

CHRISTIANITY IN A PLURALISTIC SOUTH AFRICA - AN EVANGELICAL PERSPECTIVE

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Abstract

How should the unique claims of Christianity co-exist with other faiths in an 'open', pluralistic society? The 'new South Africa' is expected to be a more 'secular' state than previously acknowledged, in spite of the fact that approximately 77% of the population claim some degree of Christian allegiance. How have other societies in transition adapted to these changes? A proper biblical understanding of the separation of church and state and religious liberty on the one hand can co-exist happily and peacefully with specifically Christian convictions on the other.

1. Introduction

The coming changes in South Africa are not only expected to transform the socio-political structures of the state, but also the outward religious character of the country. The word 'outward' is used here to indicate the recognition that, as 1 Samuel 16:7 puts it, 'people look on the outward appearance, but the Lord looks on the heart' and that therefore the true spiritual condition of people cannot really be determined by legislation.

2. Problems of the old state constitution

The present (1984) constitution of South Africa professes to 'uphold Christian values and civilized norms'. While this is in theory commendable and not to be despised in itself (e.g. in comparison to states where Christian minorities may be disadvantaged and even persecuted for their faith), such a profession is open to several serious objections even from Christians.

1. Many aspects of state or government policy, especially under the general umbrella of *apartheid*, have in fact been oppressive and in conflict with biblical and Christian principles. This has resulted both in people of other faiths as well as Christians who were discriminated against on racial grounds, being

compelled to look upon the actions and policies of the South African government as 'Christian values', thereby gaining a negative impression of such 'Christianity' and sometimes rejecting it in the process (See Morphew 1989:34-35 on the damage a 'Constantinian alliance' of church and state has historically produced in South Africa).

2. Although the clause 'with recognition and protection of freedom of faith and worship' did in practice reflect the large measure of religious liberty enjoyed by those of other faiths, it may still somehow have left those of other minority religions with the conviction that they were less favoured and were the object not only of racial, but also of religious discrimination. M. Prozesky (1991:13) has even alleged 'not since the arrival of the first white settlers in the mid-17th century, have we had a situation which can truly be called equitable and fair to all faiths'.

3. It may be questioned whether it is really possible or desirable for the state as such to 'uphold Christian values'; this is rather the function of the church. While recognizing the fact that Scripture sees the unity of life and does not rigidly divide it into spiritual/secular or religious/ political spheres, there is in fact in the New Testament a distinction between the church and 'the world', or the church and the state. Just as missionaries in the East who distribute rice to the hungry as part of their ministry find that some people are more interested in the material 'fringe benefits' of the gospel than in a true response to the claims of Christ on their lives, so a system which in any way gives special favours or status to one religious group may find that this approach tends to produce 'rice Christians' rather than biblical Christians!

3. Two responses to the reality of pluralism

The South African situation involves not only facing up to the challenges of non-racialism but also to the reality of religious pluralism, i.e. the fact that in a multicultural and multiracial society it is not only a question of different Christian denominations (such as Catholic or Protestant) learning to co-exist but those of completely different religions such as Islam Hinduism, and African traditional religions, as well as those of no faith at all. In response to the social reality of pluralism, at least two basic attitudes may be adopted.

1. The view that all religions are essentially human expressions of the basic search for God or for spiritual reality and meaning. This view tends to see all religions as different paths leading to the same God, so that dogmatism and exclusivism is out of place. No group can claim to have the final truth or revelation or insist that theirs is the only way. Some would also hope for a broad syncretism or coming together of all world religions, so that a wide religious attitude acceptable to most adherents of the great world religions would emerge.

2. The view that although meaningful dialogue may lead to the discovery that many important truths and values are held in common, the 'truth claims' of

the various religions cannot honestly be eliminated and will have to be recognized as constituting very different views of the nature and character of God and the world, the concept and way of salvation, etc., which are ultimately irreconcilable. The different religions must, however, in spite of these differences, learn how to continue their missionary efforts peacefully and learn how to co-exist in the broader society in spite of these differences.

4. The uniqueness of Christ

Evangelical Christians, who may be broadly defined as those who emphasize the inspiration and authority of Scripture and the necessity of personal commitment to Christ as Lord and Saviour, would clearly adopt their own version of the second approach described above. In the context of religious pluralism and inter-faith dialogue, evangelicals also believe that Christianity is unique, because of the person and work of its founder. One of the earliest Christian creeds was 'Jesus is Lord' (Phlp 2:11). This was not just a title of respect but the translation of Yahweh or Jehovah, the sacred name for God in the Old Testament. Thus Thomas could say to Jesus ' My Lord, and my God' (Jn 20:28).

Jesus is 'God manifest in the flesh' (1 Tm 3:16) and is God's final word to humankind (Heb 1:1-3). On Jesus' own terms, he is not a way but 'the way, the truth and the life - no one comes to the Father but by me' and 'he who has seen me has seen the Father' (Jn 14:6,9). The incarnation and atonement of Christ led to the conviction that 'neither is there salvation in any other; there is no other name given under heaven, by whom we must be saved (Ac 4:12).

5. The gospel, not Western culture

Claims to the uniqueness of Christ have sometimes been dismissed as a sort of Western cultural imperialism, a theological hangover from the arrogance of nineteenth-century colonial expansionism. This is to forget, however, that the first Christians were not Westerners, but Palestinians. Westerners are now a minority among the universal body of Christians which includes believers from all cultures and nations. Christian nationals have even been sent from Third World nations in Asia and Africa to work as missionaries in Europe where the spiritual vitality of some Christian churches is in relative decline compared to previous centuries. Belief in the uniqueness of Christ is not cultural arrogance of one group over another.

The Gospel is not something we invented or can take any credit for. We merely bear witness, as messengers and stewards, to what God has done in the whole biblical story, culminating in Christ himself (Anderson 1992:4).

6. A reduced Christology?

Historically, Christianity has been simultaneously both theocentric and Christocentric, but in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries especially there has been a reaction against the carefully defined Christology of what has become known as 'Chalcedonian orthodoxy' (referring to the Creed of Chalcedon of 451). Clark H Pinnock (1988:156) explains:

What Troeltsch said about historical relativity and what Toynbee maintained about the commonality of all religions hover in the popular mind and create an enormous groundswell or resistance to the historic Christian belief in Jesus Christ. Indeed, it has led theologians to propose a major paradigm shift in the way Christians should think about the gospel. Christocentrism is an offense in the context of religious pluralism, and ought to be replaced by a concentration on theocentrism instead.

This approach is seen in the work of philosopher-theologian John Hick who is well aware that a full New Testament Christology stands directly in the way of an amalgum of religion. He has therefore devoted much energy to reinterpreting the incarnation in mythic terms so that it can still serve as a Christian symbol but not constitute a unique and universal truth claim in the historic sense. This is evident in the book *The Myth of God Incarnate* (SCM 1977), to which Michael Green and others responded in *The Truth of God Incarnate* (Hodder 1977). Thus Pinnock (1988:157) comments:

This radical paradigm shift is obviously the product of the desire to accommodate to cultural pressures arising from religious pluralism, and we cannot possibly accept it. It seems to me incontrovertible that when the New Testament writers and the majority of Christians today confess their faith in Jesus Christ they are not simply saying how good Christ has been to them. They are also volunteering the information they are certain is true: that Jesus is Lord of all people and wants to be recognized by them all. Christianity is both theocentric and Christocentric, and I predict the effort to reduce it to a vague theism will fail as indeed it ought to. Trying to fit Christianity into the contours of the world's way of thinking is an apologetic strategy Christians should not accept.

In the South African context, similar opposition to a reduced Christology has been aired by Michael Cassidy of Africa Enterprise (See AE Update May 1990). Seminars on The Uniqueness of Christ with Louw Alberts, Michael Cassidy and Ravi Zacharias of India as speakers were also held early in 1993. R B Nicolson (1991:67,81) has even suggested that unless Christians substantially modify their views on Jesus as normative, they will be irrelevant to the establishment of a democracy. But are democracy and the uniqueness of Christ mutually exclusive? The present writer believes that it can be shown that they certainly are not incompatible.

7. A wrong approach - 'theocracy' and the denial of political rights

It is true that the Lordship of Christ has sometimes been used as a political rallying call in South Africa, but with unworthy motives. At the time of the 1983 Referendum on the new 'tricameral' constitution, a group of 193 ministers of the three main Afrikaans churches opposed the new arrangement, not because it failed to address the political aspirations of blacks, but because it was alleged that for Christians to have to share power in a combined parliament with those of other faiths (obviously referring to Hindus and Muslims amongst the 'Coloured' and 'Indian' houses) would jeopardize the Christian character of the state. At that time Prof Willie Jonker (1984:1-14) showed that those who used this argument were probably influenced by a type of Dutch theocratic thinking which too easily identifies the white South African society with Christianity, resulting in a form of political discrimination against other population groups on religious grounds. The 'Christian character' of a nation cannot be upheld by discriminatory political measures and in particular, this approach fails to distinguish clearly between the church and the state. B C Lategan (1984:20-34) has also shown that in 2 Corinthians 6:14-7:1, where believers are urged not to be 'unequally yoked' but rather to be 'separate' from unbelievers, the apostle Paul is writing about relations within the community of faith. These verses therefore cannot legitimately be used to refer to the believer's position with regard to the state or to participation in the processes of government as is sometimes implied.

8. The separation of church and state

The New Testament provides only 'definitive clues' rather than detailed treatment of a theology of church and state. In summary we may say that in Matthew 22:15-22 Jesus lays down the basic principle of the separation of church and state. The actual experience with the state of people in general and Christians in particular will range between the submission to the governing authorities (which may be a 'pagan' government) urged by Paul in Romans 13:1-7 which seems to suggest an ideal situation when rulers are functioning as 'God's servants for your good', and the opposite extreme in Revelation 13 which shows how Christians ought to respond when the state degenerates to become a monstrous evil or becomes demonic and totalitarian.

In the teaching on 'God and Caesar' in Matthew 22:15-22, Jesus not only separates the function of church and state but also clearly limits the power of the state, i.e. the relationship is not

GOD and CAESAR (as equals)
but rather
GOD
and
CAESAR (F Schaeffer in Cassidy 1989:359).

This was, of course, a 'radical' concept at that time, but has continuing relevance and application for us today. The passage does not, on the other hand, teach a rigid division of life into 'sacred' and 'secular', but rather a recognition that the 'secular' finds its proper place within the overriding claim of the sacred. What should happen when the two conflict is not at issue in this passage; Acts 4:19, 5:29 are more relevant to such a conflict. While Caesar's claim is limited, only God's claim on us is absolute.

In the context of a modern pluralistic society, there are at least two major practical problems that need to be faced in actually applying this concept.

1. Most Christians understand 'separation of church and state' not to mean that no reference may be made to God in the affairs of state but that there should be freedom of religion and no established 'state church'; it does not necessarily imply a 'secular state'. On the other hand, those whose philosophy of life may be described as 'secular humanism', understand this concept to imply freedom from religion, i.e. separation of God and the state, so that 'religion' is reduced only to an entirely private matter.

2. Most ancient societies were 'sacral societies' in that they were held together by a religion to which all the members of that society were expected to be committed. The 'voluntary principle' or the idea of a religiously neutral state was unknown. Those of some other faiths today have difficulty with the whole concept of the separation of religion and the state, because it appears to deny the wholeness of a religious approach to life while others tend to think in politically 'theocratic' terms. Muslims and Hindus may therefore see this separation as a product of Western civilization which artificially divides life into 'religious' and 'secular'. Religious beliefs are therefore far more evident and 'public' in the social and political life of countries such as Saudi Arabia (which is an Islamic state where Islamic law and state law are basically one) and India.

Esack (1991:214-224) has explored the problems faced by ANC-supporting Muslims who view the well-known phrase from the Freedom Charter 'The people shall govern' as a 'secular' ideal conflicting with the Islamic ideal of Divine sovereignty. A. Tayob (1989:65-81) has also shown how conservative Muslims have opposed 'left-wing' Muslims because of their involvement in 'infidel politics' with non-Muslims. These observations indicate that for some religious minorities in South Africa, the concept of the separation of church and state may create more problems than it solves!

9. Religious freedom, not just religious toleration

Writing in 1986, G J A Lubbe (1986:117) suggested that Muslims and Hindus in South Africa generally conceived of themselves as being tolerated but not free. Because religion and racism were so closely connected in theory and in practice in the country, virtually every experience of prejudice was also interpreted as experience of religious oppression. Hopefully, this interpretation

will increasingly become a thing of the past as people of all races and faiths are granted full and equal rights, privileges and access to political power. Even where racialism has never been a factor, however, it is necessary to grasp the distinction between religious freedom and religious toleration.

P A Deiros (1991:14-15), writing in the Latin American context, defines religious freedom as

... an inalienable right of the human being and as such it should be acknowledged by the state ... a gift from God to all human beings. Religious toleration on the contrary, is not an inalienable right, but a granted right, a judicial concession that the state may consent to because of political reasons or tactical convenience .

Evangelicals should support not just religious toleration of minority religions by the majority, but full religious freedom for all in the sense already defined. This means that even a false religion like Satanism should not be banned by the state, but only the crimes of Satanism (such as muti-murders, child abuse, kidnapping, desecration of graves etc.) should be prosecuted, not because they are committed by a 'suspect' religious group but because they are crimes in themselves. On the other hand, religious freedom also implies the right of churches and religious groups to operate independently of being 'registered' by any 'Department of Religious Affairs'. Recent suggestions that churches in future will no longer be able to approach the state directly on any issue but only through an interfaith body, and the idea that 'A religion shall be entitled to recognition by the state on the recommendation of the interfaith advisory body' (Original Draft Declaration on the Rights and Responsibilities of Religious People, which has since been revised) would be a contradiction of religious freedom and should therefore be resisted.

10. 'Public Christianity' in the state : neutrality or 'democracy'?

No responsible evangelical Christian group with which the writer can conscientiously identify seriously advocates a theocratic state based upon the Mosaic Code. Thus A H Jeffrey James (October 1989;1) has commented

... there never has been a genuine theocracy since man was expelled from the Garden of Eden. What have usually been described as such have been systems of autocracy or dictatorship led by religious despots who play-act God. The consequences for religious, social and political freedom have usually been disastrous.

Where responsible evangelicals do appear to differ however, is over the appropriateness or otherwise of state-supported bodies such as schools operating within a Christian frame of reference, or whether the population must be expected to be 'religiously neutral' in such contexts, because of the presence of several other religions within the country. Co-chairman of the National Conference of Church Leaders, Dr Louw Alberts (letters, *Beeld* 23 July 1992) rejects such public neutrality as unreasonable and in no-ones' in-

terest except a few convinced secular atheists. An example would be that Christians resident in Israel or Egypt could not reasonably expect the respective governments of these states to stand religiously neutral in the interests of a small minority of Christians. It may therefore be expected that public bodies in these countries would operate within a Jewish or Islamic framework, but with the provision that freedom of worship and witness is recognized for those of minority religions. This principle would apply for example at school assemblies in South Africa where at particular schools, the student body is either overwhelmingly Christian or Islamic or Jewish or Hindu. This approach of still recognizing the Christian orientation of much public life in South Africa seems to be the general outlook of Reformed Christians as also noted in the papers of Profs Johan Heyns (1991:170-176) and Willie Jonker (1984:5-13). Other evangelicals such as Hugh Wetmore (1991:5,9) feel that many 'public prayers' are more often than not a mere formality in which Christianity can be 'used' to 'baptize' wrong decisions.

It is also suggested that Christianity will actually be weakened when it is propped up by official state support, as evidenced by the observation that the more spiritually pure and vibrant Christians are often found in countries where the state does not favour Christianity. The difference of outlook is possibly influenced in the case of Reformed Christians by the Calvinistic conviction that Christians are to exercise their calling in this world and not apart from society and culture (see Bosch 1991:130-133), while the radical wing of the Reformation tended to emphasize the church as a body of true believers distinct from the state. This question clearly demands a more in-depth consideration from both perspectives.

11. The position in some other countries

How have other societies in transition adapted to the challenges of pluralism? The 1963 constitution of Kenya guarantees religious freedom; Christian, Muslim and other religious leaders are given the opportunity of participating in some state functions. J H Smit (1991:99-104) has shown how the churches have continued to exercise an independent and 'prophetic' role towards the state, even during times of tension which developed after Kenya became a one-party state in 1982. Singapore follows a policy of 'religious neutrality' and so there is no Christian teaching in state schools, other than voluntary societies. Yet, although in 1986 only 12% professed Christianity, 30% of the nation's university students and 38% of all school-teachers were committed Christians (Wetmore 1991:8). Fuller details which show how this largely non-Christian nation has yet been able to achieve a remarkable degree of peace and prosperity, possibly because it was (unconsciously?) honouring the biblical principles of 'kindness, justice and righteousness in humility' in a way South Africa as a nation was not yet doing, may be found in Wetmore's paper *Perspectives on the future of South Africa*, published in *Nürnberger* 1991:585-591 and also in *Alberts & Chikane* 1991:149-158. In *Japan*, D Reid

(1990:212-220) suggests that the concept of the separation of church and state is relatively new; in premodern Japan all notions about authority were politico-religious. Although separation of religion and state is written into the Constitution, its social rootage is shallow. There has been a tendency in recent court cases to allow the use of public funds for public Shinto and Buddhist religious activities to either be declared 'secular' activities, or to define the body responsible for religious activity as 'private'. Reid explains the overall tendency as 'maintain the constitution, but revise it by interpretation'. India, similarly, has a constitution outwardly committed to a 'European' view of the state but in practice this is built on the foundations of two other traditions: that of the local Rajah where the religion of the ruler was the religion of the state and of the people (usually Hinduism incorporating Jainism and Buddhism), or that of Islam. This has led to a certain confusion in Indian views of religion and the state, with Christians and modernized Indians generally finding the 'secular state' idea more compatible. Christians (who are a minority in India) involved in state functions tend to base their involvement either on 'Christian witness', the common humanity of all people (the doctrine of creation) or in terms of human activity conforming to the values of the Kingdom of God (Samuel 1991:6-10). In August 1990 a rally of about 100,000 Dalit ('oppressed') Christians of many denominations gathered in New Delhi to demand amendments to the President's Constitution (Scheduled Caste) Order of 1950 which discriminates against Christians because of their religion. In the United States, church/ state issues have been characterized by Supreme Court rulings on the First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution which prohibits Congress or the individual states from either establishing one religion or restricting religious liberty. For the past 40 years or so, Supreme Court rulings have generally favoured the separationists, so that Scripture reading and prayer is not allowed in state schools and the question of 'federal funding' of 'sectarian' universities is regarded as possibly restricting academic freedom (see Zagano 1990:136-148). There are, however, some indications that this tide could, in some cases, be turning in favour of more freedom for religious expression in 'public' matters. N Gibbs (*Time*, December, 1991, p 50) comments:

U.S. courts have fenced religion out of public life, but believers who think the judges have gone too far are fighting to bring God back.

In Britain, society is now irretrievably mixed and pluralist. In Bradford, a third of babies born are of Asian origin, and thirty schools in the inner city have more than 50% Asian Muslim children. As a result, there has been, in religious education at schools, a trend away from a syllabus centred on the Bible to what might be called 'religious studies'. Other interesting developments have emerged, including a general disapproval by Muslim and Hindu parents of the 'secular' spirit in British education, including a distaste for Western sex education and the separation of religion and morality. The best and sincerest efforts of teachers to teach world faiths are often regarded by parents as misrepresenting their particular faith. In addition, it becomes in-

creasingly apparent that it is impossible to really 'study' God in a detached way, without personal commitment on the part of teachers and pupils. As one teacher put it with devastating simplicity:

After three years of world religions the children are just as bored as they were with Christianity. What are we going to do about that? (Lamb 1985:1,23-26).

In Latin America, the situation varies from state to state. While Brazil is religiously 'neutral', others such as Argentina officially favour Roman Catholicism in that although all citizens pay taxes, only the Roman Catholic church benefits from the economic assistance of the state, which pays the salaries of the bishops and chaplains from the federal budget. The State also has an Index of Cults, mandatory to any religion other than the Roman Catholic, which forces them to supply information that could be used in repressive ways if wanted. Generally speaking, although in practice a very wide religious toleration seems to be prevailing throughout Latin America, the experience of a full religious freedom is a concept which is still being worked out (Deiros 1991:15). The situation in largely Muslim states of the Middle East varies from an encouraging and positive toleration in Jordan where Christians are even granted recognition of Sunday as their holy day (Holmes 1992:1), to a situation of the restriction, harassment and even persecution of Christian groups in Saudi Arabia (Christian Living Today 44:21). Pakistan has made the death penalty mandatory for anyone convicted of defaming the Prophet Muhammed. This would have serious implications for evangelists who affirm that Christ is the only Saviour and makes a 'pluralistic society' impossible (Evangelens 15:3,4,23).

12. Items for inter-faith dialogue

G J A Lubbe (1986:125-127) has noted, amongst others, two essential requirements for creative interaction in inter-faith dialogue: prior commitment to one's own religious faith, yet with openness to the other; complete honesty and transparency, so that such dialogue is not superficial. Honesty therefore suggests two particular items that should be high on such an agenda:

1. On the local level, there needs to be dialogue with other faiths about pastoral issues arising out of inter-faith contact. One Methodist minister is concerned for the case of two mothers in the congregation whose daughters have converted to Islam, initially through romantic encounters. Islam, it is claimed, puts stumbling blocks in the way of ongoing family communion. It may have become a cliché, but if it is true that 'people matter more than things', pastoral issues such as this will need to be faced honestly and humanely.

2. A T Khoury (1991:203-206) has noted that in countries officially practicing 'Islamic law' Christians are granted family and religious rights, but not civil rights, and are not equal before the law. The present writer would therefore issue a call for academics and leaders of other faiths to address this

issue in the states concerned. President Mubarak of Egypt recently received a personal letter from the 1.9 million Muslims in Germany requesting the release of three Christians held on religious grounds. The writers of the letter are of the idea that Muslims in the West can only claim their rights provided those same rights are made applicable to Christians in Muslim countries. (Evangelens 15:3,4,39). Similar responses from the different religious communities of South Africa would certainly help promote freedom, tolerance and understanding in our pluralistic society.

13. Some specific issues

Religious broadcasting policy

As yet nothing 'official' is available from the major players in the current political negotiations. The current opinion of the ABC Religious Advisory Committee may, however, be summarized as follows (Du Plessis 1992:1-2):

- a) Religious freedom should be an entrenched clause in any future Bill of Rights.
- b) The state constitution should not favour one religion but be religiously neutral.
- c) Broadcasting privileges would be granted solely on the basis of proportional representation. In practice this would mean that the Christian churches would still have the right to the major share of available religious broadcast time because it can claim some 78% of the population as opposed to some 2% Hindu, 1.4% Muslim and 0.42% Jewish representation.

This seems fair provided the census figures are accepted as reasonably reliable. In addition, if private or commercial broadcasting stations are permitted nationwide (as presently is the case in Ciskei and Transkei) one would have to accept in principle that various religious groups could either finance their own stations or 'buy time' on commercial stations.

State Law

Can state law really be completely free of religious influence? Does not even 'secular' law in Western countries reflect certain Christian norms and values? During the Nuremberg war crimes trial after the Nazi defeat in World War 2, many of the accused pleaded that as they had simply 'followed orders' or made decisions within the framework of their own legal system, they could not rightly be condemned because they deviated from the alien value system of their conquerors. Faced with this argument, Robert H Jackson, Chief Counsel for the United States at the trials, was compelled to appeal to permanent values, to moral standards transcending the life-styles of particular societies, in a word to a 'law above the law' of individual nations, whether victor or vanquished (Montgomery 1975:24-25). The difficulty, of course, is just

where the basic principles of this 'higher law' are to be found, and how they are to be identified and justified.

Some would appeal here to 'natural law' which is universal, and a 'higher' law but is not necessarily religiously based; others point out that from medieval times the Roman-Dutch law of the West was influenced by 'Canon Law' of the Roman Catholic Church, and that it is ultimately impossible to have laws that are completely divorced from all aspects of biblical moral law as found for example, in the Ten Commandments. In the present context of a pluralistic South Africa, the question of polygamous marriage is a case in point. Generally, civil marriages take precedence over African customary marriages (which are sometimes polygamous) and as a result, customary marriages are not recognized in cases where the General Law of the land is applicable (Stewart s a, 5-6).

Space does not permit further discussion of all the complex problems involved, but the dilemma is clear - can state law really be 'religiously neutral' in all aspects of life? Does not sometimes a choice have to be made between one religious view or another in deciding particular cases?

Sunday legislation

Insofar as the state is the political embodiment of society it cannot ignore the religious nature of that society. It is bound, therefore, in some limited way at least, to reflect that nature in legislation, though without establishing a 'state religion'. The principle of one day's rest in seven is sometimes called a 'creation ordinance' (Gn 2:2-3) and may be understood as for the good of all the people of the earth, since it appears even before the beginning of Israel as a nation or the emergence of New Testament Christianity. D Williams (1989:97), however, notes a number of points that may be made against the 'creation ordinance' idea and suggests that we must argue on other grounds that the 'Sabbath' principle retains both a meaning for Christians and also value for people as a whole. Thus, both the Protestant Association of South Africa (April 1989:1-5) and the Evangelical Fellowship of South Africa (Wetmore 1991:7) have resisted the attempt to make Sunday merely like any other working day, mainly on the grounds that human beings in general and workers and the poor in particular would then be less free to enjoy time together for rest, worship, family life and recreation. Greedy employers could exploit employees, making them work continuously. The precise way Sunday is spent is not at issue and may be left to the individual conscience to decide, and so this does not discriminate unfairly against those who do not want to worship, since these same people are hardly likely to agree to work seven days a week. The fourth commandment may be described as the first example of legislation governing labour relations. Its provisions for a day of rest applies to all sections of the community, from office cleaners to managing directors and politicians. In God's sight there is no difference. The Fourth Commandment destroys the notion that the affluent members of society, and

the prosperous middle-class, have the unrestricted right to the personal use of Sunday whilst the rest of humankind must work either to keep them entertained or to provide facilities for their leisure, and thus be denied that right (James, April 1989:4). There is also some objective evidence for the truth of Jesus' claim that the Sabbath was made for the good of humankind as a whole (Mk 2:27). During World War I in Britain it was found that working seven days a week actually reduced production because it harmed the physical and emotional health of workers (MacQuarrie 1967:336). Even in post-revolutionary France and Soviet Russia, where the church was thrown out with all that was old, the attempts to replace the seven-day working cycle with a cycle of five or ten, although more in keeping with our system of counting, just did not seem to work (Williams 1989:97).

Different religions have chosen different days of the week to set aside as their holy day. Yet there is an obvious need for both state and private institutions to standardize the working week and its weekend as much as possible. Continuing to recognize Sunday as the general or official day off would not only be least disruptive, but it would democratically recognize that Christianity is the majority religion. There must of course be some provision for these who wish to worship on other days (e.g. many Muslim-owned businesses close for at least two hours on Fridays; in some Muslim countries, the Christian minorities worship on Fridays, and sometimes briefly on Sunday as well). There could therefore be laws ensuring that every employee be entitled to at least one day off per week, and that no-one be unfairly discriminated against because of religious convictions.

It will probably be necessary to stipulate a maximum number of religious days off work, lest this principle be abused (Wetmore 1991:7). Except for 'essential services' such as hospitals, fire department, transport etc., this principle could also be protected by the practice of paying overtime rates to workers who are required to work on Sundays. The main point is that all people would be less free, and would be open to exploitation if the principle of one day's rest in seven is not protected by law.

Religious education in state schools

The privileged position of Christianity in the former 'white' state educational system up to the present has been the logical outflow of the religious affiliation of the white population as reflected in the various national census statistics. The most recent census indicates that 93.4% of the white population profess allegiance to the Christian faith (Staples 1992:24).

Parents of other religious persuasions have always had the legal right to withdraw their children from any Christian religious instruction or observance held in the school. Because we are now moving towards one unified, non-racial educational system, the religious diversity of the total population must obviously be provided for when determining details of the new national education system. The ANC Discussion Paper on Education Policy does not ap-

pear to make any specific reference to religious teaching of any kind. The Department of National Education's November 1991 document A Curriculum Model for Education in South Africa continues to provide for Biblical Studies as an optional but accredited examination subject, while Bible Education is one option within the non-examination subject 'Religious Instruction' which can, however, be supplemented or replaced by 'Right Living' or 'Lifestyle Education'. A later circular of January 1992 explains that this does not imply religiously neutral education, but that 'local option' of the community will largely decide the shape and content of such religious education, while continuing to honour religious freedom of minorities. This means that schools with a largely Christian parent and pupil body may opt for Christian religious instruction, while those with a majority of Hindu, Moslem or Jewish students are free to have religious education that satisfies their norms. Here the principle of Matthew 7:12 demands that Christians show to people of other faiths the respect that they would want shown to their own.

Respect, however, does not and never has meant, believing the tenets of a different faith nor compromising the firm beliefs of one's own faith. A major difficulty, of course, is the uncertainty of the actual policy which will be adopted by future governments, whether 'interim' or more permanent. It would, however, obviously be an extreme political blunder for any government to deny access to the Bible which is revered, or at least outwardly respected, by about 70% of the total population.

Although most Christians in South Africa seem unlikely to carry the separation of church and state to the point of prohibiting prayer and religious instruction in state schools, some have recognized that should this eventually happen, it need not be detrimental to their children's spiritual life because such a situation tends to make Christian children stand on their own feet, and also compels parents to take their God-given personal responsibility for raising their own children 'in the discipline and nurture of the Lord' (Eph 6:4) seriously rather than abdicating this responsibility to the school or church only.

Much religious teaching in schools has been counter-productive because it has been taught by teachers who are uncommitted to Christ and are simply filling in a teaching period; this can actually turn children away from Christianity. Another option would be for ministers, priests, and teachers of the various religions to visit the schools and give instruction to their own adherents during designated periods. In addition, voluntary religious assemblies may be more meaningful than compulsory assemblies; voluntary societies such as S.C.A./S.U./C.S.V. and their equivalent in the other religions should continue to be allowed to operate on school premises during breaks or after school hours.

Some Christians go further and opt for completely private 'Christian schools' rather than state schools. There are various pros and cons in this approach (for a positive perspective, see Jones 1992:12-15). While a few of these may

be motivated by racial or political considerations, most appear to be motivated by a dissatisfaction with 'secular' or 'neutral' education, in favour of education based on a 'biblical world view'.

It may be that with the increasing cost of school fees in 'Model C' schools, more parents may feel that private schools are becoming a financially viable proposition. For those remaining within the state school system, the 'local option' factor will mean that parents will need to become involved now in management and PTA committees and other school service organizations so that when issues affecting their children are being decided, their views will carry the weight of interested and helpful parents.

14. Conclusion

The uncertainties of the future in South Africa are of concern to people of all faiths. There are real dangers that could eventually emerge as everything 'goes into the melting pot' in our pluralistic society. Christians, however, must not be afraid to support full religious freedom for all. Christianity is no stranger to pluralism, and we need to remember that the New Testament emerged in a very pluralistic society. We should continue to proclaim the uniqueness of Christ, and allow others the liberty to do the same with the particulars of their different faiths. We may confidently leave the final outcome of conflicting 'truth claims' to God, for according to Jesus in Matthew 13:36-43, it is neither governments nor individual religious leaders nor any other mere human being who will decide the final outcome, but only the 'Son of Man' himself.

Those who have ears, let them hear!

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