

CHRISTIANITY
and
DEMOCRACY

in
SOUTH
AFRICA

**CHRISTIAN
RESPONSIBILITY
FOR POLITICAL
REFLECTION
AND SERVICE**

CHRISTIANITY AND DEMOCRACY

IN

SOUTH AFRICA

**Christian responsibility for
political reflection and service**



**Potchefstroomse Universiteit
vir Christelike Hoër Onderwys**

1996

About the book

This edition of *Orientation* contains the proceedings of a conference on *Christianity and democracy in South Africa* which was held at Potchefstroom from 10th to 12th July, 1996.

It was attended by about 350 people from all over South Africa and neighbouring countries. Papers were delivered by local speakers, representing the major South African political parties and a wide variety of churches, as well as nine speakers from outside South Africa.

Apart from an introduction, the conference concentrated on the following four main areas:

- South African Christians from different political groups sharing their experience of a new democracy
- An evaluation of the new South African constitutional dispensation and dynamics
- International experience of democracy from a Christian perspective
- Political strategies in the case of both secular and Christian political parties as well as the churches

The last part of the volume contains some of the devotions delivered at the conference, *A vision for the future* by the internationally well-known dr. Beyers Naudé, an extensive report by the chairman of the Steering Committee who organised the conference as well as a brief bibliography for further reading on the issue of Christian involvement in politics.

Order from:

The Institute for Reformational Studies,
Potchefstroom University for Christian
Higher Education,
Potchefstroom, 2520,
Republic of South Africa.

This is a special issue of

ORIENTATION

***International Circular of the Potchefstroom University for
Christian Higher Education***

Jan.-Dec. (79-82):1996

Orientation is published by the Institute for Reformational Studies on behalf of the Potchefstroom University for Christian Higher Education.

If you are interested in receiving *Orientation* please write to the following address:

The Editor: *Orientation*
C/o Institute for Reformational Studies
Potchefstroom University for Christian Higher Education
Potchefstroom
2520 RSA

EDITORS: Bennie van der Walt and Rita Swanepoel

CONTENTS

Preface - B.J. van der Walt

SECTION I: INTRODUCTION

1. *Opening speeches*
 - 1.1 *The voice of this Conference in the context of voices from the past and the present* - B.J. van der Walt 1
 - 1.2 *Word of welcome at the campus of the PU for CHE* - J. van der Elst 8
 - 1.3 *Official opening of the Conference* - S. Roopa 10
2. *Keynote address: Christianity and democracy* - P. Marshall 14

SECTION II: SOUTH AFRICAN CHRISTIANS FROM DIFFERENT POLITICAL GROUPS SHARING THEIR EXPERIENCE OF A NEW DEMOCRACY

3. *An experience from the ANC* - M. Phosa 24
4. *An experience from the NP* - C. Dowry 27
5. *An experience from the IFP* - F. Mdlalose 30
6. *An experience from the FF* - P. Mulder 36
7. *An experience from the DP* - E. Papenfus 41
8. *An experience from the PAC* - M. Pheko 50
9. *An experience from the ACDP* - K.R. Meshoe 60

SECTION III: DIFFERENT EVALUATIONS OF THE NEW SOUTH AFRICAN CONSTITUTIONAL DISPENSATION AND DYNAMICS FROM A CHRISTIAN PERSPECTIVE

10. *An evaluation* by M. Wiechers 63
11. *An evaluation* by S. Duncan 66
12. *An evaluation* by C. Dlamini 69
13. *An evaluation with particular reference to the Bill of Rights* by L.M. du Plessis 74

SECTION IV: INTERNATIONAL EXPERIENCES OF DEMOCRACY FROM A CHRISTIAN PERSPECTIVE

14. *An African perspective* - D.M. Gitari 85
15. *An American perspective* - J.W. Skillen 101

16.	<i>A British perspective</i> - J. Chaplin	112
17.	<i>A European perspective</i> - A. Rouvoet	135
18.	<i>A South Korean perspective</i> - W.Y. Shin	146

SECTION V: POLITICAL STRATEGIES

19.	<i>Confessing Christ in politics: How?</i> - J.W. Skillen	150
20.	<i>Do the ends justify the means?</i> - B. Goudzwaard	179
21.	<i>Christian inspiration in secular political parties: What kind of strategy should a Christian use when he/she is a member of a secular political party?</i> - J.P. Balkenende	189
22.	<i>What kind of strategies will be applicable in a Christian political party?</i> - E. Schuurman	202
23.	<i>In which ways could the churches be mobilised to influence politicians, parties and the government?</i> - M. Nthla	211
24.	<i>Party politics, grass roots politics and civil society</i> - L. Camerer	216
25.	<i>Reconciliation in Gauteng Province</i> - G.P. Moerane	238
26.	<i>Reconciliation: a perspective from KwaZulu-Natal</i> - S. Britton	243

SECTION VI: CONCLUSION

27.	<i>A vision for the future</i> - C.F.B. Naudé	252
-----	---	-----

SECTION VII: DEVOTIONS

28.1	<i>Unity in the Body of Christ</i> - E. Makue	259
28.2	<i>Christ is Victor!</i> - J.H. van Wyk	262

SECTION VIII: REPORT

29.	<i>Report on the Conference</i> - B.J. van der Walt	267
-----	---	-----

SECTION IX: BIBLIOGRAPHY

30.	<i>Bibliography for further study</i> - B.J. van der Walt	278
-----	---	-----

APPENDIX

	<i>Does religious freedom imply religious equality? A Biblical perspective</i> - B.J. van der Walt	284
--	--	-----

PREFACE

As promised in the previous edition (nr. 75-78) of *Orientation* (1995), this edition contains the proceedings of the conference on *Christianity and democracy in South Africa* which was held at Potchefstroom from 10th - 12th July, 1996.

It was attended by about 350 people from all over South Africa and neighbouring countries. Papers were delivered by local speakers, representing the major South African political parties and a wide variety of churches, as well as nine speakers from outside South Africa.

Apart from an introduction, the conference concentrated on the following four main areas:

- South African Christians from different political groups sharing their experience of a new democracy
- An evaluation of the new South African constitutional dispensation and dynamics
- The international experience of democracy from a Christian perspective
- Political strategies in the case of both secular and Christian political parties as well as the churches

The last part of the volume contains some of the devotions delivered at the conference, *A vision for the future* by the internationally well-known dr. Beyers Naudé, an extensive report by the chairman of the Steering Committee who organised the conference as well as a brief bibliography for further reading on the issue of Christian involvement in politics.

The following organisations were involved as presenters of the conference:

- The Department of Political Sciences and the Institute for Reformational Studies (IRS) at the Potchefstroom University for Christian Higher Education
- The Evangelical Alliance of South Africa (TEASA)
- The International Fellowship of Christian Churches (IFCC)
- The Public Justice Movement (PJM)
- The South African Council of Churches (SACC).

Members of the Steering Committee included the following:

- Rev. Aubrey Adams, The Evangelical Alliance of S.A.
- Rev. Vanessa MacKenzie, Church of the Province of S.A.
- Mr. Eddie Makue, South African Council of Churches
- Prof. Gerald Pillay, Dept. of Church History, University of South Africa

- Prof. Christopher Rabali, Dept. of Biblical Studies, Potchefstroom University for Christian Higher Education
- Rev. Ron Steele, Rhema Ministries
- Dr. Gideon Strauss, Public Justice Movement
- Proff. Bennie van der Walt, Ami van Wyk and Ponti Venter, Institute for Reformational Studies, Potchefstroom University for Christian Higher Education
- Proff. Joh van Tonder, Willie van Wyk and Dr. Poen Coetzee, Dept. of Political Sciences, Potchefstroom University for Christian Higher Education.

The financial assistance of the following organisations/individuals to the conference is hereby acknowledged. Opinions expressed and conclusions arrived at, are those of the authors and are not necessarily to be attributed to these organisations/individuals:

Major sponsor:

- The Dutch Foundation for a New South Africa

Other sponsors:

- Anglo American: Chairman's Fund - Educational Trust
- Bakker & Griffioen
- The Centre for Science Development (The Human Sciences Research Council, South Africa)
- The Free University of Amsterdam, the Netherlands
- Jolly Jumbo
- The Old Mutual
- The Potchefstroom University for Christian Higher Education
- The South African Council of Churches

Individuals

- Mr. L.P. Korsten
- Mr. L.J. Kruger

May the publication of these proceedings assist Christians - not only in South Africa, but throughout the African continent and abroad - firstly to realise and secondly to take up their responsibility for political service.

Prof. Bennie van der Walt
(Chairman: Steering Committee)

SECTION I: INTRODUCTION

Chapter 1: Opening speeches

1.1 THE VOICE OF THIS CONFERENCE IN THE CONTEXT OF VOICES FROM THE PAST AND THE PRESENT

B.J. van der Walt*

I do hope that my introduction will not be perceived as too personal, written too much from a limited Potchefstroom perspective. After all, one cannot help being, to a greater or lesser extent, a product of one's own experiential world. My sincere hope is none the less that these brief opening words may reflect a more universal experience, voicing the feelings of the Steering Committee as well as those of most of us who are gathered here tonight. (It should be kept in mind that the Potch University is merely the *host* of this conference and not its sole *presenter* - see the preceding *Preface* and below.)

I regard this conference as an historical occasion - as will soon become evident. On such occasions we usually direct our sight in three directions: back into the past, at the present situation and also to the future. We will therefore let the voices of history and today resound briefly. We will also ask ourselves what significance this conference should have for the future of South Africa.

I divide my presentation into the following six voices speaking to us from the past and the present:

- * The *original* voice
- * An *exclusive* voice
- * A voice of *protest*
- * An *inclusive* voice
- * A *clear* voice
- * The *decisive* Voice

THE ORIGINAL VOICE

This voice was heard for nearly 80 years, since the establishment of the Potchefstroom University (our host for the conference) in 1869, up to the fifties of this century. It was the voice of Christians who were convinced of the necessity of being faithful to the

*Prof. Bennie van der Walt, Chairman of the Steering Committee, IRS, PU for CHE, Potchefstroom 2520, RSA.

Lord and his Word - also in the way one thinks, educates and practises scholarship. They were inspired by the vision of God's all-encompassing kingdom and the need to obey and serve Him in all areas of life. Their aim was to develop a Biblical-reformational worldview or cosmoscope in order to guide and equip the younger generation for the different vocations to which the Lord calls them.

Realising this ideal entailed a tremendous effort, a long and difficult struggle. But they were prepared for sacrifices and determined to persevere and succeed. It was not the voice of politically powerful or materially rich Christians, but people with a vision. It was not an impressive voice according to the standards of the world, but it was a strong and clear voice ...

AN EXCLUSIVE VOICE

Unfortunately, from about the fifties of this century, this strong, clear, original voice lost its strength and depth, became shallow, faint and even ambiguous. This happened when previously suppressed, marginalised and poor Afrikaner Christians assumed political power (1948). They did not acknowledge the different ways in which the Gospel could be applied to politics or education. They opted for only one exclusive way, the Christian-national way, which merged into the political ideology of apartheid. The way the government viewed and structured society - including this University - was regarded as the only and best possibility. Others who could not agree with this exclusive voice, were suspected, marginalised and suppressed. It was the voice of political power!

The greatest tragedy of it all was that, because of the strong emphasis on the exclusive "National" element in the "Christian-national" motive, the original clear voice of the Gospel became captivated by an unbiblical, nationalistic ideology.

This exclusive, compromised Christian voice, which lasted for about four decades, embarrassed, confused and paralised many, it affected the credibility of the Christian faith - and even the Word of God itself - and harmed the dignity of millions of South Africans.

A VOICE OF PROTEST

Through the grace of God this exclusive voice of those in power could not succeed in totally smothering the liberating, powerful Word of God. Even if it sometimes was only a "Gideon's" group, there remained staff and students at this university who knew, deep in their hearts, that the dominating, exclusive, ambiguous voice could not be the real, original, clear Christian voice of Potch: A voice proclaiming the sovereignty of

God also in the political arena - instead of human sovereignty and autonomy. They accordingly re-emphasised the authentic, Biblical-reformational perspective.

Their voice should therefore not be regarded simply as protest for the sake of protest. They were not simply anti-apartheid people. They were protesting not in the first place *against* but *for* something better. They wanted to demolish in order to help build a better South Africa. In essence they wanted to revive and continue the original Christian voice and build it out clearly and constructively in a new context. A few did so by leaving Potch. Others decided to stay and challenge its exclusive voice.

When I now mention a few of these protest voices, the impression may be created that they were the only examples of resistance. Much, much more, however, happened in private discussions, academic debates, etc. which never reached the media to shock the establishment. A few examples which come to mind are:

- * As early as 1958 a few leading academics (proff. L.J. du Plessis, D.W. Kruger and J.H. Coetzee) voiced their disagreement in the press.
- * *Woord en Daad (Word and Action)* the successive editors of which were all recruited from the staff of this University, followed suit in the sixties by continuously asking critical questions for more than thirty years.
- * At its conference on "Justice in the South African Society" (October, 1976) the *Reformational Movement of Southern Africa* in no uncertain terms voiced its protest against apartheid.
- * In October the following year (1977) the *Koinonia Declaration* was released by a group of young lecturers and students at the PU for CHE. It was an urgent call, based on Biblical grounds, to abolish apartheid. Outside Potch - even internationally - it was acclaimed, but at home those responsible were severely reprimanded.
- * At several conferences (1983, 1984, 1986, 1988), attended by all population groups of South Africa as well as with overseas participation, the *Institute for Reformational Studies (IRS)* amplified this voice of protest against discrimination in general, and its entrenchment at the PU for CHE. It also indicated a reformational alternative. This was no easy task, both theoretically and practically. This difficult position of the IRS continued even until 1990 when a conference with more or less the same contents and aims as the present one was planned, but could not obtain the green light.

Even the security police were well informed about what was happening at this supposedly rebellious institute!

Personally I am of the opinion that this University (as an institution) should confess its previous commitment to apartheid and redress the inequalities of the past. Not enough has changed yet.

Enough, however, about the internal struggles at Potch. During the 80's much more was happening outside, which encouraged everybody in South Africa tremendously. Within only one year inside South Africa itself the *Kairos Document* (1985), the *Belhar Confession* (1986), *Evangelical Witness in South Africa* (1986), and *Church and Society* (1986) were published which strengthened this Christian voice of opposition all over the country. This further initiated a critical discussion of the implications of being a Christian citizen. (Cf. L. Aberts & F. Chikane eds. 1991. *The road to Rustenburg; the church looking forward to a new South Africa*. Cape Town : Struik.)

Christian scholars also echoed this voice of protest internationally outside South Africa. As an example, I may refer to the invaluable contribution made by the book *The idols of our time*, the author of which, prof. Bob Goudzwaard, is tonight in our midst. It helped to focus the eyes of many a student and lecturer on the dangers of ideological blindness.

Let this suffice as far as both the exclusive and protesting voices from the past are concerned. This conference is held within the context of a totally new dispensation. What kind of Christian voice is needed today?

AN INCLUSIVE VOICE

If I read the signs of the times correctly, in the place of the two voices of the past, we need two new voices for the future: an inclusive and a clear Christian voice. First a few remarks about the need for an inclusive voice.

For many years the IRS had been stimulating and publishing critical and systematic studies on various issues of the South African society. During 1994 a few members of staff at the PU for CHE grappled with the specific problem of politics. It became clear that we urgently need a *new* Christian voice in the area of politics. It should, however, not be the lonely, isolated voice of Potchefstroom, in some aspects still struggling to finally get rid of its exclusive apartheid heritage.

A small conference was therefore held at Johannesburg on 4th May, 1995 to test the climate. The need for Christian reflection and action was evident. A pilot committee was elected, which was later expanded to the present Steering Committee, which had the task of planning the present conference. A special effort was made to ensure that the presenters of the conference should - as far as possible - represent all Christian denominations in South Africa. We are extremely encouraged by the goodwill and response we encountered.

It is true that, on account of the time limit and other constraints, we could not *fully* succeed. There may still be members of churches who feel that they should have been more directly consulted and involved by way of planning this conference or being represented by way of speakers. Women may legitimately draw our attention to the fact that, numerically, their representation as speakers, is inadequate. We at least tried our utmost to be fair by sending invitations to every possible address we could obtain.

Apart from transcending the denominational barriers, we have also succeeded (during a special meeting on 26th November, 1995 at the World Trade Centre) in obtaining approval for this conference from the main political parties. This, in turn, enabled the Dutch Foundation for a New South Africa, to become the major sponsor of this conference. This Foundation is represented tonight by Mr. André Rouvoet. May we ask him to convey the gratitude of this meeting to his Foundation for its most generous gift. Our gratitude is also extended to all the other kind sponsors mentioned on the programme (see preceding *Preface*) well as the PU for CHE, acting as host of the conference.

We are therefore gathered here tonight as Christians in spite of our ecclesiastical and political differences, from as far south as Cape Town to as far north as Louis Trichardt. We have conferees from Kimberley in the west and KwaZulu-Natal in the east. We even have representatives from our neighbouring African countries and guests from countries outside our continent.

We have reached the stage of an *inclusive* voice!

This, in the first place, implies that *everybody* is welcome. Blacks and whites. It is significant that dr. Beyers Naudé, who was not welcome at the first international conference for Christian higher education, hosted by this University in 1975, is in our midst tonight.

In the second place, we can now reflect *together* on the implications of the Gospel for politics, while this was not possible in the past, because we suspected, stigmatised and rejected one another, or thought it was not necessary to consult one another.

Looking back on the 22 years that I have been at the IRS, this occasion is therefore a highlight for myself. But I am convinced that it is also a time of celebration for *all* of us, the whole of South Africa. Let us rejoice and thank our Lord for this miracle!

The ideal is, of course, that this inclusive voice will finally lead to a voice of *unity*, to enable us as Christians to speak in politics unanimously with *one* voice. I realise, however, that we are not one yet. I don't think our cultural diversity is the greatest stumbling block to the path of real ecumenism. Personally I am much more concerned about old ideological voices (and their adherents, of course) which have not died. Perhaps an even greater danger is the new, upcoming ideologies (cf. the paper of prof. B. Goudzwaard).

I realise and acknowledge the necessity of a choir of Christian voices. We need this variety of perspectives to be able to see the relevance of the Word of God for politics. New alliances may emerge as well as a new appreciation and perception of nuances in Christianity. As Christians, we are also slowly discovering that, in many ways, as far as solid basic values are concerned, our political ideas and ideals are closer to, for instance, that of Muslim and Jewish people than to many of our secularised fellow Christians.

This brings me to another kind of voice which should be emanating from this conference.

A CLEAR VOICE

At present it will not be difficult to sit back. As South African citizens we have succeeded in achieving a radical political transformation in a peaceful way. We have a new democratic constitution etc. This temptation of complacency could also be a danger at this conference in the light of what has already been said. These positive achievements should, however, be an inspiration for us as Christians to move on to the next stage.

We do not need only an inclusive voice emanating from the conference. What we need is a *clear* Christian voice.

I hope this challenge will not be too great, because a great variety of viewpoints about politics exist amongst Christians. Some are quite happy with the new political dispensation. Others lament the fact that we are now living in a secular state. They ask the question: "What happened to God in our new constitution"? Others are

obsessed by the threat of all kinds of moral decline in the country. Some prefer to reflect deeply, while others insist on marching for Christ. Some Christians even bluntly reject any kind of involvement in "dirty, sinful" politics. Deeply entrenched differences are part of South African Christianity.

We need clarity! And to be able to achieve this, we will have to return to the Biblical basics. In the first place, we need a Christian view of society and the place of the state in the broader society. We need to think - in the light of the Bible - about the specific task and limits of government. We must also have clarity about our responsibilities as citizens. To construct such a distinctively Biblically-inspired social and political vision is not an easy task. But without it, we will be lost, our Christian message will be irrelevant and probably rejected as redundant.

Secondly, clear reflection should always go hand in hand with action. Our political deeds and strategies should also speak loudly and clearly to everybody in South Africa.

This conference is primarily concerned with the first assignment, a clear vision. Ad hoc action without the basis of a clear Biblical vision will be empty and meaningless. As in the case of the three men quarrying stones. Upon being asked what they are doing, the first simply replied: "I am quarrying stones". The answer of the second man was: "I am earning a living". Only the third one had a broader future vision in mind: "I am building a cathedral for God".

Sometimes during this conference you may also have the uncomfortable feeling of quarrying stones. What should one do with all these theoretical, abstract ideas? My advice will be: Think hard, ask questions, engage in discussion. Don't leave this venue without at least the *beginning* of a new vision. Not of building another cathedral, but a vision of how to serve the eternal Kingdom of God by confessing Christ in doing politics.

THE DECISIVE VOICE

This is the sixth and last voice we have to listen to: "What has happened and what is going to happen to the Voice of GOD in South African politics?" Let us firmly focus our attention on this decisive, ultimate and unique Voice during this conference. All the other voices from the past and the present are fallible, human voices. If this conference would - in sincerity and humility - try to echo this absolutely authoritative VOICE, I am sure it could make a substantial difference in our new South Africa!

* * *