

Die PRCA en die kerklike en politieke situasie in Suid-Afrika in die tweede helfte van die 20ste eeu

S. Le Cornu

Na aanleiding van [hierdie skrywe](#) van my, het ek verder gaan lees oor van die [PRCA](#) se verslaggewing aangaande die kerklike en politieke verval in SA in veral die 70/80's van die vorige eeu, soos gevind kan word in hul kerklike tydskrif, [The Standard Bearer](#). Dit is baie interessante leesstof, opbouend dat oorsese medegelowiges die groter bybelse perspektief op ons mooi land se tragiese geskiedenis beter kon raaksien as baie Suid-Afrikaners en kerklidmate wat deur die teologiese en politieke liberalisme meegesleur is.

In die skrywes is daar ook die nodige kritiek en oproep wat dwing tot selfondersoek, aangesien die Afrikaner Christen in baie opsigte ook die skuld dra vir die geestelike ondergang van ons land en volk. Hier is 'n paar aanhalings met bronverwysings sodat u die hele artikel kan gaan lees waaruit die betrokke aanhalings kom (hier en daar plaas ek 'n opmerking by. Voetnota's is bygevoeg):

1. [Persecution for Christ's Sake in Rhodesia](#), by Prof. H.C. Hoeksema (1979)

“For the most part, we are furnished a very biased and one-sided account by both the secular and the religious press concerning the situation in countries like Rhodesia and the Republic of South Africa. The result is that we frequently do not have a true picture of affairs in those countries. I am referring to such things as the struggle concerning *apartheid* in South Africa, the communist character and influence of various anti-white and anti-government movements among the blacks, the attitudes of blacks and whites toward one another in the church, particularly the Reformed church, the corruption of the World Council of Churches and its Fund to Combat Racism (supported in the Netherlands by the GKN), etc.

Repeatedly private correspondents have both warned and assured me that here in America we do not understand the situation in South Africa. They have warned that we must not think of the situation in South Africa, for example, in terms of black-white relationships in the United States; that we must not think of the struggle about *apartheid* in terms of the racial segregation-integration struggle in this country; and that we must not think of the attitude of Reformed churches toward these matters in terms of Reformed churches in either the Netherlands or the U.S. Literature received from South Africa—both church papers and books and brochures—has tended to confirm these warnings and assurances.

And while I do not deem myself competent to make a thorough evaluation and judgment concerning the political and ecclesiastical situation in that part of the world, I have long been convinced that on the whole we do not get the "straight goods" from either the secular or the religious press. Moreover, frankly my sympathies lie with those who are usually maligned as the "white minority" and as the oppressors of the "black majority." And I have seen much concrete evidence of the fact that this "oppression" is a myth and that the Dutch Reformed Church in South Africa has done much, very much, to promote the cause of the gospel of Jesus Christ among the teeming black majority in that part of the world."

2. South Africa Church Breaks With GKN, by Prof. H.C. Hoeksema (1976)

"We can only applaud the decision to sever relations with the GKN.¹ It was long overdue. And this holds true not only for the *Gereformeerde Kerk* of South Africa, but also for all Reformed denominations which have maintained ties with the GKN. It also holds true for the Reformed Ecumenical Synod, which until now has not shown the courage to enforce its own constitution and its own anti-World Council advice.

From the point of view of the principle, the GKN has long ago and in many ways forsaken the doctrine and discipline which constitute the very basis of unity for Reformed churches. It was, therefore, wrong—principally wrong—for other Reformed churches to continue in any kind of unity with the GKN. And from the point of view of practice, the fact that others continued to maintain ties with the GKN has only afforded the latter the opportunity to introduce its corrupt leaven into other Reformed communions. Frankly, I have no expectation that the GKN will be moved to return from its evil ways; but perhaps the breaking of ecclesiastical ties will contribute to stemming the tide of liberalism somewhat in other Reformed churches.

Meanwhile, in my opinion there are ominous signs that already all is not well in the South Africa church. The talk of being radical and outspoken and of facing up to sociopolitical issues (met verwysing na prof. Tjaart van der Walt se politieke uitsprake – slc) has the all-too-familiar ring of the liberalism which has already infested other Reformed denominations."

Opmerking: profetiese woorde teen die huidige behepthed met sosio-politieke menseregte en globalisme, in plaas van die Evangelie en Wet van ons Here Jesus Christus (Ps.119:174; Matt.5:17-19; 1 Kor.2:2; Op.12:17).

¹ Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland.

3. Clasping a Viper to the Bosom, by Prof. H.C. Hoeksema (1976)

“From a correspondent-friend in South Africa we recently received some of the theological writings of a Dr. A. König, who is a minister and theologian of the Dutch Reformed Church of South Africa (N.G.K.), the largest of the three main Reformed denominations in that country.

As we reported some time ago, from time to time criticism of the *Gereformeerde Kerken* of the Netherlands has emanated from the Reformed community in South Africa.

This criticism has centered not only on the Dutch churches' support of the World Council's attempts to stir up revolution in Africa, but also on the modernistic trends in doctrine in the GKN.

Some time ago, according to my correspondent, Dr. K. Vorster, Moderator of the N.G. K. of South Africa, spoke out against the modernistic trends in the GKN. But from the literature sent me, it appears that the South African church itself is not, free from those liberal trends.

If the theology expressed in these samples is representative of what is taught at the University of Potchefstroom² and inculcated in their future ministers, then the South African Reformed community has already fallen upon evil days.

The first sample of such bad theology which drew my attention was an article by Dr. König in *Theologica Evangelica*, the *Tydskrif van die Faculteit Teologie, Universiteit van Suid-Afrika* (Journal of the Faculty of Theology, University of South Africa).³

² (Correction by prof Hoeksema in a later edition: I erroneously identified Dr. König, the theologian whose work I am currently criticizing. My South African correspondent wrote me: "There is only one matter in your article that needs correction, and I would like to point this out. Dr. König is a minister of the Dutch Reformed Church in South Africa (Die Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk in Suid-Afrika—N.G.K.) and this has no links with Potchefstroom University which is connected with the Reformed Church in South Africa (Die Gereformeerde Kerk in Suid-Afrika) a completely different denomination. The latter is a secession from the former. The Theological Seminaries of the Dutch Reformed Church in South Africa are connected to the University of Pretoria, and also the University of Stellenbosch. Dr. König is a graduate of the University of Pretoria, and has no links with Potchefstroom. It seems that this theological decline has its source in the Theological Faculty of the University of Pretoria, (N.G.K.) where König also wrote his doctorate." Thanks for the correction ! My apologies to any persons or institutions who may have been offended by this unintentional error. *Nihil humanum alienum mihi est.*)

³ Sien ook my skrywe oor prof. König se ontkenning van die almag van God hier: [Die Here beskik oor alles](#).

4. Report of the RES consultative committee to the RES Churches in South Africa, reviewed by prof. Herman Hanko (1982)

"I have not read for a long time nor studied carefully the reports and the decisions of the RES⁴ on this matter of race relations in the South African Churches. It is not possible for me, therefore, to pass any judgments on the matter as such. From correspondence and contact with saints who live in South Africa, I do know that what we read in our daily newspapers and magazines is horribly biased and inaccurate and cannot be trusted. But what strikes me mostly is that while the RES is becoming increasingly involved in social issues of this sort, the RES has yet to deal firmly with the doctrinal and moral apostasy of the GKN in the Netherlands which is far more terrible and far more a threat to the Reformed character of the RES. One is left with the impression that there is greater concern in the RES over the race issue in South Africa than over the apostasy of the GKN. We urge all those who are interested in the RES and in these questions to obtain this report."

Opmerking: In 1976, in sy voordrag voor die GKN Sinode, het GPL van der Linde van die GKSA vir dr. Augustijn (en navolger van Kuitert) van die GKN, soos volg aangehaal om die 'social gospel' van die moderne teologie uit te wys, wat baie lewendig is vandag in SA kerke: "Een uitspraak van die Gereformeerde Kerken waarin bepaald wordt dat de overheid, de kerken en haar leden een bepaalde percentage van hun inkomsten behoren te besteden aan ontwikkelingshulp, is vandag meer waard dan elke binding aan een oude of een nieuwe belydenis" (Kerk en belydenis, p.70). 'n 'Dialogoog-Kerk' moet die 'belydenis kerk' vervang (Augustijn in 'n TV onderhoud volgens Gereformeerde Weekblad)."⁵

5. South African Church Breaks from R.E.S., by Rev. Gise J. VanBaren (1985)

"So the struggle against the apartheid "heresy" continues. While the Reformed Church in the Netherlands continues a member in good standing in the R.E.S., with its membership in the World Council of Churches, with its professing homosexual members, with its women ministers (at least one unmarried though having a child and living with her boyfriend), the apartheid "heresy" has been firmly dealt with by the R.E.S.—now with the above-mentioned consequences. Doubtlessly, we've not heard the last of all of this."

Opmerking: sien in hierdie verband 'n vorige skrywe van my [hier](#), oor die GKSA se (hernude) sustersbande (Sinode 2009) met die CRCNA wat basies dieselfde teologiese en etiese liberalisme huldig as die GKN van die verlede en RES vandag.

⁴ Reformed Ecumenical Synod.

⁵ Handeling van 1976 GKSA Sinode, p.256.

6. **A MOMENT OF TRUTH (THE CONFESSION OF THE DUTCH REFORMED MISSION CHURCH 1982), Edited by G.D. Cloete and D.J. Smit & WALKING ON THORNS, The Call To Christian Obedience, Allan Boesak (reviewed by Prof. H.C. Hoeksema)**

"In the fall of 1982 the Dutch Reformed Mission Church in South Africa, what is called a "colored" church in distinction from a black church or a white church, declared that the situation confronting the churches in South Africa with respect to apartheid constituted a *status confessionis*, a condition in which the very truth of the gospel is at stake. In this connection they drafted a confession of faith (*waaruit die Belhar belydenis sou volg in 1986 – slc*) with respect to the apartheid question, a confession which sets the DRMC apart from its "mother" church, the Dutch Reformed Church of South Africa. The first of these books contains the text of that draft confession, as well as nine essays examining the historical precedent, background, theological meaning, and practical consequences of this action.

But be warned that what you will find in this book and in this confession is the social gospel undisguised; maybe today you would call it "liberation theology." Here is a sample, from Article 4:

"We believe that God has revealed Himself as the one Who wishes to bring about justice and true peace among men; that in a world full of injustice and enmity He is in a special way the God of the destitute, the poor, and the wronged and that He calls His Church to follow Him in this; that He brings justice to the oppressed and gives bread to the hungry; that He frees the prisoner and restores sight to the blind; that He supports the downtrodden, protects the stranger, helps orphans and widows, and blocks the path of the ungodly; that for Him pure and undefiled religion is to visit the orphans and the widows in their suffering; that He wishes to teach His people to do what is good and to 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 form of injustice, so that justice may roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream; that the Church as the possession of God must stand where He stands, namely against injustice and with the wronged; that in following Christ the Church must witness against all the powerful and privileged who selfishly seek their own interests and thus control and harm others."

Opmerking: sien [hier](#) meer oor die teologiese probleme met Belhar. Een aanhaling:

“A few weeks ago, Richard Mouw, President of Fuller Theological Seminary, [blogged](#) about the unfortunate trajectory of his old friend Allan Boesak (HT: Stephen Ley). Here’s part of what Mouw said:

Boesak was also instrumental in drafting the 1986 Belhar Confession, which I welcomed at the time as an important confessional statement about race relationships. He now appeals to that document in support of his advocacy for gay-lesbian ordination.

In a recent insightful blog posting, “The Belhar Confession & God’s Final Revelation,” Violet Larson argues that this is a good reason to question the theological adequacy of the Belhar Confession, precisely because of the use to which it is being put these days by proponents of full inclusion on same-sex topics. I agree with her.

*While that document spoke forthrightly against the injustices of apartheid, it did not explicitly appeal to biblical authority. **That it can now be seen by some of its drafters as capable of being extended to the full inclusion of active gays and lesbians in ministry says something about the weaknesses of Belhar—not as an important prophetic declaration in its original context, but as a statement that can stand on its own as a normative confession** (emphasis mine).”*

7. [South Africa—Another Viewpoint](#), by Prof. H.C. Hoeksema (1985)

Prof. Hoeksema haal ‘n korrespondent van SA soos volg aan:

"It has been very interesting to note some odd (i.e. occasional, HCH) comments on the situation here in South Africa in the *Standard Bearer*. Quite in contrast to the anti-South Africa stance taken by the media (which in my opinion is very nearly 100% left-wing throughout the world). The violence that is occurring in S.A. today is without doubt instigated from outside the country, but with underground communist agitators inside the county, aided and abetted by the Rev. Trouble Makers, Bishop Tutu and Dr. Alan Boesak. Both of these gentlemen proclaim themselves true leaders of their people, but in fact their following is very small indeed. But they are experts in inflammatory speeches and rabble rousing. The furthest thing from their thoughts is the calling of men and women to repentance and faith in Christ."

... With respect to the real problem he writes: "All these things are really superficial. The main problem, as far as I am concerned, in S.A. is the desperate slide into humanism and the consequent blatant materialism

that can be seen on every hand. The splendid Calvinistic heritage that this country has is being thrown overboard at an alarming pace. The Reformed churches are riddled with dead orthodoxy, holding to the form—and in many cases not even that—but no real belief. The only true Christian university is Potchefstroom, with Stellenbosch, in Cape Town, a pretty long way behind. But otherwise the universities are homes for pathetic liberal theologians who propagate their strange ideas almost in step with the humanistic philosophers who propagate their doctrines of despair."

Opmerking: Potch ? Onthou die datum: 1985. Oor Desmond Tutu se teologie, sien [hier](#).

8. **The Church, Theology, and Violence in South Africa**, by James Lanting (1990)

"The historic Christian church has always been tempted to adopt a political, economic, and social agenda addressing the plight of the oppressed, poor, and powerless in society. This concern emerged in the form of the "social gospel" of theological liberalism in the first half of this century, and more recently as Marxist-inspired "liberation theology" in the last two decades. Reformed orthodoxy has condemned these movements as a "different gospel," a gospel other "than what ye have received" ([Galatians 1:6, 9](#)).

But apparently some in the Dutch Reformed tradition in South Africa are now developing a "theology" that legitimizes revolutionary counter-violence to "liberate" the economically and politically oppressed in South Africa. Weary with the injustice of apartheid and the alleged exploitation of blacks by the capitalist economy there, South African theologians and intellectuals in the Dutch Reformed churches are suggesting that armed violence is now a political necessity in that country.

This theology of the inevitability and necessity of counter-violence to overthrow repressive and unjust regimes is articulated in a recent significant book, *Theology and Violence: The South African Debate*, edited by Charles Villa-Vicencio (Eerdmans, 1988). This book is a collection of essays by South African intellectuals and church leaders including Allan Boesak (President of World Alliance of Reformed Churches), Desmond Tutu (Archbishop of Cape Town), Dirkie Smit (Professor of Systematic Theology, University of Western Cape), Charles Villa-Vicencio (Professor of Religious Studies, University of Cape Town), and others.

... Needless to say, the Reformed believer is at a loss where to begin to criticize this heretical book. The authors are unashamedly Marxist in their analysis of history, politics, and economics, borrowing heavily from contemporary liberation theologians such as Gustavo Gutierrez, Jon Sobrino, and Juan Segundo. Moreover, their ethical philosophy is rudely utilitarian—counter-violence as a means is justifiable as a last resort to achieve the end (goal) of a better society.

But perhaps more telling is the shocking attempt to theologize without ever appealing to Scripture, for the book contains few, if any, attempts to ground this new "theology" of the necessity of counter-violence on biblical evidence. The reason for this is their almost blasphemous view of the Biblical text, for as one essayist writes ..."

Opmerkings: ironies genoeg, word dit vandag in die nuwe SA amper as 'godslastering' beskou as jy wys op die teologiese, morele en politieke bankrotskap van die nuwe SA sosiale orde. Ps.127:1 en Joh.15:5 is geensins deel van die nuwe SA argitekture (beide kerklik en politiek) se bouplanne nie.

9. [**The Thousand Generation Covenant: Dutch Reformed Covenant Theology and Group Identity in Colonial South Africa**](#), by Jonathan Neil Gerstner, reviewed by prof. David J. Engelsma (1991)

"Gerstner's attempt to hang South Africa's separation of the races on the "internal holiness" doctrine of Dutch Reformed theology is unconvincing. If it is true that an abuse of Reformed theology contributed to apartheid in South Africa, it is by no means evident that the specific doctrine that was applied wrongly was the teaching of the "internal holiness" of covenant children. Nor is it apparent that the covenant view of the "*nadere reformatie*" would have withstood apartheid.

The error of the Dutch Reformed in South Africa was that they transformed the spiritual separation implied in the covenant with themselves and their children into a physical separation. A separation that consists of holiness was made a racial matter. A separation that ought to distinguish church from world was made a policy for organizing national life.

A separation that ought to work itself out in everyday life in this way, that the sanctified freely keep themselves from the unholy world spiritually, became an instrument of coercion, to force a certain race-the blacks-to separate themselves from the whites physically. This is a corruption of the truth of the covenant. But it is a corruption to which any Reformed view of the covenant is

prone, not only that view that holds the elect children of believers for regenerate.

One evil among the Dutch Reformed both in The Netherlands and in South Africa that Gerstner amply demonstrates was the practice of baptizing the children of parents who plainly showed themselves to be unbelieving and unholy. The fiery Reformed preacher with a most remarkable name, Engelbertus Franciscus Le Boucq, charged that

Holy Baptism is so shamefully abused here that it is an abomination. It is performed on everyone, without distinction, not determining if the mothers or fathers be Christians, or without passing appropriate acts of adoption. Indeed one has good reason to believe, that if the Governor sent a sheep in human clothing to the ministers, that they would have baptized it (p. 232).

Reverend Engelbertus Franciscus Le Boucq spoke of conditions in South Africa. But the same was going on in The Netherlands. A reason for the "abomination" was the close, unholy union between church and state in both countries. But it was an "abomination." The holy signs and seals of the covenant of God are not for everyone, but only for believers and the children of believers.

The same abomination abounds in Reformed churches today. Not only "liberal" churches, but also "conservative" churches knowingly baptize the children of parents who plainly show, and even openly admit, that they are not true believers. This is profanation of the covenant, every bit as much as the admission of unbelievers to the Lord's Table. The consequence is the same: The wrath of God comes down upon the whole congregation (and denomination)."

Opmerking: Die Skrif leer dat die Koninkryk van God en die antitese tussen geloof en ongeloof in wese geestelik van aard is oor alle terreine van lewe en denke (Gen.3:15; Joh.18:36; 2 Kor.6:14-7:1), en dat ons 'in die wêreld, maar nie van die wêreld is nie' (Joh.17:15-17), tog sal dit baie maal juis beteken dat die gevolg van die geestelike antitese, 'n fisiese skeiding tot gevolg kan hê (Op.18:4), in gehoorsaamheid aan Christus en sy Woord (Op.12:17), en dit ook op elke lewensterrein (1 Kor.10:31).

Sien ook die volgende calvinisties-bybelsbegronde behulp same kritiek op apartheid SA: [Die tragedie en hoop van Apartheid SA](#), dr. Mark R. Kreitzer

10. [Editorially speaking](#) (about SA), prof. David J. Engelsma (2004)

"In this issue of the Standard Bearer, we begin a three-part series on the history and present doctrinal and spiritual condition of the Dutch Reformed church in South Africa. The articles feature the Gereformeerde Kerken van Suid-Africa (Reformed Churches of South Africa), known popularly as the "Dopper" churches. In the past, this has been the soundest of the Reformed churches in South Africa.

Most readers of the Standard Bearer have little knowledge of the Reformed church in South Africa and its present struggles. The only mention of the Reformed churches in South Africa by the religious press in North America has been castigation of apartheid. The more important issues of faithfulness in doctrine and worship are of no concern to these magazines and journals.

There are theological developments in the Reformed churches in South Africa that are of the greatest interest to all who love the Reformed faith. The report that begins in this issue informs us of these developments."

Opmerking: 'n Aanhaling uit die 'report':

"What is the solution (for South Africa)? Nothing new. Only a heartfelt repentance and call to the triune God for His mercy and salvation in these times. We must pray that the Lord, by His grace, will send preachers 'after His heart' again ([Jer. 3:15](#)); preachers who lead the flock back to God's Word, salvation in Christ alone, worshiping God according to His Word, discipline in love, the education of the elders in the Scriptures, confession, and church order, proclaiming the gospel to the people in SA, missions, and so on. Our comfort is the comfort of the elect church, that "this holy Church is preserved or supported by God against the rage of the whole world; though it sometimes for a while appears very small, and in the eyes of men to be reduced to nothing; as during the perilous reign of Ahab, the Lord reserved unto Him seven thousand men who had not bowed their knees to Baal" (Art. 27, Belgic Confession). We must learn the lesson of the past. As far back as the 1950s, the Rev. L.S. Kruger gave the following warning for us Reformed believers:

The church says it accepts the Three Forms of Unity, but its preachers do not accept it fully. It also helps nothing if you call out in the streets that you are Reformed, but in practice the essential doctrines of the confessions, for example the doctrine of predestination and the covenant, are rejected, and the preaching in the church becomes a storybook; the sacraments are served in a self-willed fashion and not

according to the covenant; that instead of proclaiming the Covenant, sectarian revival meetings are held as if there were no Covenant and no grace of the Covenant.

Is there then any hope?

For us who believe in the absolutely sovereign and gracious God of the covenant, there is always hope, because Christ said, "...on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hell shall not prevail against it" ([Matt. 16:18](#)). Our hope is in Him, and not in Arminian self-worshipping man. Together we pray the petition of the Lord's Prayer "Thy Kingdom come," as explained in the Heidelberg Catechism, Lord's Day 48, also for the Reformed churches here in SA: Q. 123: *What is the second petition?* A. 123: *Thy kingdom come; that is, so govern us by Thy Word and Spirit, that we submit ourselves to Thee always more and more; preserve and increase Thy Church; destroy the works of the devil, every power that exalts itself against Thee, and all wicked devices formed against Thy Holy Word, until the fullness of Thy kingdom come, wherein Thou shalt be all in all.*

Prof. Dr. H.G. Stoker made the following plea in the middle of the twentieth century: *I believe a time will come wherein God will shake our people awake towards a battle which will bring the antithesis to the fore again ... which would uncover the double-faced character of the (current) syncretism and thereby destroy it—a battle which must be started on the ecclesiastical and religious terrain....*

And this is possible only by the faithful preaching and teaching of the gospel of God, through Jesus Christ, acknowledging that there is only one sovereign grace for His people, and no such thing as a 'common grace' for all, because it is this theory that helped create a bridge from the world to the church, to bring liberalism and methodism in the churches, becoming more worldly and less holy.

May He, by His irresistible grace, also gather, and keep on gathering, His church from "every tribe and tongue and people and nation" ([Rev. 5:9b](#)), through the Reformed Churches of South Africa, remembering its original calling, which are firmly built upon Scripture ([Matt. 28:16-20](#)):

...We are here to maintain the law, and, if possible, to propagate and reveal the reformed Christian faith under these wild and uncivilized people, to the glory of your holy Name.... (Jan van Riebeeck prayer, 1652)