

DOCUMENTATIONSTATEMENT BY ABRECSA

The new Alliance of Black Reformed Christians in South Africa (ABRECSA) issued the following statement on their objectives at its recent Conference at Hammanskraal, near Pretoria. The full statement said:

For the first time in 300 years Black Reformed Christians in South Africa have gathered to discuss the meaning of being Black and Reformed. As black people in South Africa today we are oppressed, powerless and voiceless in the country of our birth. Dispossessed of our land, we are displaced people confined to 13 per cent of the country and robbed of our citizenship. Blackness means being dehumanised and suffering under a myriad of unjust laws.

The Reformed tradition in South Africa is seen as responsible for political oppression, economic exploitation, unbridled capitalism, social discrimination and a total disregard for human dignity.

By the same token, being Reformed is equated with total, uncritical acceptance of the status quo, sinful silence in the face of human suffering, and manipulation of the Word of God in order to justify oppression.

Being Reformed is to exhibit the pigheadedness and intransigence of our present rulers with their counterpart in unconditional submission on the part of the oppressed.

This represents our dilemma in being Black and Reformed. We ask ourselves the question "Is it a burden to be cast off, or a challenge towards the renewal of the Church and of our society?"

We reject the interpretation of the Reformed tradition which is equated with oppression, racism and the justification of tyranny. In this interpretation we observe the following:

- (1) The Word of God is subjected and made subservient to the claims of cultural and racist ideology.
- (2) The Lordship of Christ is confined to a narrow "spiritual" realm while the rest of life is surrendered to the power of a false god.
- (3) The life of the Christian is compartmentalised and his responsibility to be involved in the world for the sake of the Kingdom of God is denied.
- (4) The demand to pay uncritical allegiance to the State, which is regarded as divinely instituted.
- (5) The heresy that the unity of the Church is a mystical one where ethnicity and culture in fact become a mark of the Church.

We, however, in the spirit of the true Reformed tradition, reaffirm that

- (1) The Word of God is the supreme authority and guiding principle revealing all that we need to know about God's Will for the whole existence of human beings. It is this Word that gives life and offers liberation that is total and complete.
- (2) Christ is Lord of all life, even in those situations where His Lordship is not readily recognised. It is our task in life not only to recognise the Lordship of Christ but also to proclaim it.
- (3) We as Christians are responsible for the world in which we live, and to reform it is an integral part of our discipleship and worship of God.
- (4) God instituted the authority of the State for the just and legitimate government of the world. Therefore we obey Government only insofar as its laws and instructions are not in conflict with the Word of God. Obedience to earthly authorities is only obedience in God.
- (5) The unity of the Church must be visibly manifest in the people of God. The indivisibility of the Body of Christ demands that the barriers of race, culture, ethnicity, language and sex be transcended.

In the light of our rejection of the false interpretation of the Reformed tradition, and in relation to our situation as Blacks, we commit ourselves to come to a truer understanding of the Reformed tradition and we accept the challenge to articulate our faith in terms which are authentic and relevant.

We begin doing so by declaring unequivocally that apartheid is a sin and that the moral and theological justification of it is a travesty of the Gospel, a betrayal of the Reformed tradition, and a heresy.

In this struggle, we take courage and comfort, in life and in death, from the assurance given to us by the Belgic Confession, that "the faithful and elect shall be crowned with glory and honour, and the Son of God will confess their names before God and His Father..... All tears shall be wiped from their eyes, and their cause which is now condemned by many judges and magistrates as heretical and impious will then be known to be the cause of the Son of God...."

This is our Tradition. This we will fight for.