

NED GEREF KERK: STORMKOMPAS (1981)

'Stormkompas' is the name of a document containing 44 theological statements regarding the role of the Ned Geref Kerk in South Africa. It was published in 1981. A book with articles on theological perspectives was also published:

Stormkompas - 44 statements

Statements on the NGK in the present South African context: A few theological perspectives.

1. The church is not a human institution but the work of the Father, Son and Holy Ghost. The Church is led by the Spirit in the Truth of the Word. Therefore no other Word in the church may be exalted above or placed on the same level of the Word. The church stands or falls, lives or dies by the Word and the Word alone.
2. The church is a community of people which is neither built on, nor arises from material factors such as blood, soil, culture, language, class or profession. It is a total new community in which differences and diversity are sanctified and put to the service of God and of each other.
3. The unity of the church is no superfluous luxury, but constitutes the being (wese) of the church. Mutual divisiveness must be deplored as a sin and be controlled.
4. The concept invisible church is sometimes used theologically unsoundly for the sake of a specific theological construction to escape from a Biblical unity concept in a multi-national society.
5. A Christian may never unreservedly identify with his volk, group, class or culture. There must always be a certain distance. The highest loyalty of believers is exclusively to Jesus Christ as his Lord.
6. Because of the role of the NGK in the political and social maturation of the Afrikaner, the church is too closely identified with syndrome of Afrikaner unity. Thereby Afrikaner unity is often elevated by the church above church unity.

On reconciliation:

7. The church in SA may have been given us last opportunity to place reconciliation on its agenda, to give it tangible expression and to demonstrate it by concrete acts of reconciliation in its own midst and in the outside world.
8. In SA a joint effort of all Christians and churches, who are prepared to grasp each others' hands across all prejudices and to stand together before the face (aangesig) of God, has become an urgent necessity. In this the NGK should take the lead and the initiative because of its extraordinary influential position.
9. At the moment it is not the NGK which in SA is standing in the forefront of church efforts towards reconciliation between population groups, but rather those very churches which are often labelled by the NGK as "foreign" or even hostile towards SA.
10. The most irreconcilable attitudes with regards to people of other races are often found among members of the NGK. Hence the expectations about the reconciling role which the church can and must fulfill, have been transformed into deep disappointment among many.
11. The church as the community of the believers who are reconciled in Christ, where gulfs are bridged, tensions relaxed and eliminated and fear for each other gives place to sincere love, can and may never form an exclusive group. Should it be a closed community it violates the very deepest being of the church of Jesus Christ.
12. True reconciliation between population groups in SA cannot take place without a deep recognition and admission of guilt by all believers towards each other. The NGK ought to take the lead in this regard to confessing in humility and repentance for the injustice which has been committed over a long period by whites against blacks.
13. The fact that some NGK church councils still close their church doors to believers of other colours, points to a sinful refusal by Christians to accept each other as reconciled people - regardless of all differences that might exist in human terms.

On Church relations:

14. The unification of the so-called Mother and Daughter churches of the NGK, while allowing for the existence of separate language congregations, has become urgently necessary. The unification will inevitably lead to a joint understanding of the scripture in a SA context and could thus make the witness of this church of significance in this context.
15. The synod of the NGK did not in 1857 set its face with full evangelical force against the opposition of earthly (vleeslike) Christians in the church to the presence of fellow believers of other colours. The concession to the denial (remspraak) of the reconciliation of ethnic and social differences in the church, eventually meant that instead of overcoming the weakness of some brethren this weakness, with the actual sanction of the church, continued to block the road of reconciliation.
16. The existence of separate NG Churches for different population groups, has developed into an artificial and ideological separation of people. This enforced separation of people on the grounds of race and colour is in essence based on the conviction of the fundamental irreconcilability between people and is as such in conflict with the Gospel.
17. The holding of ecumenical services of worship or where something of the unity of the church could be experienced and a witness could be given with to the world, is indispensable for the church in SA.
18. That there is in SA no church organisation or structure in which all churches - at least of Protestant conviction - are associated must be regarded as an accusation against churches in SA.

On missionary work

19. God (die Here) has, in his great mercy blessed the missionary work of the NGK with great harvests (vrug), inside as well as outside SA. Yet we fear that the NGK in the 1980s is fast becoming isolated from the mainstream of churches in and outside SA. In the internal situation of SA the church runs the danger of becoming irrelevant and of losing its witness.

20. The white NGK has, sociologically speaking, become a middle class church which defends the status quo, and particularly the group interests of the Afrikaner. Missionary work is for some church members therefore only acceptable if, and insofar as it does not affect that interest, but promotes it.

21. Nothing could be more damaging to the credibility of the church in the world than its lack of love and unity which flows from it. The NGK has in this regard gained a reputation over the years that it keeps brothers and sisters in Christ apart, rather than binding them together into a unity, and has thereby drawn a dividing line through the unity and community of the faithful or believers.

It is precisely this which in the coming decades could totally disqualify the NGK as a church to which people in Africa will be willing to listen.

On the relationship between the church and the State.

22. Romans 13 is not an all-embracing Christian dogma with regards to the State. It deals in the pericope with the state as institution of God, and not with a divine approval for the action of any specific government.

23. The government is a servant of God and therefore also compelled or obliged to submit him to the demands of the Word of God. The church has the responsibility as the bearer of the divine Word of presenting or stressing the demands of the Word upon to the government. Therefore the church has also a special responsibility with regards to politics. This demands that it must never as such become entangled with a specific political policy direction so that it loses its freedom to testify against such a policy when that becomes necessary.

24. The constitution of a country drastically influences the life and existence of each citizen. It is therefore the responsibility of the church to pass on to the government which is responsible for the constitution, the Biblical values and points of departure which have a bearing on a constitution of a country. The church must help interpret these measures for the practical life of the citizens in order to enable the government to draft the constitution accordingly:

25. The constitution of a country must outline the political scope in which justice can be done to God and man. Scope must be given to make it possible for man to become more humane so that the divinity of God thereby can come clearer to light.

On the social witness of the church

26. The church as institution in society has the responsibility to shed the (sometimes painful) light of God's Word on the total society with all its constitutions. It means that the church from the Word, give the lead in practice to these institutions (through statements and decisions), and that the church members again in their turn give content to the Word of God within the institutions.

27. SA with all its social problems, offers to the church of Christ in this country an inescapable challenge to sound its witness clearly and fearlessly - a challenge on which the churches in S A because of their mutual divisions and lack of effective communication have yet seldom in the history of the country answered properly.

28. Neighbour-love embraces not only doing what you would have others do for you, but also that you will not allow anything to be done to another that you would not want done to yourself. In South Africa this means, among other things, that the Christian cannot be indifferent to the more than half-million black people who have been relocated in terms of government policy whether they agreed or not; the sociological and other results of the system of migrant labour; the millions of people who are crowded into black living areas, largely without basic amenities; the wage structure which, in spite of reforms, still holds sway in South Africa.

29. The church in South Africa does not have the primary function of working for human rights, but of working for the human worth of all people. Human worth means that scope must be given to a person to fulfil his destiny as bearer of the image of God. Inhumanity involves all those factors in and outside the individual which hinder them from fulfilling that destiny.

30. The skin colour of a person should not be decisive in the treatment of people in any community. The human worth of a person is denied when he is judged by his physical appearance alone.

31. A lack of empathy for the social, the socio-economic and the political grievances of the black inhabitants of South Africa on the part of the NGK manifests the identification of the church with the white ruling class for the black man. The black man's struggle for existence in a white-orientated community caused among other things by poor wages, housing shortages, the withholding of political rights and the half-hearted calls and action by the NGK in this connection, also give rise to the black man seeing the church as bearing co-responsibility for his situation.

32. The church needs to bring the Biblical perspective on wages and labour to the attention of its members. Wages received for labour, must in Biblical terms be seen as a sign of God's grace and forgiveness, and his tolerance and patience towards mankind. The worker should see his wage as a symbol of God's grace in his life. Should the employer not pay such a wage, he becomes a block to the working of God's grace in the life of his employee.

33. The urbanisation and industrialisation of the black man has been a far more traumatic process than that of the Afrikaner because the distance from land to city was much greater for the black man than for the Afrikaner, and the process was compressed into a much shorter period. The NGK took the lead in promoting the interests of the Afrikaner in the urbanisation process. The church looked after the Afrikaner people and was a champion of their rights. In this it called on the ministers of the Word fearlessly to proclaim the social implications of the Gospel. But in the case of the black man, the NGK was mostly interested in preaching to him the message of eternal salvation

in the midst of urbanisation and industrialisation, and did little to promote the earthly well-being of the black man. By so doing, it failed to grasp the real nature of the crisis of urbanisation for the blackman and to effectively stand by him.

On the political structure in South Africa

34. The societal system resulting from an enforced political policy of segregation of people, means that the human worth of everyone involved is affected. And since one population group - the whites - are advantaged by this system, it does not fulfil the demand of the gospel that justice must be done to all. Hence the church cannot identify itself with such a policy, much less justify, motivate or defend it.

35. It is time that the NGK said clearly that the policy of apartheid in South Africa has many harmful consequences, in spite of the good intentions of the authorities about allowing population groups to develop separately. The church needs to state clearly that the Christian cannot support this policy without question.

36. The dealings of the South African government in race relations over the past 33 years must, to a great extent, be attributed to the Afrikaner and his church. The NGK has failed in this respect, to proclaim the full consequences of the Christian message with reference to, among other things, the hurtful consequences of the Group Areas Act, large-scale relocations of people, and the Biblically unjustifiable Mixed Marriages Act. It was often other churches in South Africa which gave a lead on this point by raising a prophetic voice on behalf of God's justice.

37. Most ministers of the Afrikaans churches, because of their ties to the Afrikaner volk and their identification with government policy, are not prepared to apply the gospel to the socio-political situation in South Africa in their preaching.

38. The NGK must prepare its members for the fact that the white man clearly cannot forever exercise control in South Africa. Thus, it will have to teach them in a Christian way, how they should live and act as Christians in a minority situation. The church will have to make its members realise that even as a minority group, they have an extremely important contribution to make not only in South Africa, but in Africa as a whole.

39. The church must do everything possible to work, in accordance with its calling, for a new South Africa, a community of true justice, peace and prosperity for all.

On the church and the Afrikaner Broederbond

40. Because the activities of a powerful opinion-forming body like the Afrikaner Broederbond take place in secret, the free formation of public opinion is hampered. Fear of damage to future careers of its members restrains them from open and unrestricted questioning of the political and social order in South Africa, and from expressing a bold Christian witness.

41. The close links between members and officials of the Afrikaans churches with the Broederbond and the links between the Broederbond and the National Party and the government, does serious damage to the credibility of these churches.

42. The membership of particularly officials of the church of the Broederbond is questionable among Christians for the following reasons:

1. Nothing that happens according to the yardstick of God's Word, should be secret.
2. Recent revelations of a large number of the names of ministers among the members of the Broederbond, leads to suspicion and the formation of cliques within the church which harm its unity.

On the church and youth

43. One factor which is a cold reality at the beginning of this decade is the increasing frustration among young people in South Africa - a frustration which arises from the gap between ideals and future expectations on the one side, and the political realities which they face on the other. For this reason, young people are knocking more loudly on the door of the church for political guidance - on the door of the NGK in fact, which has become so entangled with the National Party that together they have become a strong alliance in the political decision-making process in South Africa.

Conclusion

44. The most urgently important change which is necessary in South Africa, is the renewal of the church of Jesus Christ.