

# The Presbyterian Church of Southern Africa and its Reformed Influence on the Socio-Political and Economic Development of Zimbabwe (1890–1990)

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## Abstract

The second half of the 19th century was characterised by the spread of Christian ethos in Southern Africa. This state of affairs also permeated the Zimbabwean soil, and in the Presbyterian Church of Southern Africa in Zimbabwe (PCSA) missionaries disseminated Reformed teachings, among other things, to proclaim the gospel of Christ. This article argues that Presbyterian teachings influenced the socio-political and economic development of Zimbabwe. It is a historical analysis illustrating how Reformed theological perspectives influenced the socio-political and economic development of Zimbabwe through the work of the PCSA. It is not the intention of this article to get into theological debates but to show the impact of Reformed influences, mainly through John Calvin, on the expansion of Presbyterianism in Zimbabwe.

**Keywords:** Presbyterian Church of Southern Africa (PCSA); Reformed influence; socio-political and economic development; Zimbabwe

## Introduction

This article attempts to show that Presbyterianism is linked to the socio-political and economic progress of Zimbabwe. It is an undertaking from a Reformed theological perspective with special emphasis on the PCSA in Zimbabwe's *missio-hominum*. Reformed tradition has had a large impact on the world since the 16th century Reformation, and it has also had a bearing on the PCSA, which is part of the Reformed family. The PCSA is committed to the Christian faith



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concerns and thus its role in politics and economics has no doubt had a huge bearing on its mission work in Zimbabwe. This study seeks to establish the possible connections between the long existence of the PCSA and the developments in Zimbabwe. The overarching question behind this study is: What impact did the mission work of the PCSA have on the socio-political and economic situation of Zimbabwe? This article attempts to answer this question.

## **Methodology**

In order to adequately carry out a study of this nature, one has to make use of both archival and oral sources. Archives are good for dates and reconstruction, whereas interviews put into the public domain those aspects that written records failed to capture for one reason or another. Interviews become outlets for the dominated that did not have a platform to tell their experiences. The article surveys the intricate facets of politics of the nation, land issues, wars and racial issues with special attention to the contribution of the PCSA, and here it relies on oral sources mainly captured through personal interviews with key leaders in the PCSA.

The article reflects on the Reformer's (particularly Calvin's) socio-political and economic teachings from a third-worldview perspective; using the living historical evidences and testimonies (oral history) to analytically evaluate how Reformed teachings impacted on the developments of Zimbabwe. It sets, discusses and infers such teachings on the socio-political and economic situation of Zimbabwe, using the data collected orally.

## **A Brief History of the PCSA in Zimbabwe**

The Presbyterian family of churches, like all Christian churches, traces its roots back to the early church in Jerusalem, to Paul and the church fathers like St Augustine (Dalziel 1982). In 1517 Martin Luther nailed his 95 theses to a church door in Wittenberg, Germany. This public challenge to the practices of the church of his time led to the formation of a new family of churches known as the *Protestant churches*. The two main branches of Protestant churches are the Reformed churches and the Lutheran churches (Pillay 2016). The Presbyterian Church is a part of the Reformed tradition within Protestantism which traces its origins to the British Isles, particularly Scotland.

Presbyterian churches derive their name from the Presbyterian form of church government, which is governed by representative assemblies of elders. A great number of Reformed churches are organised this way, but the word *Presbyterian*, when capitalised, is often applied uniquely to churches that trace their roots to the Scottish and English Presbyterians, as well as several English dissenter groups that formed during the English Civil War (Graham 1988).

John Calvin, born in France in 1509, is the Father of Presbyterianism (Parker 1995). Presbyterian theology typically emphasises the sovereignty of God, the authority of the Scriptures, and the necessity of grace through faith in Christ. Local congregations of churches which use Presbyterian polity are governed by sessions made up of representatives of the congregation (elders); a conciliar approach which is found at other levels of decision-making (presbytery, synod and general assembly). Calvin's legacy is to be found in his teaching on the

sovereignty of God, the priesthood of all believers and the Presbyterian Church structure. His ideals of morality, ethics and democracy helped shaped Western thought and later influenced Zimbabwe. From Geneva, Presbyterianism spread to Scotland and Ireland mainly through John Knox, who studied under John Calvin, and to England, the Netherlands and America. Throughout the world today there are some 80 million men, women and children who belong to the Christian family that goes by the name of “Presbyterian” (Pillay 2016), that includes the PCSA.

In Africa, organised Presbyterianism began in Natal on the evening of 28 October 1850 when a gathering of Presbyterians resolved to form themselves into a congregation with the name the *Presbyterian Church of Natal*. The Rev. William Campbell, from Scotland, accepted a call to the young congregation on 16 March 1851. The growth of the Presbyterian Church in other parts of South Africa followed in the wake of the Great Trek beginning in 1830 as well as the discovery of diamonds in the Northern Cape in 1870 and gold on the Witwatersrand in 1886 (Rodger 1998).

Following the Pioneer Column’s Great Trek from the Cape of Good Hope, the PCSA found itself in Zimbabwe north of the Limpopo River (Moyo, personal communication, 19 September 2015), and in about 1890 the British South African Company raised its Union Jack flag at Fort Salisbury (Masaka, personal communication, 18 January 2015). Mutual friendship developed and the PCSA, together with other denominations in the country, benefited from the British South Africa Company’s (BSAC) policy on land, displacing the natives of Zimbabwe. This explains why the PCSA formulated rules and regulations to be observed by the African converts on mission farms (Weller and Linden 1984). It further indicates why the church could not avoid partnering in the 1896/7 Shona-Ndebele uprising, in which it sided with the colonial government. The PCSA accepted and promoted the new order, as is evident in some of the resolutions made by the Presbytery (Masaka, personal communication, 18 January 2015) which can be observed in policies such as: The rules on mission farms (Assembly Paper 1922, 213–14); the Maize Control Act (Assembly Paper 1931, 211); Native Production and Trade Commission (NPTR) and Native Land Husbandry Act of 1944 (Parade 1945, 11); and 1965 Land Tenure Act (Assembly Papers 1965, 424). What is clear is that the PCSA in Zimbabwe aligned itself with the settler’s government and hence played a significant role in the socio-political affairs and economics of the land; mainly the premierships of Mr Ian Douglas Smith and Mr Clifford Walter DuPont—both Presbyterians. Without such involvement the land history of Zimbabwe would have been different.

In 1896 the first Presbyterian congregation in Zimbabwe was formed in Matabeleland around Bulawayo area, at Makokoba, then soon Main Street (now First Presbyterian Church), St Andrews and in the later years Njube, Ntabazinduna, Khayelitsha and Sigola. Further north of the country, in 1903, a congregation was founded at Harare (City Church), with its preaching station at Highlands, Trinity Greencroft and Hatfield. In 1910 evangelism was carried out to the domestic worker suburbs of Mbare, Highfields, Mabvuku and Chitungwiza (*the dormitory city*) (Chikomo, personal communication, 16 June 2014). These became the power houses for the development of the church into Mashonaland and Matabeleland Presbyteries in the later

years, in the 1950s when nearly all towns of Zimbabwe had a congregation or two. In 1980 it numbered around 9 400 members in more than 23 congregations (Assembly Paper 1989, 11), with its greatest strength in Harare and Bulawayo.

It must be acknowledged that the PCSA did not work in isolation; it is part of the umbrella of bodies such as the Rhodesia Council of Churches—now Zimbabwe Council of Churches (Kambudzi 2000). The PCSA provided insights that helped the church to embark on a relentless mission on the ethics of the nation. The PCSA exercised its ethical task and prophetic mission at different levels by condemning the oppressiveness of unjust rulers and demanding democratic political space for all citizens (Verstraelen 1998). It is the contention of this article that the PCSA in Zimbabwe exists in a socio-political and economic context of struggle and change, and must define its role in the quest for the promotion of its developmental values.

### **Challenges in Zimbabwe: Church and State, Racism and Education**

The PCSA functioned in significant ways in Zimbabwe, in relation to the prevailing political, social and economic conditions; by preaching and promoting peace, welfare and salvation, it stood above national political issues and that could easily be seen by any citizen or political parties. This section focuses on how the PCSA related to the Zimbabwean governments. It shows that the PCSA could not barricade itself from political, social and economic vices (Matikiti 2009), but identified human problems and came up with appropriate action plans. In this sense, the PCSA was motivated by its Reformed beliefs.

The PCSA subscribed to the Reformer, John Calvin's, views of state and church relationships and this guided its involvement in society. Being Reformed is the basis for the PCSA's involvement. Reformed tradition believes that the church should not be subject to the state, or vice versa (Matikiti 2009). While both are subject to God's law, they both have their own God-ordained spheres of influence. For example, the church does not have the authority to impose penalties for civil offenses, although it can call on the civil authorities to punish them. Equally, the state is not to intrude on the operations of the church. However, it has a duty to protect the church and its ability to function as the church (McNeill and Battles 1960). The state, for Calvin, is basically an organ of constriction in which the dynamic element is represented by the magistrate, while the static element appears in the laws (Pillay 2015). For Calvin, even though he advocated a separation between the state and church, yet in all matters the church was above the state because the rulers, too, serve under divine authority.

Prompted by its Reformed understanding, the PCSA worked hard to see to it that the state secures maximum peace and harmony required by human society for its existence during colonial and post-colonial periods. The PCSA advocated that the state must not only maintain peace; but must maintain a certain standard of morality or, as Calvin calls it, "some taste of the celestial realm" (Gamble 1992). Calvin first separates and then joins spiritual and civil government and sets his discussion of civil government in the context of his teaching on providence, Christian freedom, and the church (Calvin, Institutes IV.XX. 1–2). Calvin thought of the state as a Christian nation rather than a secular government. Reformed faith sowed the

seeds of the modern secular democracy (McNeill and Battles 1960); this as such formed the basis for the values and ethos of the PCSA in Zimbabwe as it responded to socio-political and economic issues. On many instances, the PCSA advocated for democracy during pre- and post-independent Zimbabwe.

The task of the government, according to Calvin, is to “provide a public manifestation of religion that may exist among Christians, and that humanity should be maintained among people” (Pillay 2015). This implies that the duty of magistrates “extends to both tables of the law” (Calvin Institutes 9, 1495, quoted in McNeill and Battles 1960), that is, the man’s duty to God, as well as his duties to other people. In other words, the mission of the PCSA was/is to bear witness among the people to Christ and the Christian faith; the state’s highest function is to bring about respect for this mission (Pillay 2015). Calvin saw a unity in purpose in so far as both church and state are subject to the authority of God (Graham 1988, 55). The PCSA hoped for teamwork between the church and the state to direct people to live according to God’s Word (Masaka, personal communication, 18 January 2015). As taught by Reformed theology, the PCSA engaged the government to ensure that human society was always directed simultaneously by church and state, and not by one of these institutions to the disadvantage of the other.

Calvin (Institutes 3.19.15, quoted in McNeill and Battles 1960), in his days showed that civil authority was limited by rejecting medieval hierarchy, by standing against church tyranny of the papacy and the rising state autocracy of the European monarchies. For him, humanity is considered in the first place as under two kinds of government; one spirit by which the conscience is formed to piety in the service of God, and the other political by which humanity is instructed in the duties of humanity and civility, which are to be observed in an interaction with humankind. One may be termed a spiritual kingdom and the other a political one. Reformed faith and works were to influence modern civil governance, which later spread and ended up in Zimbabwe, under the banner of the PCSA since the early 1890s. This is manifested through the advocacy for justice and peace by the church and nation committee in the Presbytery of Zimbabwe (Assembly Papers 1922 and 1965).

Unfortunately, Reformed theology was misrepresented. For example, in Zimbabwe—like South Africa—it was used to justify racism. However, as Pillay maintains: “... this was not done by Calvin’s view of state and church but by a total misrepresentation of his teaching on election and predestination” (Pillay 2015). This was not an expression of Presbyterian understanding of unity in diversity but a propagation of divisive oppression.

The League Nations Union (Assembly Papers 1923) (which put people into categories according to their skin pigmentation), was challenged as it took a firm stance against racial discrimination. The issue divided the church, for PCSA members could not share the same pews, conversely the moderators and Church and Nation Committee of the Presbytery of Rhodesia of the time spoke against such segregation practices bedevilling the church (Assembly Papers 1941, 16 & 217). In aligning itself with Reformed theology, the PCSA endeavoured for *koinonia* in the church. When the issue of racism deteriorated, in the Reformed

vein, the PCSA amongst other faith denominations, advanced that the situation needed divine intervention which would restore the fear of God, love for one's neighbour, justice and peace (Assembly Papers 1969, 101).

The PCSA built many primary and high schools in the country and 11 of these are outstanding after she surrendered some during the "quarter system" to the councils and government. These schools educated many people working across the divide of the nation; amongst them legal and medical practitioners and political leaders such as the late Vice President J. N. Nkomo and Honourable ministers Lookout Masuku, Dabengwa, Dumisani Mpfu, who later led the liberation war which changed the political climate of Zimbabwe. Educating the nation has always been the strongest drive of Reformed theology, ever since the scholastic period. The PCSA still places a high value and involvement in education.

The by-products of the educational sector fed the newly born economic drives to include the agrarian and manufacturing sectors. Gloag Ranch School became the basis of such apprentices, thereby contributing to the economic growth of the nation. The PCSA, including many other denominational vast lands, was used for health, education or commercial farming which became national economic drives.

The PCSA spoke out when the war of "terrorism" intensified in the 1970s, stating that: "War is contrary to the will of God. In obedience to God no Christian can support a political party which is based on an unjust discrimination, on grounds of color, race or religion between people who live and work in the same country" (Assembly Papers 1977, 331–332). Banana argues that the church must continue to be the watchdog of democracy and ensure that no impediments are placed in the path of those wishing to exercise their constitutional right as citizens (Banana 1996). This commitment to the promotion of justice and peace is a constitutive element of Reformed understanding of the church's mission (Matikiti 2009).

The economic situation of Zimbabwe has not been able to provide everyone with a decent job in the last two decades leading to 1990. As a result, the growing fear and anxiety have led to a deep spiritual awareness as people appeal to the divine because of the economic challenges (Masaka, personal communication, 18 January 2015). The search for jobs and the fear of abject poverty have forced many people to turn to God for divine intervention, guidance and sustenance. Many individuals who have become part of the mainline churches have actually been attracted by hand-outs from missionaries who promise personal security and the opportunity of becoming economically secure. The practice, however, cultivated a dependence syndrome and a wrong perception of the church, as critiqued by Reformed theology. In true Reformed practice, the PCSA, among other churches, stood as a voice of morality by condemning the political violence and lack of political tolerance up to the 1990 elections and onwards in Zimbabwe (Masaka, personal communication, 18 January 2015).

The economic meltdown that began in the late 1990s—but increased in intensity in 2000—has also been associated with the shrinking of industrial activity through the closure of many manufacturing concerns and the downsizing of some, and consequent high unemployment

rates. The economic decline in turn affected the social reproduction capacities of both urban and rural households. Formal sector urban employment shrunk (Kambudzi 2000; Matikiti 2009) and even those who managed to retain their jobs were in most cases receiving wages that are below the poverty line, mostly eroded by the hyperinflationary environment. The social dimensions of the crisis have been the most visible and the impact has been devastating on the majority of ordinary working people. The social crisis is characterised by the decline or absolute collapse of social service delivery in housing, health and education, and the erosion of household incomes leading to an increase in cases of food insecurity and general vulnerability (World Bank 2006). Economic, financial and social crises induced changes in the social protection system, as inapt crisis management models fuelled poverty and unemployment, and decreased economic growth.

Inequitable access to resources means that the imbalanced income distribution structure of the Zimbabwean economy continues to undermine the growth of incomes and restricts the expansion of domestic markets and industrial development. The majority of Zimbabweans continue to depend on land for their survival because of the slow industrialisation process and the incessantly growing poverty and unemployment. The imbalances dramatically skew Zimbabwe's income distribution structure, reflecting an unchanged legacy of colonial rule, in which the PCSA took part. Although Zimbabwe is now independent, racial tension and segregation are still rife, monopoly over land has not been corrected; it remains a thorn in the flesh.

In true Reformed mode, churches including the PCSA stood as a voice of morality by condemning the political violence and lack of political tolerance up to the 1990 elections and onwards in Zimbabwe. From the foregoing discussion, we can pose the question whether the PCSA used a Reformed theological view of state and church relationships to address the issues in Zimbabwe. Nevertheless, the focus of this article is on the understanding of Reformed theology in line with the PCSA in Zimbabwe's socio-politics and economics endeavour.

The PCSA proclaims the moral order on the human universe, that is, it passes moral judgments on any matters of concern. Whenever any component of society, such as the political or economic system, debases human dignity by violating basic human rights, the PCSA becomes involved by upholding the moral order (Masaka, personal communication, 18 January 2015). The PCSA has utilised its divine right to guide and direct God's people by criticising and condemning the unjust and oppressive social structures (Nxumalo, personal communication, 6 December 2015). This is the role that characterises Calvinistic ideas on church-state relations. When the government from 1890 to 1950 passed segregation legislations, the PCSA could not avoid the political, economic, or social disorders affecting and bedevilling the moral fabrics of the communities, and spoke out prophetically against this (Assembly Papers 1969 and 1970).

Presbyterian teachings view the church's influence upon the state in terms of the First Commandment, the imperative of which encompasses both church and state: "God demands an exclusive conformity of the whole humankind and his whole life. This has a direct impact on all aspects of political life" (Verstraelen 1998, 157). For Calvin, God demands an obedience

that defines not only religious beliefs and practices, but also every facet of human existence; social, economic, legal, governmental and political. The next section analyses the impact of Reformed teaching on Zimbabwe during the period under study.

## **Effects of Reformed Theology on the Socio-Politics and Economics of Zimbabwe**

The impact of Reformed theology on the socio-political and economic context of Zimbabwe is vast. The researchers noted the contributions that several Presbyterian members and theologians have made—as national premiers, presidents, and politicians, or as theologians who helped advance and implement Reformed theology in Zimbabwe. At least five principles that Calvin propagated are reflected in the work of the PCSA in Zimbabwe during the last century: the quest for unity; the concern for mission; covenanting for justice; providing a prophetic witness in the community; and when the need arose, the willingness to confront the government of the day. This section concludes with a brief look at the future of the PCSA and of the continued input that it may be able to make.

The PCSA contributed significantly to developments in the country through the years. The question is: How strong was the impact of the PCSA on Zimbabwe's socio-political and economic development? The next section will answer the question by firstly pointing to the role that several leaders, coming from a PCSA background, played in the history of Zimbabwe. Secondly, the article will trace the influence of several Reformed ideologies, mainly from John Calvin's teachings, on the developmental agenda of Zimbabwe.

## **PCSA Members in Leadership Positions in the Zimbabwe History**

Members of the PCSA were regarded to be people who take their divine calling seriously (Kambudzi 2000; Masaka, personal communication, 18 January 2015). Elected by God to serve both in the church and in the wider community, they are called to act as ambassadors of God's Kingdom in all walks of life (Kambudzi 2000, 39). It came as no surprise that among the developers in the Zimbabwean community, Presbyterians played a huge role. The story of Zimbabwe includes the stories of many men and women of PCSA background who, each in their own way, played a significant role in the socio-political and economic administration and programmes, as well as in shaping the Christian faith. They were, however, not the only ones in this playing field.

The influence of the PCSA is more multi-faceted than the role of these church leaders. In the limited space allowed for an article, the following list will suffice. Sir Howard Moffatt (1869–1951) ruled Zimbabwe from 1927 to 1933; and Mr Ian Douglas Smith (1919–2007) ruled for over 15 years between 1963 and 1979. Both were prime ministers who belonged to the PCSA. The following three were elected president of the country, all with a Reformed background: Henry Evarard (1877–1980) (Dutch Reformed Church); Clifford DuPont (1905–1978) (PCSA); and Jack William Pithey (1903–1987) (PCSA) (Chikomo, personal communication, 16 June 2014; Masaka, personal communication, 18 January 2015). In the ranks of premier and

presidency they served Zimbabwe in many ways—drafting documents, contributing to the legislature, leading political discussions, formulating policies which affected the socio-political and economic development of Zimbabwe. The names of numerous Presbyterians appear, among them Timothy Stamps and Lookout Masuku, who were successful in the politics of Zimbabwe (Masaka, personal communication, 18 January 2015).

Reformed principles shaped the Zimbabwean society. However, it would be totally wrong to conclude that only the Calvinists shaped the packages and development of Zimbabwe. Many other denominations and leaders from different traditions contributed to the thinking and the actions of the country. To ignore the PCSA's input in the process would be equally wrong. In many instances the views and the principles of the Reformed tradition were reflected in the life of Zimbabwe.

Calvinism rests upon two pillars. Firstly, Calvinism may be seen as a theology founded upon the Bible as the Word of God, speaking to us with the authority of God. Secondly, it provides a very specific view of life. The Christian message is not only, or primarily, about the salvation of humankind; it is primarily about the authority of God in all spheres of life. Calvin wrote extensively on the relationship between the church and the government, the church and the economy, amongst many others (Dreyer 2005). Christians, according to Calvin, have a divine calling to accept and to proclaim the Lordship of Christ wherever they find themselves, be it at home, in the church, or in the wider community (Cross 1957, 220). Both pillars come into play when the influence of Calvinism on Zimbabwe is evaluated. How important are Reformation views—the main tenets of Presbyterianism—in the Zimbabwean context, as it was in Geneva? In an official publication celebrating the legacy of John Calvin, co-edited by L. Vischer and S. Nyomi, several issues raised by Calvin that are relevant to Christians at the beginning of the third millennium, are noted: to manifest the gift of communion; covenanting for justice; and addressing violence and destruction in the world (Vischer and Nyomi 2008). Turning to the Zimbabwe situation, especially paging through the history of the PCSA, we would like to note that the fingerprints of the Reformed tradition are recognisable in its programmes, reports, minutes and statements in the different courts and councils of the denomination.

The PCSA continued to search for unity among the Zimbabweans, and its endeavours to provide a platform where people could meet, are directly consistent with Reformed practice. As such it suffices to interpret that, for the PCSA, as was with the Reformers, the unity of the church was/is a key concern. In Calvin's commentaries on the books of the Bible, the theme of unity is also often underlined. For Calvin, Christ cannot be divided, and faith cannot be charged (Calvin 1948). There are no various baptisms but one which is common to all. It cannot but be our duty to cherish holy unity, which is bound by so many ties. Faith and baptism, and God the Father, and Christ, ought to unite us, so as almost to become one (Calvin 1948, 4. 5, 269). Although Calvin broke ranks with the Roman Catholic Church, he lamented the disunity of the church throughout his ministry, encouraging the Christians of his day to seek unity always (De Gruchy 2009).

Calvin urged his counterparts to work towards unity because the beliefs and practices that bound them together were far more important than the differences that kept them apart (De Gruchy 2009). Leaders from many denominations in Zimbabwe shared the ZCC's commitment to ecumenism and worked hard to further the cause of unity among the many churches in the land. It is, however, equally evident that some of the most outspoken champions of church unity in the ZCC, Christian Care and the United Theological College hailed from the ranks of the PCSA, to include Rev. H. P. Chikomo, M. T. Chigwida, W. Sayimani and S. Chatikobo, and by doing that, saw them walking in the footsteps of Calvin (Masaka, personal communication, 18 January 2015). The unequivocal call for unity in the statements and messages of the PCSA through the years would have carried the blessings of the Reformation. In the years when Zimbabweans were fighting for the liberation of the country, Rev. Chigwida rose in the ranks of those who opposed the ruling government of that time, and became the shadow minister of education in the United African National Council (1971), calling for equity in Zimbabwe irrespective of race (Nxumalo, personal communication, 6 December 2015).

Equally, Rev. H. P. Chikomo teamed up with most of the Protestant denominations in Zimbabwe to form Christian Care and he became its first secretary general (Chikomo, personal communication, 10 January 2015). Influenced by Calvinism, The Rev. Chikomo organised the educational, social and justice desks to deal with state-related issues in Zimbabwe. Such programmes still form the core developmental programmes of the organisation with which Rev. S. Chatikobo is perpetuating. Within the ZCC, Rev. Sayimani, as its immediate past chairperson, championed the formation of "*The Zimbabwe We Want*" document seeking to exercise peace and reconciliation after the Gukurahundi bedevilled the country (ZCC 2009, Zimbabwe Council of Churches Report, 12).

It was a PCSA clergy, the Rt. Rev. H. P. Chikomo in Marondera in 1964, amongst other denominations, who founded the RCC (now ZCC), a fellowship of 26 Christian denominations and 10 para-church organisations that confess the Lord Jesus Christ as God and Saviour per the scriptures (Chikomo, personal communication, 29 June 2014). The interest in mission and evangelism that the ZCC had later shown, especially in the 1960s and 1970s, was therefore partially rooted in the commitment of the Calvinist member churches to honour Jesus' imperative: "You will be my witnesses" (Acts 1:8).

The call for social justice is a regular theme in Calvin's writings, especially in his sermons and in the actions he undertook in Geneva (Botha 2009). In his footsteps, over the centuries, numerous Reformed leaders dared to confront injustice in society, challenging the powers of their time, often at a very high cost to themselves. In Zimbabwe, in the latter half of the nineteenth century, standing for justice invariably meant confronting the issue of racism, unmasking discrimination, and fighting for the rights of the oppressed and marginalised (Chikomo, personal communication, 10 January 2015). Ironically, in the past discrimination was defended by many as a typical Reformed solution to the racial problems of Zimbabwe. In 1964, when the Rhodesian Front won the general election on their racial discrimination ticket, it was with the support and encouragement of the PCSA (Chigwida, personal communication, 27 January 2013) which fashioned its views on self-determination on its misreading of

Reformed theological traits (Godwin and Hancock, 1995), which could be traced back into the South African apartheid regime to whom the PCSA affiliated.

In 1965 the Rev. K. M. Edger, inspired by John Calvin, in his report to the 64th General Assembly of the PCSA at St. John's Church, Bloemfontein, reiterated Calvin's sentiments (Assembly Papers 1965, 27), triggered some controversial statements and fuelled the fires of criticism against the PCSA. At times it caused division within the PCSA itself (Assembly Papers 1965, 27–8). However, the PCSA stood for justice and truth and siding with the poor and the marginalised followed John Calvin's lead in reforming Geneva, by seeking to transform Zimbabwe (De Gruchy 1991, 78–83).

The statements from the PCSA irritated and angered the Rhodesian (racial) government, who thought of itself as a "Christian government" that deserved obedience and loyalty of all citizens, especially of the churches (Masaka, personal communication, 18 January 2015). Some of the activities and programmes of the PCSA, above all the ZCC's support of the World Council of Churches' Programme to combat racism, added fuel to the fire (Chigwida, personal communication, 27 January 2013). Should Christians stand up against the government—even rebel against the authority of the state? This was the question that dominated the minds of many Zimbabwean Christians. At a first glance Calvin's advice from Romans 13 to obey the state as "the servant of God," caused much controversy. However, this is only half of the story: Calvin also demanded that the state should rule justly. A just and well-regulated government will be distinguished for maintaining the rights of the poor and the afflicted (Boesak 2009, 12).

The time may come, Calvin conceded, that tyranny by the state should be resisted (Calvin 1935, 14.7–8:439 ff.). The clash between the Zimbabwean government and the PCSA became severe. Strong actions were taken against the PCSA and its leadership in the 1980s and 1990s. Lomagundi Church offices were destroyed in flames (Assembly Papers 1998, 5), and the late Rev. Donovan Brain Enslin died (Assembly Papers 2000, 2) in cold blood at the hands of ZANU PF militia in Masvingo. During these difficult times the PCSA leadership took their cue from Calvin and from the Reformed tradition.

Despite all the good that the new Zimbabwe brought since its independence in 1980, the country is not out of the woods—not by a far stretch! Despite the work of the unity accord (22 December 1987), Zimbabwe is still a deeply divided country, in dire need of reconciliation and healing on many levels (*Manica Post* 1999, 19). The gap between rich and poor is as deep as always. Millions still live in abject circumstances in shacks and in informal settlements, without work and without resources (Zimbabwe Council of Churches, and Evangelical Fellowship of Zimbabwe 2006, 11). The scourge of HIV and AIDS and other diseases is prevalent. Displacements and land invasions simmer under the surface, threatening to erupt at any given time (*The Herald* 2002, 12). Stories of crime and violence, of poor service delivery, of corruption and greed and racism are covered daily on the front pages of the newspapers and social media.

Many Zimbabweans seem to have lost hope—many have lost their faith. All these above have a great impact on Zimbabwe. In such a context the PCSA must rediscover its calling and rethink its agenda. In confronting the new challenges, the PCSA in Zimbabwe may once again call on its Reformed members to contribute to solving the problems of the day. The presbytery of Zimbabwe has much to offer.

Zimbabwe's socio-economic and political arrangements have been indirectly influenced by the Christian theological principles of the Reformation. This was true at the time of independence and beyond. This has enabled Zimbabwe to enjoy a democracy and economic prosperity, things which many of her neighbours know little about. This success has enabled the church, through the Reformed tradition, to state the ethics and principles of the Christian faith on matters relating to the country's socio-economic and political structures. To sum up: Zimbabwe's socio-economic and political success owes a great deal to the Reformed tradition of political liberalism and democracy which arose out of Calvinism.

The relationship between the organised church and state in Zimbabwe, especially about democratic space for association, has been at the centre of conflict between Christians and the state. It can be argued that Calvin's ecclesiology guides the Calvinistic churches in their relations in 21st century Zimbabwe. The church in Zimbabwe has benefited from Reformed theological insights. Church-state relationships are critical. The church and the body of politics cannot live and develop in sheer isolation from, and ignorance of one another (Kambudzi 2000).

It suffices to say that for much of Zimbabwe's first decade (1890–1990), the church played a serious role in complementing government efforts in nation building and fostering national development, particularly in the social welfare sector (Masaka, personal communication, 18 January 2015). Churches invested heavily in building, equipping and running rural hospitals and clinics as well as providing high quality education to previously disadvantaged communities (Chigwida, personal communication, 8 January 2013). Today, the legacy of the churches in the health and education sectors in Zimbabwe lives on just like that of Calvin in Geneva.

The PCSA in Zimbabwe has a calling to address several threats to reclaim its prophetic voice and action. Repression, infiltration, intimidation and targeting of activist church leaders and members have hampered stronger Christian advocacy and scared away many churches from taking an active part in national human rights campaigns. The PCSA worked tirelessly to achieve financial stability to enable them to implement innovative social justice and advocacy programmes as well as retain skilled staff. The churches have over the years suffered considerable membership haemorrhage as highly skilled staff left the country at the height of the economic crisis. The PCSA has lost many young very talented Zimbabwean intellectuals to the diaspora.

The PCSA's Zimbabwe women—being most active church members—are the pillar and unsung heroines of churches in Zimbabwe regarding the building of socio-economic impact to

the nation. However, they continue to be side-lined from leadership and involvement in the high-level work of the churches. For any grassroots and mass-based actions of the PCSA to stand a chance of success, the male leadership of the church must seriously and urgently work towards enabling women to be at the centre of social justice work of the church. With all the historical factors and observations of the current situation considered, the PCSA in Zimbabwe is a powerful social force located deep within the national fabric in relation to socio-political and economic influence of Zimbabwe. Despite the failings of the past, the PCSA has perpetuated the Reformed teachings which impacted the development of Zimbabwe socially, economically and politically.

## **Conclusion**

The discussion above is not necessarily exhaustive but it potentially provides scope for debate on the socio-political and economic influence of the PCSA. It is in this context that the church as a sacred institution with essential social importance and relevance should contribute significantly towards the realisation of this lofty goal. The church urgently needs to enhance her effectiveness in fulfilling this aspect of her mission; therefore, it is a balanced form of Reformed theological orientation which is both spiritually oriented and socio-politically and economically connected. With a Reformed mandate, message and method, the PCSA has contributed greatly to the attempts to solve the socio-political and economic woes of Zimbabwe.

The church has great potential to make a meaningful contribution to sustainable development as reflected by this study. The PCSA has helped stabilise Zimbabwe's socio-political and economic problems, and contributed in creating conditions for development. Critical areas where the PCSA has been highly active have been noted in the socio-economic and political sectors. This study also concludes that the Reformists (in this case Calvinists), always had a lively interest in socio-economic affairs and politics, because they were convinced that the Christian faith concerns not only heaven and spiritual matters, but also this world and our daily existence.

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