

# PENTECOSTAL CLERGY AND POLITICS IN ZAMBIA: THE CASE OF PASTOR NEVERS MUMBA, PRESIDENT OF THE MOVEMENT FOR MULTIPARTY DEMOCRACY

Austin M. Cheyeka  
acheyeka@yahoo.co.uk  
Department of Religious Studies  
University of Zambia

## ABSTRACT

There is no contesting the fact that Pentecostal clergy involvement in partisan politics is a relatively new phenomenon in Africa. In Zambia, Pastor Nevers Mumba has not been given serious attention by academic observers as yet. In this article I cite his postulation for leaving televangelism to join politics, which has translated into his becoming the fourth president of the Movement for Multiparty Democracy. I expose the inherent contradiction in practice between Mumba's 'political ethics' and 'politics' as it is played out in real Zambian life. As a 'political pastor' who vilifies corruption, Mumba would be expected to galvanise tremendous support from citizens, the majority of whom claim to be Christian. This, not having been the case, I construct an argument that Mumba seems to have compromised his Christian faith for the rewards of politics of the belly and for a future that has led him into the morass of political duplicity.

**Keywords:** Nevers Mumba, Movement for Multiparty Democracy, Pentecostal, National Citizens' Coalition, politics

## INTRODUCTION

Who is Pastor Nevers Mumba? The answer will be found in his autobiography (1994), his own 84 page book, *Integrity with Fire* – a first person narrative, recounts of testimonies, confessions, anecdotes, reflections and any personal experience in a religious context and in biographical writings of others especially that of Lockhart (2001). The starting point of my efforts to shed some light on Mumba's involvement in politics is the plain truth that religion forms an integral part of the day-to-day life of most black indigenous (*abantu*) Zambian people. It influences the way they deal with misfortune, politics, poverty, disease and failure or disappointment among other issues, that touch their

lives. It is largely through religious ideas that most *abantu* in Zambia think about the world today, and that religious ideas provide them with a means of becoming social and political actors (Ellis & Ter Haar 2004: 2).

It is generally argued that after independence, the Prophetic Christian voice in Zambia went into a slumber (Hastings 1995: 37–46). In the 1980s, however, Father Davoli Umberto, a Catholic priest, broke that silence when he engaged Kenneth Kaunda's one-party state to its comprehensive defeat in the multiparty election of 1991. Mumba began to get involved in the politics of Zambia in 1990 when he 'prophesied' that the country would experience a bloodbath if the leaders of the Movement for Multiparty Democracy, upon forming government, did not declare Zambia a 'Christian Nation' and if they did not restore diplomatic ties with Israel. Frederick Chiluba, the leader of the Movement for Multiparty Democracy was favoured to win the 1991 election and he did so. Mumba, like Chiluba is not only a Christian fundamentalist who believes in the inerrancy of the Bible insisting on a literal understanding thereof, but also believes that the doctrines which emerge from such a literal reading should be applied to all aspects of social economic and political life.

In 1997, Mumba entered the political arena. Among other reasons, I argue, he might have assumed that the followers of his televangelism and members of his church would translate into political supporters. He formed the National Christian Coalition which he later renamed as National Citizens' Coalition and contested the presidency in the 2001 elections but lost. On 27 May 2003, he was appointed Vice President by the then Republican President, the late Mr. Levy Mwanawasa. He had by then dissolved his National Citizens' Coalition. When he was dropped as Vice-President on 4 October 2004, he tried to concentrate on re-organising his Victory Ministries and a theological college, which he hoped to transform into a university. However, politics seemed to have remained his overriding ambition. He formed another party called Reform Party. Another opportunity to contest the presidency presented itself when Mwanawasa died on 9 August 2008. Mumba tried his luck to get adopted as Movement for Multiparty Democracy president and, therefore, national presidential contender. The National Executive Committee of the party had different ideas and appointed Rupiah Bwezani Banda as party president and national presidential candidate instead. Banda went on to win the 2008 election. In 2009, Mumba was appointed Zambia's High Commissioner to Canada. He returned from Canada in 2012 and in a fiercely contested election became the fourth Movement for Multiparty Democracy president when Banda retired from active politics following his defeat in the 2011 national elections.

## EARLY LIFE

Kirbey Lockhart (2001: 4) failed to get the most out of Mumba's life for his biography. 'I have never completely understood, Nevers keeps his thoughts carefully locked in the vault of his heart,' he confessed. In the end, he presented the public persona of Mumba by systematically putting together speeches, excerpts, press releases and articles written

by the Pastor. In this article I explore Mumba's reasons for joining politics to furnish an argument that Mumba threw himself into the country's political arena when the Pentecostal born-again president then, could not reward him with a ministerial portfolio for the support he had rendered to him and the 'Christian Nation' ideology. About his early life, Mumba told my research assistants<sup>1</sup> the following (Mumba, Interview 16, 18 November 2006):

My name is Nevers Sekwila Mumba. I was born on 18 May 1960 and I come from a family of twelve; seven brothers and five sisters. I happen to be the eleventh born in the family. My late father's name was Samuel Peter Mumba. My mother's name is Malita [Martha] Mumba. She comes from Lubwa Mission. My family was a moderate Christian family with my father being a preacher in the United Church of Zambia [UCZ]. My mother was also a committed Christian in the UCZ. My family was quite a religious one but at the same time it was quite permissive. My father was quite strong on the bottle. However, the Church did not find that too much of an issue. They let him do that, as long as he did what they considered to be Christian...

### From a mining student to a preacher

Mumba became a born-again Christian on 17 October 1977 at Hillcrest Secondary School. He was a member of the Scripture Union at Hillcrest School which was to produce future luminaries in Zambia's Pentecostal Movement (Gordon 2012: 178). He went to a good school which sent Form Five school leavers with excellent results to study in some of the United Kingdom's leading universities. Mumba himself noted:

A lot of friends were sponsored to the United Kingdom to do metallurgy and engineering of different sorts. When I left Hillcrest, I was sponsored by the Mining Industry, on the Copperbelt, to study instrumentation. Even during my school days, my friends would fix all kinds of electronic things which I could not. What I enjoyed at that time was preaching. That is why three to four months before graduating, I felt a strong call to go to a Bible School.

Mumba quit the instrumentation course and went round preaching in Kitwe under the aegis of the Assemblies of God. When Pastor Reinhard Bonnke of Christ for All Nations Ministries came to Zambia in 1981, Gary Skinner, a Canadian missionary and Coordinator of the organization in Zambia, asked Mumba to be Bonnke's interpreter in Kitwe. According to Lockhart (2001: 17) 'Pastor Mumba took the interpreting assignment seriously for he not only wanted to please God, but Reinhard too...'

Mumba ended up travelling with Bonnke to places where he held his crusades. Lockhart reported that 'Reinhard had taken note of Mumba's infectious zeal and encouraged him to go to a Bible school for training (2001: 18).' Mumba had already applied to a theological college in the West Indies. This was to be superseded by Bonnke's facilitation of his entry into Christ for the Nations Institute in Dallas, Texas in the USA. While waiting to go to the USA in August 1982, Mumba began to preach Bonnke's message throughout the Copperbelt province, calling all his listeners to repent

and turn to Jesus for healing. With friends he formed the 'Evangelistic Board of Zambia' and invited a Canadian Evangelist, Peter Youngmen to preach at the first crusade.

### The founding of Victory Ministries and Victory Bible College

Upon his return to Zambia, Mumba assumed the title of *Evangelist*. Duplicating the paradigms of Christ for the Nations Institute and Christ for All Nations, he started Victory Bible College in 1985 with four students, who with his colleagues from Evangelistic Board of Zambia, formed a crusade team modelled on Bonnke's Christ for All Nations. In 1985, Bonnke purchased a brand new Toyota Land Cruiser and a mobile sound system capable of reaching out to 20 000 people for the crusade team. In addition, Freda Lindsay, President of Christ for the Nations Institute encouraged Mumba to continue training full time Christian evangelists. In 1989, she paid US \$130 000 for a 15 hectare farm with 13 buildings on it on the Kafue River in the town of Kitwe, for Mumba's Victory Ministries. Additionally, a wealthy expatriate widow also donated a house in an affluent area along Jambo drive worth US \$20 000 to Mumba's family, before leaving Zambia (Lockhart, 2001). In 1987, the wealthy Mumba initiated the first national Christian broadcast called 'Zambia Shall be Saved' a replication of Bonnke's 'Africa Shall be Saved' on Zambia Broadcasting Corporation television channel. It was the first instance of televangelism by a Zambian preacher.

### Mumba's role in the re-introduction of multiparty politics

In the late 1980s, Mumba began to hold crusades in the midlands. In Lusaka a crusade was planned for September 1990 at a time when Zambians were demanding multiparty politics and an end to Kenneth Kaunda's one party rule. When Mumba finally came to Lusaka, he claimed that he was invited to State House by Kaunda. He narrated the following:

A call came in telling me I had to be at the State House at eight hours the next morning. One of my associates (Jeston Katebe) drove with me to meet the President. We were welcomed warmly by everyone and were whisked into a waiting room. On the way we asked God silently for supernatural wisdom. When we were called in, the thick double doors were closed behind us. After we were seated, God's miracle began. The anointing of God came upon me and I could feel it. As I studied the President I saw that he looked thin and weary. Things were taking their toll on him and it was showing. I saw he was a lonely man. Breaking the short silence, he started by saying, 'I have been wishing to meet with you since you began the crusade early this week, but I have been extremely busy.' Looking at him I knew he wanted to be open and freely share his hurts and fears, so I began with what God had given me early that morning during my prayer time. It was the story of the 'Rich Young Ruler'. I responded to him by saying, Sir, God is not able to help you until you surrender your life and give up any fetishes that could be around the State House. I said to the president, 'Jesus will help you by saving you because of your trust only in Jesus, for salvation.' He knelt down in front of me to honour and receive Jesus Christ into his heart. We joined hands and had a glorious time of prayer. He repeated the sinner's prayer after

me just like in the crusades. My associate was watching all this, amazed at my boldness and the President's response and the presence of the Holy Spirit in the room. Little did I know that in two hours time the President was going to address the nation on radio and television to diffuse a political time bomb, one that could have brought untold bloodshed to Zambia. He [Kaunda] declared Zambia a multi-party state. (Mumba, Interview 16, 18 November 2006)

This episode is crucial to understanding Mumba's efforts to become President of Zambia at one time or another. I argue that he saw, as he perhaps still sees himself today, as the man who influenced Kaunda to abandon the referendum on multiparty politics and use his executive powers to amend the constitution to reintroduce multiparty politics. How can such a man be forgotten by Zambians? How can such a man be sidelined by the ruling political elite?

## MUMBA'S INVOLVEMENT IN MULTIPARTY POLITICS

Mumba's political involvement is based on Proverbs 29: 2, which says: 'Show me a righteous ruler and I will show you a happy people. Show me a wicked ruler and I will show you a miserable people.' In this article I shed some light on Mumba's politicking in the context of an exuberant flourishing of Pentecostal and Charismatic varieties of Christianity in Zambia (Ellis & Ter Haar 2004: 1). When asked about his Christianity, Mumba had this lengthy answer:

It is interesting to reflect on my brand of Christianity because, quite frankly, it is one topic I have never addressed. In fact, you are the first to ask me about this. Somehow I have always assumed that everybody understands. I think that I am a casualty of what God can do. I believe that God is God and so, there is nothing he can fail to do...I do have enough faith in God so that when I see a crippled person, I do not hesitate to lay hands to pray for him or her. The psychology of saying 'it cannot happen' does not work with me because the God I believe in is the God who is just restricted to only making me feel spiritually good. If He created man, then He must be more creative than just making your spirit or soul going to heaven. He must be interested in my physical situation and in my financial condition. If you are broke, God feels with you. I would rather have a God who feels with me when I am broke, and that is where I am coming from. My involvement in politics then can be traced from this type of faith...I may not be understood but I believe in a God who cannot be restricted...When I became a preacher, a lot of friends from Bible Colleges went out and started churches so that they could develop a congregation and get an offering to sustain themselves to have their ministry stable [financially]. When I got into the Ministry, I felt that everybody was doing that. Instead, I felt very strongly pulled to become an evangelist. So, I started a team of young men and women who travelled with me. Politics were so dark that, it was even a known fact that politics were a dirty game. They [people] actually told me in my face that politics are a dirty game. 'Politicians are cheats, corrupt, immoral' and that they steal. By telling me this, they thought that they were scaring me but that is when I was getting attracted to politics...This was going to be a new mission field which required the gospel. To this effect, I began to mobilise Christians to get into politics by starting a Christian Coalition, the National Christian Coalition (NCC) in 1997. When we started NCC, there was no intention of it ever becoming a political party because I was not decided. I never even thought

that one day I would even become a politician to run for an office. What we wanted to do was to tell Christians that they could prepare to begin taking positions of authority at civic level, local government level and cabinet level. It was time Christians took up influential positions such as Solicitor General, Chief Justice or Chief of Police. I wanted to encourage people with Christian values to begin taking those positions of authority with prayer and hope that these people of morality could influence good policy formulation sensitive to the needs of the poor. (Mumba, Interview 16, 18 November 2006)

Mumba's argument is that there is a need for political ethics in the ruling elite although in 1999, two years after the formation of his political party, he admitted that politics was a dirty game. Addressing his party's Kabwe District Executive, he made a statement in which he disclosed his cessation to trusting the sole changing power of prayer in politics. He was quoted as having said: 'In 2001, I will change my gimmick and the MMD will tumble. While we campaigned in the day peacefully [in local by-election in Mbala], the MMD used dirty tactics and money, destroying us in the night (Mitanni 1999: 5).'

## THE FORMATION OF THE NATIONAL CHRISTIAN COALITION AND NATIONAL CITIZENS COALITION

It is one of my arguments in this article that Mumba had become a cadre in the Movement for Multiparty Democracy expecting some reward from the Pentecostal 'big man' in State House. When no reward was forthcoming, he along with colleagues, Florence Chola, Simataa Simataa, Emmanuel Shikaputo and Eva Sanderson, created the National Christian Coalition on 4 September 1997. At the inauguration of the party, which I attended, Mumba announced:

The goal of the new NCC is to be the strongest party in the land, run for elections and form the next government and transform Zambia. The NCC will aim at inculcating values into political leaders so that Zambia can qualify to be a Christian nation. The party is going to work with every person who accepts its manifesto. The NCC is going to be a mass party not restricted to one ethnic group of the population.

As soon as Mumba announced his presidential ambitions, the remark of 'don't mix religion with politics' was heard from the ruling political party. Archbishop Desmond Tutu aptly pointed out, in a different context, that:

It is a remark which is made not because a politician in his election campaign introduces a moral or religious element. No, we almost always hear it when a particular political, social or economic fact of life is criticized as being inconsistent with the Gospel of Jesus Christ as most Christians understand it (Tutu 1984: 36).

## MUMBA AS A VICTIM OF DIRTY-POLITICS

My starting point here is Mumba's widely remembered and unmistakable remark in an interview on the Zambia National Broadcasting Corporation television in the late 1990s that he would not consider running for political office, as doing so would be tantamount to demoting himself from his noble ministry of proclaiming the gospel. He argued in 2012:

When I gave that answer it was a very honest answer, the true answer. I had no desire for politics, absolutely no intention to ever get involved in politics. So, the answer I gave was definitely from my heart as I understood it at that time. Of course, time is the greatest gift God gives to man. From the time one is 24 years old and the time one is 40 years old, there are certain things one does not believe at 45 (Chanda 2012: 1).

Mumba was the youngest of the eleven candidates in the 2001 elections and he considered himself bearer of a most critical, necessary and most appealing message to the nation at that time, because it was about creating a moral society and enhancing developmental programmes. However, his was one of the most spectacular flops, when he polled only two per cent of the total vote cast.

## JOINING THE MOVEMENT FOR MULTIPARTY DEMOCRACY AND APPOINTMENT AS VICE-PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF ZAMBIA

In May of 2003, Mumba announced his resignation from his own party to join the ruling Movement for Multiparty Democracy. In the interview with my research assistants, his reasons conflated into the idea of 'to strengthen the fight against corruption.' He summarised his reasons in this statement:

Mwanawasa's fight against corruption, his inclusive government and many other steps already taken by his administration had given me hope that, for once, we could close the chapter of the past rivalry and open a new political order of tolerance, inclusiveness and prosperity for Zambia.

Mumba argued that his action was that of a true religious leader who would work with the state when he or she sees that the welfare of the people was being taken care of.

Arising from Mumba's decision, most Pentecostals felt that the Pastor had made a wrong decision. Those disappointed with Mumba were not short of expressions such as this one: 'What a shameful boot-licking show, Reverend Mumba! And how blasphemous to claim God's will and blessing on your cunning and selfish plot (Chola 2003: 5).' Mumba is reported to have lost a large number of his church followers because they felt betrayed in that in his sermons, he had said that he had been called to be a prophet of Zambia, a calling higher than that of a president of a country, yet he founded a party, became a presidential candidate and eventually Vice-President (Phiri 2003: 414).

## Dismissed as Vice-President

After serving for sixteen months as Republican Vice-President, Mumba was dismissed for announcing to the nation that some opposition political parties were receiving funding through the Democratic Republic of Congo. When asked whether he could accept another position if President Mwanawasa asked him to return, Mumba answered, 'I would, because I want to serve the people of Zambia with integrity and Christian values.'

## After the dismissal

The media reported Mumba's apology to Mwanawasa in writing. In any case, he went back to his preaching job and visited the United States of America. Some critics said that he had gone there to source financial support to enable him to contest the 2006 presidential election. Unashamedly, he vowed to remain in the party that had expelled him to contest the party presidency at the 2005 convention despite his suspension. When he came back he was reported to be in 'full gear' to campaign. He was nevertheless stopped from standing against President Mwanawasa at the National Convention on trumped-up charges. Mumba was subsequently expelled from the Movement for Multiparty Democracy on Tuesday, June 1, 2006 by the National Executive Committee of the party. This ended Mumba's ambition to join the presidential race on the Movement for Multiparty Democracy platform in the 2006 general elections.

## NATIONAL CITIZENS' COALITION TRANSFORMED INTO REFORM PARTY

During meetings with supporters and sympathisers on the Copperbelt, Mumba was advised to form another party. With this renewed assurance, he came up with the Reform Party. Twelve years after the formation and demise of this party, he volunteered additional information about the formation of the Reform Party:

One thing that a lot of people who criticise us forget is that I was not suspended or fired alone. Provincial chairmen, secretaries of branches, including constituencies and districts – those that were known to have supported my candidature were all of them expelled. Their cry was, 'Dr. Mumba you have made us expelled, where do we go? We are political animals and we want to continue to contribute to the political process.' Without exaggeration they were thousands of people who were expelled throughout the country. So, it was with those people we decided to form the Reform Party. We tried to reform the politics of MMD at that time... So, Reform Party was a protest party for the type of politics that looked like they were excluding democracy... And once we felt that there was an acceptance now coming from MMD that we can get back to our party, we had to return to MMD (Chanda 2012: 1).

In the bid to unseat the Movement for Multiparty Democracy presidential candidate in the 2006 elections, five political parties formed an alliance namely, National Democratic



Front; Reform Party; All Peoples Congress; the Party for Unity, Democracy and Development; Zambia Republican Party; Patriotic Front and the Zambia Development Congress. There was to be an election for the leader of the alliance. Michael Sata of the Patriotic Front pulled out of the alliance. When the convention took place on 12 June 2006 with a delegation of 55 members selected country wide, Ben Mwila of the Zambia Republican Party was elected as the alliance's presidential candidate for the 2006 presidential elections. Mumba refused to accept the results and cited corruption at the convention, and consequently pulled out of the alliance.

## WITHDRAWAL FROM THE PRESIDENTIAL 2006 ELECTIONS

Finally, Mumba announced his new course of action, that he would not participate in the September tripartite elections of 2006. Zambia's electoral laws guiding the September 2006 tripartite elections, among other things, had a clause which demanded payment of what the majority of people considered a huge sum of money – twenty million Kwacha (K20 000 000), which is an equivalent of US \$4 000 for presidential candidates. Critics insinuated that the withdrawal of Mumba from the presidential race was due to his failure to raise the set amount since he had sold his property on the Copperbelt; coupled with the absence of support for his Reform Party across the country. His attempt to contest the Chinsali constituency where he hails from on the Patriotic Front platform, as a parliamentary candidate, was stopped by residents of that area.

Mumba may have lost his bid to contest the presidency in the September 2006 general elections, but his conviction was that temporary setbacks could not make him leave politics, until Zambian politics translated into prosperity for Zambians. The death of President Mwanawasa seems to have presented an opportunity for Mumba to try and return to the Movement for Multiparty Democracy and become Presidential candidate. After all, he had, he claimed, met President Mwanawasa in 2007, at State House for reconciliation. When the campaigns of potential successors began, Mumba resurfaced despite his dismissal from Mwanawasa's party. He was emasculated, snubbed and ridiculed and told to keep away from the Movement for Multiparty Democracy. Mwanawasa's Vice-President, Rupiah Bwezani Banda was nominated to stand for the republican presidency and won the election in 2008.

## UNDERSTANDING MUMBA'S POLITICAL AMBITION

In my attempt to make sense of Mumba's use of Christianity in politics, I am guided by the question:

Is there a sense in Africa that belief in the irrational is manipulated by the elite for their own purposes? Or, conversely, is it the case that African elites, though often fully Westernised, share with the rest of the population a faith in the irrational which matters deeply to politics (Chabal & Daloz 1999: 64)?

The answer to the question either way is, in my opinion, ‘yes’. It is asserted that: ‘African Christians, who often interpret the Bible literally, may believe that they are required to work with any incumbent government (Ellis & Ter Haar 2004: 157).’ This, seems, I argue, to have been the reason for the initial self positioning of Mumba’s NCC – to gain co-option into the MMD which had come to stand for ‘*Mwalya Mweka Dad*’ (you are eating alone dad) – implying that the ruling elite was not redistributing the spoils of being in politics.

If it is Pentecostalism that had made Mumba engage in politics, then I could argue that his desire to exercise his agency was of a different kind because ‘Pentecostalism advocates a decidedly “modern” and individualistic notion of (economic and political) agency of which personal self-improvement and internationalism are perhaps the two most significant (Chabal 2009: 102).’ My other contention is that Mumba exemplified the tendency by political opponents in Africa to challenge their exclusion from the state in the hope that their agitation will earn them co-optation (Chabal & Daloz 1999: 26).

‘Leadership’ seems to have been, from the very beginning, key to Mumba, his interpretation of ‘leadership’ being *integrity*. That is why he had begun to train ‘leaders’ on the Copperbelt and when he was dismissed as Vice-President, he made some efforts to open a university that would, among other things, train Christian leaders. Undoubtedly, Pastor Mensah Otabil of Ghana is an inspiration to Mumba.

Otabil has a public and social commitment that others lack. He is driven by the idea of providing leadership for Ghana, Africa, and the third world. This is evident in the church’s self-understanding: ‘A Bible believing charismatic church with a commitment to bring leadership and vision to our generation and also influence society with the principles of the Word of God.’ He had begun to build a Pan African Centre for Christian Leadership (Gifford 1994: 260).

There is no contesting that Mumba is a man driven as much by his deep religious conviction as his boundless ambition. Trying to bring ethics into politics is not as easy as making fiery statements about it.

Different Pentecostal pastors have adopted different stances towards politics and government in Zambia. As I have indicated, Mumba only became a fiery critic of Chiluba when he was sidelined. The question though, is, would he have accepted co-option at the time Chiluba’s government had become thoroughly corrupt between (1996 and 2001)? Ellis & Ter Haar (2004: 102) argue that:

There is nothing new in religious leaders associating themselves with politics and even accepting formal office, sometimes in government known for their corruption or repression. Reverend Canaan Banana, a Methodist church minister, was no less than the first president of independent Zimbabwe. He retained his position throughout the 1980s while the government of Prime Minister Robert Mugabe was organising the systematic killing of thousands of people in the west of the country.

## FROM HIGH COMMISSIONER TO PRESIDENT OF MOVEMENT FOR MULTIPARTY DEMOCRACY

The death of President Mwanawasa left the Movement for Multiparty Democracy saddled with an unpopular leader (Cheeseman & Hinfelaar 2009: 27). On 29 September 2011, the party suffered a setback when after twenty years of rule it lost the national leadership to the Patriotic Front of Sata, who embarked on replacing former ruling party's cadres from various positions of administration with his own cadres. Among the many people recalled from diplomatic missions, was Mumba. On 16 November 2011 Sata made news headlines in the print and electronic media reporting they had recalled Zambia's High Commissioner to Canada. Nevers Mumba, was resisting coming back and could be probed for financial irregularities at the High Commissioner's office in Toronto. Mumba denied the accusations and astutely understood Sata as vindictive because of statements by some members of the Movement for Multiparty Democracy to the effect that Mumba is trying to take over the presidency of the party.

The President works with information and not slander. I am sure the President is reacting to some calls in the media that I contest the MMD presidency...I have never even responded or announced my candidature. That kind of attack will never deter me from pursuing what I believe to be God's Will in my life. I think that the president should have waited until I made indication of my political direction. I am ready to fight politically (Chanda & Chimpinde 2011: 4).

### Eventual return of the high commissioner

On Thursday 8 December 2011 Mumba arrived from Canada. At the airport, the Drug Enforcement Commission officers detained him close to an hour, from 10h15 to 11h07. As he emerged from the VIP lounge, he was lifted shoulder high amid chanting of 'our president has come'. Some placards hoisted high read 'We don't want corrupt leaders' (in reference to Situmbeko Musokotwane) and 'We don't want womanisers' (in reference to Felix Mutati who had been reported in the press of having extra marital affairs). Was Mumba assured of victory already while in Canada? Why Mumba? One plausible explanation is that he was not a Member of Parliament and therefore freer to organise the party and mobilise the electorate throughout the country. Additionally, other potential candidates were seen as not capable of standing up to Sata. Felix Mutati slated as the successor of Banda was, apart from accusations of 'womaniser' rumoured to be too friendly to Sata. It is true, however, that he had contemplated joining the PF in 2011. A Member of Parliament in the Patriotic Front told me: 'Felix should have resigned from the MMD when Judith Kapijimpanga resigned, but he grew cold feet.'

## THE CAMPAIGN AND VICTORY OF MUMBA

Mumba's campaign message was organised around the notion of 'reform'. In a televised interview with Muvi Television 'Assignment Programme' on 18 December 2011, the usual question of 'why did you go into politics?' was asked and Mumba answered:

Whatever I do, I am informed by my faith. I was upset by corruption and political intimidation... Zambia could do more with people like me who bring their faith to their work, God has led me to politics because 'I am supposed to be the salt of the earth'.

On 25 May 2012, Mumba was elected leader of the MMD, becoming the fourth president of the party from its inception in 1991. The Foundation for Democratic Process monitored the election. There were seven candidates in all, but the contest was between Mumba and Mutati. In the first round, the 51% threshold as stipulated in the Movement for Multiparty Democracy constitution was not attained by the two leading candidates, because Mumba polled 557 representing 42.36% while Mutati received 336 translating into 27.83% of the total 1, 317 votes cast. In the run-off, Mumba polled 870 votes translating into 67.34% and Mutati polled 422 representing 32.66% of the total 1, 317 votes cast.

At his inauguration on 1 June 2012 the new Movement for Multiparty Democracy President announced a 'punch to punch' ideology, which is not surprising as in his biography, Mumba is reported to be a fan of boxing (Lockhart 2001). 'When Mr. Sata punches [says something wrong – that is not in the interest of Movement for Multiparty Democracy], at seven o'clock in the morning, I will punch back at eight o'clock,' he explained (Zambia National Broadcasting Corporation television's 19h00 prime time news of 1 June 2012). By December 2013, Mumba had learnt the art of dirty politics and was facing charges of slandering the Republican President and embezzling public funds.

## CONCLUSION

It has been my special concern in this article to preserve the texture of some of Mumba's statements. I also hope that the failings of my narrative will not obscure the rich personal story of a man who has puzzled many Zambians. Many people ask: what kind of a man is Pastor Mumba who courageously, freely and openly contradicts himself even without thinking much about clarifications and apologies? My argument in this article is that the Pastor had hoped that Chiluba would offer him a job after he lobbied for the declaration of Zambia as a 'Christian Nation' in 1990. He was hugely disappointed when his only tangible benefit was the diplomatic passport which was swiftly withdrawn from him when he entered the political arena. For some evangelicals, the disappointed hope of a career boost is compounded by a theology of hierocracy: that God's agents on earth are basically church leaders and that the government of the nations by the people of God, promised in the Old Testament, is to be exercised through the direct political power

– whether by holding government posts in person or through proxies of evangelical church leaders (Freston 2001: 162).

The underlying fact that cannot blithely be dismissed is that, ‘politics in Africa today appears to many people as the ultimate form of individual activity, in which power and wealth are conjured out of nothing and used for selfish purposes’ (Ellis & Ter Haar 2004: 154). This situation goes with changing party allegiance. Of particular importance among the works of Jean Francois-Bayart is no doubt the notion of ‘politics of the belly’ (Bayart 2009). Sometimes politicians bereft of a clear ideology, jump from one political party to another for self aggrandisement and treat the public to contradictory narratives about their capabilities. This fickle political behaviour has not been peculiar to Mumba alone.

I argue that Mumba’s actions can best be described as ‘politics of the belly’. Those who play into this politics in Zambia are often referred to in ordinary conversations and social media as con-men and con-women and the country has an abundant supply of such people; they include politicians who claim to be in politics because their Christianity requires them to do so while exhibiting a Machiavellian talent for political manoeuvre (Ellis & Ter Haar 2004). Overall, Mumba is, as Lewis Dzimhiri (1998: 87–101) said about some Malawian politicians, a ‘chameleon-like leader’, which I argue is a result of politics of the belly. The frequent changing colours of the political elite do not create a positive image of politics as the basis of government business. The absence of firm principles in the political elites can in fact hamper the development of political consciousness and the emergence of an informed and committed citizenry (Dzimhiri 1998: 101).

## ENDNOTE

- 1 Mumba agreed to be interviewed by my research assistants on 16 and 18 November 2006 at his Roma Township office in Lusaka. Some of his responses to different questions have been reproduced in the article.

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