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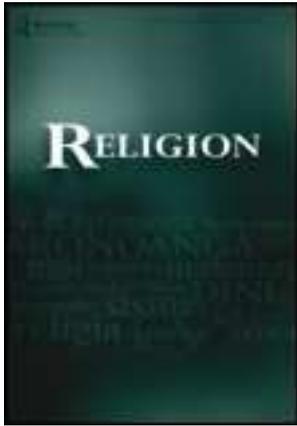
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Gay rights, the devil and the end times: public religion and the enchantment of the homosexuality debate in Zambia

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Gay rights, the devil and the end times: public religion and the enchantment of the homosexuality debate in Zambia

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ABSTRACT This article contributes to the understanding of the role of religion in the public and political controversies about homosexuality in Africa. As a case study it investigates the heated public debate in Zambia following a February 2012 visit by United Nations Secretary General Ban Ki-moon, who emphasised the need for the country to recognise the human rights of homosexuals. The focus is on a particular Christian discourse in this debate, in which the international pressure to recognise gay rights is considered a sign of the end times, and Ban Ki-moon, the UN and other international organisations are associated with the Antichrist and the Devil. Here, the debate about homosexuality becomes eschatologically enchanted through millennialist thought. Building on discussions about public religion and religion and politics in Africa, this article avoids popular explanations in terms of fundamentalist religion and African homophobia, but rather highlights the political significance of this discourse in a postcolonial African context.

KEY WORDS homosexuality; public religion; millennialism; Christianity; human rights; postcoloniality; Zambia; Africa

During a recent visit to Zambia (24–26 February 2012), United Nations Secretary General Ban Ki-moon made a statement about the need for the country to recognise the human rights of homosexuals. This gave rise to a heated public debate on homosexuality and ‘gay rights’ in Zambia, especially on the radio and the Internet.¹ In this debate various opinions were voiced, demonstrating that Zambian people are not all like-minded about these issues. However, the majority strongly rejected Ban Ki-moon’s statement. In one of the dominant discourses that can be distinguished in the debate, Ban is associated with the Antichrist and the Devil, his call to recognise gay rights is interpreted as a sign of the end times, and the United Nations is considered part of a cosmic conspiracy to impose a devilish agenda on Zambia and Africa at large. In this discourse, the issue of homosexuality

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¹In this article I use the term gay rights instead of the more inclusive terms homosexual rights, gay and lesbian rights, or LGBT rights, because gay rights is most dominant in the discourse under investigation.

is enchanted, that is, viewed from a deeply religious worldview characterised by a strong eschatological expectation and by the belief in a cosmic struggle between God and the Devil.

The heated public debate in Zambia following Ban's statement and the overall rejection of his call to recognise gay rights cannot be a surprise to anyone following the news. Issues of same-sex relationships and gay and lesbian rights are central in public controversies and political debates in various African countries. Frequently these controversies and debates receive considerable international attention. Examples are: the introduction of a new Anti-Homosexuality Bill to the Ugandan Parliament in 2009 (still under consideration); the approval of a similar bill in Nigeria (November 2011); the murder of Ugandan gay activist David Kato (January 2011); and the case of two Malawian men, arrested and jailed because of homosexuality-related offences, who were pardoned by the country's president only after the intervention of Ban Ki-moon (May 2010). In the international media and Western public opinions, these cases are often presented as revealing an innate homophobia in Africa. In this representation, the acceptance of homosexuality is a major schism between Africa, as always associated with traditionalism and backwardness, and the liberal and modern West – illustrating Achille Mbembe's argument that Africa serves as a metaphor through which the West develops and publicly accounts for its own self-image (Mbembe 2001: 1–5). The role of religion is often mentioned in media reports about the controversies surrounding homosexuality in Africa. In the perception of secular Western media and publics, religion is almost inherently homophobic, so homophobia in Africa is easily explained with a reference to the vitality of religion on the continent. This tendency can also be observed in scholarly work on the subject. For example, Marc Epprecht, a prominent scholar of homosexuality in Africa, refers in a very general way to African Christian theologians who 'have taken up the cudgels against gay rights' and who 'pepper their attempts to justify discrimination with a small number of verses from the Bible' (Epprecht 2008: 32). My point here is not that this is not true for many African Christian leaders, though there are also African theologians who actually support gay rights (cf. Van Klinken and Gunda 2012), but that little energy is expended in the understanding of the role of religion in the controversies concerning homosexuality in African societies today (perhaps except for the debate within the Anglican Communion, see Hoad 2007; Ward 2002).

In this article I aim to enhance such an understanding, taking the Zambian debate following Ban Ki-moon's statement as a case study. Analysing this debate, my focus is on the above-mentioned eschatological discourse about the Devil and the end times. I do not claim that this discourse is representative of the Zambian public debate as a whole; it is one of the dominant discourses within this debate, competing for example with other, non-eschatological, Christian discourses that also opposed Ban's call but simply by using biblical or theological arguments against homosexuality, as well as with non-religious discourses that responded more positively to Ban's statement from a human-rights perspective. Furthermore, as this is not a comparative study, I do not claim that this discourse in Zambia is also a dominant one in other African countries. It is clear, however, that the association of homosexuality with the Devil and the end times is certainly not unique in Africa (Gunda 2010: 232; Hoad 2007: xii). This association also has precedents outside the continent, in American evangelical discourse (Herman 1997). Precisely because – from an academic outsider's perspective – it

is so extreme, this particular discourse may reveal something about the reasons why homosexuality gives rise to such heated debates and controversies in Africa. As Stephen Ellis and Gerrie ter Haar argue, to understand the role of religion in African politics in the broadest sense, African epistemologies need to be taken seriously even though these include modes of thought and ways of acquiring knowledge unfamiliar to Western observers (Ellis and ter Haar 2007). One characteristic of African epistemologies, as these scholars point out, is that they have a holistic approach to what in the West is distinguished as 'secular' and 'sacred', the visible and the invisible world, and thus also to religion and politics. This article is an attempt to take African epistemologies seriously by investigating the question: How and why does the issue of homosexuality in the Zambian public debate become enchanted in an eschatological discourse about the Devil and the end times? My focus on this specific type of African Christian discourse on homosexuality, which indeed is overtly homophobic, runs the risk of reinforcing the widespread idea of a deeply rooted homophobia in backward Africa. I will try to avoid this pitfall by asking how this type of discourse is produced in the context of postcolonial Zambia, to which forces it responds, what identity it claims, and what anxieties it reveals.

Because the personal is always political, also in academia, let me be clear about my motivations as author of this article. Exploring the above questions, I am motivated on the one hand by a commitment to human rights and a desire for a world in which homophobia no longer exists; on the other, I am motivated by a concern about the Western lack of understanding of expressions of homophobia in Africa. Though I feel deeply uncomfortable with the discourse on homosexuality and gay rights I examine in this article, I think that we have to take seriously this type of religious discourse and the sensitivities, anxieties and concerns it reveals. This may also imply that 'we' in the West have to rethink the politics of human rights, particularly in relation to issues of homosexuality, in Africa and other parts of the world, because the effects can be counterproductive. In the words of two progressive-minded Zimbabwean scholars, Lovemore Togarasei and Ezra Chitando, as long as Western discourses and politics reinforce 'the perception [in Africa] that Africa is being "civilized" or talked down to accept same-sex sexuality, it will remain extremely difficult to make headway in changing attitudes towards same-sex relationships' (Togarasei and Chitando 2011: 122).

Public religion, enchantment and millennial eschatology

As is indicated in the title, this article is informed by the notion of 'public religion'. The term 'public religions' was coined by José Casanova to take into account the trend of the de-privatisation of religion and its renewed manifestation in the public sphere (Casanova 1994). This trend challenged and undermined the secularisation thesis that for years dominated sociology, and it gave rise to the current debates in philosophy, sociology and religious studies about 'post-secularism' (De Vries and Sullivan 2006). As Casanova acknowledges himself, his thesis about the de-privatisation of religion is rather Western-centric. As I just mentioned, in Africa – as in many other parts of the world – religion has never been a private affair and has always conflated with politics and public life. However, the notion of public religion is relevant also outside the West, not simply because religions in Africa and in other parts of the world are 'public', but – more interestingly

– because these public religions relate in dynamic and complex ways to secular regimes of knowledge, power and politics both nationally and globally. Processes of (re-)enchantment, where ‘secular’ issues such as homosexuality and human rights are perceived and responded to from a deeply religious perspective, are part of this dynamic. Since Max Weber’s thesis of *‘die entzauberung der Welt’*, Christianity has been associated in sociological debates with a single narrative of modernity as a linear process of a disenchantment of the world. However, our contemporary world witnesses a ‘desecularization’ (Berger 1999) rather than a disenchantment. Furthermore, historically conversion to Christianity and the resulting quest for modernity did not necessarily lead to rationalisation and disenchantment (Meyer 1996). An interesting contemporary case is Pentecostalism and its manifestation as a public religion in Africa and globally. David Martin has argued that Pentecostalism shows that secularisation theory is no longer suitable to explain the role and place of religion in contemporary societies in our globalising world (Martin 2002). Itself a big term referring to a broad variety of churches and movements, Pentecostalism as a global religion presents a particular challenge to our ‘postsecular’ era, especially to the modernist distinction between religion and politics or the public sphere, through its specific imaginary of the world. As Birgit Meyer points out, it is not only the case that Pentecostal forms of Christianity ‘assume a public presence instead of remaining a matter of private belief; ... current Pentecostals also endorse a view of the world as a site of war between God and the devil, thus instigating enchantment rather than disenchantment’ (Meyer 2010: 115). In Pentecostalism, politics is understood in an eschatological perspective and is seen as a field of cosmological struggle between God and Satan, and thus between the true Christians and the non-believers. Meyer’s study in Ghana has shown how beliefs about the Devil help people to cope with modernity (Meyer 1999), while from research in Nigeria Rosalind Hackett suggests that these beliefs and the eschatological perceptions of the world help people, among other things, to cope with globalisation: ‘Satan is good to think with about local malevolent forces ... as well as global conspirational forces such as the United Nations’ (Hackett 2011a: 123). In postcolonial Africa in the age of globalisation, many countries face political and economic challenges as well as rapid social and cultural change. In this context, Pentecostalism and other vibrant religious movements constitute ‘visible, if ambiguous, sites where new normative systems, new common languages, and the constitution of new authorities are being negotiated’ (Mbembe 2001: 93). The issue of homosexuality, not at least because it is associated with a liberal secular Western agenda imposed on Africa, becomes a battlefield where beliefs about the Devil, the Antichrist and the end times provide a powerful religious language through which people respond to this ‘threat’. This battle takes place in the public sphere which in contemporary Africa is both an ‘open setting for critical debate’ and ‘a stage for ... display of religious identity’ (Meyer 2011: 155).

Although the above paragraph associates discourse about the Devil, the Antichrist and the end times in Africa with Pentecostalism, such a discourse is certainly not restricted to Pentecostal circles. I just used the word ‘eschatological’ to describe this type of discourse, because of its concern with the end times. More precisely, this discourse can be classified as (pre-)millennialist: it is based on the belief in the imminent and dramatic second coming of Christ on earth which marks the end of the present age and the start of a new ‘millennium’ (Weber 2008). The return of Christ, in this line of thought, is preceded by apocalyptic ‘signs of the times’

as described in some biblical passages, such as the rise of false prophets (Matt. 24) and the Antichrist (1 John 2:18). Historically, pre-millennial eschatology has been foundational to Pentecostalism, although Pentecostal movements today are not always characterised by a strong millennialist streak (Poloma 2001). Outside Pentecostalism there are other typical premillennialist Christian movements, such as the Jehovah's Witnesses and the Seventh Day Adventists (Newport 2001; Partridge 2008). As Hackett (2011b) shows in a recent survey, Africa has a long tradition of millennialist groups, Neo-traditionalist, Islamic and Christian (including Pentecostal types). In Zambia, as far as Christianity is concerned, it is noteworthy that the Jehovah's Witnesses and the Seventh Day Adventists are not marginal groups but have a long history and a relatively strong presence (Chuba 2005; Gifford 1998: 186–187). The current Jehovah's Witnesses were earlier known as the Watchtower movement. In colonial Zambia (Northern Rhodesia) in the 1910s and 1920s, the Watchtowers and related movements such as the John Chilembwe Movement and the Mwana Lesa Movement fuelled an upsurge of apocalyptic-millennarian enthusiasm, characterised by anticolonial and nationalist stances (Hackett 2011b: 391–393). Around the time of independence a similar upsurge manifested itself in the Lumpa Church, one of Africa's best-known independent churches, founded by prophetess Alice Lenshina Mulenga (Hackett 2011b: 396–397). It should also be noted that many evangelical missions in Zambia and the churches they have planted (which are now united in the Evangelical Fellowship of Zambia), have their historical roots in 19th- and 20th-century American and British revivalist movements that were inspired by a millenarian missionary drive (Chuba 2005). Furthermore, since the 1970s, Pentecostal Christianity has become increasingly popular in Zambia (Cheyeka 2008). Thus it can be concluded that there are strong millennialist traditions in Zambian Christianity and that a significant part of Zambian Christians can be assumed to be familiar with more or less radical versions of millennialism. Though many millennialist believers (including the Seventh Day Adventists and Jehovah's Witnesses, but generally not Pentecostals) do not participate in formal politics, this article shows how millennialist thought appears in public debates and clearly is political.

Data collection

In this article, I highlight the Internet as an arena of the public sphere where the issue of homosexuality is debated. Of course, many Zambians do not have access to the Internet, and those who have access most likely are part of the more educated middle and upper class of society. Media such as radio, TV and newspapers will reach a wider public. However, the Internet is much more democratic in the sense that people can actively contribute to public debate. This article is based on an analysis of such Internet debates. I have collected data from several Zambian news websites – *Zambian Watchdog*, *Lusaka Times*, *Tumfweko* and *Helo Zambia* – which all provide the opportunity to post comments on articles. This function was actively used in response to the articles about Ban's statement and the following debate. Most people post their comments anonymously, that is, they use fake names (which are sometimes telling in themselves, such as the name 'Zambia is a Christian nation'). In most cases it is impossible to identify the nationality, gender, age or religious affiliation of commenters. Because all websites are specifically Zambian, I assume that most commenters are Zambians (living

in Zambia or abroad) – an assumption that is supported by identification with Zambia in many comments. The comments posted by people who are clearly not Zambians have been excluded from the analysis. When quoting comments, I have maintained the original notation and spelling, including grammatical and clerical errors and capital letters.

Introductory notes on Zambia

Some introductory notes on Zambia need to be made. First, like many other African countries, Zambia has inherited the ‘sodomy laws’ from its former coloniser, Britain. Thus, same-sex sexual activity (or ‘unnatural offences’, as the Penal Code has it) is illegal. Unlike its neighbouring country Zimbabwe, Zambia has never had a strong organisation of gays and lesbians, and there is hardly a visible gay and lesbian community.

Second, in 1991 Zambia was declared ‘a Christian nation’ by the then president Frederick Chiluba – a declaration that later was enshrined in the country’s constitution (Phiri 2003). Far from generally accepted and supported, the declaration of Zambia as a Christian nation has given rise to lively and very public discussions about Christianity’s role in, and relation to, Zambian politics and national identity. At the time, most Pentecostal churches embraced the declaration, while the main-line Protestant churches (organised in the Christian Council of Zambia) and the Catholic Church opposed it, emphasising their belief in a plural society (Hinfelaar 2011). The debate revived in 2003, after the installation of a Constitutional Review Commission (which never completed its task), and recently after the election of long-time opposition leader Michael Sata, a Catholic, as president. Soon after his inauguration in September 2011, Sata appointed a new technical committee to draft the Zambian Constitution, which again makes the notion of Zambia as a Christian nation subject of political, and thus public, discussion.

Third, in the campaign for the presidential elections in 2011, homosexuality was a big issue. The then ruling Movement for Multi-Party Democracy (MMD) accused Patriotic Front (PF) leader Sata of being in support of gay rights and suggested that he, once elected, would not respect Zambia’s status as a Christian nation. There was also much rumour about a story that Sata had told the Danish media that Zambian law recognises homosexuality and that this law only needs to be implemented. Thus, when Ban Ki-moon emphasised the need to recognise the human rights of homosexuals during an official three-day visit to Zambia in February 2012, the political Pandora’s box was re-opened and a heated public debate arose.

Lastly, though little historical and anthropological research has been conducted on the subject, it can be assumed that same-sex practices are not alien to Zambia but did and do exist in Zambian societies. This assumption is supported by some anthropological findings, for example among the Tonga people in Southern Zambia (Colson 2006: 148–169), and by wider research that provides substantial evidence of same-sex practices in various African cultures and societies (Epprecht 2004; Murray and Roscoe 1998). As Marc Epprecht points out in his discussion of sexuality among the Shona people in Zimbabwe (a neighbouring country of Zambia), reproductive heterosexuality was clearly the norm in traditional society but at the same time there was a ‘culture of discretion around sexual matters’ (Epprecht 2012a: 522). Same-sex practices could even have a particular religious significance in the traditional cosmology. What is, however, alien to Zambia and

other African societies is the concept of homosexuality as a sexual identity and a distinct form of sexuality, which is indeed a late-modern Western construct that, in the age of globalisation, is exported all over the world.

Ban Ki-moon's statements on homosexuality

On the first day of his visit Ban Ki-moon gave an address to Zambia's National Assembly in which he made a minor allusion to homosexuality. Referring to the days of the struggles against Apartheid in South Africa and colonial rule in Zimbabwe, when Zambia offered a home to Southern African liberation movements, Ban mentioned that the country has a legacy of democracy and freedom in the region and knows how important it is to stand up for human rights and human liberty. Then he referred to the current constitutional review process as an opportunity for Zambia 'to lead once more by enshrining the highest standards of human rights and protections for all people – regardless of race, religion, gender, sexual orientation or disability' (Ban Ki-moon, 24 February 2012). This statement hardly received attention in the Zambian media. Controversy arose the following day, after a private meeting between Ban and Zambia's first president, Kenneth Kaunda. The *Lusaka Times* website published a summary of this meeting under the title 'Ban Ki Moon calls for respect for homosexuals and lesbians':

United Nations Secretary General Ban Ki-Moon says people with different cultural backgrounds need dignity and respect. Mr. Ban notes homosexuals, lesbians and gays are people whose rights need to be dignified and respected by mankind. ZANIS reports that the UN Chief said this in Lusaka today when he paid a courtesy call on First Republican President and Dr. Kenneth Kaunda at his Office in Kabulonga. Mr. Ban observed and regretted that people's rights were trampled upon instead of being respected. (*Lusaka Times*, 25 February 2012)

That Saturday night, Ban Ki-moon's statement was also the opening of the Zambian National Broadcasting Corporation (ZNBC) TV news. Asked for a response, Rev. Mukuta Mwanza, the executive director of the Evangelical Fellowship of Zambia, stated that homosexuality cannot be accepted because Zambia is a Christian nation. ZNBC News had also sent a camera crew to Livingstone to interview some residents on the streets. In front of the camera, they all condemned Ban's call to recognise homosexuality. Thus, ZNBC published a message on its website, with the header 'Ban's homosexual call rebuffed' (ZNBC, 26 February 2012) – a message that was taken over by the news website Tumfweko under the title 'Zambians Reject UN Secretary General Ban Ki Moon's Call To Recognise Homosexuality' (Tumfweko, 26 February 2012).

The story continued the following day, when Ban Ki-moon paid a visit to President Sata. According to a report from Zambian Watchdog, Ban at this occasion touched on the issue of homosexuality again:

United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon says he knows that the Government of Zambia has formed a principled position in promoting and respecting the human rights of everybody, regardless of age, religion or sexual orientation, in line with the fundamental principles of the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights to which Zambia is a party. Ban Ki-Moon made this revelation when he met president Michael Sata at State House on Sunday. [...] Ban Ki-Moon

added that human beings are born with equal rights and that he has been urging the world leaders of many countries, in particular those where people have been discriminated against, and even punished and criminalized, based on their sexual orientation, to form and uphold principled positions that protect the rights of all. (Zambian Watchdog, 28 February 2012)

Zambian opposition leaders responded, allergic to the suggestion that the government, and indeed President Sata himself, had expressed to Ban Ki-moon a commitment to protect and respect the human rights of homosexuals in the country. They demanded Sata and his government be open about their position. Though the printed newspapers paid little attention to Ban's statements on this issue – perhaps because they are closely related to, or owned by the government – much was written about this on local news websites. The number of visitor comments made on the articles published on these websites is an indication of the commotion caused by Ban's statements among ordinary Zambians. The most commented-on article, published at Tumfweko, had 169 comments within two days after its publication. (To compare, 197 comments were made on the same website's article about Zambia's much-celebrated winning of the Africa Cup of Nations, on 13 February 2012). Various radio programmes also hosted discussion about the topic. In the various media it was often commented that the government was keeping very silent on the issue. Then, on Thursday 1 March, Chief Government Spokesperson Fackson Shamenda organised a press briefing in Lusaka. In an attempt to calm down the commotion, he said that the laws of the country are very clear that homosexuality is not allowed, and that the PF government has more important issues than amending the law to allow for gay rights (*Lusaka Times*, 1 March 2012).

Framing the issue: the Devil, the Antichrist and the end times

One of the respondents in the ZNBC News item of 25 February was introduced as an elder of the Livingstone Seventh Day Adventist Church (SDA). In his response he referred to the end times. As ZNBC later summarised it: 'Elder Cleverson Mweemba even quoted scripture from the Bible against the homosexuality and has called on Christians to draw closer to God saying the end is near' (ZNBC, 26 February 2012). The following day, Zambian Watchdog took this for the header on top of an article, rendering it as: 'SDA says call by Ban Ki-moon to respect gays a sign that end is near' (Zambian Watchdog, 26 February 2012). Thus in no time at all, the issue of homosexuality and gay rights was eschatologically enchanted in the public debate. This enchantment consists of two aspects: first, the identification of the incident as a 'sign of the end times', and second, the identification of Ban Ki-moon with the Antichrist and the Devil.

The above-quoted SDA elder interprets Ban's call as a sign that the end is near. Many commenters on various websites also express this view. Some simply make brief statements such as: '[W]hy promote unnatural acts? woe to those who call evil good. truly the end is near ...' (Deliverer, 26 February 2012). Others extensively quote passages from Scripture about the end times, such as Matt. 24 and 2 Peter 3, in order to argue that the incident fits in a biblically prophesied eschatological pattern. The identification of certain historical events as 'signs of the end times' is a characteristic of millennialist religion. The imminent coming of Christ is believed to be preceded by certain signs, and the task of the true Christian is

to decipher these signs. To discern the signs of the end times in the here and now is a hermeneutical activity in which certain incidents and events are invested with eschatological significance, often inspired by certain biblical texts. As one commenter puts it: 'If you take time and read Matthew 24, you will understand that the devil is working overtime now because we're in the critical times. You won't see him (devil) physically but he'll work through people like the SG' (Mebo, 26 February 2012). The hermeneutics of deciphering the signs of the end times focuses, among other things, on exposing and identifying false prophets (see Matt. 24) and antichrists (see 1 John 2:18) who will be particularly active in the last days, causing confusion in the world and stirring up people against God and God's Word. They are considered servants of the Devil in the cosmological war between God and Satan that becomes more intense when the end of the world becomes closer. Therefore, in most comments, not just Ban's message is interpreted as a sign of the end times, but also Ban himself.

Various media reports about his statements suggested that the UN Secretary General has a hidden mission to promote homosexuality. The most sensational header, on the news website *Helo Zambia*, was: 'Ban Ki Moon reveals real reason he is in Zambia.' The article opens as follows:

We all suspected that the visit by United Nations Secretary General Ban Ki-Moon to Zambia had something hidden. ... Why is Ban Ki-moon in Zambia not in Senegal where a civil war is about to break out or in Syria where soldiers are killing civilian in hundreds every day? What is so special about Zambia? Well, on Saturday, he revealed his really mission and like we all suspected, he is here to promote homosexuality. (*Helo Zambia*, 25 February 2012)

Reference was also often made to Ban's recent address to the African Union, in January 2012, in which he had also called upon African political leaders to respect the human rights of sexual minorities. Framing the idea of Ban Ki-moon having a special mission to promote homosexuality in millennialist terms, many commenters suggest that he is a false prophet whose message should alarm us. See, for example, the following quote:

Of course homosexuality has always been there and it is an old practice. The question you should ask yourselves is 'Why the call to respect it and those who practice it now'. if you want to see that it is not an ordinary call, just Look at the position of the man who is flying around preaching that message. Mark his words, he said that is one of his key messages or responsibility as he is flying around. His visit is not complete without that message. And then you say there is no need for alarm. (*Mweemba*, 28 February 2012)

Other commenters are more explicit in their statements, such as that Ban Ki-moon is 'devil's agent to satanize Zambia' (Andrew mwila, 25 February 2012) and that his message is a 'demonic attack on Zambia' (Wantanshi, 27 February 2012). According to one commenter, 'this Ban Ki Moon is an antiChrist who wants evil practices against our religion and traditional culture' (Chiwempala, 28 February 2012). The latter quote is somewhat ironic, as Antichrist here is accused of offending 'traditional culture', while in African Christianity (elements of) traditional cultures itself are often associated with the Devil (Meyer 1999).

Not only Ban Ki-moon as an individual, but also the organisation he represents is associated with demonic forces. The UN is said to be possessed by 'the spirit of antichrist' (Lee, 27 February 2012) and people 'see the devil at work through the

UN and other organisations' (Guardianer, 28 February 2012). The reason is simple: 'Justifying human wrongs as HUMAN RIGHTS is ANTI-CHRIST. UN the beast is trying to DEVOUR the Earth' (The same, 27 February 2012). Where in this comment the misinterpretation or abuse of human rights by the UN is considered evil (and is associated with the apocalyptic image of 'the beast', see Rev. 13), a few other commenters seem to reject human rights categorically. Thus, they post statements such as: 'Arise and pray hard to kick out the devil coming in human form or ideologies. Human rights where, on earth or where. NEVER' (Ngooyu AntiChrist Aawa, 27 February 2012).

In some comments all international organisations and Western political leaders are also considered to be representatives of the Antichrist and agents of the Devil, because they all support the same 'devilish' agenda. A global conspiracy is even suggested, for example, by someone who argues that the world is controlled by the Bilderberg Group. Referring to the members of this group, who in his opinion are in charge of organisations such as the UN, the World Health Organisation, the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank, he points out that 'THESE POEPLER HAVE GOT A LOT OF MONEY AND WANT EVERYONE TO WORSHIP THE DEVIL BY FORMING A NEW WORLD GLOBAL LEADERSHIP THATS WHY THEY ARE BUSY PROMOTING GAYSIM [gayism, a popular word in Zambia used for homosexual practice], PROSTITUTION, HOMOSEXIAL ... etc' (Ras, 29 February 2012). International organisations and Western leaders have set their mind on Zambia, it is suggested, because 'they know that Zambia is the heart of Africa, and once they defeat Zambia then Africa will bow to this evil image' (Guardianer, 29 February 2012). Because Zambia is a Christian nation, the country 'definitely is under a vicious attack by the forces of darkness' and 'the who is who of the world finds Zambia an attractive destination of choice!' (Wantanshi, 26 February 2012).

In the website comments it is frequently suggested that President Sata had deliberately invited and encouraged Ban Ki-moon to make a statement about gay rights. The controversial statements of Ban only a few months after Sata's inauguration, as well as the initial silence of the government, would reveal a hidden agenda of the new PF government. For many commenters it is now evident that Sata, like Ban, is an agent of the Devil: 'DEATH is now smelling on the Zambian Leader Michael Chilufya Sata because he claimed that he was going to rule the nation with 10 commandments BUT now we all know that he is actually an anti-Christ, satanist, homosexual and full of abomination' (Chola Mwenya, 28 February 2012). Because Sata is a Catholic, and because the Catholic Church is critical of the constitutional declaration of Zambia being a Christian nation, various commenters suggest that not only Sata and his PF government but also the Catholic Church is part of the conspiracy that wants to promote homosexuality in Zambia. 'Sata and his catholic knew about this agenda, no wonder they are mute' (Evangelist, 27 February 2012). Some commenters even consider the Vatican as one of the international organisations participating in the global conspiracy 'to worship the devil through homosexual rights' (Shameless, 28 February 2012), which is an actualised version of the age-old Protestant identification of the pope with the Antichrist.

End-time attitudes towards homosexuality

For all commenters who frame Ban Ki-moon's call to recognise the human rights of homosexuals in an eschatological perspective, homosexuality and gay rights are

evil things that can only be part of the Devil's agenda. However, in spite of this shared perception they express different responses and attitudes. The most common response is one of resistance. Most commenters take a firm stance against Ban's call. They call on all Christian brothers and sisters in the country, or even on all Zambians, to be strong, to resist the international pressure to recognise gay rights, to protect Zambia's status as a Christian nation and to oppose this demonic attack. If this means that Zambia will lose donor funding from the West, so be it: 'In Zambia we are not going allow this bushits if it means to die with poverty its okay will die than supporting nosense from the UN CHIEF.The world is coming to an end & this the only time to know God & undestand the bible ...' (Ban wanya, 27 February 2012). In the last days in which we are living, it is suggested, Christians must be ready to fight a spiritual battle, and Ban's statement is an indication that the battle has begun. This is a cosmological war between good and evil, between God and the Devil. In order to be strong in the battle and to protect the nation for further demonic attacks, various commenters invoke the spiritual power of the 'blood of Jesus'. In a performative speech act, they 'speak the blood of Jesus over Zambia':

This battle is spiritual ephesians 6:10-17 and is targeted to keep nations under the kingdom of darkness, thank God Jesus Christ has already overcome on the cross of calvary and we know what the end result in revelation is, the war has already been won through Jesus Christ, Lord forgive Zambia for every door that has been opened to this abomination, we speak the blood of Jesus upon our nation, upon all Zambians ,on the blogs and on every thought and mouth that does not glorify God in the mighty name of Jesus to which every knee shall bow. (Zambia shall be saved, 1 March 2012)

Such a speech act can only be understood in relation to the spiritual power attached to the blood of Jesus in a typically Pentecostal worldview. Here, Jesus' blood is not just a means for individual salvation but also a weapon in the war with Satan: 'it is very acidic and it neutralize[s] every work of the evil one' (quoted in Marshall 1995: 264). Indeed, one commenter suggests that through the blood of Jesus 'abominations shall not be allowed in Zambia' (Prevailing Prayers, 4 March 2012). Prayer and fasting are also considered primary means of resistance. Several commenters call for a time of fasting and prayer for the nation under attack: 'To all God fearing christians please take time to seriously fast and pray for our nation like Esther did, God hears and answers prayers, the prayers of the righteous are powerful and effective' (Zambia is a Christian nation, 28 February 2012). With regard to the specific purpose of this fasting, one commenter suggests to fast *for the sake of* Ban Ki-moon, in order for him to be delivered from his demonisation, while another commenter calls to fast *against* Ban Ki-moon in order for him not to find a hearing in Zambia. Yet other commenters mention fasting either as a demonstration of repentance for the nation (quoting from the Bible, Joel 2:12), as a weapon so that all governments who want to promote gay rights will fall in Jesus' name, or as an intense instrument of prayer to God that his hand will continue to protect Zambia. However, it is clear that for all these commenters fasting is an important spiritual means in the battle over gay rights. The discursive deployment of these techniques, as well as the attitude of resistance this reveals, may be more associated with Pentecostal Christians than, for example, with the Seventh Day Adventists and the Jehovah's Witnesses. Though the latter groups

also pray and may fast, they are not known for using this as weapons in any spiritual warfare with Satan.

The attitude of resistance is typically millennialist, since millennialism is characterised by a strong good–evil dualism and a related ‘narrative of violence’ (Partridge 2008: 201). The forces of evil, that are believed to become stronger in the end times, have to be resisted by the faithful and will, eventually, be overthrown by Christ. The narrative of violence is reflected in many of the website comments, and one may wonder whether this indeed gives rise to violent attitudes toward homosexuals. This question needs further investigation, as little research has been conducted on homophobic violence in Zambia or more widely in Africa (except for South Africa, where ‘corrective’ rape of lesbian women and violence against gay men has been documented; Msibi 2009). I have not heard about cases of violence against presumed homosexuals in Zambia in the period after Ban’s visit, and it might be that homophobia in this country – often praised for its peaceful nature – does not lead so much to physical violence. However, homophobic language, especially the millennialist discourse discussed in this article, is a form of hate speech that is violent in itself as it dehumanises people, easily leads to discrimination and, also in Zambia, to criminalisation; it also potentially incites physical violence (Reddy 2002). When the website Tumfweko reported in June 2012 that two gay men in Nairobi, Kenya, had been stoned to death by a mob, several commenters applauded and legitimated this by referring to the ‘satanic acts’ in which these men had indulged themselves (Tumfweko, 18 June 2012), which illustrates the blurry line between violent language and (the legitimation of) physical violence.

While most commenters call for resistance against the global pressure to accept gay rights, some commenters demonstrate a different attitude. They suggest that moral degeneration is an inevitable phase of the end times. In their opinion, since the Bible has prophesied that false prophets will come and be successful in bringing confusion, resistance does not make sense. Thus, they post comments such as:

Nobody will do anything to stop the UN from achieving their goal. Development comes with its consequences, Jesus is about to return and the prophesy must fulfilled before he returns. (Nicolas Cross Kapelelwa, 26 February 2012)

[W]hat we should have come to understand by now is that the world is coming to an end. Whether we like it or not homo rights will one day be accepted and practiced openly.lets just work on our salvation and stop wasting time on things we can not prevent from happening. (Gerald, 22 March 2012)

At first sight, these quotes reveal a more *laissez faire* attitude in which individual salvation is more important than political resistance. However, these quotes may reflect the tendency of some millennialist groups, such as the Jehovah’s Witnesses and the Seventh Day Adventists, to withdraw from society as much as possible in order to await the coming of Christ with the true faithful – something that, of course, in itself is a highly political act.

Yet another response can be distinguished, which also considers homosexuality evil but yet challenges the homophobia expressed in many other comments.

In short homosexuality is an evil just like jealousy but the remedy does not lie in discrimination/ harsh judgement. if we are christians we should pray for and counsel the homosexuals. indeed the end times are near and therefore let’s hold

fast to our faith in the lord ... showing love and compassion to all mankind!
(Commander Zero, 27 February 2012)

The end-time argument is used here not to strongly oppose gay rights, but to call upon Zambians *not* to discriminate and judge homosexuals – rather to show a truly Christian attitude of love and compassion. In view of the prevalent discriminatory attitudes, another commenter concludes that the ‘majority of christian zambians are actually devils’ because if they were true Christians they would love the sinners (Janet c, 1 March 2012). A similar reverse of the argument can be found in comments that refer to Zambia’s status as a Christian nation, not to argue that homosexuality can never be accepted in the country but to question the ‘hate speeches’ about, and judgements of, homosexuals. ‘What kind of Christian nation is Zambia, we are not a christian nation because if we were and follow the teachings of Jesus of love your neighbor as you love yourself some of you would not even think of saying bad words about our brothers and sisters who are gays’ (Mushe, 27 February 2012). It is interesting to see that the Christian-nation argument is used to make completely different cases. This illustrates that the Christian-nation ideology empowers people to comment on public and political issues but does not help to promote national unity, because in Zambia Christianity itself is also subject to differing interpretations, even when it comes to homosexuality.

The latter attitude, which demonstrates a more or less non-discriminatory, tolerant and sometimes progressive stance on the issue, is not representative of the website discussions. They show that there is variety in the opinions about homosexuality among Zambians, and that there is a public debate about this on the Internet. However, these debates clearly reveal the dominance of arguments against homosexuality and of homophobic attitudes. It has become clear above how these arguments and attitudes are informed by millennialist beliefs about the Devil and the end times. How, then, can this discursive framing of the debate on homosexuality be understood?

Political significance

The above analysis of the website discussions has shown how in the Zambian public debate the issue of homosexuality has become enchanted. Where Ban Ki-moon represents a secular human-rights discourse, the response to his call is shaped in a deeply religious discourse. People not only use religious arguments against homosexuality – for example by quoting biblical passages against same-sex practices – but they respond with strong emotional and violent language that reflects their millennialist view of the world.

For many people in the West, the appearance of ‘pre-modern’ religious notions of the Devil, the Antichrist and the end times in debates about a ‘modern’ issue such as homosexuality will reinforce their idea of a backward and traditional Africa. For scholars of religion, however, especially those with post-secular sensitivities, it is not satisfying to explain, or better to explain away, this type of discourse by referring to the role of religion, in this case ‘fundamentalist’ forms of Christianity, in pre-modern societies. First, such an explanation ignores the fact that this Zambian discourse in many ways resembles American Christian Right discourse about homosexuality and gay rights. Among conservative evangelical Christians in the United States, ‘the gay agenda’ is also considered to be ‘the devil’s agenda’ (Herman 2000).

Moreover, there is much suspicion of the United Nations among these Christians; the UN is associated with the Antichrist and is considered a major threat to the Christian character of the United States, because it would promote socialism, feminism and, indeed, gay rights (Herman 1997). These parallels are not surprising, since American evangelical Christianity has a strong pre-millennialist tradition. My point here is not that there is a direct link between this American discourse and the way Zambian Christians talk about homosexuality (although the existence of such a link cannot be ruled out). My point, however, is that as much as American evangelicals are not pre-modern but rather engage with and respond to 'modernity' in complex and ambiguous ways, the Zambian discourse outlined above needs to be analysed as a way of engaging 'modernity'. Second, such an explanation does not take seriously this type of discourse and the worldview it reflects, the people who represent it and the concerns they have. Even though a similar discourse can be found in North America (and perhaps also elsewhere), the challenge is to identify the contextual social and political meaning of these religious discourses. As Ellis and ter Haar point out with regard to new religious groups, such as Islamic renewal and Pentecostal revival movements, which affect many parts of the world, such movements may have a unique 'political significance in an African context, where there are deeply rooted concepts of power which tend to merge the religious and the political, and [they] acquire a specific public role when the institutions of state have rotted away' (Ellis and ter Haar 1998: 178). Applying this to the millennialist discourse on homosexuality as examined here, the challenge is to identify its political significance in the context of postcolonial Zambia.

In the introduction I referred to Meyer and Hackett who point out how in African Pentecostal circles eschatological expectations and beliefs about the Devil help people to cope with issues and challenges related to modernity and globalisation. The above case study offers an illustration of their thesis (although the case study is not limited to Pentecostalism). The website discussions show that homosexuality and gay rights for many commenters are modern Western issues that, in their opinion, are imposed on Africa. The comments often reflect the popular idea in Africa that homosexuality is un-African and a Western invention. This idea is directly reinforced when Ban Ki-moon, as the head of an international organisation that itself is an institutionalised form of globalisation, calls for the recognition of the human rights of homosexuals in Zambia. It is experienced as a threat to Zambia's status as an independent nation that governs its own affairs, and it is interpreted in relation to a long history of Western colonialism and neo-colonial imperialism in Africa. These postcolonial sensitivities are clearly reflected in the following comment:

yes I am emotional and I have the right to be emotional, it's my country and my continent my people. 150 million Africans were killed during slave trade, no one apologized nor repaid the continent for that. In the twentieth century the IMF and world bank put up policies that crippled many an African nations economy, we were never repaid for that. The UN allows for unfair trade policies towards Africa and south America and this MOON cows and talks about men have sex with men really! (Mwanawakwitu, 25 February 2012)

It is important to remember here that Ban's statement on homosexuality in Zambia is not an isolated case. Many commenters draw a connection to his

earlier call upon African political leaders, in a summit of the African Union, and to recent declarations of Western political leaders such as British Prime Minister David Cameron and US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton. In October 2011, Cameron had threatened to cut the development aid given to countries in the British Commonwealth that do not respect 'proper human rights' of gay and lesbian people, and in December 2011 Clinton had announced that the United States would make the defence of the human rights of LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender) people a priority of its foreign policy. These cases indeed indicate that issues of homosexuality have become central on the agenda of Western international politics, particularly in relation to Africa. The unintended effect, however, is that in Zambia and other African countries gay rights – and human-rights discourse more generally – are viewed as a 'not-so-subtle form of Western neo-imperialism' (Epprecht 2012b: 228). For people in Africa sharing a millennialist worldview, millennial eschatology offers them a powerful – and at times violent – language through which they understand and respond to the international (that is, Western) pressure to recognise gay rights. To claim that gay rights are a sign of the end times, and that Ban Ki-moon and the organisation(s) he represents are the Antichrist promoting the Devil's agenda, is not just a religious but also a highly political statement. Actually, such an identification can be considered a form of postcolonial resistance. Unfortunately, this is a resistance 'from the margins' that creates new marginalised and excluded groups.

One may wonder what precisely is at stake in the millennialist discourse about homosexuality outlined above. This question calls for a closer discussion of the general remarks on modernity and globalisation made above. If beliefs about the Devil, the Antichrist and the end times help people to cope and engage with 'modernity', what are the clashes with modernity and the globalising world order that are revealed in the Zambian public debates? Here I would like to make three suggestions.

First, the millennialist rhetoric clearly reveals a clash with modern Western perceptions of homosexuality and the subsequent politics of gay rights. As mentioned in the introductory section, same-sex practices are not alien to Zambia but were to a certain extent tolerated in the culture of discretion around sexual matters that characterised many traditional African societies. In this culture, 'acts which were forbidden in theory could be tolerated as long as the community was not compelled to pay explicit attention' (Epprecht 2012a: 522). In other words, same-sex relationships could exist as long as they were not publicly manifested, because this would undermine the norm of reproductive heterosexuality. The call of Ban Ki-moon, which represents the broader discourse and politics of gay rights advocated by many Western governments and non-governmental organisations, threatens the culture of discretion, making same-sex practices an issue of identity politics and individual rights, and making it impossible for the community to avert its eyes. This cultural clash of traditional and modern understandings of sexuality is reflected, for example, in the following comments:

We know those homos and lesbians have always been part of our society. They do their acts in secrecy and we are ok with that. If they dare come out in the open to advance their evils, we will deal with them ruthlessly!!!! (Mambala, 25 February 2012)

As far as I am concerned, gays are treated as humans as long as they keep their reprobate lifestyle hidden; but where they demand for their demonic activities to

be made legal, it is a big NO – UNACCEPTABLE in Africa! (Amazworld, 25 February 2012)

Foreign pressure to recognise publicly homosexuality as an acceptable form of human sexuality and thus as an alternative to reproductive heterosexuality may be counter-productive: instead of averting its eyes the community is now forced to speak out against 'immoral' same-sex practices publicly. In this context, millennialist beliefs provide people with a powerful language to speak out and demonise homosexuality away, into the secret again. A second suggestion on what is at stake in the millennialist discourse in the Zambian public debate on homosexuality is related to the first, but is more specifically about gender. Because of its dualistic nature, millennialist thought is much concerned with (dis)order and (im)purity. Everything that upsets the 'normal', 'natural' and 'pure' order of things is perceived as a sign of the end times, and there is a strong belief in the eschatological promise of a restored order. As a consequence, millennialist thought is also much concerned with issues of gender and sexuality. As Catherine Keller points out: 'The dualism of the apocalypse presupposes the hierarchy of one gender over the second, and the hierarchy of two genders presupposes the taboo against homosexuality. ... [I]f sex, like the primordial serpent, can slither within and between the sacred sex/gender boundaries indiscriminately, the world falls down' (Keller 1996: 263). Thus, millennialist thought is concerned about everything that threatens the patriarchal and heteronormative order – a concern that in fact reveals a deep anxiety. Evangelical Christian discourses in the United States, in which homosexuality is seen as an apocalyptic sign announcing the end of the world, can be interpreted as 'the effect of a crisis in identity, particularly over the construction of gender and sexuality' (Long 2006: 54). This raises the question whether a similar interpretation may apply to the Zambian discourse examined here. Interestingly, it has been argued that the current rise of homophobia in Africa in fact is a neoconservative response to modern gender discourses that challenge and destabilise traditional understandings of manhood and men's position of superiority (Msibi 2011; see also Van Klinken 2011). Many website comments present a rhetorical strategy in which homosexuality is discredited and heterosexuality – and thus patriarchy – is reaffirmed. Key to this strategy is the association of homosexuality with the Devil or the Antichrist and the emphasis on the 'right', that is heterosexual, order of God's creation, such as in the following quote: 'Homosexuality is demonic and is not of God therefore should neither be tolerated nor accepted in our CHRISTIAN nation. ... It is morally wrong and from the pit of hell. God made Adam and Eve not Adam and Steve' (Voice of reason, 29 February 2012). Many comments have an explicit apocalyptic streak, suggesting that humankind will come to its end when homosexuality is accepted, or referring to the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah by God because of same-sex activity (Gen. 19). The intersections of gender and sexuality need further exploration, but it could well be that the millennialist rhetoric on the websites is informed by a strong concern about the threat represented by 'gay rights' to the patriarchal order in Zambian society – an order that already is being undermined by modernisation, poverty and HIV/AIDS – and thus in fact reflects a 'crisis of masculinity' in Zambia.

Thirdly, what is at stake is nothing less than Zambia's constitutional Christian nature that is perceived to be under serious threat. It is important to note here that in Zambian public debates not only homosexuality but also some other topics are framed in a millennialist discourse. A search of the website Tumfweko

(which has the best search function), reveals that rhetoric about the end times, the Antichrist and the Devil mostly appears in comments on homosexuality-related articles, but also in posts about Islam and the Catholic Church. In the Zambian context, people who defend the constitutional declaration of Zambia as a Christian nation consider both Islam and the Catholic Church as a threat and enemy: Islam, because it is a small but growing religion in Zambia, and the Catholic Church because it rejects and actively opposes the Christian-nation declaration. For example, in an article reporting that the archbishop of Lusaka had described this declaration as 'non-sensical', one commenter asked rhetorically: 'DOESN'T THAT SOUND LIKE A MESSAGE FROM ANTICHRIST? Is it BISHOP or ANTI-CHRIST? OR BISHOP against CHRIST? Just a question' (JS, 15 April 2012). For the defenders of the declaration, Christianity is central to Zambia's national identity. Everyone who questions this form of religious nationalism, and everything considered a threat to Zambia's Christian character, is directly associated with the Devil, who in these end times is believed to be particularly concerned with attacking Zambia as a Christian nation. In many comments the Christian-nation argument is also used to argue that homosexuality can never be accepted in Zambia. As for many Christians all over the world, most Zambian Christians consider homosexuality unbiblical. This perception combined with the political concern about Zambia's character as a Christian nation and a sense of millennialist thought provides an ideal basis for the discourse on homosexuality and gay rights outlined above. At this point it is important to remember the specific political context in which the debate occurred. As mentioned in the introduction, Zambia has recently gone through a political transition when the MMD candidate, incumbent president Rupiah Banda, painfully lost the presidential elections from the long-time PF opposition leader Michael Sata. Sata won the elections even though the 'trump card' of homosexuality was played against him in the campaign, which indicates that most Zambians considered other issues more important when casting their vote. Yet in the days after Ban Ki-moon's statements, the MMD and another opposition party, the United Party of National Development (UPND), were quick to resume the strategy also used in the election campaign, associating Sata with a Western gay-rights agenda and suggesting that the character of Zambia as a Christian nation is not safe with the PF government. As mentioned above, several commenters – most likely supporters of the MMD or UPND – considered not only Ban but also Sata and his government to be agents of the Devil and part of a satanic conspiracy. Thus, the case study shows how the issue of homosexuality, precisely because it has become such a symbol in international politics, is used within the local Zambian political game, and how references to the Antichrist and the Devil can be understood as part of this game.

Conclusion

The role of religion in the recent public controversies about homosexuality in various African countries is widely acknowledged. Contributing to the understanding of these controversies, in this article I have highlighted and explored a particular line of religious thought that has so far received little attention. The case study of the public debate in Zambia following Ban Ki-moon's call to respect the human rights of homosexuals demonstrates the vitality of millennialist eschatological beliefs and the underlying worldview. Millennialist thought is part

and parcel of various Christian groups in Zambia and more widely in Africa, such as the Jehovah's Witnesses and the Seventh Day Adventists, and is also part of the theological repertoire of Pentecostal Christianity. It has become clear how indeed this line of thought is a religious epistemology, informing the way people understand and respond to issues of homosexuality and gay rights. As an effect of this epistemology, the homosexuality debate becomes eschatologically enchanted. This enchantment, more than the mere fact that people's religious beliefs do not allow homosexuality, may explain why the public debate about homosexuality in Zambia is so intense. Further comparative research is needed to investigate the role of millennialist thought in the debates about homosexuality in other African countries; further research is also needed to explore the differences in millennialist thought between various Christian traditions as well as the way these impact on the response to issues of homosexuality and gay rights.

Millennialist eschatology can be considered one of the 'forms of new political language' that is found on the ground – or, in this case, on the web – in African societies today (Marshall 1995: 243). The challenge is to understand the political significance of this language. In this article I have highlighted the aspect of postcolonial resistance to what is experienced as a Western neo-colonial imposition of a secular liberal gay-rights agenda on Zambia and more broadly on Africa. Where an emerging homonationalism has been observed in the West,² in Zambia and other African countries we can speak of an emerging anti-homonationalism. Here, the rejection of homosexuality and the opposition to gay rights is central to the constitution and defence of a national identity that, in Zambia, is literally defined as Christian. Much can be said about the complex background of this development and the socio-economic, cultural and political factors that play a role, such as the deep imbrication of materiality and morality, as well as the divergent understandings of human rights and democracy (Engelke 1999; Sadgrove et al. 2012). However, this falls out of the scope of this article, where I want to emphasise the role of a specific religious perception of the world. Even though the millennialist perception of the world is not generally shared by Zambian Christians and the subsequent discourse on homosexuality and gay rights is not representative of the public debate on homosexuality, this discourse frames the debate in a powerful way because of its totalising tendency. All Zambians who present a more nuanced understanding of homosexuality or even express sympathy for gay rights are directly associated with the same Antichrist and Devil as Ban Ki-moon and the West. In this way, an open public and political discussion about Ban Ki-moon's call, as one may expect in a democracy, was made impossible. Of course this is not surprising, as the God of this type of millennialist Christianity certainly is not a democrat (Marshall 1995).

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²The term 'homonationalism' was recently coined by Jasbir Puar to conceptualise the production of an emergent American normativity in which the recognition of homosexual subjects is tied to the national and transnational political agendas of US imperialism (Puar 2007).

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