Main content


In his most recent work John W. de Gruchy, professor of Christian Studies at the University of Cape Town, South Africa, continues his commitment to doing theology in a manner that responsibly engages its socio-political context. Written in the wake of the demolition of the Berlin Wall (1989) and the momentous democratic elections of South Africa (1994), de Gruchy considers the democratic wave that is surging around the world and asks what is the relation between Christianity and democracy? Uncomfortable with both those forces that have been slow to embrace democracy while holding...
'faith' and 'science' do not contradict each other and that Christianity is a moral-ethic or even soteriological (to fundamentalists) superstructure on top of physical 'objective' knowledge about the world (some hope, that with the development of science Christianity will come even closer to religion, "I believe in the one Big Bang" etc.). Christianity and Democracy: a Theology for a Just World Order. (Cape Town: David Philip. 1995b) 221. In this regard John Dewey pointed out that democracy does not amount to much if it does not mean a "democracy of wealth". In the long run democratic societies won't survive unless they eliminate extreme inequality and poverty. Because of the link between economic growth and democracy, democracy came to be accepted as a precondition for economic viability. In Africa, as in Eastern Europe, countries were forced to institute multiparty systems to qualify for Western development aid, in the belief that multiparty democracies would create wealth. Modern democracy could not have emerged but for the influence of Christianity on the Western world. Tocqueville emphasizes the historical rise of equality as both an idea and a social fact. Such an order depends, however, on the preservation of commonly held religious beliefs. Here Tocqueville especially emphasizes religion's contribution to sustaining public morality. America never had, and a successful democracy does not need, total agreement about the proper modes of worship or the details of theology. Rather, what is required is a common body of religious opinion in support of the common morality that a free democracy needs. He also holds, however, that the preservation of democratic freedom requires more than just an astutely organized government.