A Quarter Century of Democracy and the Uniting Reformed Church in Southern Africa

Hello Leepo Johannes Modise
University of South Africa
https://orcid.org/0000-0001-7206-2698
modislj@unisa.ac.za

Abstract

This paper focuses on the role of the Uniting Reformed Church in Southern Africa (URCSA) in the South African society during the past 25 years of its services to God, one another and the world. Firstly, the paper provides a brief history of URCSA within 25 years of its existence. Secondly, the societal situation in democratic South Africa is highlighted in light of Article 4 of the *Belhar Confession* and the Church Order as a measuring tool for the role of the church. Thirdly, the thermometer-thermostat metaphor is applied in evaluating the role of URCSA in democratic South Africa. Furthermore, the 20 years of URCSA and democracy in South Africa are assessed in terms of Gutierrez's threefold analysis of liberation. In conclusion, the paper proposes how URCSA can rise above the thermometer approach to the thermostat approach within the next 25 years of four general synods.

Keywords: Uniting Reformed Church in Southern Africa (URCSA); democracy; unity; history; poverty

Introduction

This paper focuses on a critical issue in democratic South Africa and the Uniting Reformed Church in Southern Africa (URCSA), which is service delivery (in terms of URCSA in Article 5 we speak of "Service to God, one another and the world"). The author asserts that URCSA, together with other denominations, has for the past 25 years flawlessly performed their usual business of worship, instruction and witness. It is imperative to highlight the historical background of URCSA to map out where this church has originated and why service to God is a link to others and the world. Current affairs and the state of the nation will also receive attention.

UNISA university of south africa PRESS

Studia Historiae Ecclesiasticae
https://upjournals.co.za/index.php/SHE/index
Volume 45 | Number 3 | 2019 | #6253 | 13 pages

https://doi.org/10.25159/2412-4265/6253
ISSN 2412-4265 (Online)
© The Author(s) 2019

Published by the Church History Society of Southern Africa and Unisa Press. This is an Open Access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 4.0 International License (https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/)

Moreover, the poverty status of the majority of South Africans will be highlighted. The paper will evaluate the 25 years of URCSA and democracy in South Africa in terms of Gutierrez's threefold analysis of liberation. The paper indicates services that URCSA has rendered over the past 25 years as a way of supplementing the government's efforts in trying to reduce poverty.

History of the Uniting Reformed Church in Southern Africa

The history of URCSA is divided into two parts: the pre-existence history and the actual history of URCSA. The pre-existence history of URCSA is told in terms of the racial divisions among the people of South Africa, focusing on the divided denominations in terms of black and coloured with the same doctrines. These divided churches were the products of missionary work from different mission societies. This union has a multi-layered origin.

Different foreign mission organisations started working in South Africa, which led to the formation of some denominations amongst indigenous people of South Africa who otherwise would have been excluded from the main churches. This process motivated the Dutch Reformed Church (DRC) in South Africa to start its independent mission work. In 1857, the DRC Synod decided to have separate services for its coloured members. The origin of URCSA is derived mainly but not solely from the DRC mission work via the establishment of DRMC and DRCA that have united on 14 April 1994 to form URCSA. There were, and are, both black and white churches in the Dutch Reformed block (Best 2002, xxii–xxiii).

The General Synod of the daughter denominations did not exist until 1982. The link for common consultation of the regional synod was established in 1982 in the form of a General Synod, while this consultation was linked to the Federal Council of Dutch Reformed Churches since 1957 and beyond; member churches of which met for consultation every four years. The membership was separated on ethnic lines. The rejection of church division on racial lines was expressed in 1994, through the formation of URCSA, which brought the DRMC and DRCA together in one united body (Best 2002, xxii–xxiii).

The first anniversary of URCSA was not one of joy since it was the year when the three ministers of URCSA from the former DRCA (namely Revs Koekoe, Ramolatlhegi and Matabola) started to question the process of unification of DRCA and DRMC. The concern of the said ministers was that the Orange Free State (OFS) Synod had not been disbanded as a regional synod at their synod in Bloemfontein Phahameng congregation. The objection was that the regional assembly of OFS in March 1994 had decided to be part of the URCSA. The decision was communicated on 15 June 1994 by the moderator, Rev. D. Matabola and the actuarius, Rev. Burhrmann (URCSA General Synod Agenda 1997). In the year 1995, there was a series of meetings between the General Synod executive and ministers of the congregations around the challenges in the OFS Synod. The meetings were held with the view to avoid a schism of the newly born church.

Despite all these efforts to prevent the split, the OFS continued to re-establish itself as the new Dutch Reformed Church in Africa in the so-called 25th regional synod of the OFS DRCA. This took place on 27 September 1995 in the building of the URCSA congregation in Parys; hence, the parallel existence of the DRCA to URCSA to date (URCSA General Synod Agenda 1997).

Records of the General Synod 1997 illustrate that there was another challenge from the Reformed Church in Africa (RCA). The former DRMC buildings of Via Christi congregation presented a stumbling block for the RCA to be part of URCSA. The General Synodical Commission decided to place a moratorium on unity talks with the RCA if they continued to ask such questions (URCSA General Synod Agenda 1997). The above is evidence of the sour history of URCSA; the following portrays the rich history of URCSA in terms of its Church Order Article 1.

The rich history of URCSA lies in the fact that this denomination does not enjoy only the racial unity of the DRCA and DRMC, but it is a heterogeneous unity. Throughout history, this church has been a different community, according to Article 1 of the Church Order that states:

> The church of Jesus Christ is a community of believers who are called together by the Word of God and by his Holy Spirit. Those who have been called and form the "Uniting Reformed Church in Southern Africa" are part of this church of Christ. Together with all the other churches which confess Christ, this Church has been set apart as a nation as the people of God who belong to Him and who must proclaim the saving deeds of Him who called them from darkness unto light, a new creation who lives in the light as He is the light. (Church Order and Regulations 2008)

The DRMC has brought with it a rich combination of the DRMC and the Rhenish Church into this unity, which makes this church heterogeneous. According to Solomons (2015), there was a discussion in the early 1930s amongst the missionaries, which suggested a hand-over to the DRC. This initiative was relentlessly pursued by some of the missionaries and the Rhenish executive who were in favour of a DRC take-over. However, the members of many Rhenish Church congregations regarded the DRC as the apparatus of apartheid, and they were understandably concerned about their future and becoming part of such a church. The distrust they felt for the DRC was undoubtedly linked to the suspicion they harboured regarding the missionaries and the board, who had been in conversation with the DRC without informing the congregants of plans and the content of such deliberations.

The mission board concluded that, in their view, such a take-over was ideal because then Rhenish congregants would join a denomination of the church with the same racial group, as well as a church sharing the same ecclesiological traditions. They concluded that the congregations would be best off if placed in the care of the DRC, while they were in fact included in the coloured branch of the DRC, namely the Dutch Reformed Mission Church (now known as the Uniting Reformed Church). According to the letter,

they stated: “We believe that you will soon see and experience that the transfer to the DRC will be to your advantage and will be of greater spiritual worth as what you could ever imagine” (Solomons 2015). According to Solomons (2015), the following congregations were transferred to the DRC and (based on race) belonged to the DRMC. Of these congregations, current members of URCSA are:

- Tulbagh, Steinthal (transferred in 1942).
- Ebenezer (year of transfer not mentioned).
- Stellenbosch (transferred in 1940).
- Sarepta (transferred in 1947).
- Kommaggas (transferred in 1936).
- Steinkopf (transferred in 1934).
- Worcester (transferred in 1942).
- Concordia (transferred in 1934).
- Williston (year of transfer not mentioned).
- Pella (year of transfer not mentioned).
- Richtersveld/Koeboes (year of transfer not mentioned).
- Carnarvon (transferred in 1940).
- De Doorns (transferred in 1933).
- Saron (transferred in 1946).
- Rietfontein (transferred in 1945).

This adoption of these congregations from the Rhenish mission has enriched the history of URCSA in the sense that, in 2016, URCSA was accepted as an associate member of the United Evangelical Mission (UEM), which has resulted in being awarded full membership in 2018.

The DRCA has brought with it a rich history that has resulted in a second unity within URCSA, which was endorsed by the 1997 General Synod. The Evangelical Reformed Church in Africa (ERCA) has a longstanding theological training relationship with the DRCA. According to the Agenda of the General Synod, Hammanskraal 2008, on the survey of a hundred years of missionary theological education in the DRC family, it is recorded that there was a healthy relationship between the DRCA and ERCA. In 1976, the Orumana Theological School of ERCA in Namibia was accepted as the fifth Stofberg School. However, at a 1983 Berkley West General Synod, it was reported that the Orumana Seminary had been closed in 1979 due to financial constraints and too few theological students. The arrangement was made that ERCA students would study at Witsieshoek as an interim measure until ERCA could arrange university education for their students in Namibia. This relationship has made it easy for ERCA to approach the presbytery of Namibia for unification. This unification was welcomed and endorsed by the General Synod of 1997 in Bloemfontein (Agenda of the General Synod, 1997). These endeavours greatly encouraged URCSA members for the next 25 years to pursue racial unity within the DRC as family members, as well as to promote doctrinal unity with denominations that share the same doctrinal tradition, thereby allowing the circle

to close. The more denominations within URCSA, the more URCSA can address poverty and other social ills.

From 2016 to 2019 the Maranatha Reformed Church of Christ (MRCC) has enriched the history of URCSA by showing interest to journey with URCSA on a partnership towards unity. It was a historical moment when MRCC decided in their General Assembly in Port Shepstone in 2018 that they were going to sign the Memoranda of Agreement (MOA) with URCSA for becoming a partner that would lead to unity. Likewise, the General Synodical Commission of URCSA 2018 also decided to sign the MOA with the MRCC (Agenda and Minutes of the General Synodical Commission 2018). These attempts illustrated that the history of URCSA had been enriched by unification processes that are encouraged by the *Belhar Confession* Article 1 and 2, as well as Article 1 of the Church Order.

Through the above historical overview, it is clear that URCSA is an ecumenical church that is growing according to its confession and Church Order. The 20 years of partnership with European churches bear evidence of this journey to become a church of church, as per Article 1.

Poverty Level in Post-apartheid South Africa

The former DRCA, in 1990, conducted a research study led by Pieter van Niekerk and Mark Orkin. According to that research study, the household income of DRCA members was a little lower than that of others in the wider black community. The same was true for the former DRMC, in comparison to the coloured community average. The Department of Statistics, utilising R779 per month at 2011 rates as their measurement, provides the following breakdown of people of different race groups living under the poverty line:

Table 1: Breakdown of people of different race groups living under the poverty line (2011)

Race	Percentage	Remarks
Asians	6.9%	Majority Islam and Hindu
Blacks	63.2%	Majority Christians
Coloureds	37%	Majority Christians
White	0.9%	Majority Christians

Source: Statistics South Africa (2011a&b)

The 2016 survey conducted by the South African Labour and Development Research Unit utilises different methodology, and uses R1042 as their basis. The results were as follows:

Table 2: Breakdown of people of different race groups living under the poverty line (2016)

Race	Actual number	Percentage
Blacks	29 236 632	73.0%
Coloureds	2 175 417	48.1%
Asians	150 409	11%
White	82 573	1.8%

Source: South African Labour and Development Research Unit (2016)

According to the above data, it is essential to define and clarify the concept of poverty in the South African context. In conceptualising poverty, worthy of note is the view of scholars that poverty is the disappointment to achieve a nominal standard of living which is dignified in terms of basic consumption needs (Odhiambo 2009, 323; Scheepers 2010, 164). Taking our cue from the preceding and the South African discourse on socio-economic injustice, the following picture of poverty emerges. As reported in the year 2009, about 35 per cent of South Africans were extremely poor (Odhiambo 2009, 321). Such a report presumes poverty as experienced differently, in that there is a level of extreme and moderate poverty. It is, then, no surprise that Lehohla conceptualises the simple average of living in terms of the significant poverty line; the minor poverty line; and the survival (food) poverty line (Lehola 2008, 24). The work of Lehohla is substantial in the sense that it presents the South African context in which poverty is experienced at several levels. Benchmarking on the year 2008, the significant poverty line was R507 per month; the minor poverty line was R360 per month; while the survival (food) poverty line was R259 per month (Lehohla 2008, 24). Lehohla, in his analysis, deduces that the accumulation of less than R507 per month destined that a person is poor.

Furthermore, the receipt of less than R259 per month places an individual in the category of the enormously poor South Africans. According to the latest (2011) measurements of poverty, the upper poverty line per month is R650, the lower poverty line is R503, and the food poverty line is at R393 per month (Stats SA 2012b, 71). Missing in the latter is a more in-depth glimpse of who is poor in terms of a social construct, to which we now turn.

On average, 4.35 per cent of white persons are poor in comparison to 61.4 per cent of poor black African people. This is close to the 2011 statistics, as mentioned in Table 1 above (Stats SA 2012b, 71). The margins in the latter depiction are significant. Also, such margins reveal an unsettling racial dimension of poverty in South Africa. This section of the paper is influenced by the conviction of the *Belhar Confession* Article 4, and the purpose of dealing with poverty is to illustrate the relevance of URCSA in the past 25 years, as poverty lines in terms of race are not improving that much.

The next section presents an evaluation of URCSA over the past 25 years.

Evaluating twenty Years of URCSA and Democracy in South Africa

After 25 years of democracy and the establishment of URCSA in South Africa in April 1994, South Africans were all convinced that they had arrived at their destination. The very same arrival syndrome has manifested in the theological arena, where churches like URCSA, who are identified with the *Belhar Confession,* have, however, become silent. After this period, the main question persists: Are churches still relevant in the democratic society? This question is followed by the question: What was the theme for the churches in the time of struggle? The members and leaders of the then DRMC and DRCA—who are members of URCSA—had liberation theology as their theology for the future. Liberation theology is the theology which emphasises a preferential option for the poor. While busy probing the questions above, one needs to bear in mind that there is only one history; the human history in which God is at work to overcome injustice, to break down all that separates people from God and each other. To participate in the South African struggle for liberation, then, is to work along with God in the supreme effort to save all people (Winn, quoted in Pugh 1992, 401). One cannot just conclude that after 25 years, URCSA and the democratic people of South Africa have not reached their objectives in post-apartheid South Africa, without having a tool to measure that notion. Winn (quoted in Pugh 1992, 403) comments on Gutierrez's threefold analysis of liberation as follows:

- First, there is political liberation, the liberation of oppressed classes from their oppressors.
- Second, there is human liberation, in which human beings begin to assume conscious responsibility for their destiny, seize the reins of their evolution, and become the creators of a new humanity and a society.
- Third, there is liberation from sin, which is the root of all alienation, injustice, and oppression. Unjust situations do not happen by chance; human beings are responsible for them. But this responsibility is not merely individual, private, and interior: it is a social, historical fact.

I will evaluate the South African democracy and the relevancy of URCSA after 25 years in terms of the above-mentioned threefold analysis of liberation. The paper will analyse and explore whether South Africa has gone through the three stages of freedom, and if can one say that churches are relevant or not in a democratic South Africa after 25 years.

In democratic South Africa, after 25 years of democracy and the establishment of URCSA, one can undoubtedly say that there has been political liberation from class oppression and domination from minority oppressors. In terms of Gutierrez's threefold analysis of freedom, this is a first step to start with freedom, but this does not end the process of independence. It is true that the country has a new constitution that protects human rights and human dignity. However, there is still internalised racism and internalised domination and oppression. This dictates a further move to the next stage of our threefold analysis of liberation. One cannot deny the fact that political freedom in South Africa is being held back by poverty. As stated above, on average, 4.35 per

cent of white persons are poor in comparison to 61.4 per cent of poor black Africans (Stats SA 2012b, 71).

This paper contends that the political liberation of South Africa, after 25 years of democracy, remains incomplete due to the level of poverty which is experienced in this country. If poverty is a challenge for the majority of South Africans, then URCSA as a church that confesses that God stands on the side of the poor needs to stand where God stands and should speak for the poor. Bear in mind that URCSA first emerges as the famous "Church of the poor," who engages in the struggle for life itself, in the light of active faith.[1] In a democracy, poverty is not disgraceful, neither is a human being rejected because of weakness, poverty or obscurity of origin; nor is he/she honoured because of the opposite. Aristotle, Plato's disciple, stressed the importance of justice; he condemned poverty and emphasised that extremes of wealth and poverty could undermine democracy. The only way to prevent social conflicts (service delivery protests and Marikana mine strikes) and civil wars is to establish a just balance and fair distribution of wealth within the democratic country (Constantelos 2008, 192). In this regard, poverty is an evil that needs to be eradicated in a democratic society. The challenge to eliminate poverty is immense, but perhaps not impossible.

For the past 25 years of democracy in South Africa and URCSA, there has been an alarming gap between the rich and poor in the country and the church. This gap is aggravated by the fact that wealth and poverty are most possibly widening in a perpetuation of the difference; indeed, its possible widening in a pressured economic environment is a genuine threat to peace and stability in the church and society. It is in the interest of the private and public sector alike to ensure that this situation is redressed. Economic logic suggests that, while more than 60 per cent of the population remains impoverished, there is no possibility of meaningful economic growth or national stability. If a wealth tax is not the way forward, then some other measure should be sought and implemented as a matter of urgency (Terreblanche 2012, 140). The vast and widening gap between the rich and the poor is a disturbing legacy of the past 25 years of democracy and of URCSA's existence, which has not been reduced by the democratic process or by the implementation of the *Belhar Confession* (faith in action). It is morally reprehensible, politically dangerous and economically unsound to allow this to continue. The business sector has a particularly significant role to play in this regard. Based on what is stated by Terreblanche (2012), it is important to acknowledge that poverty is still a challenge after 25 years of democracy in South Africa. This needs to be addressed, and the church and society must address this challenge.

In the past 25 years of democracy, there was political freedom in a dry land of poverty and sickness, which challenges us to take this discussion a step further to explore human liberation. In the past 25 years, the South African situation—in terms of political liberation—was more one of deliverance than fully fleshed freedom (which is defined

1 An authentic faith moves beyond understanding, feeling and experience to a way of life. Faith is a commitment, a fundamental option to be active in loving others and pursuing justice.

as permission to work and to be self-reliant). The people are delivered from class oppression rather than being free from all constraints that are incorporated into bondage and oppression. The state of deliverance is a temporary measure for the oppressed people until they are free from all the shackles of living.

During this state—like the Israelites—the one who delivered will provide the people with everything for free until they are prepared politically, psychologically, socially and economically to assume conscious responsibility for their destiny; until they can seize the reins of their evolution and become the creators of a new humanity and a society. During their freedom in the desert, in the judgment of many pilgrims, their situation was a poor substitute for oppression in Egypt. To be sure, Israel experienced grace in the wilderness, but it was also a time of grumbling, revolutionary discontent, internal strife, rebellion against the leadership of Moses, and above all, lack of faith. In various ways, the narratives emphasise the particular theme of Yahweh's guidance in the wilderness and his gracious aid in response to the people's petitions in times of need or emergency. First of all, daily sustenance—the elemental necessities of food and water—was provided (Anderson 1981, 76). In essence, there was provision for free food, free water, and free protection from their enemies, which has been the very same situation in the past 25 years of democracy in South Africa. People are talking of poverty reduction, which includes grants from the government, free packages for the poor, complimentary water, free electricity, and open shelter. What is disconcerting is that the new government and the African National Congress's (ANC) attitudes towards the poor have changed quite drastically over the past 25 years. While the poor were regarded in 1994 as the deserving poor who would be the priority of the new government agenda, many in the post-apartheid elite are now inclined to consider the poor as the undeserving poor. The post-apartheid elite often alleges that they detect in the behaviour of the poor deficiencies and moral degenerating that make them slide into dependency, feeding off hand-outs from the state while doing nothing to help themselves out of poverty (Terreblanche 2012, 105).

There is an outcry for liberation theologians to instil a sense of human liberation in which human beings will begin to assume conscious responsibility for their destiny, seize the reins of their evolution, and become the creators of a new humanity and society. The high level of poverty and the provision from the government via all sorts of social grants have illustrated that the people and the church and state are still stuck in the first stage of Gutierrez's threefold analysis. These means are not assisting the poor with anything to alleviate poverty and to address unemployment. Terreblanche (2012, 105), quoting Mosoetsa, indicates that social policies have failed dismally to reduce poverty in South Africa. South Africa's social and welfare policy framework has not achieved real economic transformation, wealth redistribution or the eradication of poverty. State transfers merely assist people to live from hand to mouth. Post-apartheid macroeconomic policies have yielded only limited economic growth while resulting in significant job losses and rising inequality.

When one evaluates the South African liberation in terms of Gutierrez's threefold analysis, one concludes that South Africans indeed have the political liberation as the first step to freedom. However, now they need to work hard to move towards the second step of liberation, which is more focused on addressing human wellness and welfare. This movement from the first stage of freedom to the next corresponds with the commitment of Nelson Mandela on 24 May 1994, when he committed the democratic government to a "people-centred society." He defined people-centred society as follows: "My government's commitment to creating a people-centred society of liberty binds us to the pursuit of the goals of freedom from want, freedom from hunger, freedom from deprivation, freedom from ignorance, freedom from suppression and freedom from fear" (Mandela 1994). The people-centred society is a society in which human beings begin to assume conscious responsibility for their destiny, seize the reins of their evolution, and become the creators of a new humanity and a society. In this sense, there is a lot be to be done in South Africa. Hence this article has emphasised the relevance of liberation theology as a "doing theology" to assist the South African people in moving towards the second and third stage of Gutierrez's threefold analysis.

Beyond Prayer: Service to one another and the World

For the past 25 years, URCSA has gone beyond prayer and worship from the comfort zone into the danger zone through its "Service and Witness" ministry, together with its partners locally and internationally. URCSA acknowledges that there is poverty liberation theology and that URCSA has a role to play in a democratic society. URCSA, forced by its confession in Article 4, concedes that God is especially the God of the poor, and the church of God should stand where God stands. Liberation theology emphasises the preferential option for the poor.

The other fact that motivates the church to stand up for justice for the people is that the church is led by people; people who emerge from communities, who are a part of society for as long as they live, and are characters inspired by their experiences gathered from communities. Equally, the church has a membership that is from the towns. These members define the essence of the communities which they come from, and the character of their communities is what they reflect. Thus, though the church might have a spiritual responsibility towards the society, it must find its identity within the communities that it exists (Mokoto and Nhlopo 2008, 14).

In the past 25 years, URCSA has attempted to take a position dictated by Article 4 of the *Belhar Confession*, which states that the church believes that God has revealed God-self as one who wishes to bring about justice and genuine peace among people. In the world full of injustice and enmity, God is in a particular way, God of the destitute, the poor and the wronged. Therefore, God calls the church to follow God; that God brings justice to the oppressed and gives bread to the hungry; that God frees the prisoners and restores sight to the blind; that God supports the downtrodden, protects the strangers, helps orphans and widows and blocks the path of the ungodly; that for God pure and undefiled religion is to visit the orphans and the widows in their suffering. Furthermore,

God wishes to teach people of God to do what is good and seek the right; that the church must, therefore, stand by people in any form of suffering and need, which implies, among other things, that the church must witness against and strive against any injustice, so that justice may roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream; that the church belonging to God, should stand where God stands, namely against injustice and with the wronged; that in following Christ the church must witness against all-powerful and privileged who selfishly seek their interests and thus control and harm others (*Belhar Confession* 1986). The church that confesses this, should go beyond prayer in its services and practices.

Article 5 of the Church Order is divided into three core ministries of URCSA, namely proclamation and worship; congregational ministry; and service and witness. The first one (proclamation and worship) focuses more on prayers and teachings of the church. The second (congregational ministry) is more of a mechanism that translates the proclamation and worship into practice, and the third (service and witness) is beyond prayer and worships the practical exercises of the church. In the Agenda of the General Synod of 2012 Namibia, from the report of General Service and Witness Ministry, the following projects indicate that URCSA for the past 20 years of democracy and its existence, goes beyond prayer. These projects were identified from different congregations and ministries like women, men and youth ministries under the following categories:

Table 3: Projects of URCSA for the past 20 years (2012)

Social development projects	**Health promotion projects**
• Water project • Orphaned and vulnerable children	• Home-based care • Prevention of curable and incurable disease. • Substance abuse
Economic development projects	**Educational development project**
• Job creation • Income-generated project • Funeral parlour	• Skills development • Daycare centres • Training of people

Source: Agenda of the General Synod of 2012 Namibia

Conclusion

For the past 25 years of democracy in South Africa, URCSA has acted as a thermostat, reading the signs of the time and attempting to change with the signs of the time. URCSA has tried to reduce poverty and bring about human dignity. URCSA has decided to live according to its *Confession of Belhar* in some of the areas of life. We, therefore, celebrate that which URCSA and the democratic government have achieved in 25 years of democracy and the existence of URCSA.

In the next 25 years in the wilderness, it is our wish that the church and the democratic government would work together to restore human dignity through projects that focus on moral, social, economic and political needs of the people. The church should adhere to its confessions and biblical orientation; the philosophical standpoint of ensuring that the law of God finds expression within the communities, and that the community lives within the confinements of these constitutional provisions of the law of God. The government must take care of its citizens, but the citizens are so scattered that the government cannot reach them all. The advantage is that the government could utilise the church (URCSA) throughout the country where there is a need for service to the people.

References

Agenda of the General Synod. 1997. Bloemfontein, South Africa.

Agenda of the General Synod. 2008. Hammanskraal, South Africa.

Agenda of the General Synod. 2012. Okahanja, Namibia.

Agenda of the General Synodical Commission. 2018. Windhoek, Namibia.

Anderson, B. W. 1981. *The Living World of the Old Testament,* 3rd edition. New Jersey: Longman Publishers.

Belhar Confession. 1986. Belhar. DTP & Printing by LUS Printers.

Best, T. F. 2002. *With a Demonstration of the Spirit and of Power.* Geneva. WCC Publication.

Church Order and Regulations. 2008. General Synod of the Uniting Reformed Church in Southern Africa, Hammanskraal.

Constantelos, D. J. 2008. "The Hellenic Background and Nature of Patristic Philanthropy in the Early Byzantine Era." In *Wealth and Poverty in the Early Church and Society*, edited by S. R. Holman. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic Publishing Group.

Lehohla, P. J. 2008. *Measuring Poverty in South Africa: Methodological Report on the Martins Press.*

Mandela, R. N. 1994. *State of the Nation Address.* South African History Online.

Mokoto, M., and M. Nhlopo. 2008. "Religion within the Context of South Africa's Developmental Agenda." Faith-based Organisation Summit. Rustenburg: North West Social Development.

Odhiambo, N. M. 2009. "Finance-growth-poverty Nexus in South Africa: A Dynamic Causality Linkage." *Journal of Behavioral and Experimental Economics* (formerly *The Journal of Socio-Economics*), Elsevier, 38 (2): 320–325.

Pugh, M. (Ed.). 1992. *Regeneration of War-Torn Societies*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Solomons, T. 2015. “In Conversation with our Heritage: Respice et Prospice.” Unpublished address at the Rhenish Church Family Meeting in South Africa on 27–28 October 2015.

South African Labour and Research Unit. 2016.

Statistics South Africa (Stats SA). 2011a. GHS Series, volume IV, “Food Security and poverty.” Pretoria.

Statistics South Africa (Stats SA). 2011b. “Social Profile of Vulnerable Groups in South Africa.” Pretoria.

Statistics South Africa (Stats SA). 2012a. “Agriculture, 2002–2011: In-depth Analysis of the General Household Survey data.” Pretoria.

Statistics South Africa (Stats SA). 2012b. “Development of the Poverty Lines for Statistical Reporting.” Pretoria.

Terreblanche, S, J. 2012. *Lost in Transformation*. Stellenbosch: Sun Press.