

ABBREVIATIONS

DRC	Dutch Reformed Church
SRC	Shona Reformed Church
ARC	African Reformed Church
RCZ	Reformed Church in Zimbabwe
ZCC	Zion Christian Church
RCC	Roman Catholic Church
BSAC	British South Africa Company

ABSTRACT

Since the time of its establishment in Zimbabwe in the late 19th century, the RCZ (formerly DRC) has been involved in a number of services in the area of its operation (southern Zimbabwe). This study on diakonia has analysed, from a social-scientific perspective, the theological or doctrinal principles behind such service. Since the church considers the Bible normative and claims to be guided by the New Testament in its teaching and practice, the study first analysed the teaching and practice of diakonia in the New Testament. Here it has been noted that the practice of diakonia took new twists and emphases with the development of the church from the Jewish world to the Hellenistic world. The study has therefore found the same trend in the RCZ. Its teaching and practice of diakonia has been found to be mainly meant to bring people to Christianity just as Jesus' teaching and practice, for example, was meant to bring people into the kingdom of God. Analysed from a cultural-anthropological perspective both the New Testament and RCZ teaching and practice of diakonia have mainly been classified under M. Sahlins' generalised and balanced reciprocity. In both contexts, the New Testament and the RCZ, it has been found out that sometimes the provision of service has resulted in the providers of service being the patrons of the recipients with the recipients becoming the clients. By and large the New Testament teaching and practice of diakonia implied the same for the RCZ. Differences are therefore only a result of time and context.

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