



A critical assessment of Church and political engagement in Zimbabwe under the new dispensation



Authors:

Christopher Magezi¹ 
Kimion Tagwirei^{2,3} 

Affiliations:

¹Department of Missiology,
Faculty of Theology,
North-West University,
Potchefstroom, South Africa

²Department of New
Testament and Related
Literature, Faculty of
Theology and Religion,
University of Pretoria,
Pretoria, South Africa

³Assemblies of God Back to
God Church, Harare,
Zimbabwe

Corresponding author:

Christopher Magezi,
magezichristopher@gmail.
com

Dates:

Received: 08 Mar. 2022
Accepted: 26 May 2022
Published: 13 July 2022

How to cite this article:

Magezi, C. & Tagwirei, K.,
2022, 'A critical assessment
of Church and political
engagement in Zimbabwe
under the new dispensation',
Verbum et Ecclesia 43(1),
a2527. [https://doi.org/
10.4102/ve.v43i1.2527](https://doi.org/10.4102/ve.v43i1.2527)

Copyright:

© 2022. The Authors.
Licensee: AOSIS. This work
is licensed under the
Creative Commons
Attribution License.

Read online:



Scan this QR
code with your
smart phone or
mobile device
to read online.

Since the reign of the late Robert Gabriel Mugabe, Zimbabwe has been seized by retrogressive puppetisation of partisan gospel ministers and churches, worsened by state victimisation of those who stand against political ills. Church and state relations were compromised and fear gripped most citizens. At his inauguration, the incumbent President Emmerson Mnangagwa pledged a 'new dispensation' but contrarily remained similar to the preceding regime. Today, Church and state relations remain compromised as leaders appear accommodative when supported and vindictive when critiqued. The prevailing situation divided the Church, leaving some pastors dining with oppressive leaders whilst others side with the oppressed, culminating in disturbing polarisation. Ruling politicians captured some gospel ministers to sanitise the 'new dispensation' and vilify its critics. Although multiple researches have been carried out on Church and politics in Zimbabwe, the lack of clarity on how churches should engage with the state remains an ongoing challenge. Using a literature-based approach, this article evaluates ecclesial engagement with national politics in view of the Old Testament's fearless prophetic involvement in politics and the New Testament's understanding of the Church as the salt and the light of the world (Mt 5:13–16). Results of this assessment are that Church engagements with politics have been defined by economic volatility, polarisation, corruptibility, hermeneutical weaknesses and theological differences. The article concludes that the Church should contextually apply the Old Testament's prophetic stance and the New Testament's 'salt and light' engagement in Zimbabwe.

Interdisciplinary and/or interdisciplinary implications: Assessing Church and political engagement in Zimbabwe under the new dispensation in light of the Old Testament's prophetic involvement in politics and the New Testament's conceptualisation of the Church as salt and light (Mt 5:13–16) is a contextually critical contribution that interfaces ecclesiology with Christian, biblical, public and political theologies.

Keywords: Zimbabwean church; church and state relations; polarisation; prophetic stance; Matthew 5:13–16.

Introduction

Since the end of the 37-year reign of the late former president Robert Gabriel Mugabe, Zimbabwe has been seized by retrogressive puppetisation of partisan gospel ministers and churches. In addition, the government has ratcheted up the victimisation of those who dare to stand against political ills. Consequently, Church and state relations have become compromised (Mujinga 2018:248) and most gospel ministers and citizens have been gripped with fear and silenced from partaking in political engagements. The incumbent president, Emmerson Mnangagwa, pledged a progressive 'new dispensation' when he got in power. Contrary to that, his administration has not been any different from its predecessor. Some researchers claim that the current administration is even worse than Mugabe's regime (Masunungure & Bratton 2018:1). To date, Church and state relations are still like a marriage of convenience, as the government seems to be accommodative of those who support it and vindictive towards those who critique it. This situation has divided the body of Christ, as some pastors dine with the oppressive ruling elites, whilst others side with the oppressed, thus, creating a disturbing state of polarisation (Dombo 2014:144–145). The status quo can be appositely referred to as a 'puppets' and opponents' affair in which the ruling politicians have captured partisan Church leaders and assigned them the role of sanitising their power conquest and retention, whilst vilifying their impartial counterparts as opponents. Although multiple researches have been carried out on Church and politics at national level in Zimbabwe, there is an ongoing challenge in which the Church cannot freely take part in political engagement. Given this, there is a need to critically assess ecclesiastical engagement with politics in light of the Old Testament's fearless prophetic participation in politics and the New Testament's understanding

of the Church as the salt and the light (Mt 5:13–16). It provides the Church with a biblical theological perspective on how to engage politically with the state. In using the aforementioned approach, the article concludes by recommending a localised contextualisation of the Old Testament's fearless prophetic involvement in political affairs and the New Testament 'salt and light' (Mt 5:13–16) application, through which the Church can exemplarily engage with political issues to influence progress towards liberating developments for the citizens of Zimbabwe.

In order to achieve its objective, the article commences by providing a brief background of the research and all the issues embedded in it. Thereafter, it will proceed by giving the conceptual definition of Church and politics. The second section will give an overview discussion of the Old Testament's fearless prophetic involvement in politics and the New Testament's understanding of the Church as the salt and the light (Mt 5:13–16), so as to inform the Church's political engagement with the state. The article will conclude by recommending a contextualisation of the biblical Old Testament's valiant prophetic involvement in political affairs and the New Testament's 'salt and light' (Mt 5:13–16) application in Zimbabwe.

Background, conceptual definition of Church and politics

Overview background of the study and problem formulation

Hitherto, the discourse of Church and political engagement has been historically contentious even before Zimbabwe gained independence. A number of scholars advance a thesis that political leaders and the Church had a love–hate, bittersweet relationship since the colonial era. Like their counterparts in the successive post-independence regimes, the colonial-era politicians were only accommodative of praise-singers and vindictive towards critics (Majome 2016:n.p.; Mujinga 2018:253). We bear in mind some scholars' observations that the Church played a significant role in Rhodesia's (Zimbabwe) political environment between 1890 and 1980, given that some members of the clergy – notably Reverend Ndabaningi Sithole of the Methodist Church and the United Methodist Bishop Abel Muzorewa – spearheaded African nationalist politics. Sithole was a founding member and leader of the Zimbabwe African National Union (ZANU), whilst Muzorewa, who was also the leader of the United African National Council (UANC), was the first African Prime Minister of Zimbabwe-Rhodesia in 1979 (Hove & Chenzi 2017:1–2).

When Zimbabwe regained her independence in 1980, Reverend Canaan Banana was the first president of independent Zimbabwe. In that view, Paradza (2019:3) observed that the Church strongly collaborated with the liberation movements during the armed struggle, and the Church became a fertile ground for grooming nationalists such as Canaan Banana, Joshua Nkomo, Robert Mugabe,

Abel Muzorewa and Herbert Chitepo. However, Dorman (2002:3–6) explained that during colonial era the relationship between the Church and the state was characterised by mixed experiences, as some churches initially supported colonialism whilst others opposed it.

On the one hand, the Church was a major beneficiary of land, which the white settlers violently grabbed from the native people. However, upon realising that the colonial government was systematically violating the human rights of the native people, denominations such as the Roman Catholic Church rose outstandingly in defence of citizens, whilst some denominations supported white hegemony and others took a neutral position. Since then, issues of independent engagement, co-option and disengagement wreaked havoc on Church and political engagements. In concurrence, Dombo (2014:143) submitted that retrogressive divisions rocked the Church as members developed contradicting views on political matters. Some churches took a stance that Togarasei (2018:33) depicted as salvationist, quietist, indifferent and expressing unquestioning submission to authority. This stance emphasised that the role of the Church was to prepare people for life after death – for God. Other churches had a contrary conception that regarded Christians as 'the salt of the earth and light of the world', as Matthew 5:13–16 implies.

Chitando, Taringa and Mapuranga (2014:174) averred that whilst some clerical leaders in colonial Zimbabwe bravely challenged the state for marginalising the black majority, after independence the trajectory changed. It became characterised by polarisation in different strands, including individual ecclesiastical ministers, denominational organisations and interdenominational bodies. Consequently, the prophetic mission in independent Zimbabwe eventually became costly. Church leaders such as Pius Ncube, who stood out in defence of the oppressed and thus against the oppressive government, were muzzled. The government labelled them colonialist whilst courting African-initiated churches, thereby dividing and weakening the Church (Chitando et al. 2014:179).

Some more clergymen such as Bishop Levee Kadenge and Sifiso Mpfu of the Christian Alliance, Bishop Anselm Magaya of the Zimbabwe National Pastors' Conference and their associations endured harassment and persecution whenever they advocated for the opening up of democratic space in Zimbabwe. In an effort to complement what established Church bodies were doing in engaging the state, the above-named leaders organised 'prayer meetings' and involved civil society and political opposition leaders. State security agents descended on the meetings and assaulted the members. Such leaders are reminiscent of Ndabaningi Sithole, Abel Muzorewa and Canaan Banana, who actively participated in the struggle for Zimbabwe (Chitando 2011:45).

A close analysis of the history of Church and politics in Zimbabwe indicates that the two tend to cleave together and

discard each other when it is convenient. Other scholars such as Paradza (2019:5) and Chitando (2009:96) argued that the prophetic voices became inaudible after independence, when the political elite disregarded the prophetic role of the Church in political processes and public spaces and relegated it to spiritual matters. We argue that the audibility of the ecclesial voice in Zimbabwe has been somewhat high, whilst co-opted members tirelessly attempted to neutralise the entire Church and cow her into submission. This research is thus approached from a setting of state-schemed polarisation, co-option and pampering of the ruling elite with praises camouflaged in labels of patriotism (Dube 2021:7–8).

The nature of Church and political engagement in Zimbabwe has forced countless pastors and congregants into conformity. That has left the state to relentlessly violate the rights of the citizens without censure. However, in a case of history repeating itself, the few pastors who have commendably developed the courage to raise their prophetic voices have been misunderstood, misjudged and mistaken as enemies of the state (Hove & Chenzi 2017:3). Up to today, any religious leader who dares to stand, speak out and or act to promote the interests of the citizens risks getting misconstrued as an agent of the opposition. Against such a volatile milieu, where gospel ministers are confronted by hard choices of either being neutral, co-opted or conscientious objectors (Lapsley 1986), the possibility of meaningful Church and state engagement remains a challenge that needs further exploration.

It can also be contended that the Church herself cannot enter into effective engagements because of a number of other reasons such as factionalism, economic instability and corruptibility. Chitando (2011) observed that although the Church has played an active role in efforts to defuse and resolve the Zimbabwean crisis, the effectiveness of her attempts has been limited by factionalism. The government also masterminds divisions by deliberately upholding the partisan and denigrating independent members, in order to divide, weaken and silence the Church and keep a continued grip on power (Chitando 2011:46). We agree with Chitando (2011:47) that the Church also lacks the hermeneutical skills to engage the state meritoriously. Therefore, there is need for the Church to engage in contextualised reading of biblical passages to ensure that justice is achieved. Contrary to that, the Church in Zimbabwe has been misinterpreting and misappropriating Romans 13:1–7 (Gusha 2020:1) by confusing and coercing pro-ruling party religious ministers to blindly and unquestioningly submit to the government of the day and at the same time denigrating anti-ruling party ministers for allegedly not indicating contextual interpretation and appropriation (Togarasei 2004:76–77).

Meanwhile, we also note that the Church has not only been struggling with the notion of whether she can engage in politics but also with the modalities and the extent thereof (Goronga & Dimingu 2019:420–421). Some Church leaders think that ecumenical bodies should engage the state on

behalf of the Church, whilst others value strength in numbers and see the need for denominational grassroots voices to complement representative bodies. On the other hand, there is a clique that believes that the Church must totally focus on salvific missionary work and not get involved in secular politics. As if such a dilemma is not challenging enough, poverty and corruptibility have dogged the Church and weakened her capacity to engage in politics effectively. We draw this from the reign of the late former president Robert Gabriel Mugabe, who invited some Church leaders to have lunch with him at State House in 2006. Mugabe seemed to have accommodated the clergy's views on the kind of Zimbabwe they wanted, and he bribed some of them with cars, land, farms and unlimited access to state resources to build churches (Dombo 2014:144–146).

Following their meeting with Mugabe, the Church leaders produced a document termed *The Zimbabwe We Want*, which omitted some critical issues, and it was believed that the leaders were bribed to portray the state positively. Since the fiasco of *The Zimbabwe We Want* document, up to today under the new dispensation, some Church leaders have been supporting ZANU PF policies, such as violent land redistribution, election campaigns and the indigenisation programme. Examples of clerics who got co-opted by the state include the deposed Anglican Bishop Nolbert Kunonga, Reverend Obadiah Musindo of the Destiny for Africa Network (DFAN), which was formed in 2000, Prophet Andrew Wutawunashe, the founder and leader of Family of God and Samuel Mutendi of the Zion Christian Church.

Prophet Andrew Wutawunashe formed Faith for the Nation Campaign in 2000, claiming that God had spoken to him to establish a platform on which the body of Christ would unite, rally and look to God for guidance and answers on national issues. The Faith for the Nation Campaign was criticised for bearing close resemblance to ZANU PF's Pan-Africanist ideologies and blocking open debate on democratisation in Zimbabwe. Wutawunashe also continued to praise ZANU PF's land reform programme whilst criticising the European Union and the United States for imposing sanctions on ZANU PF leaders (Zakeyo 2012:10). Today, Andrew Wutawunashe runs the partisan Zimbabwe Independent Indigenous Council of Churches (ZIICC) with Samuel Mutendi.

Traditionally, the Church in Zimbabwe has always had multiple faces, ranging from neutral to co-opted to independent, daring and God-fearing. During and after the reign of Mugabe, some young church leaders rose to fame for fearlessly critiquing state excesses. One such leader is Pastor Evan Mawarire, who was victimised, criminalised and persecuted for leading a vicious social movement codenamed 'ThisFlag', which organised protests against ill-governance by the Mugabe regime (Moyo 2019:19–20). Another firebrand young church leader is Apostle Talent Chiwenga, a cousin of the incumbent vice president, Constantine Chiwenga. Apostle Chiwenga daringly preaches

prophetically against the political wrongs of the ruling government and rebukes political leaders to repent or face the wrath of God. The young preacher lost his wife and two church members in a fatal accident, which he suspected to have been a government-sanctioned assassination attempt on him (Mavaza 2019). However, Apostle Chiwenga boldly keeps his prophetic voice loud.

Conversely, some young religious leaders have declared their support for ZANU PF. Panganai Java, better known as Prophet Passion Java, recently got appointed as the deputy president of a partisan empowerment organisation called the Affirmative Action Group (AAG). The AAG was founded by popular businessman and ZANU PF apologist Philip Chiyangwa (ZimEye 2021). Passion Java has been facilitating colossal social media campaigns for ZANU PF and, in the process, courting comedians such as Felistus Edwards (known as Mai Titi on social media) and Tarisai Munetsiwa (famously known as Madam Boss), for whom he bought Mercedes Benz cars (Mlauzi 2021). Prophet Passion Java owns a recording company registered as Passion Java Records, which recently facilitated and produced a propaganda song called Patati Patata by Zimbabwean musician Rocky, Congolese rhumba maestro Kofi Olomide and Tanzanian award-winning musician Ray Vanny. The song has a part that appeals for support for President Emmerson Mnangagwa and claims that he is the best leader (Nyathi 2021). Likewise, London-based Zimbabwean prophet Eubert Mudzanire (who renamed and popularised himself as Eubert Angel) has also been backing the ruling party and for that, he eventually got appointed as ambassador-at-large to the Americas and Europe (Murwira 2021).

Dube and Nkoane (2018:229–235) depicted the rise of partisan ministers of religion to active politics as a means to maintain the status quo and advance their political endeavours. For example, the Johannes Ndanga-led Apostolic Christian Council of Zimbabwe (ACCZ), commonly known as Mapostori, claims that it promotes the interests of indigenous religious churches in Zimbabwe and affirms its support for the ruling party. The ACCZ discerns the victimisation and shushing of dissenting religious voices by the state as justified (Dube & Nkoane 2018:229–235). One such dissenting voice was that of Pius Ncube, whose stance against state injustice was labelled by the ACCZ as immoral. The views of the ACCZ and like-minded organisations reinforce our observations that, from pre-independence to the current era, co-option, factionalism, economic volatility, corruptibility, hermeneutical weaknesses and theological differences have dismembered Church engagements with politics. The authors therefore find ecclesiastic engagements with the state to be ongoing and demanding unrelenting attention.

Against the volatile context delineated here, this article proposes that the Church should reconsider reigniting *kairos* consciousness, which faded from view after the attainment of political independence, as the political elites in Zimbabwe downgraded the prophetic role of the Church from political

processes and public spaces to spiritual matters (Paradza 2019:5). We recommend the activation of *kairos* consciousness through contextualising the Old Testament kind of prophetic boldness, firmness and the New Testament call for the Church to be the salt and light of the world, regardless of the presence of suppressive and repressive political forces. We also argue that this should be performed with an understanding that liberation does not come on a silver platter but as a result of boldness, selflessness and sacrifice, as Mujinga (2018) submitted that political leaders seek to use and abuse the Church as a riding horse for their selfish interests. Having explained the underlying challenges associated with the engagement between the Church and politics in Zimbabwe, the subsequent section provides our conceptual definition of the Church and politics, respectively.

Conceptual definition of the Church¹

The term 'Church' is often given different meanings depending on circumstantial references (cf. Howard 2017). In the Zimbabwean context, the term is usually interchangeably used to refer to a denomination or building where members of a denomination gather for their services (Howard 2017). However, Howard (2017) posited that the term 'Church' does not mean a building. Others take the term 'Church' to mean service or programme, hence the expressions: 'let's go to church', 'let's have church' and 'let's not miss church...'. At times, the term 'Church' is used to mean people and various other allusions. It is therefore necessary to conceptualise the term 'Church', as it makes up the bedrock of this article.

Lindsay (2000:18) indicates that the word translated church in the New Testament is *ecclesia* and, as shown in Numbers 10:2–3, the Jews used it to refer to the assembly of the congregation of Israel that was summoned to meet at the door of the Tabernacle of God by men blowing silver trumpets. The Greeks, as shown in Acts 19:41, used the word in reference to the sovereign assembly of the free Greek city-state, which was summoned by a herald blowing a horn along the streets. However, for the followers of Jesus Christ, *ecclesia* is the congregation of the redeemed community of God, whose messenger continually summons it to appear in the presence of God, who was always in its midst (Lindsay 2000:18–19). Thus, in the Old Testament, the concept denotes the congregation of Jehovah (God), and in the New Testament it refers to the congregation of Jesus Christ (Lindsay 2000:19). In this way, Lindsay (2000) concludes that:

1. We are aware that there are some scholars who uphold the theological concept of the *invisible and visible Church* (Stibbs n.d.:194–203). *Invisible Church* refers to an *invisible Christian Church* of the elect (born again believers of the past, present and future) that can be only seen and known by God (Stibbs n.d.). The visible Church is the institutional body on earth, which expresses Christianity in a way that people can see (Stibbs n.d.). These visible ways include the gathering and practices of the individuals in various church buildings. It also includes the evangelisation of the world, as Jesus commanded his followers to do in Matthew 28:16–20 (Stibbs n.d.). In our view, these concepts arise from one's biblical understanding of the doctrine of salvation. However, in the context of this article, we are going to define the Church as an institutional body on earth that expresses Christianity that people can see and, in this sense, it operates as an agent of God in accomplishing his plans and purposes in the world (cf. Van Aarde 2016:298–299). That is to say, 'the Church plays a central role in the realisation of the reign and kingdom of God and the completion of the mission of God'. The task of the completion of the mission of God has specifically been given to the Church. The Church is God's primary instrument for 'the summing up of all things' (Eph 1:10) and the 'fulfilling' or 'completion of all things' (Eph 1:23).

The New, if it is to be lasting, must always have its roots in the Old; and the phrase 'My Ecclesia' recalled the past and foretold the future. The roots were the memories the word brought both to Jew and to Greek; and the promise and the potency of the future lay in the word 'My'. The Ecclesia had been the congregation of Jehovah; it was in the future, without losing anything of what it had possessed, to become the congregation of Jesus the Christ. (p. 19)

Given this, the Church is a visible, redeemed (by the Christ's salvific work) and united community or society of God's people, both Jews and Gentiles, who confess Jesus Christ as the Lord and Saviour of their lives, who transformed them from death to life² (Lindsay 2000:19). This united community of God believes in the doctrine of universal sin for all humankind, which emerges from the biblical interpretation of Genesis 3, Romans 5:12–21 and many other related New Testament passages (Wright 1991:40). In line with the previously mentioned verses, the community of God believes in the covenantal perspective that views sin as having entered the world through Adam and that God graciously chose or elected Abraham and his descendants (i.e. Israel) to be the vehicles for the redemption of all humankind from the *Adamic* sin (Wright 1991).

The notion of the visible community of God is buttressed by Moo (1996:329) and Jewett's (2007:373) interpretation of Romans 5:12–21, which posits that it does not matter whether the universal sin of humankind is explained in terms of *sinning in* and *with Adam* or because of the corrupt nature that humankind inherited from him. As Jewett (2007:373) puts it, what the Church believes is that the sin of Adam has 'affected all' his descendants 'without exception, placing all under the powers of sin and death'. This means that the Church is a community of God that believes that Abraham and his descendants (Israel) were part of the *Adamic* sin and death, so they could not fulfil their God-ordained redemptive role (Magezi & Magezi 2016:159–165). Thus, in the narrative of redemption, we are confronted with Jesus Christ as the sinless New Adam, who is both true God and true man in nature and has come to fulfil the covenant necessities (between God and Israel) from the sides of both God and man (Torrance 2008:73; Wright 1991:35–40). That is to say, 'Jesus Christ stands in the place of Israel' as the one who fulfils the role of the latter in bringing salvation to all humankind who believe in Jesus' redemptive work (Wright 1991:35–40). Therefore, the Church is a visible community or society (both Jews and Gentiles) of God that believes in Jesus Christ's redemptive work for salvation because:

[W]ithin this human-inhuman existence of Adam, Jesus Christ comes as the Son of God, the Son of man as Jesus calls himself,

2. We agree with Lindsay (2000:22) that 'the word Church is seldom used in the New Testament to designate one universal and comprehensive society'. On the contrary, out of the 110 times in which the word occurs, no less than 100 do not contain this connotation of a wide-spreading unity. In the overwhelming majority of cases, the word 'church' denotes a local Christian society, varying in extent from all the Christian congregations within a province of the Roman Empire to a small assembly of Christians meeting together in the house of one of the brethren. If we except the one New Testament instance in Matthew 16, St Paul alone uses the word in its universal application, and he does it in the two epistles to the Ephesians and the Colossians — both of them dating from his Roman captivity. There are numberless other indications that the thought of the unity of the Church of Christ was never absent from the mind of the Apostle. The Christians he addresses are all brethren, all saints, whether they be in Jerusalem, Damascus, Ephesus or Rome.

to live out a truly obedient and filial, that is a truly human life, in perfect and unbroken union with God the Father. ... In all of that Jesus Christ is the last Adam, the one who ... brings to an end the bondage of Adam's sin, breaks its power and opens up a new and living way to God. (Torrance 2008:73)

In view of the discussion considered so far regarding the meaning of the Church, together with Shekhar (2017:1227), we submit that the word 'church' refers to the community of people who believe in Jesus Christ as their personal saviour and Lord. These people gather at a place of worship to listen to God's word being proclaimed. However, it is important to note that the purpose of the Church in the world is to glorify God and serve humanity (Brunsdon & Magezi 2020:8). The Church glorifies God by performing its God-ordained responsibilities, such as worshipping God and evangelising the world (Mt 28:16–20), building up believers to reach Christlikeness and partake in compassionate ministries in the world. That is to say, the mission of Jesus Christ was to create the foundation for God's mission by his redemptive work, teaching and appointing the Church to serve God and the world (cf. Deyoung & Gilbert 2011:26; McNeal 2009:24; Van Aarde 2016:285–286, cf. 298–300). This emphatically affirms that Christ founded his Church as the agent of the mission of God. This is why Van Aarde (2016:285–286, cf. 298–300) argued that in the plan of God, 'the Church is more than a sign post or an end in itself; it has a participatory and prominent role in the unfolding and execution of God's plan'. As this article interfaces Church and politics, it's important for us to define politics.

Conceptual definition of politics for the study

The term politics is historically complex in Zimbabwe and the whole world. A number of scholars observe its convoluted and indicate a multiplicity of conceptualisations and references. Modebadze (2010:40) rightly submitted that we often encounter a titanic difficulty when we try to define the term politics because it does not have one legally accepted definition but rather a wide range of definitions and acceptable and legitimate meanings; hence, it is a loaded term. Likewise, various scholars note that the definition of politics varies from place to place and context to context (i.e. Rosenberg 1951:6; Stein 2018:1–2). Alexander (2014:247) argues that politics is a confusing subject and, in the last 30 or so years, many writers have put forward hopeful and partial definitions of politics. As such, there are varied disagreements between different definitions of politics.

Books such as *What is Politics?* edited by Adrian Leftwich are ideal examples that reflect the confusion on the subject, as they present a diversity of viewpoints about politics. Leftwich (1984a,b) introduced the book by questioning the definition of politics and admitting that politics raises many further and difficult questions, such as:

Is politics a universal feature of all human societies, past and present? Or is it confined to some types of society only and, if so, which societies and why? Is it possible that some societies have been, are or will be without politics? Is politics tied to certain

sites, which is institutional arenas where it takes place? Is it solely concerned with issues and decisions affecting public policy, that is, the whole society? Or may politics be found in all groups and organizations, large or small, formal or informal? And how, if at all, is it to be distinguished from other social and economic activities? For instance, do wars, civil conflicts and revolutions represent extreme forms of politics? Or are they the result of the failure, or collapse, of politics? Does bargaining between businesses over prices and terms of contracts, or between managers and workers over pay and conditions, count as politics? Or are they simply expressions of economic processes in the form of market forces? Can they be both? And what of discussions in a family as to whether to redecorate the kitchen or go on holiday? Is that politics? Is politics an activity which is confined to the human species alone? (pp. 1–2)

The definitions assembled in the above-cited book contradict the editor's own introductory definition. The editor suggests that politics is about all the activities of cooperation, negotiation and conflict, within and between societies, whereby people go about organising the use, production or distribution of human, natural or other resources in the course of the production and reproduction of their biological and social life. Alexander (2014:274) remarked that the definition is good, but it lacks order, as more or less everything is jumbled together and called politics, which itself is essentially nothing other than a trivial set of activities that is certainly devoid of the importance that Aristotle attributed to it.

For the past decades, politics has been associated with the state and that has kept it in harness. Without the state, politics often seems to be anything and everything. The problem with such conception is that if politics potentially encompasses everything, it can as well amount to nothing. Beard (2000) explained that the word politics is from classical Greek and its original meanings are 'city', 'citizen' and 'civic', but even Greek philosophers such as Plato described politics as 'nothing but corruption'. According to Beard (2000:4–5), the original sense of the word was being concerned with people and the lives they lead in organised communities, as was reflected by George Orwell in his essay *Politics and where do they stand?*, which negatively viewed politics as a mass of lies, evasions, folly, hatred and schizophrenia.

Beard (2000) found defining politics problematic because:

[I]t is very hard to find a vocabulary that describes it neutrally, without connotations, whether positive or negative. How do you describe the opinions of those on the wings of politics? To call a view 'extreme' carries critical connotations; to call a view 'strong' does not necessarily place someone on one of the political wings – those in the centre will claim that their views are 'moderate' when judged on the left/right scale, but are 'strong' in terms of the conviction with which they are held. It seems, then, that all the terms that are used in an attempt to place politicians and their views into categories carry inferences, and that the implications differ depending on who is using them. Some politicians are proud to be seen as having views that place them on the wing of their party. (p. 6)

From several deep and wide discussions about politics in the 20th century, it is agreed that there is certainly no obvious way that one could reconcile any of them. It is in reflecting through the problem of definitions that one can realise that the only way to reconcile submitted attempts is to take steps backwards and consider what is common to all of them (Alexander 2014:273–282). Gunnell (2017:197–198) said that politics can be taken with reference to a specific historical, evolving, dispersed, but socially and culturally circumscribed, particular form of human life, which arguably had a beginning and will possibly have an end as a conventionally discriminated element of social organisation. The other uses of politics are necessarily derivative and metaphorical. Part of the problem with the word politics stems from the fact that it is both a concept in political discourse and a term for describing political life, and finding the means to reconcile the two is problematic. Political practices do not stand still for those who wish to define and analyse politics.

Amongst various opinions that have been recently raised about the meaning of politics, we infer that it is sometimes abstracted as one of the aspects of human relations and interactions in all the different domains of life (Van der Eijk 2018:10). It is also taken as the intersection of power and conflict, covering conflict resolution, governance, conduct and management of public affairs (Jordan 2016:1–2). Therefore, there are multiple perceptions on the meaning of 'politics' and what is 'political'. Peters (1984:24) related fundamental politics to governing, steering or providing direction to the economy and society. Politics is also presented as a complicated marketplace in which people pursue their interests in such a way that they can maximise their benefits and costs, because people are rational agents who are always calculating their interests and advantages, choosing between particular courses of action aimed at achieving desired ends under circumstances where their resources are scarce and their wants many (Weale 1984:86).

Callinicos (1984:53) outlined the Marxist notion of politics as nothing less than class conflict; it also looks at class interests and relative class power in order to explain what happens. Crick (1984:67) defined politics as a distinctive form of rule, citizenship and democracy, whereby people act together through institutionalised procedures to resolve differences, conciliate diverse interests and values and make public policies in the pursuit of common purposes. Swift (1984) conceptualised politics as a notion that is specifically concerned with the state and deals with whether there should be a state, how it should act, what moral principles should govern the way it treats citizens and what kind of social order it should seek to create (Swift 1984:135). Carter (1984:182) asserted that politics is about the way people interact with their social and natural environment.

Generally, when most Zimbabwean Christians hear the word politics, they immediately think of party politics and reserve themselves in fear of getting soiled, usually because of publicised traditional conceptions which portray it as a

virulent, violent and intolerant dirty game (Chikerema & Chakunda 2014:58; Dube 2013:206; Hodzi 2012). In view of the given discussion that depicts the conceptualisation of politics as rooted in complexities, it is imperative to have a contextual definition. In concurrence with Tutu (2017) and Mujinga (2018:246), this article reflects on politics with regard to governance, mobilisation and management of resources for the best of citizens and the nation. With this conceptualisation, we will now reflect on Church and political engagement from the Old and New Testaments, in order to draw lessons for the Zimbabwean context.

The Old and New Testament overviews of Church and political engagement

The Old Testament's fearless prophetic involvement in political affairs

Drawing from different perspectives of politics in Zimbabwe, the discourse of Church and politics is commonly associated with evil. Thus, it is important to start by noting that God is sovereign; hence, he is concerned with politics. One may observe that the Bible begins and ends with God doing what and as he wishes, in infinite power and authority, as the first ruler: setting up the first government, raising and deposing rulers (Dn 2:21), installing his will across the entire Earth (Dn 4:35) on all things (Is 46:11), ruling all nations (Ps 22:28), including kings. Humanity must be awakened to represent him in this broken world as he guides (Olinger n.d.). Although the term 'church' is not explicitly used in the Old Testament, the Greek word *ekklesia*, – translated as Church in the New Testament for a specific gathering of Christians and for all believers or followers together – is used in the Greek translation of the Old Testament, the Septuagint. *Ekklesia* means 'assembly', and it is used with reference to Israel when gathering together to appear before God (Van Ee 2017).

We are well aware of diverging perceptions about the relationship between Israel and the Church (McLain 1986:51–52). Some schools of thought say that the Church has supplanted Israel, as others ruminate that the latter has been set aside and the Church is now in the position of favour previously reserved for the former, whilst others recognise the two as separate entities in God's dealings. In agreement with scholars such as Dahl (1957:154), we argue that Israel was and is the people of God, thus, the Old Testament Church. Our interrogation of Church and political engagement is therefore herein traced from how prophets engaged with kings and related leaders. In his PhD thesis titled 'Chosen Nation: Biblical Theopolitics and the Problem of American Christian Nationalism', Anderson (2010) argued that theology, Church and politics cannot be separated and further depicts Israel as normative for the Church and depicts her election and covenant as God's express embodiment of theopolitics in the midst of nations to show his reign, salvation and invitation for nations to join Israel in submission to him. Israel gradually syncretised her divinely ordained theopolitics with secular politics and abandoned her covenant

and, consequently, fell out of grace, however, God did not abandon her, but he used prophets to turn his people back to him through unwavering prophecies that penetrated all areas of their lives, including politics (Anderson 2010:120–169).

In order to show that the Old Testament Church had a fearless prophetic voice, one must begin by relating the encounters of the prophets with the relative affairs and politics of their times. The authors note, together with Albrektson (1972:48–49), that there were many kinds of prophets in ancient Israel – true prophets who stood outstandingly as word-bearers of God and cultic or professional prophets who were attached to sanctuaries and to the royal court in Jerusalem, who supplied oracles for a fee and tried in innumerable ways to ascertain the will of Yahweh. Although this article's focus is on what true Old Testament prophets did, it is remarkable that all kinds of prophets unequivocally played a part in politics as they engaged with kings and affairs obtaining in their contexts (Albrektson 1972). It is observed by countless Old Testament scholars (such as Bess 1960:12; Mudzudza n.d.:1–2) that prophets had many roles, such as being word-bearers, messengers of God, enthroners (kingmakers) and dethroners of kings in Israel (such as in 1 Sm 9:15–17 and 1 Sm 16:8–13). They were also moral reformers who stood and spoke out against any forms of social injustices that were practised by the wealthy people in society (as reflected in Am 2:6–7 and 4:1, which rebuked social injustices, and Elijah, who rebuked Ahab when Jezebel masterminded the murder of Naboth in an attempt to take his vineyard [1 Ki 21:17–29]). So it is clear that the moral reformers stood for what was right in the eyes of God, without fear or favour of the political leaders of their times.

Strydom (2000:108–118) investigated South African prophetic work in light of the Old Testament book of Micah 2–5. He argued that it is one of the best examples that illustrates the Old Testament prophetic engagement with politics. Micah confronted the political leaders of his times and proclaimed that God would punish them for all the injustices they had committed (Strydom 2000). Some scholars note that the Old Testament prophets were burdened with Israel's persistent disloyalty to God (Janzen 2005:26–27; Wessels 2005). The primary target of the prophets was the people's return and loyalty to the Lord (Janzen 2005:26–27; Wessels 2005). As such, their roles entailed speaking on behalf of God, pronouncing messages of doom, salvation and reconciliation. Whenever need arose, the prophets boldly rebuked people who violated God's will, regardless of who was involved. Examples of prophets who took such stances include Nathan, Amos and Hosea. Nathan rebuked David for adultery and murder (2 Sm 12:4–12), whilst Amos reprimanded those who oppressed the poor and the needy (Am 4:1), and Hosea confronted unfaithfulness (Hs 4:1, 6:6–7). Such prophetic positions portray that the Old Testament prophets fearlessly stood out as the word-bearers of God.

As God's mouthpieces, the Old Testament prophets were always active participants in all the affairs of their contexts

(Famulusi 2018). Hoek (2017:5–10) advanced that the Bible presents amazing examples of God's people tenaciously standing up for just causes, vigorously defending human dignity, sacrificially fending off threats to the vulnerable and leading them into a better inheritance. Moses also stood upon the call of God to liberate Israelites from Egyptian bondage, and Esther played a prophetic role in God's redemptive purpose, fully aware of the potential cost to her own life as she served Jewish people (Hoek 2017). We also find Moses and Esther exemplarily showcasing bold prophetic standpoints in which they defend and advocate for the rights of the destitute. The aforementioned figures embody our argument that the Old Testament prophetic engagements with politics were fearless and firm. Suski (1983:72–74) emphasised Amos' boldness and argued that the politics of his theology affirms that God is the sole and righteous governor of the world who judges the people righteously. Accordingly, the prophet Amos depicted that Christianity is neither restricted to the private or nonpolitical sphere nor to merely ecclesiastical affairs, but it engages in life holistically, by covering politics, economics and other areas (Suski 1983). Bariu (2017:153) complemented this with a submission that the nature and function of Hebrew prophecy is so firm that it confronts and shames actions that compromise the communal good of all or amount to injustices against other people.

Having that in mind, the authors concur with Wax (2013:225–226) that most issues that were confronted by the Old Testament prophets run through our current societies, and they need the Church's prophetic attention as exemplified by Amos, Isaiah, Micah and Jeremiah, who condemned the evils of their times. Amos said that injustice was an offence against God (Am 2:6–7), and Isaiah presented it as grievously offensive against God (Is 3:14–15). Micah condemned luxuries and bribery (Mi 3:9–11), whilst Jeremiah equally confronted the evils of his time (Jr 5:26–28, 9:1–9). Abioje (2010) stressed that the Old Testament prophets stupendously intervened in the institution of the Jewish monarchy by overseeing the enthronement, dethronement and eventual replacement of kings, as well as rebuking any waywardness, as in the case of Saul (1 Sm 9–15) and David (2 Sm 11–12).

Writing from Kenya, Bariu (2017:148) thought that the Church in the African society is increasingly redefining its boundaries in secular engagements. He argues that the thick line that once separated the spiritual from the secular, which allowed for a dualistic view of the world, is constantly being perforated in order to allow a monistic view of the world, where the spiritual and the secular interact seamlessly within the same world. Kasomo (2009:130–131) agreed that the issue of whether the Church should be involved in politics is no longer a debate, as Church and politics are attached. We concur from the Zimbabwean context that the boggling question is not whether the Church should be involved in politics but how and to what extent she can contribute to democratic politics without losing sight of ecclesial mission, vision and credibility. We thus underscore that in the Zimbabwean ecclesiology, the challenge is *how* and *how far*

the Church can engage in political affairs. There is therefore serious need for the Church to rethink and reconsider her missionary role in politics, alongside strategic approaches towards effectively attaining her prophetic role.

The New Testament concept of Church as 'salt and light' (Mt 5:13–16)

Having observed the Old Testament's political engagement, it is remarkable that the New Testament comprehensively integrates with life and alludes to Church and politics in many instances (Cranfield, 1962:5; Punt 2017:2–3). The politics of the New Testament cannot be exhaustively discussed in this piece, because that is not the focus of this article. This section gives attention to the depiction of the Church as the 'salt and light' in Matthew 5:13–16, which says:

Ye are the salt of the earth: but if the salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be salted? It is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men. Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hid. Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.

Matthew 5:13–16 clearly identifies those who should live according to God's will. The audience of the given passage (the disciples) are metaphorically labelled as the 'salt of the earth' and the 'light of the world'. It must be observed that God created salt, which seasons, flavours and preserves food, thus preventing it from decay. Our bodies need salt to be healthy. As Adams (2020:3) observed, the people of God should season and keep this world from rotting. Thus, they are critical to others' lives and the world.

Talking of the light, it is useful in many ways, such as dispelling darkness and lighting the way. If light is absent, chaos may reign (as reflected in Gn 1:1–4). The metaphorical portrayal of believers by Jesus Christ as the salt and light of the earth means that his disciples should be the salt and light of the world (Anthony 2015:265). Christians must therefore be examples of purity, upholding the right standards of life, such as honesty, conscientiousness, morality and diligence in work, speech, conduct and thought (Ogbonnaya 2011:65).

In the ancient and contemporary world, salt has been the most common preservative used to keep things from going bad and rotten. In the world today, the Christian, as the salt of the earth, must keep the Earth from corruption. The present-day Zimbabwean context has been a theatre of social, political and economic evils (Davidson & Purohit 2004:2; Moyo 2014:128–140). The COVID-19 pandemic is being used as a weapon to neuter political dissent, side-line parliament and judiciary services, arrest and detain journalists and civil society leaders (Moyo & Phulu 2021:50). Consequently, political instability, human rights abuses and endemic corruption have been a part of life for many Zimbabweans (The Zimbabwe Peace Project Report 2020:1–10). In such a situation, the Church is expected to stand out and give taste

to the food and light in the darkness of life. The Church should not adjust to the ways and values of secular rules, as the kingdom of God is not for the future but rather a reality whose values must be lived now (Olley, n.d.:2).

Anthony (2015:266) argued that Jesus Christ initially embodied lightness and saltiness with his presence on Earth, so that those who are in the darkness may experience the light. Christ's metaphorical affirmation of his followers as the light and the salt of the world indicates that believers should be reminded of their vocation as the light to this world, which is full of evil such as corruption and injustice.

Bearing in mind that historically Zimbabwean politics have been tragically militarised, intolerant and violent (as indicated by numerous scholars such as Beardsworth, Cheeseman & Tinhu 2019:593; Dzimiri et al. 2014:231–235; Helliker & Murisa 2020:9; Maringira 2021:105), the majority of Christians in Zimbabwe no longer reflect what is good in the presence of evil because of fear of intolerant Zimbabwean politics. The need for a review of the concepts of Christian saltiness and lightness amidst the political darkness in Zimbabwe is long overdue. That is why this section interprets the meaning of being the salt and the light of the world and deliberates on how it can be applied in the Zimbabwean context. Drawing from the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus challenges his disciples to a new way of life in line with the principles of the kingdom, marked by a new righteousness befitting of Jesus' genuine followers, who are also covenant keepers who extend the bond with their Lord to the world (Garlington 2011:748). It is in being and in doing that the Church becomes a useful instrument for the reconciliation and advancement of the world with God. Just as light dispels darkness, shows the way, safeguards people from falling, brings about orderliness and makes what is hidden visible in the physical world, being the salt of the earth and the light of the world means leading by example, influencing, guiding and giving meaning and direction for humanity, which is currently crucially needful in contexts of evil, darkness and confusion, where people do not know what to do. It can be further advanced that, as the salt of society, Christians are tasked to preserve, reconcile, add taste, give meaning where there is no meaning, give hope where there is no hope, prick the conscience of the world and be an irritant to ungodly behaviour (Oyetade 2021:7). By their deeds and words, Christians are therefore called to be the moral antiseptic that keeps the evils of society at bay. In respect to that, the Church should be deeply concerned with the well-being of society by preserving what is good and valuable, whilst curbing what is bad.

Whilst Niringiye (2020) finds the question of responsible Christian political engagement problematic, as Africa has been a playhouse of violence, intolerance and victimisation of dissenting voices since the colonial era, Jesus Christ challenges believers to 'let their light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven' (Mt 5:16). The Church is consequently expected to be exemplary in everything and should contribute

towards curbing the injustice, oppression, exclusion, gross inequalities and corruption that are bedevilling Zimbabwe. It is in that light that Mujinga (2018:248) viewed Church and politics as 'Siamese twins', meaning that the two are inseparable; thus, for the Church, political involvement is necessary and unavoidable (Tshaka & Senokoane 2016). Furthermore, critical decisions about citizenship are made in political circles, so the absence of Christians in politics excludes them from decision-making processes, yet what affects individuals in the civil community does the same in the Christian community. Kritzinger (2007) warned against the privatisation of Christianity, arguing that if Christians who make up the majority of national citizens do not commit themselves to significant processes of people-centred development but continue in their lukewarm and comfortable private Christianities, we should not be surprised when we are left behind in areas of life that we must be involved in. The majority of Zimbabwean Church leaders and congregants have been complaining on various social media platforms that the government omitted the Church from the list of essential service providers during the COVID-19 lockdowns, which resulted in the prohibition of physical church services, thus restricting pastoral care and psychosocial support. Arguably, such exclusion confirms that having no genuine Christian representatives in government would eliminate the Church from influencing decisions, which would eventually affect her and the nation at large.

Matikiti (2009) and Kritzinger (2007:1673–1674) agreed on the importance of Church involvement in politics and reason that Christianity in politics is like truth in the midst of error and lies, righteousness in the midst of a sea of unrighteousness and a spirituality within all our crass materialistic tendencies. The given submission suggests that we should not build a fence, which separates the chosen from the rest, in the mould of 'Jews from gentiles' and Church from politics. The community of Christ is and must be open on every side, because Jesus died for all – even for those yet to believe the gospel. Matikiti (2009) and Kritzinger (2007) argued that we need a consciousness of Christ beyond us, which enables the Christian in society to stand out and give hope to people in need. An exclusivist Christianity that builds walls around itself and neglects involvement in political affairs is therefore retrogressive. It is unfortunate that many Christians have approached politics as outside their primary realm of responsibilities (Tutu 2017). Politics is often viewed as part of the world where people do not show love to their brethren but only do so for their selfish interests. In Zimbabwe, Christian life is much confined to personal life and church activities such as attending prayer sessions, meetings and Bible studies. The involvement of Christians in politics is largely regarded as a move into the secular world. The relationship between Church and politics is wrongly perceived by the majority of today's believers.

Whilst they observe 1 Timothy 2:1–3 by offering supplications, prayers and intercessions for those in authority, most believers misconstrue eschatology. According to Penn (2010:3–4), some Christians read Philippians 3:20, Hebrews 13:14, 2 Peter 3:13

out of context, thereby professing and propelling a school of thought that their citizenship is in Heaven and thus retreating from secular political engagement. Such a perception discourages voting, getting voted into political office and actively standing against political evil or in support of political good. Penn (2010) pertinently explains that Philippi was a city of retired Roman legionaries, and Paul's letter to the Church there was to guide the believers to be heavenly-minded and conduct themselves in Godly ways without succumbing to their contextual political privileges, because Rome was the locus of peace, divine favour and salvation and appeared invincible. Moreover, Roman politics was entrenched in fundamental identities and boundary-marking; hence, the apostolic message indicated a better place in heaven. Politics is not just for politicians, because worldly politics influence our lives whether we like it or not, and as believers are the light of the world and a city on a hill (Mt 6:14–16), they should engage with political affairs in transformative ways.

Biblical wisdom in the book of Proverbs reflects that when the righteous are in authority, people rejoice, but when wicked leaders rule, people mourn (Pr 29:2). If Christians neglect politics, they give room for evil people to enter into governance and allow ills to flow unabated. Insights from biblical Proverbs suggest that what makes politics good or evil is the calibre of the people who get involved in it. If Christians, as the 'salt and light of the world', participate in politics, the citizens will enjoy good governance and decent standards of living. We therefore argue that Zimbabwean Christians ought to get involved in politics and demonstrate what is good for the world eschatologically, as outposts of heaven. Agreeably, Tutu (2017) suggested that the best way to do politics is to uphold Christian principles of truthfulness, faithfulness and honesty, which will see many politicians turning over a new leaf, thereby instituting the desired peace and development.

Summary and conclusion

This article unravelled Church and political engagement in Zimbabwe under the new dispensation. It uncovered that there is an ongoing challenge of clarity on how the Church can engage with the state. The authors traced the historical background of the Church and politics in Zimbabwe and observed that factionalism, economic volatility, corruptibility, hermeneutical weaknesses and theological differences amongst churches have defied ecclesial engagements with politics from the pre-independence era to the present day. It is contended that the prophetic voice of the Church was weakened after Zimbabwe's political independence when suppressive ruling elites used and abused churches as their riding horses for conquest and retention of power. Perceiving that the meanings of the terms 'Church' and 'politics' have been compromised and confused by ruling party politicians and their enablers to brainwash citizens, the definitions were revisited and complexities were unearthed which buttress the article's argument that political engagement by the Church is an ongoing conundrum in Zimbabwe. The Old Testament's fearless prophetic nexus with politics was reviewed, as was the New Testament's reflection of the Church as the salt and the light of the earth (Mt 5:13–16). Our discernment of the

interactions between the Old Testament prophets and kings, as well as the New Testament's metaphoric reflection of believers as the salt and the light of the world, provides a definitive model of holistic ecclesiology that engages with all issues in all areas of life, through which we find that the Church and politics are inseparable. Our reflection on the Old Testament indicates that word-bearers of God should be firm and fearless in living, delivering and applying the word of God in broad terms. This article's New Testament appraisal proposes that the Church must be sound, exemplary and influential towards the conversion and reconciliation of humanity from evil to Godliness. In Zimbabwe's volatile political context of prevalent evils such as selfishness, corruption, intolerance and violence, it is concluded that the Church must rise as the 'salt and light', to engage in politics as ambassadors of God by contextualising the firm, bold and fearless prophetic tenets of the Old Testament. In keeping with the New Testament principles, the Church must season and influence national politics towards curbing injustice, oppression, corruption and other evils that have been haunting Zimbabwe for decades.

Acknowledgements

Competing interests

The authors declare that they have no financial or personal relationships that may have inappropriately influenced them in writing this article.

Authors' contributions

Both authors contributed equally to the writing of this article.

Ethical considerations

This article followed all ethical standards for research without direct contact with human or animal subjects.

Funding information

This research received no specific grant from any funding agency in the public, commercial or not-for-profit sectors.

Data availability

Data sharing is not applicable to this article as no new data were created or analysed in this study.

Disclaimer

The views and opinions expressed in this article are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the official policy or position of any affiliated agency of the authors.

References

- Abioje, P.O., 2010, 'Critical prophecy and political leadership in biblical, African and Islamic worldviews', *Koers* 75(4), 787–810. <https://doi.org/10.4102/koers.v75i4.107>
- Adams, D.D., 2020, *This is our identity: Salt & light*, viewed 07 October 2021, from https://0201.nccdn.net/1_2/000/000/127/0ad/2.9.2020-MESSAGE.pdf.
- Albrektson, B., 1972, 'Prophecy and politics in the Old Testament', *Scripta Instituti Donneriani Aboensis* 6, 45–56. <https://doi.org/10.30674/scripta.67069>

- Alexander, J., 2014, *Notes towards a definition of politics*, viewed 02 September 2021, from <http://repository.bilkent.edu.tr/bitstream/handle/11693/26417/Notes%20towards%20a%20definition%20of%20politics.pdf;jsessionid=987F669486072A0AE994FC506FDD76?sequence=1>.
- Anderson, B.P., 2010, 'Chosen nation: Biblical theopolitics and the problem of American Christian Nationalism', PhD thesis, Marquette University, viewed 18 September 2021, from http://epublications.marquette.edu/dissertations_mu/64.
- Anthony, E., 2015, 'If all Christians were really salt and light (Matt 5:13-16): Corruption would have been eradicated from the world', *International Journal of Arts & Sciences* 8(7), 265–278.
- Bariu, R.M., 2017, 'The function of prophetic forthtelling in Roho Christianity', *European Scientific Journal* 13(35), 146. <https://doi.org/10.19044/esj.2017.v13n35p146>
- Beard, A., 2000, *The language of politics*, Routledge, London.
- Beardsworth, N., Cheeseman, C. & Tinh, S., 2019, 'Briefing Zimbabwe: The Coup that Never was, and the election that could have been', *African Affairs* 118(472), 580–596. <https://doi.org/10.1093/afraf/adz009>
- Bess, S.H., 1960, 'The office of the prophet in old testament times', *Grace Journal* 1(1), 7–12.
- Brunsdon, A.R. & Magezi, C., 2020, 'Fostering embracement, inclusion and integration of migrants in complex migration situations: A perspective from Matthew 25:31–46 and Hebrews 13:1–2', *HTS Teologiese Studies/Theological Studies* 76(2), a5966. <https://doi.org/10.4102/hts.v76i2.5966>
- Callinicos, A., 1984, 'Marxism and politics', in A. Leftwich (ed.), *What is politics? The activity and its study*, pp. 53–66, Basil Blackwell, Oxford.
- Carter, N., 1984, 'Politics as if nature mattered', in A. Leftwich (ed.), *What is politics? The activity and its study*, pp. 182–195, Basil Blackwell, Oxford.
- Chikerema, A.F. & Chakunda, V., 2014, 'Political culture and democratic governance in Zimbabwe', *Journal of Power, Politics & Governance* 2(1), 55–66.
- Chitando, E., 2009, 'Walking with the walking wounded: Black and African Liberation: Theologies in the HIV era', in E. Chitando (ed.), *Troubled but not destroyed: African theology in dialogue with HIV and AIDS*, WCC Publications, Geneva, viewed 11 October 2021, from <https://www.oikoumene.org/sites/default/files/Document/TroubledButNotDestroyed.pdf>.
- Chitando, E., 2011, *Prayers, politics and peace: The church's role in Zimbabwe's crisis*, viewed 17 September 2021, from http://archive.kubatana.net/docs/relig/osisa_prayers_politics_peace_110630.pdf.
- Chitando, E., Taringa, N.T. & Mapuranga, T.P., 2014, 'Zimbabwean theology and religious studies during the crisis years (2000–2008): A preliminary study', *Studia Historiae Ecclesiasticae* 40(1), 173–189.
- Cranfield, C.E.B., 1962, 'The Christian's political responsibility according to the New Testament', *Scottish Journal of Theology* 15(2), 176–192. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0036930600010152>
- Crick, B., 1984, 'Politics as a form of rule: Politics, citizenship and democracy', in A. Leftwich (ed.), *What is politics? The activity and its study*, pp. 67–85, Basil Blackwell, Oxford.
- Dahl, N.A., 1957, 'The people of God', *The Ecumenical Review*, viewed 10 October 2021, from <https://onlineibrary.wiley.com/doi/pdf/10.1111/j.17586623.1957.tb01798.x>.
- Davidson, L. & Purohit, R., 2004, 'The Zimbabwean human rights crisis: A collaborative approach to international advocacy', *Yale Human Rights and Development Journal* 7, 4.
- DeYoung, K. & Gilbert, G., 2011, *What is the mission of the church? Making sense of social justice, shalom and the great commission*, Crossway Pub, Wheaton, IL.
- Dombo, S., 2014, 'Refusing to be co-opted? Church organizations and reconciliation in Zimbabwe with special reference to the Christian alliance of Zimbabwe 2005–2013', *Journal for the Study of Religion* 27(2), 137–171.
- Dorman, S.R., 2002, "'Rocking the boat?'" Church-NGOs and democratization in Zimbabwe', *African Affairs* 101(402), 75–92. <https://doi.org/10.1093/afraf/101.402.75>
- Dube, B., 2021, "'To hell with bishops': Rethinking the nexus of state, law and religion in times of crisis in Zimbabwe", *Religions* 12(5), 304. <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel12050304>
- Dube, T., 2013, 'Engendering politics and parliamentary representation in Zimbabwe', *Journal of African Studies and Development* 5(8), 200–207. <https://doi.org/10.5897/JASD2013.0229>
- Dube, B. & Nkoane, M., 2018, 'The interface of politics and religion in Zimbabwe: Rethinking religious leaders as agents of consecration and repudiation', *Alternation Special Edition* 23, 224–243. <https://doi.org/10.29086/2519-5476/2018/sp23a10>
- Dzimiri, P., Runhare, T., Dzimiri, C. & Mazorodze, W., 2014, 'Naming, identity, politics and violence in Zimbabwe', *Studies of Tribes and Tribals* 12(2), 227–238.
- Familusi, O.O., 2018, 'Prophets as social and political activists: The Nigerian example', in A.O. Dada, J.A. Ayantayo, O.B. Akinbamijo, J.S. Adekoya, O.O. Familusi & S.K. Olaleye (eds.), *Prophecy, politics and power in ancient Israel and the Nigerian context: A Festschrift in honour of the most rev. Dr. G.I. Lasebikan*, pp. 17–32, Zenith Book House, Ibadan.
- Garlington, D., 2011, 'The salt of the earth in covenantal perspective', *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 54(4), 715–748.
- Goronga, P. & Dimingu, C., 2019, 'Political theology of Zimbabwe's land reform: Churches at cross roads in Zimbabwe from 1890–2017', *International Journal of Scientific Research and Management (IJSRM)* 7(1), 417–427. <https://doi.org/10.18535/ijssrm/v7i1.sh01>
- Gunnel, J.G., 2017, 'Political concepts and the concept of the political', *Teoria Polityki* 1, 187–201. <https://doi.org/10.4467/00000000TP.17.0010.6589>
- Gusha, I.S., 2020, 'Exegesis of Romans 13:1–7 and its appropriation to the new dispensation of the Second Republic of Zimbabwe', *HTS Teologiese Studies/Theological Studies* 76(4), a6041. <https://doi.org/10.4102/hts.v76i4.6041>
- Helliker, K. & Murisa, T., 2020, 'Zimbabwe: Continuities and changes', *Journal of Contemporary African Studies* 38(1), 5–17. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02589001.2020.1746756>
- Hodzi, O., 2012, *Sexual violence as political strategy in Zimbabwe: Transitional justice blind spot?*, Oxford Transitional Justice Research Working Paper Series.
- Hoek, M., 2017, 'A biblical theology for a campaigning church', in N. Tween (ed.), *The Prophetic Church*, pp. 3–17, Christian Aid, London.
- Hove, M. & Chenzi, V., 2017, "'Prophets of boom": The Zimbabwean Christian community and contemporary politics', *Insight on Africa* 9(2), 173–195. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0975087817710054>
- Howard, B.N., 2017, *What is this thing called church? The Gospel Coalition*, viewed 02 September 2021, from <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/what-is-this-thing-called-church/>.
- Janzen, W., 2005, *Suffering servants*, viewed 03 September 2021, from <https://www.baylor.edu/ifl/christianreflection/SufferingarticleJanzen.pdf>.
- Jewett, R., 2007, *Romans: Hermeneia – A critical and historical commentary on the Bible*, Fortress Press, Minneapolis, MN.
- Jordan, S., 2016, 'Politics: Basic concepts', in A. Farazmand (eds.), *Global encyclopedia of public administration, public policy, and governance*, pp. 1–2, Springer, Cham.
- Kasomo, D., 2009, 'An examination of co-existence of religion and politics', *International Journal of Sociology and Anthropology* 1(7), 124–131.
- Kritzinger, J.N.J., 2007, "'The Christian in society": Reading Barth's Tambach lecture (1919) in its German context', *HTS Teologiese Studies/Theological Studies* 63(4), 1663–1690.
- Lapsley, M., 1986, *Neutrality or co-option? Anglican Church and state from 1964 until the Independence of Zimbabwe*, Mambo Press, Gweru.
- Leftwich, A. (ed.), 1984a, 'The political approach to human behaviour: People, resources and power', in *What is politics? The activity and its study*, pp. 100–118, Basil Blackwell, Oxford.
- Leftwich, A. (ed.), 1984b, 'Thinking politically: On the politics of politics. Introduction: Argument and issues', in *What is politics? The activity and its study*, pp. 100–122, Basil Blackwell, Oxford.
- Lindsay, T.M., 2000, *The church and the ministry in the early centuries*, Christian Classics Ethereal Library, Grand Rapids, MI.
- Magezi, V. & Magezi, C., 2016, 'An Adamic incarnational Christological framework as a theological approach for African contextual ministry', *Missionalia* 44(2), 153–174. <https://doi.org/10.7832/44-2-111>
- Majome, M.T., 2016, 'Religion, politics and law', *News Day*, viewed 15 October 2021, from <https://www.newsday.co.zw/2016/09/religion-politics-law/>.
- Maringira, G., 2021, 'Soldiers, masculinities, and violence: War and politics', *Current Anthropology* 62(Suppl. 23), 103–111. <https://doi.org/10.1086/711687>
- Matikiti, R., 2009, 'Church and state relations: The contribution of John Calvin to the understanding of church-state relationships in 21st century Zimbabwe', *Studia Historiae Ecclesiasticae* XXXV(2), 205–218.
- Masunungure, E. & Bratton, M., 2018, 'Heal the beloved country: Zimbabwe's polarized electorate', *Afrobarometer policy no. 49*, viewed 02 September 2021, from https://www.africaportal.org/documents/18766/ab_r7_policypaperno49_heal_the_beloved_country_zimbabwe_polarized_electorate.pdf.
- Mavaza, M., 2019, *Unpacking the assassination attempt on apostle talent Chiwenga*, viewed 12 October 2021, from <https://www.zimye.net/2019/06/15/unpacking-assassination-attempt-on-apostle-talent-chiwenga/>.
- McLain, E.C., 1986, *Israel's relation to the church*, viewed 10 October 2021, from https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/pdf/cbtj/02-2_051.pdf.
- McNeal, R., 2009, *Missional renaissance: Changing the scorecard for the church*, Jossey-Bass, San Francisco, CA.
- Mlauzi, K., 2021, 'Passion Java buys Mai Titi and Madam Boss Mercedes Benz vehicles', *Nehanda Radio*, 24 July, viewed 12 October 2021, from <https://nehandaradio.com/2021/07/24/passion-java-buys-mai-titi-and-madam-boss-mercedes-benz-vehicles/>.
- Modebadze, V., 2010, 'The term politics reconsidered in the light of recent theoretical developments', *IBSU Scientific Journal* 4(1), 39–44.
- Moo, D., 1996, *The epistle to the Romans: The new international commentary in the New Testament*, William B. Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, MI.
- Moyo, C., 2019, 'Social media, civil resistance, the Varakashi factor and the shifting polemics of Zimbabwe's social media "war"', *Global Media Journal* 12(1), 1–36.
- Moyo, G. & Phulu, K.I., 2021, 'The weaponisation of the coronavirus crisis in Zimbabwe: Legal and extra-legal instruments', *iBusiness* 13(1), 48–66. <https://doi.org/10.4236/ib.2021.131004>
- Moyo, S., 2014, 'Corruption in Zimbabwe: An examination of the roles of the state and civil society in combating corruption', PhD thesis, University of Central Lancashire, viewed 09 October 2021, from [https://clock.uclan.ac.uk/10965/1/Moyo%20Stephen%20Final%20e-Thesis%20\(Master%20Copy\).pdf](https://clock.uclan.ac.uk/10965/1/Moyo%20Stephen%20Final%20e-Thesis%20(Master%20Copy).pdf).
- Mudzudza, S., n.d., *Old Testament prophets and their roles*, viewed 10 October 2021, from https://www.academia.edu/34049755/Old_Testament_Prophets_and_their_roles.

- Mujinga, M., 2018, "Religion as a riding horse of politics?" A critical evaluation of political influence in the Zimbabwean ecclesiastical life', *Alternation* 23, 244–265. <https://doi.org/10.29086/2519-5476/2018/sp23a11>
- Murwira, Z., 2021, 'President appoints Angel ambassador', *The Herald*, 18 March, viewed 12 October 2021, from <https://www.herald.co.zw/president-appoints-angel-ambassador/>.
- Niringiye, D.Z., 2020, *Responsible Christian political engagement*, viewed 30 August 2021, from <https://christiansforsocialaction.org/resource/responsible-christian-political-engagement/>.
- Nyathi, K., 2021, *Zimbabwe: Koffi Olomide in trouble for 'praising' Emmerson Mnangagwa in new song*, viewed 12 October 2021, from <https://allafrica.com/stories/202108090148.html>.
- Ogbonnaya, J., 2011, 'The church in Africa: Salt of the earth?', in S. Chu Ilo, J. Ogbonnaya & A. Ojacor (eds.), *The church as salt and light: Path to an ecclesiology of abundant life*, pp. 65–87, Wipf and Stock Publishers, Eugene, OR.
- Olinger, D., n.d., *A Christian approach to politics*, viewed 18 September 2021, from <https://www.bjupress.com/pdfs/current-issues-whitepapers/christian-approach-to-politics.pdf>.
- Olley, J., n.d., *Light and salt – Christian participation in society*, viewed 08 October 2021, from http://www.ethos.org.au/site/Ethos/filesystem/documents/In-depth/Politics/Light_and_Salt-John-Olley.pdf.
- Oyetade, M.O., 2021, 'Salt and light in Matthew 5:13–14: A paradigm for democratic sustainability in Nigeria', *Journal of Sustainable Development in Africa* 23(1), 1–10.
- Paradza, K., 2019, 'Kairos consciousness and the Zimbabwean ecclesiology's response to crisis', *HTS Teologiese Studies/Theological Studies* 75(3), a5621. <https://doi.org/10.4102/hts.v75i3.5621>
- Penn, G., 2010, *Eschatology and politics: The last things we want to talk about?*, Cambridge Papers, Jubilee Centre, Cambridge.
- Peters, G., 1984, 'Politics is about governing', in A. Leftwich (ed.), *What is politics, The activity and its study*, pp. 23–40, Basil Blackwell, Oxford.
- Punt, J., 2017, 'The New Testament as political documents', *Scriptura* 116(1), 1–15. <https://doi.org/10.7833/116-1-1280>
- Rosenburg, M., 1951, 'The meaning of politics in mass society', *Public Opinion Quarterly* 15(1), 5–15. <https://doi.org/10.1086/266274>
- Shekhar, K., 2017, 'The concept of the church in Christianity', *Imperial Journal of Interdisciplinary Research* 3(2), 1227–1230.
- Stein, M., 2018, 'What is the "political" in political philosophy?', Presented at the New York State Political Science Association Annual Conference, Staten Island, NY, pp. 1–15.
- Stibbs, A., n.d., *The church of God: Invisible and visible*, viewed 06 May 2021, from https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/pdf/churchman/079-03_194.pdf.
- Strydom, J.G., 2000, 'Being a prophet in the New South Africa: Can we learn from the Old Testament prophets?', *Old Testament Essays* 13(1), 103–118.
- Suski, M.M., 1983, 'Politics in Amos', MA dissertation, Western Evangelical Seminary.
- Swift, A., 1984, 'Political philosophy and politics', in A. Leftwich (ed.), *What is politics? The activity and its study*, pp. 135–146, Basil Blackwell, Oxford.
- The Zimbabwe Peace Project Report, 2020, *Who shall protect the people? When the state unleashes violence on people it is supposed to protect, who shall protect the people?*, viewed 09 October 2021, from <https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/ZIMBABWE%20PEACE%20PROJECT%20JULY%202020%20MMR.pdf>.
- Togarasei, L., 2004, "'Let everyone be subject to governing authorities": The interpretation of New Testament political ethics towards and after Zimbabwe's 2002 presidential Elections', *Scriptura* 85, 73–80. <https://doi.org/10.7833/85-0-937>
- Togarasei, L., 2018, 'Assessing the place of Pentecostal Biblical Interpretation in Zimbabwe's socio political and economic affairs', in F. Machingura, L. Togarasei & E. Ezra Chitando (eds.), *Pentecostalism and human rights in contemporary Zimbabwe*, pp. 21–38, Cambridge Scholars Publishing, Newcastle, WY.
- Torrance, T.F., 2008, *Incarnation: The person and life of Christ*, IVP Academic, Downers Grove, IL.
- Tshaka, R. & Senokoane, B., 2016, 'The Christian politician? An investigation into the theological grounding for Christians' participation in politics', *HTS Teologiese Studies/Theological Studies* 72(1), a3300. <https://doi.org/10.4102/hts.v72i1.3300>
- Tutu, O.A.D., 2017, 'Biblical perspective on Christians participation in politics', *World Wide Journal of Multidisciplinary Research and Development* 3(9), 165–170.
- Van Aarde, T.A., 2016, 'The relation of God's mission and the mission of the church in Ephesians', *Missionalia* 44(3), 284–300. <https://doi.org/10.7832/44-3-117>
- Van der Eijk, C., 2018, *The essence of politics*, Amsterdam University Press, Amsterdam.
- Van Ee, J.J., 2017, *The church in the Old Testament*, viewed 01 August 2021, from <https://www.wscal.edu/blog/the-church-in-the-old-testament>.
- Wax, K.P., 2013, 'The intricate relationship between politics and religion in the Hebrew Bible: The prophet Amos as a case study', Unpublished PhD thesis, Department of Ancient Studies, Stellenbosch University.
- Weale, A., 1984, 'Politics as collective choice', in A. Leftwich (ed.), *What is politics? The activity and its study*, pp. 86–99, Basil Blackwell, Oxford.
- Wessels, W., 2005, 'Return to the Lord your God, for he is gracious and compassionate...' (Jl 2:13). A prophetic perspective on reconciliation and restoration', *Verbum et Ecclesia* 26(1), a226. <https://doi.org/10.4102/ve.v26i1.226>
- Wright, N.T., 1991, *The climax of the covenant: Christ and the law in Pauline theology*, T & T Clark, Edinburgh.
- Zakeyo, M., 2012, 'The church, politics and the future of Zimbabwe', *Religion in the Public Sphere* 8, 211–235.
- ZimEye, 2021, *Passion Java teams up with Zanu PF youth members in Chiyangwa's Indigenous Business Group*, viewed 12 October 2021, from <https://www.zimeye.net/2021/04/25/passion-java-teams-up-with-zanu-pf-youth-members-in-chiyangwas-indigenous-business-group/>.