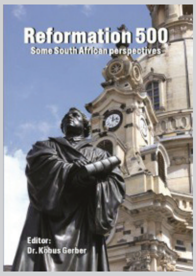
In die Skriflig / In Luce Verbi
ISSN: (Online) 2305-0853, (Print) 1018-6441

Ecumenical reflections on the undeniable influence of the Reformation on the South African society

Book Title:
Reformation 500 Some South African perspectives

Book Cover:



Editor:
Kobus Gerber

ISBN:
978-1-8680404-404-7

Publisher:
Christian Lecture Fund, 2017, R200.00*
*Book price at time of review

Review Title:
Ecumenical reflections on the undeniable influence of the Reformation on the South African society

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How to cite this book review:
Knoetze, J.J., 2017, 'Ecumenical reflections on the undeniable influence of the Reformation on the South African society', *In die Skriflig* 51(1), a2308. https://doi.org/10.4102/ids.v51i1.2308

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In 2017 the courageous attempts of Martin Luther to reform the church from within are celebrated all over the world, not only by the Lutheran Church, but also in many ecumenical bodies. This publication deals specifically with the influence and importance of the Reformation within the South African society. The editor Dr Kobus Gerber, is a well-known actor in ecumenical circles in South Africa and abroad. In the 'Foreword' it is stated that the Conventus of the Churches of the Reformation in Southern Africa invited authors from different denominations to describe any aspect of the Reformation from their own, or their denomination's perspective.

> The idea was to create a mosaic or kaleidoscope which can stimulate further reflection in an ecumenical context where we start to share our experiences and not debate our doctrinal differences and issues. (p. 5)

The thirteen articles from twelve different denominations will indeed contribute to further conversation on our South African society and ecumenical relations.

The articles are academically well founded. Each with its own focus on the influence of the Reformation in the praxis of theology or society in general. Although most of the articles are written from the perspective of the reformed church family, there are also important contributions from denominations *outside* the reformed tradition such as the Zion Christian Church (ZCC), the Apostolic Faith Mission (AFM) and the Roman Catholic Church (RCC). According to the reviewer, three main themes that influence the South African society can be identified, namely education, the relationship between church and state, and ecumenism.

Chapters 1 (Free reformed churches), 4 (ZCC) and 12 (Dutch Reformed Church) focus on the role of the Reformation in the education of children and young people in general within the South African context. Chapter 1 indicates how the reformed education developed into private education in South Africa in the twenty-first century. In Chapter 4 the importance and influence of reformed theological education within the initial leadership of the ZCC is emphasised. 'Unfortunately, the ZCC has lost its theological direction in the midst of African religion' (p. 61). A good historical view is given in Chapter 12 on how Luther and Calvin regarded education as important to their specific contexts with application to the South African context. It emphasises 'that all children should have equal educational opportunity regardless of birth or wealth' (p. 175).

The relationship between church and state is described from different points of view to indicate how the principles of the Reformation influenced the relationship between the church and the state. In Chapter 2 (Netherdutch Reformed Church of Africa – NHKA) the challenge to be continuously reformed through the Word and the Spirit is discussed. This is done from the reformational perspective of the NHKA. The historical development of the Peoples Church of Africa as a reformed church is described in Chapter 3. The core insight of the Protestant Reformation is described by Nurnberger in Chapter 7 (Lutheran Church) as the fact that 'we are righteous and sinners at the same time (*simul iustus et peccator*)' (p. 93). This understanding is spelled out in nine implications for the economic and ecological impasses we are currently facing. Chapter 8 (Dutch Reformed Church in Africa) gives attention to leadership and six societal challenges to the church in relation to the state. In Chapter 13 (Reformed Churches in South Africa) the role of Calvinism in the development and the contesting of apartheid is described.

Ecumenism is described in Chapter 5 (Evangelical Lutheran Church in Southern Africa), 6 (Apostolic Faith Mission), 9 (Uniting Presbyterian Church in Southern Africa), 10 (Roman

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Catholic Church), and 11 (Baptist Union of South Africa). In Chapter 5 the reader is warned against the fallacy of 'pure doctrine' and how the distinction between fixed and focused theology (p. 72) can help in this regard. The relationship and distinction between Reformation and the Pentecostal movement are discussed in Chapter 6. In Chapter 9 some reasons why the World Communion of Reformed Churches are joining in celebrating the Luther Reformation are described as 'with the hope and prayer for Christian unity, a renewed commitment to mission, justice and ecumenical engagement' (p. 145). Chapter 10 discusses the document *Declaration on the way: Church, ministry and eucharist*, drawn and published in 2015 through the United States Catholic Conference of Bishops (USCCB) and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA). The basic principles of the Reformation (*sola's*) are discussed from a Baptist point of view in Chapter 11.

This is indeed an ecumenical book with a definite contribution to the South African society from a Reformed perspective. It can be recommended for pastors, politicians and the church people in general.

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ISSN: (Online) 2305-0853, (Print) 1018-6441

Korrupsie en die toerusting van Christen-leiers

Book Title:
Corruption in South Africa's liberal democratic context: Equipping Christian leaders and communities for their role in countering corruption

Book Cover:

Editors:
Ferdinand Kruger
Ben de Klerk

ISBN:
978-0-620-72526-2

Publisher:
AOSIS, 2016, R220.00*
*Book price at time of review

Review Title:
Korrupsie en die toerusting van Christen-leiers

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How to cite this book review:
Nell, I.A., 2017, 'Korrupsie en die toerusting van Christen-leiers', *In die Skriflig* 51(1), a2319. https://doi.org/10.4102/ids.v51i1.2319

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'n Kort opsomming van die inhoud van die tema van die werk

In hierdie publikasie poog die outeurs om prakties-teologiese riglyne vir Christen-leiers oor die teenwerking van korrupsie te ontwikkel. Hierdie riglyne is gevorm deur 'n hermeneutiese interaksie tussen die bevindinge in die deskriptief-interpreterende en normatiewe afdelings, en deur die uiteindelike inkorporering van die bevindinge in die strategiese gedeelte van die studie.

Volgens die outeurs kan die impak van die diepgewortelde korrupsie in die Suid-Afrikaanse samelewing nie ontken word nie. Volgens hulle ontstaan wydverspreide korrupsie as gevolg van die misbruik van publieke bronne vir die verkryging van persoonlike finansiële voordele deur korrupte administrateurs wat wantroue in die huidige leierskap tot gevolg het.

Hulle beweer dat insig vir die oorsake van korrupsie en wat onder die oppervlak van die probleem daarvan lê nodig is. Praktiese teologie kan volgens hulle 'n bydrae lewer tot 'n in-diepte ondersoek van die probleem. Om die probleem van korrupsie suksesvol te hanteer, beteken nie alleen die vervanging van korrupte leiers nie, maar ook die vernuwing van 'n anti-korrupsie kultuur, van die publieke lewe en van individue. Christelike praktiese teologie lewer volgens die outeurs 'n unieke geleentheid om by die kern van korrupsie uit te kom en kan daarom 'n waardevolle bydrae maak tot die verduideliking en verstaan van sowel as die reaksie op die probleem deur onder andere die interaksie en interdissiplinêre dialoog aan ander menslike wetenskappe te meet.

Die basiese navorsingsvraag van die studie word soos volg deur die outeurs geformuleer:

> What insight can be gained from a practical theological study regarding the deeply rooted causes and far-reaching effects of corruption in a South African liberal democratic environment and what strategic elements are needed by Christian leaders to address this problem faithfully according to the normative indicators linked to their God-given calling?

Die outeurs gaan dan voort en voer hulle argument deur gebruik te maak van Rick Osmer se benadering tot praktiese teologie aan die hand van die volgende vier vrae: Wat gaan aan?; Hoekom is dit die geval?; Wat behoort te gebeur?; en Hoe verander ons dit? Hierdie vier vrae omskryf hulle deur van die volgende hoofde gebruik te maak:

- die aard van korrupsie;
- sommige van die hoofoorsake in 'n Afrika konteks;
- die bydraes wat Christelike tradisies kan maak om korrupsie te hanteer; en
- moontlike strategiese benaderings wat Christen-leiers kan oorweeg om die probleem te hanteer.

'n Kort evaluering van die standaard en meriete van die werk

Die outeurs lewer in die geheel werk van 'n goeie standaard en bevat die boek 'n magdom van interessante inligting – alles verbind aan die basiese navorsingsvraag wat, myns insiens, goed geformuleer is. Die taalgebruik is baie goed en die tegniese versorging van goeie gehalte.

Ek het veral hoofstukke 3, 4 en 5 baie waardevol gevind in die lig van interessante teorieë wat in verband met die onderliggende oorsake van korrupsie bespreek is en wat waardevolle lig op die onderwerp werp. Volgens my hanteer veral hoofstuk 5 van die belangrikste oorsake vir korrupsie vanuit 'n etiese perspektief.

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In die lig hiervan lewer ek graag kommentaar oor enkele aspekte van die werk wat volgens my oordeel ’n voortgaande dialoog oor die onderwerp van korrupsie kan bevorder soos wat die outeurs ook op verskillende plekke in die boek voorstel.

Wat die metodologie as deel van die empiriese navorsing betref, vind ek dit ongelukkig problematies dat daar net van vier respondente gebruik gemaak is. Indien die outeurs ernstig daaroor is dat hulle sommige van die hoofoorsake van korrupsie in die Afrika-konteks wil ondersoek, sou ’n mens verwag dat hulle ten minste tussen 15 en 20 onderhoude gevoer het wat normaalweg die norm vir kwalitatiewe empiriese navorsing in die vorm van semi-gestruktureerde onderhoude is. Wat verder problematies is, is dat ’n mens geen aanduiding vind van wie die respondente is nie. In hierdie tipe navorsing is dit gebruiklik om ten minste net die basiese inligting te verskaf rondom die geslag en ouderdom van die respondente.

Gesien in die lig van die hoogs kontroversiële aard van die navorsingsonderwerp, sou ek graag ook die volgende wou sien: eerstens, ’n idee van die twee Christelike leiers se betrokke denominasionele agtergronde; tweedens, van watter politieke party die politieke leier is; en derdens, watter sektor in die besigheidwêreld word deur die betrokke sakeman verteenwoordig? Of die Christelike leiers wat ondervra is deel van die Protestantse tradisie of van die onafhanklike kerke in Afrika (soos wat die outeurs self later in die boek aandui – vgl. bl. 57-60), sal ’n reuse verskil maak. Dit is duidelik dat hierdie twee agtergronde verskillende benaderings tot korrupsie sal hê. Dieselfde geld van die politieke leier (watter party) en besigheidsleier (watter sektor en watter ekonomiese model) hulle ondersteun?

Die rede waarom laasgenoemde opmerkings oor die empiriese deel van die studie belangrik is, hou verband met die feit dat die outeurs doelbewus die hele argument, wat hulle die ‘konsepsuele raamwerk’ noem, op grond van hierdie empiriese resultate bou. In hulle eie woorde: ‘*The conceptual framework, gleaned from the empirical data, functions for our practical theological reflection on corruption in the consecutive chapters*.’

In die geheel dink ek egter dit is ’n goeie publikasie wat ’n baie relevante onderwerp in die Suid-Afrikaanse konteks benader. Dit lewer ’n definitiewe bydrae tot die diskoers oor korrupsie.