

Calvinism and the socioeconomic politics of Botswana's liberal democracy

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Abstract

Botswana has undergone tremendous socioeconomic and political transformation and, as a result, the country can be said to be a success story and a true model of a liberal democracy on the African continent. Given this remarkable success, it is worth exploring how religion/theology has contributed, in Botswana, to the creation of a liberal democracy. In this article, I shall attempt to show how Christian morality, and the political ethics of Calvinism in particular, support the socioeconomic and political principles of liberal democracies. I shall also attempt to show how Calvinism may have directly or indirectly impacted on Botswana's political configuration.

Introduction

To discuss whether or not Calvinism has contributed to Botswana's socioeconomic and political success story, it is important to start by describing Botswana's historical context. Geographically, Botswana is a landlocked country, situated in the interior of Southern Africa. It covers an area of 581,700sq km (224,000sq miles) and has a population of about 1.7 million people. Botswana is bounded by Namibia to the west and north (the Caprivi Strip), Zambia to the north, Zimbabwe to the north-east and South Africa to the southeast and south (Parsons 1999:1). Politically, Botswana has been stable since independence from Britain in 1966 and has remained a good example of a multiracial society, even during the height of the apartheid regime in South Africa and white minority rule in Namibia and Zimbabwe (formerly South West Africa and Rhodesia). The country has experienced an uninterrupted period of steady socioeconomic and infrastructural development. Communication and roads in particular are well developed, and this facilitates movement within the country and with neighbouring countries. Botswana's road infrastructure also facilitates movement of goods and services for her northern neighbours to South African and Namibian ports (National Development Plan, 1991:1-14).

Secondly, it is important to define Calvinism as a concept and to show how it relates to the socioeconomic and political institutions of liberal democracies. Calvinism refers to the Protestant religious perspective associated with the work of John Calvin, which includes both his teachings and the later developments of his worldview. The term “Calvinism” refers to a set of specific Protestant theological beliefs, Protestantism itself being the work of the reformer Martin Luther and then carried on by John Calvin. Calvin ruled over the city of Geneva, Switzerland in the mid-1500s and forged a theocracy – that is, a society where only the leaders of specific religious convictions can also be leaders of the secular sphere as well. Since its beginning, Calvinism has been distinctly renowned for its emphasis on the omnipotent sovereignty of God, the need for discipline in the church, and the fact that life must be conducted in a spirit of ethical seriousness (Noli 2009). These beliefs also laid the basis for a Calvinist moral perspective and tradition regarding the socioeconomic and political institutions of western liberal democratic states; in short, Calvinism was the basis of their theological thinking and religious beliefs and justified their economic activity (capitalism).

Historical background to John Calvin and the philosophy of Calvinism

John Calvin was born at Noyon, France, on July 10, 1509. Noyon was an ecclesiastical city dominated by its cathedral and its bishop. At the very beginning of his life, therefore, Calvin had an example of a theocracy – the rule of the clergy in the name of God. His father, Gerard Chauvin, was secretary to the bishop, proctor in the cathedral chapter, and fiscal procurator of the country. The stories of Calvin's youth indicate that he was an assiduous student, shy, taciturn, pious, with an unshakable fidelity. He studied theology, ethics and was influenced by the severity of the Justinian Institutes. He obtained a Bachelor of Law degree (Durant 1957:459). Calvin's educational life commenced with his tenure at the University of Paris, France. He attended the College de la Marche at the age of 14, then moved to the College de Montaigu, although historical evidence is lacking to piece together exactly how these educational movements shifted or if, indeed, he ever attended Montaigu. What seems clear about his stay in Paris is that (1) he taught Latin grammar for a time, (2) then he may have been formally affiliated with the College de Montaigu, and (3) it is there that he studied arts (philosophy). It is certain that Calvin's father initially wanted him to study theology in Paris, but then moved him to study law instead, this being a more lucrative profession (McNeill 1954:65). Calvin was very much influenced by Aristotelian philosophy, a system that he was to take with him when he drew up his own theological formulations, as is evident in his commentary on Seneca's *De Clementia*, and in his *Institutes of the Christian Religion*. He was also familiar with Augustine's thought, and this, too, can be seen in his *Institutes*.

There is, overall, uncertainty about the exact nature of Calvin's sojourn in Paris, although, through his writings and through the accounts of his life (especially Beza's), traces of a coherent "life of Calvin" during this period can be pieced together. John Calvin left Paris sometime in the 1520s with his degree in the arts in order to start his work in law at the University of Orleans (where he came face to face with an aspect of humanism that would shape his thinking for the rest of his life). The University of Orleans was not a collegiate university, and only had a course of study in law (with a bias in civil law) and had undergone radical revisions in 16th century France under the writings of men such as Guillaume Bude.

The humanism Calvinism encountered at the university was not that of the humanism of 21st century man "as the measure of all things without God". Instead, it focused on "how ideas were obtained and expressed" with emphasis on going "back to the sources" (*ad fontes*) to obtain the meaning of a given thing. For instance, Erasmus, in his *Enchiridion*, said that the church ought to go back to the scriptures and the early fathers in order to reform itself (i.e. back to the sources). It was not, however, Calvin's intention, at this time, to go back to commentaries or the Latin text of the Bible, but the original sources, the Greek and Hebrew texts themselves. The influence of these texts would show themselves in Calvin's thought after he had graduated from Orleans in 1531. He then dedicated two years of his life to researching and writing his commentary on Seneca's *De Clementia*. Calvin moved from being a humanist to being a reformer by a "sudden conversion" (*subita conversion*, as Calvin called it).

He left Paris after another stay, went to Noyon, and then left Noyon for Basel, thinking it wise to leave France for a while, given the religious and social upheavals caused by Luther's Reformation. Here, in his hermit-style retreat in Switzerland, Calvin wrote the first edition of the *Institutes* for French evangelicals. After this, he was forced to move back to France for a time in order to settle family matters. Reformation, at this time in history, was very much a city phenomenon. This is because, firstly, the city gave people a sense of community. Secondly, the economic and social struggles of the Reformation (as seen in Thomas Brady's analysis of Strasbourg) proved victorious, and thirdly, the religion of urban communities tended to centre on the doctrine of justification by faith alone. In addition to all this, historical circumstances had led to pressure for social change. The rather "Hollywood" version of stalwart reformers who stormed cities for the Reformation cause has little historical veracity. Political, economic, social and military considerations were the reasons why many of the Swiss Cantons began to embrace the "symbiotic" relationship of city and reformer. In the same way, Geneva had a relationship with Calvin: the Magistrate and Council moved ahead for the good of the political-religious state under the guidance of Calvin's theological/socioeconomic writings and guidance. As a matter of fact, Geneva was

“primed” and ready for this kind of relationship, because it was part of Swiss confederacy which had been in place for sixty years before Calvin arrived on the scene. It had adopted many of the same reformation principles other Swiss cantons had already implemented. Farel, the city’s former “reformer”, persuaded and convinced Calvin to remain and continue the work. Unfortunately, his first tenure there did not go well and, in 1538, he was exiled (along with Farel & Courault) as a result of a practical difference in distributing the Lord’s Supper to the wayward and unruly members of the city.

Calvin spent three years (1538-1541) in exile in Strasbourg where he wrote a new version of the *Institutes*, as well as a tract against the Catholics (who had made inroads in Geneva during his absence). In 1541 he returned reluctantly, again because of pressure from Farel, to continue what God had started through him. Calvin, upon his return to Geneva, formulated a church-state relationship with the Magistrate of the city, or the senate, much like the Graeco-Roman city state. The *Institutes* remain his theological powerhouse of reform, but his *Ecclesiastical Ordinances* (written in 1541 for the express purpose of structuring discipline and orderliness in Geneva) was the “backbone of this ecclesiastical organization”. This Consistory was created in order to “police” religious orthodoxy. Trials such as the “Servetus affair” demonstrated the civil-religious power of the Consistory, when the members of the Consistory burned Servetus at the stake for heresy: this event certainly “coloured” Calvin’s reputation for the next 450 years.

However, it is perhaps worth pointing out that, at the time, other countries and cantons had done much the same with their heretics, so the Geneva Council felt obliged to follow the same course of action with Servetus, and for the same reason: religious convictions. Yet Calvin’s role in the trial and execution of Servetus was more akin to “technical advisor or expert witness” rather than the prosecutor, a role that was left in the hands of Geneva’s civil authorities. Although Servetus’s execution left its mark upon the Reformation, Calvin was, in fact, extremely successful in his subsequent work during his time in Geneva (compared, for example, with the work of Vadian in the city of St. Gallen). The Reformation under Calvin was primarily the work of God through the Word of God. Although Calvin wrestled with the theological idea of accommodation (i.e. that God accommodates ideas to, us as the Word of God, in order to allow us finite creatures to understand an infinite deity of incomprehensible dimensions), he concluded that God knows His audience, and thus adjusts His language accordingly for this audience to apprehend (not comprehend) His truths. For Calvin, he used the idea of three aspects of God as father, teacher and judge to communicate, to human beings, His divine person. Given this conviction, Calvin published many works (especially in French) that specifically attempted to help the people of God understand theology. He published his *Institutes* in French, in 1541, and this work was to

eclipse the combined works of Luther, Melancthon and Zwingli as “the document” of the Protestant Reformation.

As far as Calvin’s message about Christianity as found in the *Institutes* is concerned, one does not find a basic central core doctrine on which all others are based. (Calvin’s main doctrine is not, as is commonly believed, predestination.) Instead, Calvin’s *Institutes* demonstrate cogency about biblical doctrine as a whole and the Bible as a whole, thus influencing a Christian view of Jesus Christ and every doctrine connected with Christ. Christ, then, should be said to be the centre of Calvin’s thought, along with the many doctrines about Him as the central figure in God’s redemptive history. Book 1 demonstrates the idea of how human beings can know anything about God. Book 2 demonstrates how human beings know God the Redeemer, Jesus Christ. Book 3 demonstrates how human beings obtain favour, blessings, grace, benefits and effects of grace through this Redeemer (Jesus Christ). Book 4 centres around the remaining theological issues of the church itself, and the outward means by which the church is called into fellowship with Jesus Christ. Although Calvin did not return to France, his influence extended to France, as a result of the Reformation, in a variety of ways. Calvin, along with the city of Berne, attempted to pressurise French diplomats into halting the persecution of Protestants in France. When this failed, Geneva became a haven to over six thousand refugees from France into the single city of Geneva itself. Calvin’s influence in France was primarily the result of the theological works he published in French, which affected people at several levels of France’s social hierarchy from 1540-45. Geneva even supplied pastors to needful French pastorates and, by 1562, Calvinism was a dominant force in Protestant France.

In 1564, Calvin fell ill, and suffered from “migraines, gout, pulmonary tuberculosis, intestinal parasites, thromboses haemorrhoids, and irritable bowel syndrome”. He died on Friday, April 28, 1564. However, his influence lived on and, by 1575, Calvinism had established itself “as an international religion”. Although the Reformation may have begun with Luther, Calvin continued to hold the torch for years afterwards, primarily through his *Institutes*. Geneva itself became internationally known, especially on account of its academic standing as a result of Calvin’s work. Here, then, we find Calvinism coming to light (a term first used by Joachim Westphalia to refer primarily to the sacramental views of difference between the Reformed and the Lutherans) and culminating a great appeal thorough the systematisation of the Biblical record and defended itself well against Roman Catholicism – the premier theological force against Protestantism of the day. As a theory, Calvinism, also called the Reformed tradition, the Reformed faith, or Reformed theology, is a theological system and approach to the Christian life that emphasises God’s sovereignty or control over all things (Benedict 2002:62).

Christian morality and political ethics according to Calvinism

Christian morality, as the term suggests, refers to actions, or living and acting, according to the light of Christianity. Christian morality dictates the basis for Christian actions, and stipulates the grounds on which actions are judged to be right or wrong. Although Christian moral theology deals with the principles which govern the behaviour of Christians and the application of these principles in particular circumstances, it also plays an important role in providing moral standards through which people can make economic decisions and judge their political institutions. As Joan Callahan (1988:12) notes, economic issues are often of great moral significance. We live under conditions of moderate scarcity, and thus any decision to use these limited resources in one way is necessarily a decision not to use them in another way. What Callahan means here is that it will be wrong for people to renege from decisions made on economic issues and replace them with others than the ones initially intended. In other words, people must abide by those economic decisions that are found to be constructive, rather than those that are known to be destructive. To do this requires us to possess good moral decision-making abilities. In this sense, there is a relationship between economic matters and morality. This also applies to any political decisions that people (Christians and non-Christians alike) take in an attempt to attain happiness for themselves and others (Gill 1985:76). On the issue of Christian morality and political ethics, Bonino (1983:11) notes that

We must determine what it is and of which of the sciences or capacities it is the object we want to attain. It would seem to belong to the most authoritative art and that which is inmost truly the master art. And politics appears to be of this nature, for it is this that ordains which of the sciences should be studied in a state, and which each class of citizens should learn and do.

Bonino's argument is particularly relevant to the discussion in this article, because the Botswana liberal democratic state often depends on such morality and ethics to justify its political actions. In other words, if politics is understood in its sense as the whole, as the total of all the relationships that go to make up life in a particular society, it is easy to see that the market tendencies in a capitalist society tend to politicise life as a social or public act, in which not only primary, but also secondary, relationships, whether right or wrong, are involved. According to Bonino, social complexities cannot be ignored. Citizens have to exercise certain responsibilities through the structures of responsible participation, which is what happens in liberal democracies. In other words, responsible participation and actions deal with

social ethics through which men and women should understand themselves as protagonists of history. It is through such a process that they can also claim control over their world, their life, their destiny and, at the same time, make decisions and take actions about socioeconomic and political matters. Such political decisions are, therefore, informed and guided by Christian moral and ethical considerations. In short, all decisions become political decisions, since they are incorporated into a total system that operates at a time and in a given context (Bonino 1983:11).

While Christian morality and ethics cannot be regarded as the only basis of the economies of liberal democratic countries, it can be argued that they form the basis for political discipline and, together, are a vital feature of the structure and management of such economies. In other words, if socioeconomic political decision-making is involved, this is usually achieved on the basis of a systematic or developed theory based on morality and ethics. Although socioeconomic and political decisions may be understood in this way, not all of them would clearly relate to intelligent moral decision-making. In short, not all politicians in liberal democracies, who are responsible for making moral decisions on political matters, are exponents of Christian ethics (Gill 1985:4). This is why Calvinists base many of their social ideals on the notion of predestination.

Borrowing from Christian moral and political ethics, in this article I shall argue that the development and occupation of the economic space in a liberal political dispensation poses a number of questions about the relationship between Calvinism as a Christian philosophy and the economic performance of capitalism. This powerful capitalism is totally dependent on plans, goals and resources that are determined at different economic and political levels. As a result, Christian theology, such as Calvinism, has become decisively political, because, as never before, morality and ethical conduct remain the way in which the credibility of political leaders and the nature of the system, particularly in an open economy, (normally preferred in a liberal democratic system), are predetermined. One could argue that this approach leads almost inevitably to a consideration of the development, in our time, of "economies of scale", through which large capitalist enterprises and individuals in nation-states find it justifiable to penetrate and control the production processes of their socioeconomic cultures (Bonino 1983:14). This means that the most fundamental political decisions about the economy, education, use of resources, and population policy, as prevalent in liberal democratic economies, are considered inviolable, as predestined, and as having consequences that are said to be inevitable" (Bonino 1983:15). This is just one way in which Christian morality is related to liberal democratic politics.

The most important issue to address here is to try and explore the role of the Christian faces in a liberal democratic society. Bonino has examined the internal and external threats that swirl around the human future by taking

an inventory of the economic, political, social and moral resources on which humanity depends. He argues that there is nowhere to turn except to those private beliefs and disbeliefs that guide each of us, because lives has become socialised to such an extent that individual lives are nuclei determined by the criss-crossing of complex lines of economic, religious, ethical and cultural structures. Secondly, that prospect in our daily lives are critical to subordinate more things, more powerful, greater wealth in making our diverse philosophical, political and religious viewpoints on occasion for mutual encounter and enrichment to structure our economy and devise political structures in order to cope with problems and give viability to the hopes of our time. Thirdly, an intense and resolute effort seems necessary if we are to bring this complex reality under control and subordinate it to human ends. Our task is to subordinate power to human decisions and human goals and this is precisely the function of Christian political ethics (Bonino 1983:16).

Bonino's argument is particularly relevant to liberal political beliefs and convictions because of the universal belief that goods and benefits must be justly distributed; that there must be equal opportunity for all; that a measure of freedom is necessary for human development; and that honesty and truthfulness are needed in our common life. Such principles are important because they offer specific motivation for putting them into practice and provide a firm foundation for establishing a liberal democratic set-up, something that is commonly credited to the influence of Calvinism. These general principles can be specified in terms of certain criteria for political action, the welfare of all, including the material, cultural, and political conditions of human development and a measure of security and justice. In particular, the application of these criteria requires analysis of the concrete circumstances and the correct use of available resources.

Finally, there is emphasis on praxis as the necessary presupposition of any significant Christian social ethics. For those who subscribe to a liberal political philosophy, this means that they should join in the human effort to articulate political ethics for today's world and shoulder the task of bringing to bear upon it the basic beliefs and disbeliefs that guide each of them, as Christian morality suggests. Bonino's view is also shared by Ernest Troeltsch (1912:37), who argued that

The question of the inward influence of Christianity upon the sense of personality, upon ethical mutual relationships, is certainly of immense importance ... but that the only method for attempting to find an answer at all is by investigating the concrete affect of its influence in different social groups. In the course of such investigation, however, it will become evident that great tracts of social life, like that of the economic social order, throw a great deal of light upon the general fundamental

tendency of Christian sociology, which permits us to draw certain inferences about the general character and the effect on civilization of Christian sociological principles.

Liberal political theory, Calvinism and the socioeconomic values of capitalism

Historically, the liberal tradition in political theory has always been associated with capitalist economic systems. The needs of the developing capitalist class and the liberal values of autonomy and self-fulfilment have often been linked with the right to private property. As already indicated, Calvinism or the liberal tradition led to demands for a more democratic society and more political liberty, views which are based on deeply held moral convictions about the inherent equality of all men. These demands also expressed the challenge posed to society at the time by the rising merchant and industrial capitalist classes, who were eager to do away with the restrictions on travel, finance and manufacturing that were the result of an outworn feudal system (which, by its very nature, hampered the growth of trade and industry (Jagger 1983:25)). Liberal political theory provides the ground for the basic moral and political values of liberalism which, in turn, prescribes the method that liberals should use for resolving problems. The fundamental moral values of liberalism are predicated on the assumption that all individuals have an equal capacity for reason.

The basis of liberalism is the intrinsic and ultimate value of individual human freedom. The liberal conception of the natural, good society is one that supports the liberal value that a good society must protect the dignity of each individual's autonomy and self-fulfilment. Given these values, liberals have inferred that a good society should allow each individual the maximum freedom, without any undue interference from others. Liberals assume that the resources for human survival are limited and that each individual has an interest in securing as large a share as possible of those resources. On the basis of these assumptions, liberals conclude that every society contains the built-in mechanism, so to speak, of competing individuals (Jagger 1983:33).

Given the preceding discussion, the fundamental problem for liberal states is to devise social institutions that will protect each individual's right to a fair share of the available resources while, simultaneously, allowing him or her the maximum opportunity for autonomy and self-fulfilment. The liberal answer to this dilemma is traditionally framed in terms of justifications and delimitations of the power of the state. In trying to determine the limits of state intervention in the life of an individual, liberal theory distinguishes between classes in the public and private realms.

Calvinism also influenced the capitalist endeavours of the merchant traders, although Calvin himself did not necessarily like capitalism. There

was a struggle in Geneva itself around the effect of Calvinism on capitalism; unsurprisingly, this struggle was between tradition and progress. Although various parties wanted their own way to prevail (a desire based on class and status), there was a growing need to create “independent sources of capital” and a need to maintain “political independence” in the city. Calvinism, then, includes issues that are relevant to trade and industry, even though Calvin himself did not develop an “economic theory”. Later, during the 17th century, Calvinism and capitalism “were virtually coextensive”. Weber maintains that this was due to the Calvinistic doctrine of “calling” (not “effectual calling”, but of vocation, i.e. what would a Christian do if God’s calling is for his life). This idea was placed in a more concrete position through what might be called “federal theology”, which emphasised not only the salvation of the individual through grace in Christ, but also what that individual should do in labouring before God and unto God in the world (Weber 1904: 5).

Calvinism and its influence on the economies of Western liberal democracies

Having attempted to outline a framework of Christian moral and political ethics and how these influence the socioeconomic and political values of liberal democratic countries, it is important to show how Calvinism, as one of the three major branches of Christianity which originated in the 16th century, is helpful in this regard. An economic system is understood to be a system by which people organise resources, human skills, natural materials and manufactured capital goods in order to produce products that will satisfy human needs and wants. In a market or a capitalist system, the decision about what to produce depends on how households and individuals decide to spend their income, on what they want to buy (items that will sell well and be profitable to produce), and what they do not want to buy (items that will sell badly and will result in losses to the producers (Sleeman 1976:146)). The political values of liberalism, its ethics and business attitudes are particularly relevant in this respect, because the regulating mechanisms in a market economy rely upon the efficient use of resources, the price system, competition, and the motives of seeking satisfaction and profit. Capitalism is based on the spirit and culture of doing business that is profitable and that produces goods that people want to buy. This view of the market is encouraged in countries such as Great Britain, where it is generally accepted that liberalism encourages political and social freedom.

Calvinism has had a profound effect on Western nations, especially on culture. Two aspects of Calvinism stand out here: (1) the international character of the movement that influences religious, economic and political issues in those countries; and (2) the “world affirming character” of Calvin’s theology, especially as developed later by the Puritans. Because of these two

characteristics, Calvinism continues to influence secular society, despite Calvin's condemnation of materialism. As a Christian moral and political ethic, Calvinism provides an incentive for capitalist enterprises by declaring them to be blameless. In an article entitled *The Institute Calvinist but not Reformed*, Anthony Bradley (2008) notes that Puritans (those pure in business) such as Jonathan Edwards were merchants and slave owners. What Anthony Bradley (2008) seems to imply here is that there was nothing wrong with slave owners engaging in slave trade as long as it was profitable; he also seems to be making the point that, according to the Calvinist tradition, some people were created to be slaves.

Explaining the relationship between the nature of society and God, Peter Sedgwick (1992:159) points out that the Church, by its actions in witness, points to the social nature of the world that God has created. This order, in turn, enables human beings to re-order themselves on what has already been decided by God. Such a process is known as "predestination". Predestination refers to God's sovereign involvement in certain things before they happen. DW Hardy (1994) is even more direct on this issue. He has spelt out the profound implications of adopting theological positions that view the world as primarily lived in and continually created by God's presence through his creations (e.g. people, who are expected to look after and use the world for their own survival).

Calvinists also believe that "God's divine providence (has) selected, elected, and predestined certain people to restore humanity and reconcile it with its Creator". These "elect" were originally thought to be the only people going to heaven. To the Calvinists, material success and wealth was a sign that you were one of the "elect", and thus favoured by God (Berlet 2005). As far as Calvinism and the economies of Western liberal democracies are concerned, the real issue is that God ruled, in advance, how people in those countries should fashion and manage their socioeconomic institutions. The most profound implication here is that predestination has already generated richer possibilities for those human beings who live in capitalist economies. The stability or economic growth of these countries is thus believed to be the result of predestination. In other words, the successful performances of their social institutions, economic arrangements, personal relationships and culture are believed to have been planned, in advance, by God. The Church is, therefore, expected to witness to this continual process of predestination, because it does not pronounce on God's work outside of society.

According to Hardy (1994), the understanding of freedom in such a process is directly related to the establishment of a predestined society or community, whereby the energies of the individual are placed above those of the society. In this case, the relationship of our individual freedom to collective society also becomes crucial. Human freedom is one of the presuppositions of Christianity's understanding of God's relationship with the world

(Sedgwick 1992:162). Freedom, then, is a crucial term for the culture of entrepreneurship. The work of the spirit is a way of speaking of God at work within each Christian, but in a way that respects the freedom and integrity of each believer.

Pursuing the same point, Jeffrey Stout (2004) said: "We do, however, live in a society where economic forces seem increasingly to produce people who lack the virtues needed to use their freedom well ... what we need to discover is the mean between giving approval to the status quo and wistful alienation from it. I would argue that any attempt to work out a Christian economic and political philosophy must be taken on this basis." Sociologist Max Weber was among the first to identify and formally posit religious affiliation as a critical determinant of economic and social progress.

Analysing family income levels of Protestants, Catholics and Jews in the German city of Baden in 1904-1905, Weber showed that Protestants were substantially better off than Catholics. This analysis led to Weber's masterpiece: *The Protestant ethic and the spirit of capitalism*, which explained why the values and attitudes inculcated by ascetic Calvinism were a more effective motivator for entrepreneurship, capital accumulation, and community responsibility than the values and attitudes inculcated by confessional Roman Catholicism. Max Weber linked the rise of Calvinism with the needs of budding capitalists and suggested that the economic success of early capitalists was interpreted as a sign of their preordained salvation. The rising popularity of Calvinism coincided with the consolidation of the capitalist economic system. Calvinists justified their accumulation of wealth, even at the expense of others, on the grounds that they were somehow destined to prosper. It is not surprising that such notions still find resonance within the liberal democratic set-up, which also champions capitalism and all its attendant inequalities, as is the case in Botswana.

Ronald Inglehart's (1997) study of the relative performance of Protestant and Catholic countries between 1870 and 1938 confirms Weber's assertions. Weber identified features of ascetic Protestantism that, in contrast with Roman Catholicism, encouraged behaviours conducive to economic achievement. There were two aspects to this advantage. First, Protestantism had certain stringent ethical standards, and advocated virtues such as thrift, frugality, honesty, a sense of duty to others, personal responsibility, and a high regard for work. Weber believed that the more flexible Catholic ethic put them at a disadvantage relative to Protestants in this life, since a rigorous ethical code is likely to increase levels of trust, something that is extremely important to both political pluralism and economic efficiency.

A second aspect of the Protestant advantage was that this rigorous ethic was applied universally. Protestantism, according to Weber, required consistent adherence to high levels of honesty and fairness in dealing with everyone, regardless of their family or kinship network. Protestantism thus

fostered the establishment of trust funds, which were the foundation for the development of large institutions such as the modern corporation.

Writing about the early 1800s, evangelicals who subscribed to Calvinism argued that it was unthinkable that capitalism led to class conflict, for that would mean that God had created a world at war with itself. Evangelicals believed in a providential God, one who built a logical and orderly universe, and they saw the new industrial economy as a fulfilment of God's plan. The free market, they believed, was a perfectly designed instrument to reward good Christian behaviour and to punish and humiliate the unrepentant. At the centre of this early evangelical doctrine was the idea of original sin: we are all born stained by corruption and fleshly desire, and the true purpose of earthly life is to redeem us from this state of affairs. The trials of economic life – the sweat of hard labour, the fear of poverty, and the self-denial involved in saving – were earthly trials designed to test our sinfulness and virtue. While evangelicals believed salvation was ultimately possible only through conversion and faith, they saw the pain of earthly life as means of atonement for original sin (Beliles & McDowell 1991).

Moreover, they regarded poverty as part of a divine programme. Evangelicals interpreted the mental anguish of poverty and debt, and the physical agony of hunger or cold, as natural spurs to prick the conscience of sinners. They believed that the suffering of the poor would provoke remorse, reflection and, ultimately, the conversion that would change their fate. In other words, poor people were poor for a reason, and helping them out of poverty would endanger their mortal souls. It was the evangelicals who began to see the business mogul as a heroic figure, his wealth a triumph of righteous will. Defending the God-given right of property owners, evangelicals argued that the purpose of government is to protect the life, liberty and property of all individuals, by punishing evildoers and encouraging the righteous (*America's Providential History* 1991:20).

The third principle is the "right to property", which is one of the "rights of colonists as Christians". Scripture defines God as the source of private property. Ecclesiastes 5:19 states "For every man to whom God has given riches and wealth, He has also empowered him to eat from them ...". Also in I Chronicles 29:12, "both riches and honour come from Thee". The Texas Republic Party Platform also espouses the absolute right of property owners, when it says:

We believe that good government is based on the individual, and each person's ability, dignity, freedom, and responsibility must be honored and recognized. We believe equal opportunity is a right and a privilege but equal outcome is not. We insist that no one's rights are negotiable and that individual freedom demands personal responsibility.

Another sociologist, Sara Diamond, notes in an article entitled *Dominion Theology* (1995) that Calvinists believe that God has already preordained every single thing that happens in the world. Most importantly, even one's own salvation or condemnation to hell is already a "done deal" as far as God is concerned. According to this theological scheme, the human will cannot change the course of history. All that is left for the "righteous" to do is to play out their preordained role, including their God-given right to dominate the world.

To what extent can we attribute Botswana's socioeconomic performance to the influence of Calvinism?

As a protectorate, Botswana was neglected for a long time, simply because the British government thought it was expensive to run a colony that was counted amongst the world's poorest countries, a country with scant resources and no infrastructure at all (Maylam 1980:23). This situation, however, changed when Botswana attained independence and adopted a capitalist mode of production, and consciously adopted values commonly practised in northern Europe, the former colonising powers.

Benedict (2002:12) notes that Calvinism is attributed with "setting the stage" for the development of capitalism. Capitalism refers to the economic and social system in which the means of production or capital are privately controlled and labour, goods and capital are traded in a market; profits are distributed to owners or invested in new technologies and industries and wages are paid to labourers. It has already been shown that Calvinism, as a philosophy, touches upon every sphere of capitalist society. The study of Calvinism, therefore, is not simply a study of the movement's historical past, but involves examining its influence on current political, social, and religious events and observing its socioeconomic impact in contemporary society. This will include looking at countries such as Botswana, whose socioeconomic institutions are based on a free market which, in turn, is justified by a Christian political ethic normally associated with Calvinism.

Calvinism plays an important role since it represents and justifies Christian ethics which, in turn, helps account for the emergence and growth of individualism as experienced in liberal democratic systems. As already indicated, it often advocates private ownership as opposed to state or collective arrangements. In the case of Botswana, this is clearly evident in the country's socioeconomic performance and its liberal, democratic institutions. Botswana has many features of a liberal democratic system, such as allowing any citizen to run for office, freedom of the press, rule by elected representatives, secret ballot and equality of franchise, and a free market economy (Somolekae 1988:75).

For Barry A. Harvey (1994:1), there is a relationship between the historical essence of the human soul and moral truth that ensures that free and open discussion will produce one right answer to moral and to free and open questions, and this is provided for in liberal democracies. An important point to make is that, by adopting a liberal democratic system, Botswana consciously or unconsciously chose to uphold Calvinist theology, which argued that capitalist mode of production was more effective than other systems. In other words, one of the unintended results of Botswana's free market economy is based on a Calvinist tradition.

I have already discussed how Calvinism was seen as the basis of theocracies in many western countries which, without any doubt, Botswana continues to emulate. PP Molutsi (1988:105), in an article entitled *The ruling class and democracy in Botswana*, observes that Botswana's liberal democracy combines elements of traditional leadership and the preponderance of western educated groups.

Theologically speaking, one can argue that Calvin's writing and preaching provided the seeds for individualism, i.e. the moral stance, political philosophy, ideology, or social outlook that emphasises both political and economic independence. Individualism promotes the exercise of one's goals and desires and opposes most forms of external interference on one's choices, whether by society itself or by any other group or institution. It is in this sense that the conditions of Botswana's liberal democracy and the prospects of its socioeconomic and political performances may be understood within the context of a Calvinist tradition, as has been discussed at length above. This is clearly reflected in the country's legitimising of a free market economy.

In view of the issue discussed above, certain elements of Calvinism represented a revolt against the medieval condemnation of usury and profit. The democratic polity of Botswana is based on the notion of the free human will, which has also encouraged the articulation of the individual interests of the vast majority of people, particularly in terms of property accumulation. A remarkable contrast exists between Botswana's economic performance and that of other countries in the southern African region, particularly those who chose the socialist path of development that outrightly contradicts the values, principles and traditions of Calvinism. In other words, the Calvinist churches, teachings and traditions provided a message for those who wanted to do business as individuals, as opposed to those who believed in collectivism. There is no doubt, therefore, that economic performance is directly attributable to the fundamental spirit and protestant ethic which encourages individuals and private institutions to use their free will in acquiring property.

Calvinistic thought, as I have said repeatedly, has exerted considerable influence on capitalism. It can, therefore, be safely argued that Botswana's economic successes are not unrelated to its unconscious practice of the

economic ideals of Calvinism. Liberal democracy is still related, for many Botswana, to old capitalism and to Western democracies which, of late, have been given the new name of "globalisation". In this case, the principle of free market and the individual right to property is clearly visible in the fact that every member of a tribe enjoys certain rights and privileges in common with fellow tribes people. He or she is entitled to land on which to erect his home, to plough and to graze his cattle, and to all other facilities needed to earn a livelihood (Schapera 1955:198). If one is to understand this Tswana arrangement of property ownership from a Calvinistic traditional perspective and the spirit of the Protestant ethic, it is clear that Botswana have always consciously practised it. There were a number of social, economic, political and religious matters that pressurised capitalist states such as Botswana to perform positively and, although Calvinism was not directly involved, Calvinistic ideas were indirectly involved because of the influence of Calvin's writings and philosophy on such countries. According to K. Datta and A. Murray (1988:58), this arrangement gave Botswana absolute property rights and control over their own labour. It is, therefore, true that the legal framework for property relations was somehow informed by Calvinism teachings on economic life.

It is clear from this paper that the Botswana government's liberal democratic policy orientation and principal decision-making body on socioeconomic and political matters, which undercuts the liberal conception of freedom as non-interference, is consistent with the tenets of Calvinism. In short, one can safely argue that, Calvinism has made an indelible mark on Botswana's liberal socioeconomic and political institutions.

Conclusion

Botswana's liberal democratic, socioeconomic and political arrangements have been indirectly influenced by the Christian theological principles of Calvinism. This was true at the time of independence and remains true today. This has enabled Botswana to enjoy a liberal democracy and economic prosperity, two things which many of her neighbours know little about. This success has enabled the Church, through the Calvinist tradition, to state the ethics and principles of the Christian faith on matters relating to the country's socioeconomic and political structures. To sum up: Botswana's socioeconomic and political success owes a great deal to Calvinism and the tradition of political liberalism that arose out of Calvinism.

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