament. Of course, we must acknowledge that while the term "reign" of God is a New Testament formulation, the notions that underlie the concept have deep roots within the theology and history of Israel. To gain a thorough idea of its meaning in the NT, it is, therefore, imperative for one to begin by tracing it within the Hebrew Scriptures. However, we begin with the NT on the understanding that Jesus' own interpretation of this metaphor, while not unrelated to apocalyptic and rabbinic thought of the OT, has its own characteristics.

There is little doubt that the idea of God's "reign" or "kingdom" (including Matthew's use of a similar term, the "kingdom of heaven", probably as an artificial restoration of the rabbinic usage) as recorded in the Synoptic gospels occupied a central place in the whole of Jesus' thought and teaching. Both Mark and Matthew cited this as an inaugural summary of Jesus' preaching.⁸⁹ And although Luke formulated the beginning of Jesus' ministry in a different fashion, he, too, stressed the importance of this motif early in the gospel (cf. Luke 4:43).⁹⁰ The "reign" of God was also a consistent theme in Jesus' parables, and as Senior again says, it was "linked to his healing miracles and exorcisms" (Matthew 12:28, Luke 11:20).⁹¹

But having said that, I think it is also important to state at the outset that, although there is this frequent reference to the "reign of God" in each of the Synoptic sources, there is no clear definition of its meaning both in the ministry of Jesus and later NT traditions. The "symbol"⁹² has a range of interpretations in Christian tradition – as a result of which, its meaning cannot be exhausted by a single formulation. The symbol can be conceived in different ways.⁹³

In this study, I propose to develop the meaning of God's reign as *future hope* (eschatological event) and as *earthly utopia* (present reality). The usefulness of looking at the reign of God from these two dimensions is twofold. One, whilst the eschatological

⁸⁹ "... Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of God and saying, 'the time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent, and believe in the gospel'" (Mark 1:14 and Matthew 4:17).

⁹⁰ "But he said to them, 'I must preach the Good News about the Kingdom of God in other towns also, because that is what God sent me to do'". See Donald Senior, CP. "Reign of God". In Joseph A. Komonchak, et al. 1987. *The New Dictionary of Theology*. Minnesota: The Liturgical Press. Pg.857

⁹¹ Ibid.

⁹² Norman Perrin sees "reign of God" as a "symbol" than a "concept" or "idea".

hope envisages the reign of God as about to come into being in future, there is also the notion which clearly implies that the "reign" has already come in the person and ministry of Jesus himself. In Jesus' thought and teaching, it is, thus, advisable to allow the existence of both emphases and to attempt to understand their relationship to one another.⁹⁴ Two, this also enables us to locate a witness of the church within the tension between the "reign of God" as eschatological event and "reign" as we can presently experience it.

I. GOD'S "REIGN" AS FUTURE HOPE:

Our starting point then is the "*reign of God*" understood as the *eschatological* or *future event* brought about by God himself. This understanding of "reign" as *future hope* was quite fundamental in Jesus' message and since then, has always been present in the church. More than anything else, it has been a pointer beyond this life to something more ultimate and complete – not mere spiritual survival only but a final cosmic reconciliation.⁹⁵

Though it occurs in a variety of forms, the "*reign*" as *future hope* is marked by at least four basic biblical features. The first is its eschatological focus. Futurity is the key to this conception of God's reign. The primary present meaning of God's reign is the hope it offers for finally putting to rights all that is wrong in the world. This is a model of both ultimate judgement and ultimate reconciliation.⁹⁶

The second feature is the expectation of final judgement.⁹⁷ The coming of the kingdom means not merely the end of history or the giving of rewards. It will really be a summing

⁹³ See Norman Perrin, 1976. *Jesus and the Language of the Kingdom: Symbol and Metaphor in New Testament Interpretation*. Philadelphia: Fortress

⁹⁴ Evans O. E. "Kingdom of God". In George Arthur Buttrick (ed.), 1962. *The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible: An Illustrated Encyclopedia*. New York: Abingdon Press.

⁹⁵ A primary image in this understanding is that of "a new heaven and a new earth". "Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth . . . There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away" (Rev. 21:1f). Today millions of believers afflicted by injustices, suffering death and despair, people who are defined by using anti-language are even consoled by these revelations.

⁹⁶ This interpretation can be confirmed in the writing of Mark when Jesus uses the phrase "with great power" in reference to the coming of the Son of Man (Mark 13:26). The coming of the reign of God "with power" is thus to be identified with the PAROUSIA of the Son of Man and as such should be clearly seen as a future event.

⁹⁷ Matthew 25:31-46, The parable of the sheep and the goats. This clearly points to a future judgement: "the King will say to those at his right hand, 'come . . . inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world'."

up, a cosmic reconciliation and a final settling of the score regarding all the evils and injustices of history. It will be a form of new creation; a new heaven and a new earth; an alternative reality – a reality where there is going to be no suffering, persecution, death, sorrow or tears. As John Wesley put it:

The whole brute creation will then undoubtedly be restored, not only to the vigour, strength and swiftness which they had at their creation, but to a far higher degree of each than they ever enjoyed. They will be restored, not only to that measure of understanding which they had in paradise, but to a degree of it as much higher than that as the understanding of an elephant is beyond that of a worm.⁹⁸

The third mark of God's reign is a general pessimism concerning the present order. Since we live in a fallen, ruined world that bears in every area the marks of the fall, there is no hope for the world short of the Second Coming of Christ. For the present, Christians, can, at best, serve as a sort of brake on the world's downhill slide. As salt, Christians act a preservative against the world's decay; as light, they help to illuminate the darkness. But there is no fundamental hope for the transformation of the present social order.

A final characteristic is its emphasis on the Second Coming of Jesus Christ. New Testament passages about Jesus' return and Old Testament predictions about the Day of the Lord are particularly stressed. The return of Christ is the church's "blessed hope" (Titus 2:13).⁹⁹

Throughout much of church history, this view of *God's reign as future hope* has been a primary one. Most scholars agree that the *future kingdom* or *reign* was the commonly accepted view in the church during the first two centuries, either as a *future earthly reign of Christ* or as the perfect *'reign of God in heaven'* following the Last Judgement.

In his important work *Against Heresies*, Irenaeus (about AD 115-220), for instance, saw all of history as being renewed or "recapitulated" in Jesus Christ (cf. Eph. 1:10). This

⁹⁸ John Wesley. "The General Deliverance". In Albert Outler (ed.). 1985. *The Works of John Wesley*. Vol. 2, *Sermons II*. Nashville: Abingdon Press. Pg.446

⁹⁹ See also Matthew 24:14. Here Jesus speaks of the signs of "the end of the age" and of "the coming of the Son of Man" and says that "this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the world . . . and then the end will come".

shaped his view of the reign of God. Drawing especially on Romans 8 and on God's promise of land to Abraham, Irenaeus wrote that Christians will inherit the kingdom not just in a spiritual sense but literally, within "this created order, then made new," following the resurrection of the righteous and "the appearance of God." Creation will be "restored to its pristine" state; the meek will inherit the earth. "These things are [to be] in the times of the Kingdom, when the just rising from the dead, will reign, when the created order will be made new and set free, and will produce an abundance of all kinds of food, from the dew of heaven and the fertility of the earth."¹⁰⁰

Thus, according to Irenaeus, the 'reign' is future but will be a literal fulfilment of the biblical kingdom promises, though following the resurrection and a fundamental renewal or transformation of the created order. This is a certain hope of a kingdom yet to come.

Another church father to deal with *God's reign as future hope* was Tertullian (c. 160-225 AD). Tertullian provided a particularly interesting study of Christian understanding of God's reign as Christianity progressed through the third century. His concern with 'reign' was not merely theological and apologetic. He pointed to its practical meaning in the light of the challenges Christians were facing in his day. According to Tertullian, God's reign was primarily a future hope. With his strong emphasis on prophecy and new revelations through the spirit, he expected this hope to be realised soon.

In summarising the creed therefore, Tertullian stated that the Word of God was incarnated in Jesus Christ, who "preached the new law and the new promise of the kingdom of heaven" and who "will come with glory to take the saints to the enjoyment of everlasting life and of the heavenly promises" and to judge the wicked.¹⁰¹ "We do confess that a kingdom is promised to us upon the earth", says Tertullian, "although before heaven, only in another state of existence; inasmuch as it will be after the resurrection for a thousand years in the divinely-built city of Jerusalem, 'let down from heaven.'"¹⁰²

¹⁰⁰ Irenaeus. "Against Heresies". In Cyril Richardson (ed.). 1970. *Early Christian Fathers*. New York: Macmillan. Pg.391-94.

¹⁰¹ Tertullian. "Prescription against Heretics", 13. In Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson (eds.). 1976. *The Ante-Nicene Fathers, 3*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans. Pg.249

¹⁰² Tertullian. "Against Marcion". Ibid. Pg.342

Though with somewhat different features because of changed historical and cultural contexts, this futurist mark of the reign of God has dominated much of the Christian tradition. It was certainly one of the principal streams of Christian thought and expectation in Western medieval Christendom and it has been a popular feature especially during troubled or seemingly apocalyptic times, such as periods of plague or war.¹⁰³

When we closely examine this analysis, we can appreciate the fact that there are abiding values in the interpretation of the “reign of God” as an eschatological event.

Firstly, “God’s reign” as “future hope” has considerable biblical foundation. It takes seriously the extensive biblical material concerning the future, especially that found in Daniel, Ezekiel, Revelation, and the apocalyptic passages in the Gospels.

Secondly, this understanding maintains the future accent; something which is a fundamental element of the Christian conception of God’s reign. The NT and early Christian proclamation of the reign – though centred in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ – clearly looked forward to the return of Christ and finally to a new heaven and a new earth. This is an essential part of the Christian hope.

Thirdly, this understanding has provided and continues to provide hope for Christians in suffering and in difficult circumstances. It has become the only source of hope, knowledge and guide for living. In this respect therefore, this element of hope will always give continuing appeal to this understanding of the reign – until it comes in its fullness.

That said, there are, however, some NT scholars who have criticised the futurity of God’s reign in Jesus’ teaching. These critics have perceived the teaching as a remnant of Jewish thought.¹⁰⁴ Others, liberation theologians especially, have also argued that the eschatological aspect in the reign of God tends to be pessimistic regarding the present

¹⁰³ See footnote 93 above.

¹⁰⁴ Bultmann and Dodd are among the critical NT scholars who have dismissed the futurity of the reign of God in Jesus’ message as a remnant of Jewish thought. See Wolthart Pannenberg, 1969. *Theology and the Kingdom of God*. Philadelphia: The Westminster Press. Pg.53 and also Beasley-Murray G. R. 1986. *Jesus and the Kingdom of God*. Grand Rapids: WM. B. Eerdmans. Pg.338

order – so much so that it undercuts confidence in the power of God's grace in the world and induces an unbiblical passivity.

Indeed, with this present/future polarity tilted strongly toward the future, Christians tend to see their calling as one of waiting patiently for the kingdom or as solely one of working to rescue souls from this passing world for eternal life in the world to come. This view can make Christians indifferent to or fatalistic about social problems that could be changed. It makes it possible for Christians to ignore or even oppose efforts to assist the poor and oppressed, for such efforts may be seen as distractions from central kingdom concerns. And also, in this unhistorical form, it characterises religion as an 'opium', because it enables a suffering people to endure, by offering private dreams to compensate for an intolerable public reality.

This analysis of the reign of God, brief as it is, undoubtedly gives us an idea of what it means when the metaphor is interpreted as an eschatological hope. The other fundamental NT interpretation of God's reign is in its understanding as *earthly utopia* (*present reality*); differently put, the expression of "longing to experience God." This is the aspect we now examine.

II. GOD'S REIGN AS EARTHLY UTOPIA

Coined by Sir Thomas More, the word *utopia*, is a pun based on two Greek words: *eutopia* or *outopia*. It comes from the name More gave to the imaginary island he created as the setting for the perfect society, depicted in his treatise of that name written in 1516. The word can mean either 'good place' or 'no place'.

In popular usage, utopia has therefore, come to suggest a vision of the perfect society but one that is fundamentally impossible, an "impracticable scheme of social regeneration."¹⁰⁵ Thus, to be utopian is to be an idealist, a dreamer, to indulge in fantasies, to loose contact with reality.

To utopian visionaries however, proposals for changing "the way things are" (social regeneration) are not impracticable. They are often considered highly workable and, in

¹⁰⁵ The Merriam-Webster Pocket Dictionary. 1958. New York: Pocket Books. Pg.407

some cases, even inevitable. Utopians see themselves in tune with the future. What makes them religiously significant is the contagious power of their visions and the way attempts to embody them have affected world history.

With such definition of *utopia*, there is a sense in which the reign of God can, thus, be understood as an *earthly utopia* – a society on earth rather than a “heavenly city”; a society with God’s sovereignty (or God’s presence) over the life of all humanity and all creation. This reality is, in fact, testified by all gospels.

To begin with, Jesus’ vivid sense of God’s intimate “presence” was expressed in his characteristic address of God as *abba* (Mark 14:36). Considered so, the address reflected a deep conviction about God’s presence. His teaching also emphasised the closeness of God to creation and even more so to the human person (Matthew 6:25-33; 10:25-29), particularly to the weak, the poor, the hungry and marginalised “whose angels behold the face of God” (Matthew 18:10).

The actual presence of the reign is again implied in Matthew 11:12-13; Luke 16:16; “*The law of Moses and the writings of the prophets were in effect up to the time of John the Baptist; since then the Good News about the Kingdom of God is being told, and everyone forces his way in.*” This saying clearly distinguishes between two periods, that of the law and the prophets on the one hand and that of the reign of God on the other. The ministry of John the Baptist is the dividing line between them. If the reign of God is suffering violence, it must then be in existence. On the other hand, if it is exercising its power, it must equally clearly be already in existence.

Several of Jesus’ parables¹⁰⁶ also extend that providence to the individual. God’s own compassion and gracious forgiveness become the model for love of enemies and reconciliation ‘within’ the community (Matthew 5:43-48).

In the rest of the NT, reference has been made to the reign of God in a manner that suggests its present reality (cf. Romans 14:17, 1Cor 4:20). However, a clear theological image that captures many of the elements of this model is the New Jerusalem. As it

¹⁰⁶ Parables such as the Lost Sheep (Luke 15:3-7), the Lost Coin (Luke 15:8-10) and the Lost Son (Luke 15:11-32) are all good examples of Jesus’ teaching about God’s reign as present reality.

appears in Revelation 21 and 22, the New Jerusalem is the eschatological community where suffering and pain are gone and all is peace and harmony rooted in justice.

The early church in Jerusalem following the day of Pentecost (Acts 2-5) can also be another source for this model. The New Testament description of the early Christian community is a vision that, when contrasted with the present-day church or society, can release powerful energy for change and renewal.

Historically too, the utopian kingdom symbol has found resonance in the many utopian communities, whether Christian, secular or the blending of the two that have sprang up during the nineteenth century. These social experiments are in part the fruit of changes brought about by the Industrial Revolution and the utopian literature it spawned. As Mumford notes, "a whole group of utopias sprang out of the upturned soil of industrialism."¹⁰⁷

In this regard, the primary modern-day version of this vision has been Marxist Communism. Marxism is perhaps best understood as a secularised, materialistic version of the Christian hope of God's reign. Despite its practical failures, the great appeal of Marxism has been its vision of a harmonious classless society – a vision that in many of its features is clearly biblical. This has probably been the major reason for the appeal of Marxism. Conversely, it is its failure to achieve this vision that led to disillusionment and subsequently to the disintegration of Communist political power which the world has witnessed in the last decade of the twentieth century. Interestingly though, one needs to point out that even with the failure of the Socialist bloc, the idea that the global market economy (capitalism) creates "the best of all worlds", is itself a utopian claim. This is very evident if we look at it from the perspective from below; the perspective of those who are excluded from enjoying its benefits. These people are condemned to hopelessness and what they look for is an ideal society where their needs will also be met.

Most liberation theologies also have a conception of the kingdom that reflects this interpretation. That is, liberation theology hopes to see society radically transformed now into (or according to the values of) the reign of God. The Christian's calling is to

¹⁰⁷ Lewis Mumford. 1962. *The Story of Utopias*. New York: Viking Press. Pg.111

be involved in the liberating process, with high realism about the social, economic and political dimensions of the present order. And above all, the poor are given an upper hand in these theologies. Liberation theologies speak of God as manifest in the poor of history – the poor here identified as:

the faces of young children, struck down by poverty before they are born . . .
 the faces of indigenous peoples living marginalised lives in inhuman situations . . .
 . . . the faces of the peasants; as a special group . . . the faces of marginalised and
 overcrowded urban dwellers, whose lack of material goods is matched by the
 ostentatious display of wealth by other segments of society; - the faces of old
 people, who are growing more numerous every day, and who are frequently
 marginalised in a progress-oriented society that totally disregards people not
 engaged in production.¹⁰⁸

It is these efforts of focussing on this-worldly liberation in reaction to or negation of salvation in narrowly spiritual terms that make it possible to understand the strong attraction of liberation theology (in some of its forms) to Marxist analysis and also that make these theologies fully fit the utopian metaphor.

As with all biblical symbols, when we interpret the reign of God as a *present reality* or *earthly utopia* or as the gospels put it, the reign of God “is at hand”, the question which must then be asked is: “what kind of a God and what is the nature of this reign?”

In the first place, here all of the various facets of this metaphor converge. The proclamation of Jesus reveals that God is a saving God whose coming will effect personal and social transformation. It is a God whose reign will mean “good news,” particularly for those who have experienced oppression: “happy are you poor; the Kingdom of God is yours! Happy are you who are hungry now; you will be filled! Happy are you who weep now; you will laugh . . .” (Luke 6:20-23). Most important thus, the power of this interpretation lies in the fact that it speaks to people in terms of their life situation. As de Gruchy states:

It is good news to the poor, liberty to the captives, sight to the blind. It is also a challenge to the rich, comfort to the fearful, and a way of rebirth for those

¹⁰⁸ John Eagleson and Philip Scharper (eds.). “Pueblo and Beyond: Documentation and Commentary”. In David F. Ford (ed.). 1997. *The Modern Theologians: An Introduction to Christian Theology in the Twentieth Century* (2nd edition). Oxford: Blackwell Publishers. Pg.412

unable to break out of their old way of life and enter the kingdom of God. In the New Testament sin and salvation have to do with the real world, the world of everyday existence, human power and pain, and the historical events that determine people's lives. If the good news of the kingdom did not relate to our existential and historical situation, it would not be good news. If it does not speak to *[people]* both as *[individuals]* affected by *[their contexts]* – the two cannot be separated – then it is bad news.¹⁰⁹

Secondly, there is a visionary power in this interpretation. Precisely, because of its clash with present reality *and* its insistence that the “reign” is not an otherworldly future hope, this model appeals powerfully to (at least) a significant minority in society. It appeals especially to people, who are turned off by institutional Christianity or traditional religious forms, for it seems to be about something genuinely new and hopeful.

Thirdly, this model also accents the powerful prophetic kingdom visions in scripture, particularly in the Old Testament prophets. Taking these scriptures symbolically, this model points to a present translation into reality of the poetic prophetic visions of peace. These elements give this model a popular appeal that can be socially powerful.

However, like the first interpretation, close examination reveals that there are also some difficulties with this interpretation of God's reign. Firstly, although it draws some poetic inspiration from scripture, as a model it has in fact rather meagre biblical support. It is almost entirely an earthly, present model in which the “*new*” is brought about through human action. The aspects of divine action and of the spiritual future dimensions of the kingdom either disappear or are reconstructed in some sort of evolutionary, ecological, and or socio-political fashion, which may seem to fit modern sensibilities but are reductionist of the biblical worldview.

Secondly, the meagreness of the biblical basis in this interpretation is seen also in a kind of naivete regarding human nature. The earthly utopia has little place for sin as a personal moral contamination. Sin is often seen primarily as a matter of unjust social structures, unhealthy relational patterns, or cultural traditions. In some forms of this model the reasoning is: People are good; social structures (or at least the presently dominant ones) are bad. Salvation or the way to the kingdom, therefore, means

¹⁰⁹ John de Gruchy. 1986. *The Church Struggle in South Africa*. London: Collins. Pg.203. Words in italics are

demolishing or modifying structures so that innate human goodness may flourish. This may be understood in an economic sense, as in Marxism, or in a more socio-political sense, as in some liberation theologies.¹¹⁰ But human sinfulness is no respecter of persons. Divide up people as we will – rich and poor; black and white; male and female and so forth – the line of personal selfishness, self-seeking and willingness to inflict or condone the suffering of others cuts across all categories and runs through every human soul or psyche. This model generally fails to recognise the internal depth of human self-centredness and thus tends to be naive about the perfectibility of human nature and society apart from the fundamental work of God's grace through Christ within the human spirit.

This examination, though equally brief, also gives us an idea of what God's reign as "earthly utopia" means. And similarly, it is not an interpretation without difficulties.

This chapter has made an attempt to define the biblical interpretation of God's reign especially as we see it in the teachings of Jesus – as *futurist* and *present*. Complex as it is, of importance, however, both the *futurist* and *present* perceptions of God's reign envision remarkably similar pictures of what society may or will become. That is, a human society of peace, justice, harmony, health, equality etc. What they differ radically is the means to achieve the final goal. As such, the strengths and weaknesses in both the eschatological event and the earthly utopia can be critiqued. They fall short of entirely or adequately defining God's reign.

What does this imply in our search for *God's reign* or at least for those very tiny *foretastes* of the "reign" in Zambia today?

We can argue that any relevant kingdom theology should only be useful to the degree that it provides guidance for the actual life of the community. The "reign" of God should be understood in a way appropriate to the needs of the day. It must provide a powerful symbol for interpreting and evaluating the people's experience. In other words, "the reign of God" is not an abstract, individualistic, ethical concept as some nineteenth century theologians had presumed. Nor, as liberation theologians have rightly insisted,

substitutes of the original.

can it be divorced from social and political transformation. The key to proper interpretation of this symbol is to maintain in tension the full scope of its biblical elements:

It is a metaphor expressing the impact of God's gracious and decisive act of salvation; it reveals the quality of human existence defined in the person and ministry of Jesus; it is a corporate experience to be revealed in fullness at the end of human history and yet, already now, in the light of faith, impinges on human action and human institutions.¹¹¹

From this then, and in the light of the challenges of the Zambian society described in chapter one, I would summarise the meaning of God's reign as:

1. *God's Reign is over all.* Understood so, "reign" is not so much as a realm but as God's continuing sovereign authority and activity over "all things", things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible; things present and things to come. Thus the affirmation of the reign of God is an affirmation that God is not merely Creator, and is not some impersonal, blind force in the universe, but is the God of scripture who continues to be active in the world. In this sense, the reign always *is*. It is reality; the way things are as well as the way they will be. It is realism, not idealism. People may acknowledge God's sovereign power and grace or refuse to acknowledge them. Nevertheless, God reigns over all.

2. *The reign of God means shalom.* It opens up the future for justice, peace, and the restoration of the integrity of creation."¹¹² Likewise, it "anticipates the ultimate transformation of all things", and also relates the "ultimate hopes to penultimate struggles and achievements."¹¹³ In this regard therefore, God's reign is the foundation of Christian hope. "For Christians of the "popular classes", engaged in a struggle for life and justice", God's reign – shalom (or peace) – "is the most hopeful and helpful moment of biblical history."¹¹⁴

¹¹⁰ See Latin American liberation theology's stance on the reality of the poor. Here the poor do not just happen, they are created by structures and institutions. Being the case thus, liberation theology is a critique of these structures and institutions that create the poor. Cf. David Ford. Op Cit.

¹¹¹ Donald Senior, CP. Op cit. Pg.861

¹¹² John de Gruchy. 1995. Op Cit. Pg.232

¹¹³ Ibid

3. *The Reign of God is Historical*: It is not some spiritual reality that operates only in another world or that unfolds on some supra-historical salvation plane somehow parallel to our everyday existence. The reign is a reality at work within history, rather than simply a goal to which history tends. It is God's working down through history to fulfil his good purposes and make good on his gracious promises given in times past. Thus the kingdom moves toward the fulfilment prophesied in scripture. The final outcome of history is sure, though we still struggle, suffer and face doubts. We are still in the battle of the kingdom.

4. *The Reign of God promises, and is, a New Social Order*: It is a reconciled humanity and environment based on love, justice, holiness, and peace. It promises nothing less than radical social reconstruction, "a new heaven and a new earth, the home of righteousness (II Peter 3:13). Biblically thus, 'reign' involves all areas of life. It is concerned with reconciliation in every sphere of human existence. In this sense we may say that the kingdom is not *only* God's reign but that it is also concerned with where that reign is effected in space and time. While denoting the active rule of God, the term kingdom never loses its spatial dimensions as active rule calling for a place or area in which this rule finds a home.

5. *Jesus Christ is the decisive in-breaking of the Kingdom into Human History*: God's reign is "the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ" (Rev.11:15). The good news is that in Jesus Christ, God's reign has become visible and present in love and power, though not yet fully. The early church experienced the "already" of the kingdom in Jesus' own presence and in his announcement that the Kingdom of God was at hand and in the presence of the Holy Spirit after Pentecost. In other words, in Jesus' life, teachings, healing, and feedings and especially in his death and resurrection the power of the kingdom has been decisively demonstrated. In the resurrection and life of Jesus we see the promise of resurrection personally and of the new heaven and new earth that will come. The nature and the character of the kingdom, therefore, always centre in the person of Jesus Christ – both as the source of our spiritual life and as our model and the pattern of a new social order.

¹¹⁴ George V. Pixley. 1977. *God's Kingdom: A Guide for Biblical Study*. MaryKnoll: Orbis. Pg.19

The next chapter is a reflection on some parameters of a "kingdom" society. After this theological interpretation of God's reign, there is no doubt that this kind of reign cannot be built neither can it evolve out of the societies we already have, no matter how much they improve or progress. This is because, building of such "reign" (kingdom) is, basically, a divine initiative. Being the case therefore, the reign of God, for a majority poor, marginalised and dispossessed, becomes like one of Plato's perfect ideas that can never be experienced fully in this life. God's reign, to them, belongs to another world; a world of ideas or heavenly realities.

However, while this "concrete utopia" is, as de Gruchy puts it, "beyond full realisation",¹¹⁵ certainly, something; a social order, that will at least be moving in that direction – that of a reign of God – must be struggled for. Again this is because the reign of God is not an "abstract utopianism". It is a "concrete utopia" related to justice in this world and, therefore, hope for this world.¹¹⁶ Its loss would only result in the realisation of a just society impossible.

¹¹⁵ John de Gruchy. Op cit. Pg.274

¹¹⁶ Ibid. Pg.230-231

CHAPTER IV

CONCRETE UTOPIA: THE CONTENTS OF A HISTORICAL HOPE

In the preceding chapter, I tried to provide a sketch for the meaning of "God's reign". We specifically looked at Jesus' teaching about God's reign and how the symbol has been interpreted overtime in the history of the church. From that analysis, it has been established that the construction of the reign of God in the world is essentially the work of God himself. It is not a human construction. It is God who builds his reign. Naturally, this interpretation raises questions. What significance can it have then for our outlook on life? How do we account for the eschatological significance of general human history? Do historical happenings, political, cultural and economic have any value in terms of the reign that God prepares and will gloriously establish in the Parousia of the Lord?

Although it is beyond doubt that God builds his reign and that this reign (*shalom*) must not be confused with the establishment of a just society (this reign is only a gift of God's grace – that is, it is something which cannot be planned through social engineering), it is also correct to say that God's action is, however, a constant call and challenge to humanity to build the reign in entirety. A person's response to this call and challenge is realised in the concrete arena of history with its economic, political and ideological options. In this regard, faith is not a different history but a dynamic, a motivation, and in its eschatological horizon, a transforming invitation. What this means is that we cannot talk about God's reign without consideration of the historical needs and concerns of humanity and creation as a whole.¹¹⁷ This is evident when we read some biblical passages both in the OT and NT.¹¹⁸

In an attempt to bring to realisation this vision of "God's reign on earth" today, this chapter identifies three concrete aspects viz.: *Democracy, Economic Justice and Human Rights.*

¹¹⁷ Ibid. Pg.277

¹¹⁸ For instance, for Jesus, the vision for a just order was at his heart in the proclamation of the reign of God. Cf. Luke 4:18-19: "The spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has chosen me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind; to set free the oppressed and announce that the time has come when the Lord will save his people."

These, in my view, stand out in terms of describing a *just* and or *humane* society – so expressed as “a society renewed” or “a new heaven and a new earth” or indeed “God’s reign”. Most important though, these issues must be rooted in Christian theology if they are to make sustainable and viable contribution to this building of God’s reign.

I. DEMOCRACY

The discourse on democracy¹¹⁹ at the present juncture has been shaped by the prevalent triumphalism of capitalist ideology in the context of the collapse of the orthodox socialist model, most dramatically in Eastern Europe. In developing countries, the transitions to democracy have largely assumed the embrace of formal structures of multi-party democracy and the adoption of versions of the free market.

This ‘wind of change’ that has heralded a new democratic spirit in Africa since 1990, has put a critical task on the African church even to the extent of radically altering church-state relations.

Talking of church and democracy, the question is raised: what is the relationship between the two? To discern the relationship between Christianity and democracy, it is important that we begin with what democracy is.

Critical comments quickly come up at the mention of the word “democracy”. The term conjures up many different things in many different minds. Despite its significant capacity for mobilisation in political transformation, there does not seem to exist consensus on its definition. The term is very elusive and like a chameleon, it changes its meaning any time depending on the context in which it is used.

Nevertheless, in the contemporary discourse on democracy, though the concept may be multi-faceted, at root, it is about the universal human condition, it is about our innate desire to live as free men and women the world over, it is about liberating the human potential within us. It is about a fundamental desire by people to be truly authors of

¹¹⁹ There is a substantial literature on “democracy”. I have not reviewed it all, but see the following items: *Christianity and Democracy* (1995) by John de Gruchy, *Democracy and its Critics* (1989) by Dahl Robert, *The Christian Church and Africa’s Democratisation* (1995) edited by Gifford Paul, *Models of Democracy* (1992) by David Held, *The Children of light and the Children of Darkness* (1960) by Reinhold Niebuhr, *Politics and the Parties: When Christians Disagree* (1992) by Chaplin J. P., *Democracy: A Christian Imperative* (1990) by Neuhaus R. J., *Christianity and Democracy in Global Context* (1993) by J. White

their individual and collective destinies. It is a demand by the people at grassroots level to participate in decision-making and to be active in shaping their society, its laws and its governing institutions. It is this abiding appeal of democracy that led Franklin Roosevelt to even claim that "democracy alone, of all forms of government, entails the full force of men's enlightened will. It is the most humane, the most advanced and in the end the most unconquerable of all forms of human society. The democratic aspiration is no mere recent phase of human history. It is human history."¹²⁰ And as de Gruchy also points out, it is its abiding appeal that "ecumenical Christianity now recognises democracy as the best available option for the establishment of a just social order."¹²¹

What then does "democracy" mean? Literally, the term means popular rule, "*rule by the people*" - famously expanded later by Abraham Lincoln as "*government of the people, by the people, for the people*."¹²² In its birthplace Athens, it denoted rule (*kratein*) by the whole of the people (*demos*) as distinct from rule by a *part of the people* as in aristocracy or meritocracy.¹²³ The idea of popular rule has, however, been interpreted in widely different ways depending on who was deemed to be included in "the people" (on whom was full citizenship to be conferred), what "rule" was taken to imply, and in what sense rule could be exercised in the interests of the people (that is, how the purpose of government was understood).¹²⁴

To clarify, Chaplin argues that, "for much of the history of the evolution of democracies, citizenship was restricted to a privileged few. But the steady outworking of the principle of political equality has now ruled out this restricted franchise. Now, only few relevant reasons such as age and mental stability can exclude adults from full political rights."¹²⁵ The other question that has been crucial is who counts as "the people" and what "rule" is taken to mean. Today, states, which claim to be democratic, employ the representative principle; sometimes tempered with features such as referenda, petitions, or recall. In this case then, "democracy" has widely come to be interpreted as implying,

¹²⁰ Cited by Vernon Mwaanga. "Africans taking a centre stage in discussing democracy". In *Times of Zambia*, August 15, 1998

¹²¹ John de Gruchy. 1995. Op Cit. Pg.228

¹²² Ibid. Pg.6

¹²³ Jonathan Chaplin. "Christianity and Democracy: A British Perspective". In Bennie van der Walt and Rita Swanepoel (eds.), 1996. *Christianity and Democracy in South Africa: Christian Responsibility for Political Reflection and Service*. Potchefstroom: Institute for Reformational Studies. Pg.113

¹²⁴ Ibid.

¹²⁵ Ibid.

minimally, a political system in which executives are held accountable to the representatives of the people elected by universal franchise.

Clearly, “democracy” seen from this perspective has a strong Christian argument for support. Firstly, there is an argument which appeals to the biblical idea of a three-way covenant between God, ruler and people and in which political authority is conceived as a delegation of divine authority, while the people are seen as bearing the right to consent to those who will exercise that authority.

Secondly, there is an argument which concludes by various stages, from the belief in the equal status of all humans as being created in the image of God to the specific claim that such status must be expressed through the equal possession of political rights, including the right to vote, freedom of assembly, freedom of worship, right to form parties et al.

Thirdly, there is an argument that seeks to justify and circumscribe democratic institutions in terms of the purpose of the state: from the Protestant tradition typically as the establishment of justice or as the Catholic tradition puts it “the promotion of the common good.” In this regard, the state is seen as the political community of government and citizens existing to establish justice in the public realm of society. As members of a community, all citizens are co-responsible with government for the state’s promotion of public justice and thus have the right to participate via elected representatives in the political process. At the same time, the decisions of popular representatives must serve the purpose of public justice.

Fourth, there is an argument of devolution of power from the centre to the lower tiers of government (provinces and districts) without jeopardising national unity and the ability of the centre to govern justly and effectively. This is very essential in restraining abuses of power.

The final argument is that in which popular elections are deemed to function as one among several vital constitutional checks on the arbitrary exercise of political authority. The implication here is the need for “constitutional *restraints* on the exercise of a

democratic mandate as opposed to democratic radicalism premised on the doctrine of unlimited popular sovereignty."¹²⁶

But having said this, it is also important to understand that democracy is not always free from a vast array of divergent pressures. Political factors bring into play an array of forces and divisive elements that can impose severe stresses on the institutional fabric of democracy and indeed on the integrity of nations. In fact, this is the challenge that both old and young democracies tend to face - how to sustain democracy and institutionalise a genuine democratic culture. For instance, if by democracy we only mean that the people are sovereign, that the government should do the will of the people, then all sorts of hideous things could follow. Hitler, for example, did not come to power in Germany by means of a coup. The population elected him. Though the Nazi party did all it could to manipulate these elections, there is little doubt that he enjoyed the popular support of the German people. In this crude sense, one would claim Nazi Germany was a version of "democracy". Yet it exterminated millions of people and led the world into a bloodbath.

The point being made is that, evil, even political evil is not confined to dictators and generals. It is something that lies in all of us. It is universal. In light of these divergent pressures on democracy then, is this truly democratic sign attainable?

In an attempt to achieve and consolidate or sustain a truly just democracy, there should, certainly, be the existence of a participant political culture, a culture that perceives democracy not purely as a political mechanism or merely as ballot boxes and majorities, but as a dynamic and vital force in a given society. As conversion wisdom will demonstrate, the practice of democracy cannot simply be reduced to the mere act of casting a vote in a ballot box. "Democracy covers the entire process of participating by citizens (the people of God) in a constant process of dialogue, consultation and consensus building."¹²⁷ Essential to this therefore is among other things:

¹²⁶ Ibid. Among the most important constitutional limits on democratic institutions are: the separation of legislative, executive, and judicial powers, the effective accountability of the executive to a representative legislative assembly, the requirement to hold free, fair, secret and regular elections and a wide range of individual and institutional rights. Underlying all these provisions is the fundamental presupposition of constitutional government - the rule of law - which implies that a just government itself consistently operates within the law.

¹²⁷ Vernon Mwaanga. Op Cit.

1. *The existence of strong and viable political movements/ or parties*¹²⁸: The imperative of a 'humane' democracy falls in the existence of political movements/parties. Political parties are, by nature, actors in multi-party democracy. Without their existence, democracy becomes empty in content. However, we must stress that it is not the number of parties that is necessary, but their strength. The viability of a multi-party system largely depends on their strength. Their instability only contributes to the absence of a viable democracy.

2. *Political morality*¹²⁹: Morality is the foundation of democratic decision-making. When we speak of "politics", we speak about the organisation of public life. It is about organising public life, about public decision-making. These decisions are based on certain principles, a philosophy of life, certain standards and values that determine choices. Thus, being involved in politics equals making choices and it is clear these choices are made in accordance with convictions, values and standards. In this sense there is an inevitable link between politics and morality. To the extent that politicians are reproached when they bring the issue of morality into debate, to that extent it is imperative.

To suppose that democracy can secure good governance or public virtue without morality is a chimerical ideal. Neuhaus contends, "the naked public square is an illusion". Such a thing as the neutral state [without morals] does not exist. "If it [Public Square] is not clothed with the *meaning* borne by religion, *new meanings* [not democratically recognised by society] will be imposed by virtue of the ambitions of the modern state."¹³⁰ In this respect therefore, moral convictions remain vital. They keep society from disintegration. They help people to be good citizens. They produce the virtues that a society or nation needs. If dominant morality in society degenerates it has its impact on the democratic decision-making, which in turn has consequences for the life of the people. Profoundly thus, this is where Christianity and its values ought to play its role "as nurturer of a culture of democratic moral value."¹³¹

¹²⁸ Maybin F. Chisanga. "Multi-Party Democracy". In *The Post*, July 28, 1998

¹²⁹ Rouvoet A. "Christianity and Democracy: A European Perspective". In Bennie van der Walt et al. (1996). Op Cit. Pg.137

¹³⁰ Richard John Neuhaus. 1986. *The Naked Public Square: Religion and Democracy in America*. Grand Rapids: WB. Eerdmans. Pg.86; ix.

¹³¹ John de Gruchy. Op Cit. Pg.228

3. *Existence of a strong and vibrant civil society*¹³²: The discourse on democracy devotes considerable attention to the concept of “civil society.”¹³³ Civil Society constitutes a major pressure and hope for the process of democratisation and democracy itself. There are a variety of roles that the organisations making up civil society can play in promoting and sustaining a viable democracy. These include amongst others: an educative socialisation role (*where citizens participate in a wide range of associations*); a resistance, vigilant role (*preventing abuse of power by the state by holding it accountable to the interests of its citizens*); a reconstructive and developmental role (*where civil society assists the state in fulfilling its service delivery functions*) and a role in conflict resolution.¹³⁴ All these roles require a very strong and vibrant civil society. It is needless to say, therefore, that democracy is too important a matter to be left only to the politicians, political parties or to the government. A strong civil society is essential for sustaining “a democracy” for without which, goals such as freedom, and equality can not be realised.

Let me end by saying that though democracy is not the perfect system, however, if all the essential vehicles are considered, it is the best (Churchill: least bad) system we know of for a just society. The way we use the system, the extent to which we succeed consolidating it, determines the quality of politics and society we want to have.

II. ECONOMIC JUSTICE

Writing about the prophetic understanding of economic justice, de Gruchy argues that it “is not the impartial administration of law, but the overcoming of the gap between rich and poor; it is economic justice. From the perspective of the gospel, the care for, and the empowerment, of the poor and other social victims is the chief criterion by which to evaluate social structures and to become involved in them. This is the permanent test of

¹³² Lloyd Sachikonye (ed.), 1995. *Democracy, Civil Society and the State: Social Movements in Southern Africa*. Harare: Sapes Books. Pg.11

¹³³ Civil Society is an elusive concept to define. Like “democracy”, it has become all things to all people depending on which position they wish to punt. However, if to adopt Keane’s (a contemporary democratic theorist) definition: “Civil Society” may be conceived of as comprising formations relatively independent from, and outside of the state viz. the market-regulated, privately controlled and voluntary organised complex of community life that lies between the “private realm” of individual action and the “public realm” of organisations and institutions constituted by the state (1988: 1). Hence associations such as churches, universities, civic associations, the press, Non Governmental Organisations (NGOs), trade unions, chambers of business and industry, etc., can all be identified as organisations of civil society.

¹³⁴ Lala Camerer. “Party Politics, Grassroots Politics and Civil Society”, In Bennie van der Walt et al. (1996). *Op Cit*. Pg.222

the authenticity of Christian witness, and the basis upon which critical theology must evaluate all social and political structures.”¹³⁵

The term “economy” comes from two Greek words “*oikos*”, meaning “house” or “household”, and “*nomos*”, meaning “law” or “rules”. Economics, therefore, literally refers to applying “household rules.”¹³⁶ In this sense then, economics (*oikonomia*) is not only about money and wealth. It is a reality about people’s daily life and or concerns: procuring food, shelter, clothes, performing meaningful work etc. It - means “management of the house, the whole human house of the world.”¹³⁷

Theologically, “economics” must discover the biblical understanding that all of life is relational and interdependent and sustained by the power of God’s spirit, who is confessed in the creed as the “giver of life”. However, this is only possible if rules given by God for the management of the household, the economy, are observed. These rules include, amongst others, safeguarding the creation and protecting the most vulnerable people in society: the poor (Exodus 23:6), widows, strangers and orphans (Deuteronomy 24:19-22) and also lepers (cf. Leviticus 25).

Like “economics”, the term “justice” [to practice justice – “*sadak*”] traces its roots from Greek word “*sedeq*”. One of the problems with the term *justice* is determining exactly what it means. Although there is evidently a need to define it, any attempt to do so opens up larger questions. This is principally due to the fact that the Protestant theological tradition - born, developed and argued out in Western Europe and taken up and amplified in the United States - puts an exaggerated emphasis on the forgiveness of sins and the justification of sinners by faith. This somewhat passive European approach makes it difficult to understand this concept as a whole.

Yet an attempt to define *justice* is essential. The meaning of the term appears with different emphasis depending on who is reading it and where. Thus, it strikes me as logical that in the western societies the emphasis is constantly on the forgiveness of sins or justification of the sinner before God. However, this emphasis may not be so helpful to the poor majority in the “Third World”. To them, it does not help much to be

¹³⁵ John de Gruchy. 1995. Op Cit. Pg.268

¹³⁶ *Christian Faith and the World Economy Today: A Study Document from the World Council of Churches*. 1992. Geneva: WCC Publications. Pg.4

constantly reminded that they are sinners and have the joy of being pardoned - living as they do in sub-human conditions of exploitation. In their case, what they long for is the revelation of God's justice that embraces all things including, paradoxically, God's love for the authors of sin. That is, while the oppressors need to remember their sin, God's total otherness, the poor need to remember His almighty grace, their dignity as children of God and God's nearness and solidarity with them.

From this understanding therefore, to understand the biblical concept of justice, this study approaches the task from the standpoint of the poor. The bias toward the poor is simply because, one, "the poor are particularly vulnerable to injustice in ways others are not and are therefore victims of injustice more frequently than most others".¹³⁸ As such, their state requires greater attention if the equal regard called forth by the equal merit of all persons in society is to be achieved. "Justice must vindicate those who cannot themselves secure their own rights."¹³⁹ Two, a commitment to listen to the poor "enlists *with* them and creates ways - through the church and otherwise - by which they can be heard so that their struggle for justice will gain strength and momentum."¹⁴⁰

The brief interpretation I use in defining "justice" is one postulated by Stephen Mott.¹⁴¹ According to Mott, justice oriented to the needy should be modelled on God's justice (cf. Psalm 35:10; 146:7). This justice reaches out to the prisoners, the blind, strangers, orphans and the widows (Psalm 146:9). In this understanding, justice is grounded in "God's character as the sovereign creator of the universe (Ps. 99:1-4), God establishes justice for all the oppressed of the earth (inhabited world), not merely the land of Israel."¹⁴²

In the NT, the gospels make frequent references to justice. In his preaching, for instance, Jesus proclaimed the intervention of God's justice on behalf of the needy and oppressed (Luke 4:15-22). Further, Jesus identified himself with his least brethren.

¹³⁷Ibid.

¹³⁸ Calvin Beisner. "Justice and Poverty: Two views Contrasted". In Herbert Schlossberg et al (eds.). 1994. *Christianity and Economics in the Post-Cold War Era: The Oxford Declaration and Beyond*. Grand Rapids: WB. Eerdmans. Pg.72

¹³⁹ Stephen C. Mott. "The Partiality of Biblical Justice". In Herbert Schlossberg et al (eds.). Ibid. Pg.86

¹⁴⁰ *Christian Faith and the World Economy Today*. 1992. Op cit. Pg.15

¹⁴¹ Op Cit.

¹⁴² Mott. Ibid. Pg.87

“Insofar as you did this to my least brethren (giving a cup of water, visiting the imprisoned, the sick etc), you did this to me” (Matthew 25:40).

Out of these few biblical citings, Mott identifies five explanations of God’s justice: *Deliverance*, *Restoration to Community*, *Basic Equality*, *Benefit Rights and Freedom Rights* and *Negative Rights*. For our purpose however, we shall explicate only the *Deliverance*, *Restoration to Community*, and *Basic Equality* explanations.

Firstly, justice is *deliverance*. It is “rectification of the gross social inequalities of the disadvantaged. It is not a mere mitigation of suffering in oppression.”¹⁴³ In situations of oppression, God takes sides and brings the oppressed to security and well being (Ps.76:9; cf. Isa. 63:1). It also involves the deliverance of people from political and economic oppression (Judges 5:11). Contrary to the thinking that providing for the poor is weakening them more, here it simply means “setting them back on their feet, giving them a home, leading them to prosperity and restoration, and ending their oppression” (Psalm 68:5-10; 10:15-18).

Secondly, justice is a *restoration to community*. In Lev. 25:35f., “the poor are described as being on the verge of falling out of the community because of their economic distress. The community’s responsibility to its diminished members is to ‘make them strong’, restoring them to participation in community”¹⁴⁴ so that they may equally live and “once more be active, participating members of the community.” Anything less than this diminishes community membership and deliverance becomes incomplete, argues Mott.

Thirdly, justice is *equality*. For Mott, since membership in community involves a shared participation in all of its essential spheres, ‘justice’ provides an *equality* in the fundamental elements of human life.”¹⁴⁵ By equality, it refers here “specifically to basic needs.” And “basic equality does not mean a mathematical division of all property and power or a levelling of all social goods.”¹⁴⁶ Basic needs are limited and capable of being identified. In essence, these are simply “minimum requirements of participation in the community.”¹⁴⁷

¹⁴³ Ibid.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid. Pg.88

¹⁴⁵ Ibid. Pg.90

¹⁴⁶ Ibid.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid. Pg.91

In light of these explanations, what then do we mean when we talk about *economic justice*?

In our contemporary situation, talking about economic justice immediately brings to mind two economic ideologies - *capitalism* and *socialism*.¹⁴⁸ In a nation like Zambia where some 80% of the people are poor and or live in abject poverty, it is, for instance, argued that the poor would not benefit if we don't talk about free market or capitalism. Advocates of capitalism argue that this is the only system necessary for creating the required just society. It enables individuals to choose how they will participate in the economy, to have control over their labour, and to maintain a livelihood independently of the provisions of the state. They argue that it is realistic about human nature; recognising that people do not by nature act in the interests of other human beings. It modifies the destructive consequences of self-interest by directing human energy into the creation of wealth that benefits the entire community. In this regard, the sanctions of religion are along with the prospect of self-improvement and the coercion of economic subsistence, important elements of control. They have criticised socialism on the assumption that socialism has not coped with the issue of power. It has established one of the most oppressive systems by those in power. It has turned into an instrument of political dictatorship, totalitarianism, economic exploitation of the masses by the powers that be and social indoctrination and domestication.

Critics of capitalism, on the other hand, have argued that capitalism is not a panacea for the economic ills of the country. Probably what is needed, if anything, is a socialist oriented economy. They argue that many of the features of capitalism run counter to the vision of a truly developed humanity and Christian ethics. The system, far from creating just social, political, and economic structures, through its twin obsessions with the primacy of economic growth and the maximising of profitability, creates a series of powerful economic centres, which subsequently produces distorting and exploitative relationships. These create the very social and economic injustices that Christians are called to redress. Its glorification of competition is the antithesis of the biblical concept of co-operation or mutuality. The way it exploits the earth's resources for the benefit of

¹⁴⁸ Capitalism, in abstract, refers to a socio-economic system in which most capital is privately owned. The market system is self-regulating. It implies that there should be as little state intervention as possible. Socialism, on the other hand, refers to a socio-economic formation that exists for the benefit of most members of a society, particularly working people. In this system all resources are in the hands of the state. The state administers all proceeds of production. All planning of the economy and basic social services are in the hands of state agencies.

a few and to the disadvantage of the world's poor, countermands the Christian concern for respect for all of creation. Its vision of unlimited economic growth, and its willingness to defend and promote itself by force and coercion if necessary, does not legitimately claim Christian allegiance. Still worse, the communities capitalism creates bear little resemblance to those envisaged by the prophets, or created by the first Christians.

As an alternative social theory or system, some people, including many Christians, feel that the vision for a just and humane society is most faithfully reproduced in Socialism. In a frequently cited essay, *'Capitalism versus Socialism: Crux Theologica'*, Juan Luis Segundo, for instance, argues strongly that the church must make a choice, and that it should opt for socialism.¹⁴⁹ There is [or had been] a uniform conviction that some form of socialism offers the best hope for the world today. It is argued that this ideology has a passion for people's welfare. It aims at abolishing the inequality between the rich and the poor. It emphasises equality and justice among all people in all social, economic and political activities.

From these two ideologies, there appears to be no consensus as regards the meaning of economic justice. If "God's justice" is about caring, sharing and love, what kind of economic system does he encourage? How can we be like the caring and sharing community described in Acts chapters 2 and 4?

Theologically, *economic justice*, from the explanations of 'economics' and 'justice' is about effecting the reign of God on earth. The failure by these ideologies to offer solutions and hopes to world's problems suggests that life can not be satisfied through ideologies. The reign of God on earth cannot be effected by ideologies, as these are not '*ends*' in themselves. This view is quite evident even in the works of liberation theologians, who, apparently, are strong advocates of economic justice through socialism. Today, when liberation theologians speak about socialism, they nearly always advocate something new; something that fits a particular context and does not simply imitate existing models. Thus Miguez Bonino, in one of his works is even able to write, "Christianity must

¹⁴⁹ Juan Luis Segundo. "Capitalism versus Socialism: Crux Theologica". In Rosino Gibellini (ed.), 1983. *Frontiers of Theology in Latin America*. Maryknoll: Orbis.

criticise capitalism radically, in its fundamental intention, while it must criticise socialism functionally, in its failure to fulfil its purposes.”¹⁵⁰

Indeed, although it is clearly not the task of theology to conjure up some alternative to both *capitalism* and *socialism*, as it is not competent to do so, it is however, the task of theology to subject economic systems to the demands of the gospel which affirm the dignity of all people and their obligation to work for a more just economic order. To the extent it is critical of economic systems that exclude, ignore or evade the issue of economic justice, it is the task of Christian theology to support such economic initiatives and ethical values which shape, bend and redirect economies towards the benefit of those who suffer most in society: the poor, the weak, the marginalised etc. In essence, that means, a just economy must be centred on how life can be sustained and made to flourish; it must be people centred; it must protect life; it must bond families; it must maintain the dignity of women and children; it must be socially participatory; it must be indigenous; it must be culturally, morally, and spiritually sensitive. In other words, it must be an economic initiative but with a human face, something that calls for a sharing of resources in a manner which empowers people, enhances human dignity and creates the optimum conditions within which full humanity, the kind we see in Jesus, can develop.

Having discussed democracy earlier, one in fact sees a close link between economic justice and democracy. Like an army, democracy cannot march on an empty stomach. It cannot survive without bridging the vast disparity between the affluent rich and the poor. The touchstone of a truly democratic society is the way in which it cares for the disadvantaged. Poverty is an enemy of democracy and incompatible with a just democratic society.¹⁵¹

That said, we can only conclude by saying that economic justice; the right to life of all human beings without exception, is at best one of the strong parameters for the just society. It lies at the very heart of the Gospel.

¹⁵⁰ Miguez Bonino. 1976. *Christians and Marxists: The Mutual Challenge to Revolution*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans. Pg.115

¹⁵¹ Vernon Mwaanga. Op Cit.

III. HUMAN RIGHTS

With the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights (December 10, 1948), the language of human rights has become so pervasive through out the world. In Africa particularly, it is interesting to note that the subject has, in recent times, received critical attention on the agenda of African social science discourse. The intense interest the matter now generate: is the consequence of an emerging global morality with which the prevailing human rights abuses against the spirit and the letter of the African Charter on Human and People's Rights (1981) by several African governments are being measured.

Louis Henkin, an international human rights lawyer, has defined human rights as "rights of individuals in society. They are those benefits deemed essential for individual well being, dignity, and fulfilment, and that which reflects a common sense of justice, fairness, and decency."¹⁵²

John Pobee, a Ghanaian and Anglican theologian, has also, in the spirit of contemporary globalisation and especially, in the context of what he calls "an increasingly interdependent world" defined human rights as "the fundamental privileges a person is entitled to in any society because he or she is a human being. Or theologically put, it is the respect everyone should be accorded in order to let him or her live his or her life with the dignity and honour which is his or her right as God-given."¹⁵³

It is now no longer in dispute that all people possess certain basic or fundamental rights simply by virtue of being human beings regardless of their race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or social class, birth or other social or economic status. They are claims on society, which do not have to be earned. We claim them simply because we are human. As Henkin again says:

Human rights are rights; they are not merely aspirations, or assertions of the good. To call them rights is not to assert, merely, that the benefits indicated are desirable or necessary; or, merely, that it is 'right' that the individual shall enjoy these goods; or even, merely, that it is the duty of society to respect the immunity or provide the benefits. To call them 'rights' implies that they are

¹⁵² Henkin, Louis. 1990. *The Age of Rights*. New York: Columbia University Press. Pg. 2.

claims 'as of right', not by appeal to grace, or charity, or brotherhood, or love; they need not be earned or deserved. The idea of rights implies entitlements on the part of the holder in some order under some applicable norm; the idea of human rights implies entitlement in a moral order under a moral law, to be translated into and confirmed as legal entitlement in the legal order of a political society.¹⁵⁴

Among the basic of fundamental rights include therefore: the right of persons to life; the right to liberty; the right to freedom of speech, association, movement, assembly; the right to freedom of religion, and the protection against inhuman or degrading treatment. These have been called the *first generations rights* or *blue rights*. The other group of rights which comprises the economic, social, and cultural rights - the right to work; the right to a fair wage; the right to education, to shelter, to basic food, clothing etc. has also been called *second-generation rights* or the *red rights*. The *third generation* includes the rights to peace and the rights to development. These have sometimes been called the *green rights*.¹⁵⁵

Like democracy, human rights are very susceptible to misuse. Some people claim that anything they want is theirs 'by right'. This breadth of application makes some to reject rights as a concept, arguing that if everything becomes a right then nothing will be a right, since all rights imply corresponding responsibilities. Thus, to guard against abuses and to give them important weight, people have, in their own culture, developed ways of doing so. Without some such system, the intricate checks and balances necessary not only for maintaining social order and harmony but also for enhancing the well being of the polity would be missing. This is the reason why in many contemporary societies (even nations under military juntas), these rights and freedoms are often enshrined in constitutions. At most however, the question often asked is as to the extent, expression and enjoyment of these freedoms and rights in these constitutions because, on their own, constitutions have been found not to suffice as guarantors of the rights enunciated therein. Conditioned and determined by issues of power, politics and production as well as exchange relations, rights have invariably been rendered vulnerable to abuses especially by the powerful and majority in society. Given this scenario, if human rights

¹⁵³ Pobee John S. "Theology in the Context of Globalisation". In *Ministerial Formation*, No. 79, October 1997. Geneva: WCC. Pg.18-26

¹⁵⁴ Op.cit. Pg.3.

¹⁵⁵ Julius B. Sakala. "Human Rights". Paper Presented at the Church Ministers Workshop at UCZ Theological College, Kitwe, Zambia, 11 December 1996.

are to be legitimate and binding, specific instruments must therefore be put in place. They must be grounded in some solid foundation such as the *Bill of Rights* and *Religion*.

A *Bill of Rights*, in this regard, is a cornerstone of democracy. It enshrines the rights of all people in the country and affirms the democratic values of human dignity, equality and freedom. On the other hand, the bill applies to all law and binds the legislature, the executive, the judiciary and all organs of state. Differently put, it is an instrument of self-control: through cross and double checks state authorities impose limits on their own use of power, thus attempting to avert possible abuses. Here, the judiciary plays a key role of enforcing this – at the instance of aggrieved persons and institutions – over and against the legislature and the executive. Although the bill may not be a particularly Christian ‘invention’, the ‘reasoning’ underlying its historical evolution is not at odds with the Christian preference for restrained government and respect for the dignity of the human person created in the image of God.

Religion and *Christianity* in particular, is another instrument that forms the cornerstone of human rights. Of course, it is a known fact that the relationship between Christianity and human rights is very complex. Down through the ages, its history is marred by the persecution of heretics, the burning of witches, the crusades, the defeat of indigenous peoples in the name of Christian mission and so forth. And occasionally, it has defended arbitrary and oppressive dogma and ignored human suffering in pursuit of a heavenly world to come.

These notwithstanding, Christianity awakens concepts of the self-worth and dignity of humanity. It gives expression to the human will to be free – to the affirmation of human rights. In this respect, advocates of human rights have usually sought its grounding for their commitments; so partly to “get beyond mere assertion” and partly also “to reach down into those depths of motivation and staying power that are characteristic of religion.”¹⁵⁶ It is this that has given the Christian faith and secular quests for human values sufficient affinity to enrich one another in both critique and affirmation.

¹⁵⁶ Shinn Roger L. 1982. “Religion and human rights: Some paradoxical relations”. Unpublished paper for seminar on “Religion and Human Rights”, Centre for the Study of Human Rights, Columbia University. Pg.11

For Christians, the focal point of the theological justification of rights lies in the concept of 'human dignity'.¹⁵⁷ This concept attributes to the human person a universal value which is the foundation of rights and which can not be negated or violated. This value is reinforced theologically by viewing God as both the source and the object of human existence and purpose. The theological corollary of 'human dignity' is the 'image of God', what Lisa Cahill calls "the primary Christian category or symbol of interpretation of personal value."¹⁵⁸ Cahill contends that there are at least two major interpretations of 'image of God' as indicative of the way in which persons exist under divine claim. The first is the one commonly found in Roman Catholic thought on social issues. It holds that the 'image' and dignity, which provide the foundation for rights, are *intrinsic* to the person as God's creature. The second more commonly found in Protestant theological thinking and exemplified by Jurgen Moltmann¹⁵⁹ believes that 'dignity' and 'image' are not inherent to human nature but *conferred* as a result of God's valuing of the human person.

In this regard therefore, though contentious human rights may be, they are foundational for social, economic and political justice. Fundamentally, one cannot begin to talk about a *just society* without first recognising rights of human beings in community; recognising the wholeness and totality of human beings: their physical and emotional needs, health, personal dignity, freedom to live their lives to the full and to contribute towards the development of society.

In conclusion, let me re-state that democracy, economic justice and human rights, these three aspects stand out in terms of describing a just society. They are basic foundations of any humane society. They are ethical principles that must be reflected in all spheres of life. Fallible though they may be, if we lack them, the attempt to witness to God's reign on earth will always remain an illusion.

¹⁵⁷ See also Article 1 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights adopted by the United Nations in 1948 declares: "All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood [sic]". The language used here contains a moral exhortation no less a statement of faith than the opening sentence of the Nicene Creed.

¹⁵⁸ Lisa Cahill S. 1980. "Towards a Christian theory of human rights". *Journal of Religious Ethics*, 8/2. Pg.279

¹⁵⁹ Jurgen Moltmann. "A definitive paper: A Christian declaration on human rights". In Miller A. O. (ed.). 1977. *A Christian Declaration of Human Rights: Theological Studies of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches*. Grand Rapids. W.B. Eerdmans

CHAPTER V

CHRISTIAN THEOLOGY AND SOCIAL RECONSTRUCTION IN ZAMBIA

What is designated as liberation theology does not purport to be merely one sector of theology, like 'theology of work' or the 'theology of death'. Liberation is meant to designate and cover theology as a whole.

Juan Luis Segundo¹⁶⁰

In the last two chapters, an attempt was made to define God's reign. We began by looking at the interpretation of God's reign from a theological perspective. We then looked at the contents of a historical hope, analysing here democracy, economic justice and human rights. To this effect, we saw that these aspects are moral imperatives for realising God's reign on earth today, though, however, they must be rooted in Christian theology.

The purpose of this chapter then, is to explore some of the theological currents operative in Zambia. We need to see if these theologies have engaged these very aspects of democracy, economic justice and human rights in their operations. Given the number of theological brands and need for detailed analysis, I shall consider three currents only that typify theology in Zambia today. These are missionary theology, contextual theology – which I will illustrate with Kenneth Kaunda's theology of humanism, and African theology. In the process of analysing, all three "currents" will each be tested against its role in social reconstruction.

I. MISSIONARY THEOLOGY AND RECONSTRUCTION

By Missionary theology, I refer specifically to the theology of the early missionaries; the theology of those who took the gospel to non-European nations, so to the extent that, from this part of the world, we even call it European theology.

To begin with, it has to be acknowledged and appreciated that missionaries who came to Africa and those who went to other parts of the world did so in the full conviction that

¹⁶⁰ In Bonganjalo Goba. Op cit.

they were responding to the great commission of the Lord, to “go into the world” (Matthew 28:19-20). So, enthusiastically they went: “far away in the heathen darkness dwelling, looking only to Jesus, and minding not the cost.”

Indeed for their great love of the gospel, the labours of these missionaries have given birth to the Christian communities across the continents. Today, these communities are testimonies of their zeal and devotion. They contributed a great deal to the welfare of the local people wherever they went – mainly through putting up schools, health and social centres. The point has been made already. But also worth noting, is that, these missionaries, generally dedicated to the spiritual welfare of humanity, often underwent severe hardships of a physical and psychological nature. For some, it cost them their lives while far away from home; for others, they went back home completely worn out so much so that it was only a matter of days before they “passed away.” For all this, we must acknowledge and appreciate without reservations.

The case against them, however, was their ‘theology’. Missionary theology of the Kingdom of God polarised missionary reflection for several centuries right up to the start of the twentieth century.¹⁶¹

In missionary theology, the concept of God’s reign was totally different from the concept we have argued for in the previous chapters. Here, salvation was concerned with the souls. Missionary theology centred on the conversion of the infidel and making of the new elite. “The essential task of the missionary is to heal, convert, and Christianise people. It is to proclaim the Gospel, to be the herald of Christ’s good news.”¹⁶² Grounded in this belief, missionary theology had little to do with the physical environment. It was more preoccupied with or more emphatic on preparing people for heaven rather than how to live a full life here and now. In this theology, the reign of God had little connection with the earth. It taught that the reign was an individual or private choice. That is, the reign was only to be entered into as one confessed individually. It was not a social reign.

¹⁶¹ Ngindu Mushete. “The history of theology in Africa: From polemics to critical irenics”. In Koffi Appiah-Kubi & Sergio Torres (eds.). 1979. *African Theology en-Route*. Maryknoll: Orbis. Pg.24

¹⁶² Ibid.

As if not enough, missionary theology also taught that the reign was an after-life; a future hope. It was not a historic reality as Marxists or liberation theologians comprehend it today or as the Jews understood it. In other words, in missionary theology, the 'reign' had no relevance now, but later when this life was no more.

Of course, I must submit at the outset that winning souls and individuals for Christ are important elements in the Christian message. But that said, it must as well be stated explicitly that they are by no means the whole story or indeed the centrepiece of the gospel of Jesus Christ. "Today we know too well that being a Christian involves belonging to that larger reality we call the People of God. It also entails membership of that organic entity we call the Body of Christ. Christianity is thus essentially a social religion and as such has important social implications."¹⁶³

Given this therefore, one encounters several problems or difficulties in this theology regarding reconstruction or the historical dimension of God's reign.

Firstly, fashioned on the basis of a dualistic anthropology (body and soul), missionary theology ran the dangerous risk of disregarding the concrete historical dimension of the integral salvation brought by Christ.¹⁶⁴ The theology did not address the situation of the poor. The themes of the theological discussion about God, Jesus Christ and salvation were abstract concepts divorced from the historical Jesus, who, himself, identified with the poor of his time. Thus, there being no other way to look at it, one is, justified to say that, this 'unfortunate' theologising lent credence to the Marxist thesis that religion was the opium of the people.

Secondly, on this understanding, missionary theology contributed to the production of passive Christians rather than active Christians who would have taken an active role in reshaping society around and about them. This is so because those churched were made to believe that the poor would inherit the kingdom of God, somewhere in "heaven" when this life is no more. As Smith argues, these persons who have been merely churched, "belonging to Christendom"

¹⁶³ Lane A. Dermot. 1984. *Foundations for a Social Theology: Praxis, Process and Salvation*. New York: Paulist Press. Pg.2

¹⁶⁴ Mushete. Op Cit.

has little to do with the business of bringing home bread, having shelter over one's head or experiencing life as satisfying, fulfilling, or meaningful. Christianity, to them, means little more than not to be 'pagan', 'heathen' or 'uncivilised'. It has nothing to do with their perspective on what is human, what constitutes the good life or the viable and affirmative community.¹⁶⁵

Basing the weaknesses of missionary theology on these arguments does not, however, imply that the spiritual is of no value in the theological enterprise. As I have already intimated, the spiritual is very important element in any theology. What it entails is that this theology was traditionally too spiritualised out of all proportion to its socio-economic and political value. In such a case, the spiritualisation was placed in the category of "theory", to the exclusion of the socio-economic and political consciousness in the area of "praxis" where the action really is. If the praxis, suitable, in this case for the Zambian context, bears reference to self-actualisation on the part of the Zambian people, the praxis of the missionary theology then, had fallen woefully short.

If, then, the praxis of missionary theology has fallen woefully short, has it been possible for theology to transform itself in accordance with the changing context? Certainly it has. There are steps that theology has taken to "deactivate", so to speak, the missionary theological expositions that are antithetical to indigenous efforts at self-actualisation.

Like in many independent African states, transformation of theology in Zambia started sometime toward the end of 1950 through into the early 1960s following the political independence of the country and the subsequent hand over of churches from missionaries to African leadership. What remained to be seen, however, was if these changes in theology were going to work out or critique the assumptions of missionary theology, and that being the case, if they were going to be of relevance to the culture that was just building up both in church and society. Furthermore, it was to see if these changes were going to be of help in the reconstruction of society. For analysis of these issues, below, I, respectively, examine contextual and African theologies in Zambia.

¹⁶⁵ In Lewin L. Williams. 1994. *Caribbean Theology. Research in Religion and Family: Black Perspectives # 2*. New York: Peter Lang. Pg.31

II. CONTEXTUAL THEOLOGY AND RECONSTRUCTION

Contextualisation is a word that has come only recently into theological discourse, having its rootage and impetus in the perception of Christian identity and mission; identity in the sense that the gospel must be made to be relevant in every situation everywhere, without compromising it. Mission oriented in the sense that Christian theology, while correctly observing that need for contextualisation, needs to reformulate its self-understanding so that it may genuinely know itself as a part of Christ's mission in the world. Therefore, the term is not simply a fad or catchword but a theological necessity demanded by the incarnational nature of the word. As Bevans puts it, it is "of the very nature of theology itself"; it is a theological imperative.¹⁶⁶

Contextualisation recognises that culture, history, contemporary thought forms, indeed the totality of contemporary human experience, alongside scripture and tradition are what make logic in theology, as the same, are the very formative factors of theology. Imbued with these therefore, *contextualisation* makes theology relevant and meaningful. Theology becomes relevant and meaningful in that it takes seriously the *social reality* of the faithful who seek to respond to the love of God and the redeeming work of Jesus Christ. That *reality* gives form, shape and content to the work of faith. That *reality* is "mediated by meaning, a meaning we give it in the context of our culture or our historical period, interpreted from our own particular horizon and in our own particular thought forms."¹⁶⁷

Further, *contextualization* makes theology meaningful in that it is liberating. It frees the faithful to take their own situation as a basis for theological reflection rather than to apply some pre-set doctrine or interpretation. It means that 'the people' do their own theologising. Such a theology is more authentic because it reflects the life experiences of the faithful. It takes serious account of their context or situation. The faithful are not programmed to think in particular ways but to own their own theological construction. People are freed to participate in the development of their own theological enterprise.

In this regard therefore, there is the inspiration for doing contextual theology. Firstly, it is because it is done not necessarily from a classic text, neither is it necessarily a way of

¹⁶⁶ Bevans Stephen, 1994. *Models of Contextual Theology: Faith and Culture*. Maryknoll: Orbis. Pg.1

believing. Contextual theology is done “from present realities and future possibilities.”¹⁶⁸ “It bases itself on the personal experiences of the members of the church. It does not accept the separation of the spiritual and the material, or the religious and the profane, and it is in constant communication with the surrounding world, that is, the social context.”¹⁶⁹ As such, it breaks with traditional theology because of its communitarian, contextual, interdisciplinary and ecumenical character.

Secondly, as a result of this, we can safely say that contextual theology is a kind of “popular theology”. It is popular theology because it is a theology for ordinary people, revolutionaries and those priests/ministers who support popular culture. That is, it is a “*people’s theology*.” It is not primarily academic discourse for academic debate in academic institutions, although academics and professional theologians take part in deliberations and even assist with the writing (after all, intellectual reflection is very important in the exercise of theology for conceptual clarity). It is *people’s* because it raises the concerns of the ordinary people. The ordinary people of God speak through it; their silences gain voice in this theology. The marginalised take centre stage in this theology. They “own” theology and they articulate their own faith and experience. And it is “*contextual theology*” because it is reflection on faith by people of faith aimed toward their context or reality.

To discuss contextual theology in Zambia, one should therefore bear in mind all this together with the challenges that face the Zambians (context). We have discussed these challenges at length in chapter one. They include, among others, the restructuring of the economy in such-wise that production for profit is replaced by production for social needs; giving power back to the people so that they can mould their own lives; creating a counter-culture constant with the dignity of the human and with the positive values of tradition.

For illustrative purposes, let me now focus on one work of contextual theology in Zambia: Kenneth Kaunda’s theology of Zambian humanism.¹⁷⁰ This theology, as Mijere calls it, fairly represents the Zambian model of contextual theology. It is also one type of theology that generated many debates both from within and outside Zambia. Of course,

¹⁶⁷ Ibid. Pg.2

¹⁶⁸ Ibid. Pg.64

¹⁶⁹ Kalilombe P. A. 1985. “Doing theology at the grassroots: a challenge for professional theologians”. *African Ecclesiastical Review (AFER)* 27, No. 3. Pg.148-61 (Part 1), and 27, No. 4. Pg.225-37 (Part 2).

¹⁷⁰ Mijere M. Op cit.

one could also discuss here Emmanuel Milingo's theology to achieve the same ends. Milingo's (Roman Catholic theologian and former archbishop of Lusaka – now in Rome at the Vatican) theology, which takes healing as its first point of reference, was originally formed in Zambia. As it were, it was in Zambia he discovered the need for the church to engage in healing, and its potential to do so. It was in Zambia too that he first became aware of the liberating power of healing. He learned all this through his involvement in the lives of his congregation, whom he saw as dominated by poverty and oppression. And so, like Kaunda's theology, the theology of Milingo also generated many debates both inside and outside Zambia to the extent that, on the orders of the Vatican, he was made to resign as Archbishop of Lusaka in 1982 to go to Rome.

The choice to discuss Kaunda's theology here is simply due to its duo characteristic. Zambian humanism had clear political and spiritual dimensions.

The political dimension of Zambian humanism is already covered in Chapter one of this dissertation. In this section I am more devoted to an analysis and critique of Zambian humanism from its spiritual dimension and more specifically from the perspective of theological method in liberation or reconstruction theology.

As stated, the "theology" of Zambian humanism was vividly contextual and quite certainly, in its formative and active days, earned Zambia an international reputation. It was contextual because the context was the decisive factor for its creation. The social, political and economic experiences of Zambia shortly before and immediately after independence proved so overwhelming that it became imperative to come up with a guiding theme. Humanism immediately became the dominant theme in the theory and praxis of the country's philosophy.

A creation of Kenneth Kaunda, first president of Zambia, son of a Presbyterian evangelist and himself a professed Christian, humanism was a national or Zambia's political philosophy, which endeavoured to devise a social, political and economic order based on humanity's truth rather than on his or her untruth. Formally endorsed by Kaunda's UNIP as the official national philosophy and ideology of Zambia in 1967, it is argued that the religious dimension is crucial to an authentic understanding of Zambian Humanism. That is, unlike other secular ideologies, Zambian Humanism had to go a

step further than a mere science. It drew not only upon science and its unlimited possibilities, but also upon spiritual belief. It was deeply rooted in the bible - thus taking up a Christian character to correspond to what is known as "*Christian Humanism*" as opposed to "*secular*" or "*atheistic*" humanism. As Kaunda himself argued:

Historically in the west, Humanism has been an alternative to the supernatural interpretation of life. Western humanists, confident in the power and truth of science, rejected theistic religion, putting man [sic] in God's place as the ultimate reality. That was a brave thing to do, but it is far removed from my understanding of Humanism, which asserts the value of man [sic], without attempting to clothe him in Divine attributes.¹⁷¹

There are several factors that accounted for the creation of the theology of *Zambian Humanism*. One, as indicated in chapter one, it arose out of recognition of the state of anxiety based on an accurate assessment of the plight of the human condition: to do away with forms of exploitation, oppression and greed. Humanism sought to create an egalitarian society; a just society; a society in which there was equal opportunity. To achieve this, *Zambian Humanism* emphasised on the traditional understanding of community. "For Kaunda, the traditional society/community was a kind of just, mutual aid society that, because of kinship ties, was all-inclusive. Its economic system was geared towards the needs of the whole society. It was not conducive to the exploitation of one's fellow humans."¹⁷² To consolidate this aspect, the example of Christ and his teaching: "Do unto others as you would have them to do unto you" was referred to as the theological basis for the relationship of human beings to one another.

Two, the theology of *Zambian Humanism* was also a reaction to the isolationism and individualism of the western expression of Christianity. The point has already been made. The kind of theology implanted in Zambia – especially by the Protestant missionaries – tended to be of the pietistic variety, with a dominant emphasis on individual salvation. The theology of *Zambian Humanism* focused on what corresponded to the social teaching of Christianity. As members of God's family, all human beings find their true realisation and fulfilment by reaching out to others in love and concern. God is love and the love of God is the basic principle of goodness in every

¹⁷¹ Meebelo Henry. 1973. *Main Currents of Zambian Humanist Thought*. Lusaka: OUP. Pg.18

¹⁷² In John Parrat. 1995. *Reinventing Christianity: African Theology Today*. Grand Rapids: WB Eerdmans. Pg.145

human being such that "when man [sic] shows love towards his fellow man [sic], they are sharing the very life of God who is love."¹⁷³ When human beings learn this, "we shall have entered not the kingdom of 'man' but the Kingdom of God."¹⁷⁴

Three, the creation of this theology was also out of the concern for the dignity and worth of humanity created in the image and likeness of God. It was Kaunda's view that humanism in Zambia observed the principle of respect for individual worth, dignity and honour of all people realised in community with others. Kaunda's own background had significant influence in this regard. He had lost his father at an early stage. Consequently, this meant a lot of hardships in his life. It is this experience that later motivated him to cultivate a sense that whether one was poor, widow, orphan, or lowly and with despised status in the community, there was to be, at least, a clearly defined place in the system for them, and that, in itself, could enable nearly everyone to feel a sense of belonging and protection. In this regard therefore, the theology of Humanism referred to a blueprint for the creation of a special kind of society in which God retains a central position, "a human-centred society" but one in which "humanity in that society is God-centred." In other words, for Kaunda, society was based on a vision of the perfect society; a new society vis-à-vis God's reign. It worked and hankered after perfection.¹⁷⁵

In all these therefore, the role of the Church, according to Kaunda, was to formulate its faith in terms of humanism. And priests, ministers and pastors were to act as "midwives in the process of giving birth to *Zambian Humanism*."¹⁷⁶

What is most remarkable about the theology of *Zambian Humanism* is that, firstly, it did play a laudable role in the social reconstruction and development of the *Zambian* society. Secondly, it was an attempt to strengthen the sense of nationhood after the initial anti-colonial impetus had subsided. That is, it provided cement to a society that might otherwise have fallen apart. Thirdly, as a unifying influence, it contributed to the growth of a single moral community and helped to sustain respect and dignity of human beings. No doubt, it could be described to be close to or associated with the theology of "*ubuntu*".

¹⁷³Kaunda Kenneth. 1966. *A Humanist in Africa. Letters to Colin Morris*. London: Longmans. Pg.39

¹⁷⁴ Ibid.

¹⁷⁵ Kenneth Kaunda. "Humanism in Zambia and a Guide to its Implementation", Part II. Pg.5

Understood from this perspective, analysis of responses about Zambian Humanism in literature shows that many theologians (Church leaders, priests, pastors etc.) in Zambia strongly supported it. One of the strong supporters was Emmanuel Milingo. Milingo believed that Kaunda's brand of humanism held a holistic view of life. It offered a promising middle way between the extremes of an individualist society and one that is collectivist or totalitarian. "In the Zambian version of humanism, the individual has value and inviolable rights, and must precede, and not be subordinate to the collective, being defended from all form of oppression, exploitation and degradation."¹⁷⁷

While there was this strong support, it is also noticeable that there were strong rebuttals from some local theologians of the theological claims this humanism made. As much as the general intentions were generally supported, these theologians found it disappointing as a work of theology

To begin with, theology and theological reflection must cover a far larger area of issues and concerns than only social, economic and political factors. In theology, there are matters of concern like sin, creation, salvation, Jesus Christ and so forth. Additionally, any comprehensive theological reflection must deal with such personal issues like prayer and death. Kaunda's theology, unfortunately, lacked most of these and thus, couldn't have claimed to be a complete or comprehensive theology. While it may be correct to say that the premise around which it was formed contributed to the way it was, it must, however, be realised that a theology, and particularly Christian theology, cannot be complete when it appears to be so human-centred. The argument here, therefore, is that Zambian humanism had so much assumed that national development could only be achieved by human efforts.¹⁷⁸

The second criticism, thus, concerned its centrality of humanity. The strong criticism in this respect came from Leonard Nyirongo.¹⁷⁹ His criticism was formed around the adoption of the "human-centred" society into humanism. It must be recalled that the

¹⁷⁶ Mijere M. Op cit

¹⁷⁷ Emmanuel Milingo, *Development: An African View*. Paper presented to the students of the Divine Word Centre in London and Ontario, 19-23 January 1976. Pg.11

¹⁷⁸ This was evident between 1989 and 1991 when Kaunda was linked to the *Maharish Mahesh Yogi* in a project to make Zambia "Heaven on Earth." Advised by his spiritual/political advisor Dr. M. A. Ranganathan, towards the end of 1989, hundreds of Indian farmers and eastern gurus arrived in the country to start the programme. (Un)Fortunately, due to the political situation at the time, the project failed to take off.

central feature of Zambian Humanism was its focus on persons as unique individuals of absolute worth and dignity. For Nyirongo, this meant "faith in man's [sic] capabilities." The human being was presumed to be the highest being on earth and master over all creation, in which case, God came to have no place in Zambian humanism, so Nyirongo argues in his book. Apparently, Nyirongo's argument found support of many church leaders especially among the Pentecostal or born-again pastors.¹⁸⁰

The other criticism is that, as apparent to most Zambians, humanism had not halted corruption or the abuse of power. The problem with it was that it played an important role of ideological justification of a political system, which caused many political and economic injustices. Theology, though it should be able to support such efforts and systems which promote and or bring about peace and justice in society, it must, however, "not be used to give political systems that divine legitimation. On the contrary, it is part of Christian witness within the political sphere to evaluate all political systems prophetically, including democracy, from the perspective of the reign of God."¹⁸¹

Let me, in conclusion, say that: in the first place, certainly, a theology of Zambian Humanism offered a good example of contextual theology. Notwithstanding these criticisms, what Kenneth Kaunda's theology of Zambian humanism succeeded in doing, was to challenge us to examine critically the philosophical presuppositions which inform and shape our theologies, particularly missionary theology, which, reflects the western philosophical tradition. Two, in view of the above criticisms, which if anything to go by apply to most theological models in Zambia, it goes on to say that, indeed, a real contextual theology remains a pressing need or concern if its critical role in the reconstruction of society has to be seen. Though not every effort has been put to evaluate it from the perspective of "reconstruction", the theology of Zambian humanism, as we argued in chapter one, did not achieve much of the reconstruction ideals.

¹⁷⁹ Leonard Nyirongo. 1987. *Should A Christian Embrace Socialism, Communism or Humanism?* Chingola: CCP

¹⁸⁰ See also the 1982 church resistance to the introduction of "scientific socialism" and the note on *Maharish Mahesh Yogi*. For the later, both politicians and church leaders joined efforts to oppose Kaunda's intentions. If anything, it became a big issue during the 1991 electioneering.

¹⁸¹ John de Gruchy. "Theological Reflections on the task of the Church in the Democratisation of Africa". In Paul Gifford (ed.). 1995. *The Christian Churches and the Democratisation of Africa*. Leiden, New York, Koln: E. J. Brill. Pg.48

III. AFRICAN THEOLOGY AND RECONSTRUCTION

Although Stephen Bevans has made the point that "contextualisation" enables theology to take account of the social, economic and political reality, we have noted above that the "theology" of Zambian Humanism has not done a great deal to the issue of socio-economic reconstruction in Zambia. If anything, its intended ideals remained more theoretical than practical.

In this last section of the chapter, I undertake an evaluation of social reconstruction in African theology as manifested in Zambia. We can confidently assert that African theology is a genre within the liberation theology mould. It is a contextual theology. However, unlike the Latin American liberation theology, African theology has a different starting point. To approach this point, here, I introduce to African theology a new conversation partner: *post-colonial theory*. There are many common issues, which the two bodies of literature share.

Firstly, what do we mean by post-colonial theory and in what ways do we find the convergence of the two bodies?

Post-colonial theory has become an important tool of analysis especially for cultural critique in the formerly colonised world. Building on Edward Said's seminal work in *Orientalism* (1978),¹⁸² post-colonial theorists question the distinction between 'pure' and 'political' knowledge and work to destabilise the former. For most "Third World" intellectuals involved, the discourse which comes to identify specifically with the term 'post-colonial' begins with changes in power structures after the official end of colonialism as well as colonialism's continuing effects. For them, post-colonial theory is an umbrella term that has gradually come to cover different critical approaches which deconstruct European thought in a wide-range of areas including philosophy, history, anthropology, economics etc.

In this perspective, post-colonial discourse involves literature and criticism not of a simple periodisation but rather a methodological revisionism which enables a wholesale

¹⁸²See Edward Said. 1978 *Orientalism*. New York: Pantheon. A good application and analysis of Said's work has been done by Wong Wai Ching in his article "Towards an Asian Theological Agenda for the 21st Century". Unpublished.

critique of Western structures of knowledge and power, particularly those of the post-Enlightenment period. In short, it does not only bear “witness to those unequal and uneven processes of representation by which the historical experience of the once-colonised Third World comes to be framed in the West, but it also aims to dismantle the ‘West-as-centre’.”¹⁸³

From the foregoing, I also share with other proponents in believing in the importance of post-colonial theory. Though Africa may talk of political independence, starting as far back as in the late fifties, it is also a fact that imperialism continues its ideological role in constituting our everyday culture and value as Africans today. This trend must certainly be deconstructed or dismantled.

African theology emerged in the early 1960s.¹⁸⁴ Although expressions and articles on the subject were in circulation long before this time, it is only correct to understand it from this period (late 1950s to the early 1960s), in this respect thus, as a post colonial theology. A number of factors, most not even theological, helped to produce the climate within which it evolved. Among them were certainly the emergence of independent nations from former colonial territories and indeed pre-independence political movements themselves during 1950s and 1960s. As John Parrat argues:

With end of colonialism, the church was left with a creative opportunity and challenge to develop a new vision, a new theology and strategy for action that would deal with not only the legacy of colonialism but also the implication of its end.¹⁸⁵

So also, especially in French-speaking Africa, the philosophy of *negritude* developed by Senghor and others played a significant role.

It is in this understanding that African theology, since its inception, could be seen to have taken part in the post-colonial discourse. It has contributed to a body of critics by the once colonised peoples who seek to take their place as historical subjects. African

¹⁸³ Wong Wai Ching. *Ibid*.

¹⁸⁴ The first book on the subject was, however, written in 1969. It came after the first assembly of the All Africa Conference of Churches (AACC), a theological consultation, which was held in 1966. See Vuyani Ntintili. 1997. “The contextual background and earlier challenges of African theology: A revisitiation”. In *Journal of Black Theology in South Africa*. Vol. 11, No. 1, Pg.1

¹⁸⁵ Parrat John. 1987. *A Reader in African Christian Theology*. London: SPCK. Pg.2

theology carries with it a critical scrutiny of the colonial relationship and sets out in one way or another to resist colonial perspectives. It, too, aims at a change in power and a symbolic overhaul and a reshaping of dominant meanings.

At theological level, African theology has shouldered an anti-imperialistic task. It has been marked with a strong urge to find its own place and identity in the overall theological discourse. In one of his appeals to Zambian theologians, Kaunda even writes:

The more sensitive theologians are beginning to explore what it means to be a Christian in a genuinely African way. I wish some of our African clergy showed more interest in this complex problem and put a little less zeal into turning their congregations into black versions of seventeenth century English Puritans.¹⁸⁶

He calls for an African way of 'doing' theology, confessing that he has found within himself a "tension created by the collision of two world-views, which I have never completely reconciled."¹⁸⁷

In brief therefore, African theology has really been about a theological movement to change the ways Africans have been *doing* theology, to reclaim "our own" African-ness of our theological tasks in all areas of human endeavours – social, economic, political etc. It has been about a discontinuity with the theological methods of Western theology and at the same time, an 'exorcist' of the 'omen' of an imperialistic Christianity.

As such, African theology shares with post-colonial theory. Through its foundation or factors of its emergence, one sees the convergence of African theology and post-colonial theory.

With reference to the above, the questions worth asking, however, are: "has African theology been so responsive to the needs of Africa and Zambia in particular as presented here?" "Has it really succeeded in extricating itself out of its rationalist tentacles, so to take serious account of Christian piety as a legitimate intellectual exercise?" "Has it been a force that can be used to deconstruct post-colonial

¹⁸⁶ Kenneth Kaunda. 1973. *Letter to my Children*. London. Pg.17

imperialism?" While we appreciate what ever role it has played, taking into account the volatility of its environment, however, considered from the perspective of the excluded or marginalised lot, the suffering masses, hunger stricken human beings and so forth, really, the answer is a blunt 'no'.

The criticism of African theology is twofold. One criticism is that many, if not most, African theologians do not proceed contextually. They ignore the actual, post colonial situation and instead of trying to construct a new liberation theology for Africa today, they remain stuck in the position of the outdated negritude movement. Differently stated, African theology has not engaged the contemporary concerns of Africa such as poverty, civil and political conflicts, gender, democratisation issues and so forth. The other criticism is that, as a result of not proceeding contextually, African theology has remained far too academic, and, is for the most part irrelevant to what is going on in African society today. Though so often preached triumphantly in African churches, it is a pompous irrelevance, truly an ideological superstructure at the service of the bourgeoisie.

Of course there are reasons for these weaknesses of African theology. Mainly, they result from a matrix of theological and social factors.

Firstly, Itumeleng Mosala attributes this to the fact that this theology shares an inherent commitment to the same framework of values with the reactionary theology which it seeks to transform.¹⁸⁷ The language African theology uses is not African language. Other than being translated into local languages, it is the language of the western theological tradition; apparently a language which does not name the African world. The theology is done through an interpretive grid developed in foreign culture and then results are applied in local context. As a result, whatever its content, it still harbours some elements of marginalisation and oppression.

Secondly, like Mosala, Simon Maimela also argues that African theology has failed to make a revolutionary break through because it is so much wedded to the same concepts

¹⁸⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸⁸ Itumeleng Mosala. 1989. *Biblical Hermeneutics and Black Theology in South Africa*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans. Pg.14-20

it criticises and has a view about the normativity of scripture which keeps it in captivity.¹⁸⁹

Thirdly, the other reason for its weakness is due to the theological training of its advocates. By and large, the theological training system that has been maintained in Africa is that of the distinctive western nature. It is still considered of a great prestige value for many to be associated in training, designations and identified in practices with churches overseas. Saddled with this mentality, despite that popular culture, from which African theology proceeds, has started finding expression in church and academic institutions, not sufficient recognition of this has been provided for.¹⁹⁰

On this basis, it seems fair to say then that radical change in African theology, especially in its engagement with the contemporary situation might not be possible in a near future. Theological change may continue to recede for sometime and the gap between academic exercise and the needs of ordinary people continue to grow.

However, as the aim of this thesis entails, we need to acknowledge that there is urgent need for theological involvement in the radical change of society; a change, which is not arrived at only through abstract principles, but if anything, by faith grappling with a human context. As Segundo states: "Only on the basis of this contextual option does theology begin to have meaning at all; and it retains meaning only so far as it remains in touch with the real life context."¹⁹¹

In this regard, to articulate and execute itself well, to be meaningful and true to its definition, it will require, on part of theology in Zambia, to undergo transformation; from an intellectual genre that has little impact or intelligibility beyond a small circumscribed professional guild to a theology that intellectually engages in and addresses the total reality. That is, theology in Zambia will need not simply to engage in theological rhetoric but to grapple seriously with the concrete, dehumanising situation in which the

¹⁸⁹ In Mouton J. (ed.). 1988. *Paradigms and Progress in Theology*. Pretoria: HSRC. Pg.314

¹⁹⁰ In Africa, although African theology is now taught at a number of universities, as far as can be ascertained, the only place where it is possible to obtain a Ph.D. in the discipline (African religions inclusive) is South Africa. The situation is even worse in a country like Zambia where there is not even a department of theology at the country's universities. Even at major theological colleges like Justo Mwale for the RCZ, THICA for the EFZ and UCZ Theological College, their syllabi are tailored on western courses.

¹⁹¹ Juan Luis Segundo. 1976. *The Liberation of Theology*. Maryknoll: Orbis Books. Pg.76

poor find themselves. It will need not simply a reflection of a popular theological jargon or 'fad', but an attempt to examine and involve the community of faith in national reconstruction. It will have to be one that expresses the mute longings of the downtrodden and the unwanted of the earth. So, too, the theologians will have to be people who have made a historic option in favour of the disinherited. Only then will theology slough off its esoteric character, its elitist jargon and its exclusivist, sectarian features. Only then will theological reflection be true to grip the masses and thereby become a power that changes society and the whole world.

In concluding this chapter, let me say that, we have tried here to analyse three brands of theology that have existed or are found in Zambia viz. missionary theology, contextual theology and African theology. One point needs to be made clear. In as much as it has been easy to distinguish missionary theology from the other two theologies, it has not been that simple to draw a clear distinction between contextual theology and African theology. Especially in the Zambian case, it is nearly impossible to distinguish them. This is made problematic in that we have to depend so much on same people whose works are known for theological assessment. However, being the case though, the point has been made. African theology, in essence, is a particular form of contextual theology. This fact should be able to save us from the confusion.

Secondly, in these analyses, one other thing is clear. Though founded on good reasons, theologies (all three brands though with particular emphasis on contextual and African theologies) in Zambia have not been able to make a fundamental paradigm shift which is required in the changing context. They haven't made the impact people (the poor, civil servants, marginalised etc) might have expected them to make. They have failed to critically confront the social and political evils that have characterised Zambia in the post independence era. Instead of transforming themselves to the contemporary needs, they are still so much wedded to dogmatic paradigms of Western theology. As a result, are these criticisms and subsequently, most people, without option, have ended up considering them as personal and private matters that have no relevance or role to play in public life.

In the next and final chapter, I try to propose some fundamental theological propositions that might enable theology and the church in Zambia be seen to be more responsive to the needs of the Zambian society.

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CHAPTER VI

TOWARDS RE-IMAGING GOD'S REIGN IN ZAMBIA

If theology is to be more effective instrument of critical reflection on faith, its criteria have to be of a different order from those still operative in the institutional spheres of the church.

Hugo Assmann¹⁹³

This dissertation has ranged far and wide. It has worked from defining the Zambian context through to the analyses of theological currents. In the process, several challenging issues have emerged. One such issue is that Zambia needs to be reconstructed – politically, economically and socially. This task, however, “lies in going beyond critical analysis of the values which govern modern culture to developing ways of living which place value on *being in relation* rather than acquisitiveness and competition, based on the insight that freedom, power, love, security and well-being can only thrive if they are shared.”¹⁹⁴ In fact, it is in this arena that the activity of this study is concentrated. It is here that God's reign has been defined. It is here that we have seen the parameters necessary for a just society. It is here that theological currents functioning in Zambia have been analysed, each being tested against its role in social reconstruction. All this exploration, however, beckons us to embark on a new theological direction.

This final chapter, thus, presents some fundamental theological propositions for the *reconstruction of the Zambian society*. These propositions are expressed in form of theses. These theses should not, however, be seen as fixed – for good reason that the study of transforming society cannot be conclusive. To reiterate my earlier words, “*it is an ongoing quest because socio-economic planning and policy decisions are matters that depend upon a wide variety of ever fluctuating factors and a scientific approach to their solution requires a continual openness to the empirical data in question.*” Inevitably, I use the theses as enabling propositions only around which economic and political cultures and theologies in Zambia can find expression. They are used as themes that have emerged in this study. In a sense thus, they function

¹⁹³ In Bonganjalo Goba. Op Cit. Pg.93

¹⁹⁴ Konrad Raiser. “Civil Society and the Conciliar Process: Thoughts from the standpoint of the World Council of Churches.” Address to GEP Forum, Frankfurt, March 1995. Pg.5

as a conclusion, which encapsulates the seminal ideas of this study. They do, however, also serve a critical function. They are intended to bring a new direction and meaning to our *theological method* or *activity* in Zambia and one only hopes that these suggestions will enable Christians in Zambia to identify themselves in this theological activity and find themselves participating in the reconstruction of their society.

Thesis 1: A Preferential Option for the Poor and Marginalised. The most positive aspect of theology or Christian faith towards constructing a just and humane society is in "a preferential option for the poor and marginalised." For some years now, there has been ceaseless proclamation that to be "a church" is to identify with the poor, the underprivileged, the neglected, all who have no place in our so called "modern world." Essentially, this means, "the church is called to solidarity with the poor, the disinherited, the dispossessed, the exploited, and the marginalised. This aspect suggests that God stands on the side of these people. It affirms that, whatever the reason, the weak, disadvantaged, the poor et al. occupy a special and unique place in his concern. It also affirms that in God's economy, understanding is gained not from the vantage point of those at the top of life's ladder but those at the bottom. This "reading from below" is also reflected in the words of Bonhoeffer: "there remains an experience of incomparable value. We have for once learnt to see the great events of world history from below, from the perspective of the outcast, the suspects, the maltreated, the powerless, the oppressed, the reviled."¹⁹⁵ This radical orientation to the poor, thus, explains the basis on which the church is mandated to approach social and political realities in the drive for social/economic justice, human rights, democratic accountability and all that creates a just society.

Thesis 2: Priority to the Grassroots Level. The other aspect of theology towards re-imagining the reign of God in Zambia is giving *priority to the grassroots level*. I have indicated above that one of the aims of this dissertation is to enable Christians (majority of whom constitute the poor and marginalised) in Zambia to participate in the social reconstruction of their country. If the poor are, thus, to become subjects of their liberation, then, only a theology "of the people, by the people and for the people" can be the bearer of the Christian message.

¹⁹⁵ Quoted in A. Nolan, 1988. *God in South Africa: The Challenge of the Gospel*. Cape Town: David Phillip. Pg.192

In my teaching experience in the theological college, new students arrive with a type of thought that “only the professional theologians are intelligent.” It is only when they have spent sometime in the college that they begin to be aware that their once impressive thought is actually wrong. If this is what it is with theological students, what more is the situation of the average lay person in the church!

If theology and indeed the church in Zambia are truly to be serious in contributing to the reconstruction of society, they must be seen and understood as being done most fully at the grassroots by the subjects. Voices of the subaltern within the church must be listened to. These people, apparently, are the agents of transformation. A theology whose *priority* is found on the higher echelons of the church ends up in an alienation in which Christian people ultimately have nothing to say, have no specific role in church except to obey. And even more, such theology ends up being visionless. “Vision”, a vision of God’s reign on earth, a vision of a society at peace, a vision of a society within which justice reigns, is born at the grassroots, or as Alves puts it, “is born of pain.”¹⁹⁶ And as Metz, speaking from his vantage point, says, “no true revolution comes from above.” What is needed, he believes, “is a ‘post-bourgeois initiative-taking church’, which neither rejects that tradition and the leaders of the church, nor wastes its time waiting for change to come from above.”¹⁹⁷

From this understanding then, the grassroots constitute the focus of historical praxis. They “are not only the backbone of religious institutions but also the foundation on which [the] democratic state is built. When they constantly demand and work for justice, the foundation is broad and strong. When they are apathetic and do nothing, the foundation is like sand on which no stable structure, be it religious or political can be built.”¹⁹⁸ In this regard therefore, it is not only enough to appreciate their predicament but also their potential for social transformation; not only their need to be heard, but their capacity to produce existential and contextual theologies.

¹⁹⁶ Rubem Alves. 1972. *Tomorrow's Child*. London: SCM Press. Pg.111

¹⁹⁷ In Paul Lakeland. 1990. *Theology and Critical Theory. The Discourse of the Church*. Nashville: Abingdon Press. Pg.130

¹⁹⁸ Welekazi Sokutu. “A Voice from the Periphery: A Community Groups’ Perspective of the Role of Religion in Public Life. Paper presented at the Multi-Event 1999, 14-20 February, Cape Town.

No words would capture and summarise this principle better than the words of Gustavo Gutierrez. Writing on Liberation theology's methodological rigor or its theoretical sophistication, Gutierrez writes:

We will not have an authentic theology of liberation until the oppressed themselves are able to freely and creatively express themselves in society. We shall not have our great leap forward, into a whole new theological perspective, until the marginalised and exploited have become the artisans of their own liberation.¹⁹⁹

Thesis 3: *Africanising Democracy, the Economic Order and Human Rights*. The issue about contextual theology and African theology is about *doing* theology from context. In our case thus, it is about doing theology in the African/Zambian context, that is, taking into account the social, economic, political and cultural concerns of the Africans/Zambians. By asking for the Africanisation of democracy, economic system and human rights, here, it follows to mean the same as the process in theology. It implies that democracy, human rights and economic systems in Africa should not only be "black versions" of the west but rather have African characteristics and Zambia's particular tradition.

The problem, as I see it in Zambia today, is not the idea around which democracy, the economic order and human rights are formed. In my view, it is the form. "It is not the universality of human rights in which true democracy is rooted but their restricted and selective application, which emphasises the civil and political (individual) rights and plays down the social, economic and cultural (collective) rights, that is being questioned."²⁰⁰ Thus, it is this deformed image and restricted application that we need to Africanise or humanise. In order to do so, according to the Windhoek consultation,²⁰¹

one must emphasise the holistic character of life in African society; respect the value of family in the extended African sense; respect authority, but hold all authorities accountable to God and the extended family [past, present and future], respect the land and establish a just relationship with it in community; respect the rights and dignity of people in and beyond one's own family; and at

¹⁹⁹ In Robert McAfee Brown. 1990. *Gustavo Gutierrez: An Introduction to Liberating Theology*. Maryknoll: Orbis. pg.70

²⁰⁰ *One World*, A monthly magazine of the World Council of Churches, No. 198 Aug./Sept. 1994. Pg.12

²⁰¹ Windhoek Consultation on *Peace, Democracy and Violence: The Church's Mission Today* sponsored by the World Council of Churches was held in Windhoek, Namibia, 4-8 December 1993. For the quotation, see *One World*, *ibid*.

the same time hold each accountable to others in renewed dedication to the goal of African unity.

That allowed, democracy, the economy and human rights are all going to be meaningful and relevant to all. And in all these efforts, the church in Africa and Zambia in particular, cannot afford to confine itself merely to moral posturing. If real change is to be effected, the contribution of the church and new contextual/African theology are more critical.

Thesis 4: A Need for Reconstructed Theology. During the confident period leading up to and following the first wave of independence in Africa, African theologians²⁰² dominated the scene, offering a new vision of theology. They made a remarkable contribution to the development of theologies in which "African culture and Christianity were creatively related."²⁰³ Today, that vibrant spirit on which these theologians started has, unfortunately, faded. This has resulted in theology being stuck in the position where the euphoria of independence left it. It has not proceeded contextually so as to engage the contemporary concerns of Africa such as poverty, civil and political conflicts, gender, democratisation issues and so forth.

These contemporary concerns offer challenges to theology and to African theologians in particular. If theology is to be meaningful and meaningfully speak to us, it must provide us with insights in the midst of our daily struggle, in terms which make sense of it and illumine it for us. Differently put, for theology to engage the poor, the grassroots, and for it to Africanise values of modernity, it must move and *change its paradigm*. It must change its thrust: from pious anxiety to redemptive concern; from spiritual comfort to comprehensive well being; from selfishness to responsibility; from individualism to community spirit. In Africa, we need a theology that is *liberating* and *empowering* in terms of God's creative authority, God's redemptive concern and God's comprehensive vision. We need a theology which takes Africa's cultural, political and economic issues seriously. In other words, theology must be liberated to re-image itself into "*A New [African] Theology*" which is capable of dealing with the New World Order; it must be a

²⁰² Names like John Mbiti, Gabriel Seriloane, Kwesi Dickson, Kofi Appiah-Kubi, Patrick Kabilombe, Harry Sawyer, Charles Nyamiti, Bolaji Idowu, Mushete Ngindu come immediately to mind.

²⁰³ John De Gruchy. 1995. Op Cit. Pg.191.

theology that grasps and is aware of new and emerging currents; it must be a theology that is fashioned out of a vigorous interrogation of such emerging issues.

However, we must point out that reconstructing the current theology so that it meets the contemporary struggles will not be an easy task. Changes of any sort are normally resented because changes involve uncertainties and therefore create fear and anxiety in the minds of people. And more, in this case particularly, because the Gospel values have the “subversive” power of threatening structures of injustice and oppression, the structures of death (cf. Acts 16:20; 17:6), we are likely to meet with protest from those who live by individualistic, consumeristic, capitalistic values competing with others and exploiting others. Being the case thus, it will need theologians of a particular making, namely theologians who have given up beliefs in ontological truths and are willing to live with the insight that all knowledge (even knowledge about God) is relative to one’s (culture and social) perspective, and that, that perspective is not static but constantly changing.

Thesis 5: Separation of Church and State. If the church has to play its reconstructive role effectively, if the commitment to change and alleviate suffering, injustice and oppression is to be truly effective, and if the church’s prophetic witness is to be concrete, then there is an urgent need for the *separation of Church and State in Zambia*. The church in Zambia must *change from what it is to what it should be*. This is not a matter of choice but a necessity.

We can, however, argue that the Church in Zambia does not preside over state affairs neither does the state preside over church affairs – and so the two enjoy autonomy. To the extent that the state has constitutionally declared Zambia a Christian nation, undoubtedly, there is a critical relationship between them. Church leaders, who by nature are the mouthpieces for the church, enjoy the benefits of the state. In turn, this has made their role as witnesses to political finitude undermined. For those who try to oppose it, the state just withdraws at any time it wishes. Thus, it is either it [church] speaks out and loses the benefits or remains silent and retains state “gifts”. It is in this sense that I argue that the voice of the church has been swallowed up by the state, and that the church has become an ideological ally of the state, to the extent of being constantly used to justify and buttress injustice, exploitation, repression, persecution etc.

This is not only improbable but also ethically undesirable. In this regard, separation is inevitable.

Of course, the precise relationship between Christian faith and politics or church and state is a matter of intense debate. Just to highlight briefly, firstly, the separation that should rightly exist between *church* and *state* does not mean separation between *religion* and *politics*. Usually, it is the failure to grasp the distinction between state and society, and the meaning of the separation of church and state that lies behind the popular notion that "religion and politics must be kept apart." Secondly, contrary to this popular notion thus, to silence religion on political issues of public concern would be to assume that public issues are without ethical and moral significance for society. It would also be failing to appreciate the important and positive role that religion plays, not only in the private lives of citizens, but also in building and preserving the moral fibre of society.

What is at stake in the *separation of church and state* in Zambia is, therefore, the urgency to understand what it means to be the *People of God*. It is about a *clear conscience, integrity, authority and identity* of the church. This means, the separation of church and state shall protect not only the state from sectarian interests and perceptions of the truth, but also the church from becoming captive to the dominant interests and values of the state.²⁰⁴ It will allow scope for a prophetic witness on the part of the church, which, subsequently, will contribute to the Democratic process and enable the church to take its own teaching seriously.²⁰⁵ And needless to say, the church will be able to maintain its integrity and authority.

EPILOGUE

The task of this dissertation has been to examine the role of the church and theology in the reconstruction of the Zambian society. Our argument is that if only appropriately engaged and effectively used, they can significantly contribute to the reconstruction of Zambia. They can play a dynamic and significant motivational and explanatory role in fostering and or enhancing the divine positive alteration of all the structures and factors that impede the experience of anthropological dignity or the meaningfully abundant life that only Jesus the Christ has promised (John 10:10).

²⁰⁴ Charles Villa-Vicencio. 1992. Op Cit. Pg.265

²⁰⁵ Ibid.

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