

Where have all the Prophets Gone? URCSA 25 years Later: Re-Acquainting with Prophetic Theology in Post-apartheid South Africa

Eugene André Fortein

<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-5592-5145>

University of Stellenbosch

dseugenef@gmail.com

Abstract

The Uniting Reformed Church in Southern Africa (URCSA) was formed in 1994 as a merger between the former Dutch Reformed Mission Church (DRMC) and the Dutch Reformed Church in Africa (DRCA). URCSA, as the bearer of the Belhar Confession, has always stood within the tradition of Prophetic Theology. This article upholds the presuppositions that the prophetic nature of Black Liberation Theology impacted on the reasoning of the authors of various anti-apartheid documents like the theological declarations of the Belydendekring and Alliance of Black Reformed Christians in Southern Africa (ABRECSA), the Kairos Document and Belhar Confession; and with the advent of our democracy, URCSA not only lost her Kairos conscience but parted with Prophetic Theology—hence the title of this paper. Issues like state capture, corruption, the expropriation of land without compensation, poverty, racism, and so forth are all issues plaguing our young democracy and require a clear theological response. This article argues for renewed acquaintance from the church, URCSA, with Prophetic Theology, which will enable the church to not only speak prophetically but to challenge the status quo. Prophetic Theology is much better prepared to engage with the challenges posed in post-apartheid South Africa because it is grounded in a hope that is unprepared to accept the world as it is.

Keywords: URCSA; Belhar Confession; Kairos Document; Prophetic Theology; apartheid



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Introduction

Prophetic Theology, as part of Black Liberation Theology, played a major role in the history of South Africa, and it influenced the theological landscape in a profound way. That influence is evident in the various theological declarations and decisions of synods coming from the black church during the church struggle against apartheid. This article will first provide an account of URCSA's history with Prophetic Theology. I will then discuss the importance of Prophetic Theology and why the church needs to regain her Kairos conscience to address the various challenges of the present day. I will do this by engaging with both the Belhar Confession and the Kairos Document, indicating how Prophetic Theology can still be utilised in our current democratic dispensation. The article presents the interwovenness between Prophetic Theology and Reformed Theology in South Africa and the challenge it poses for URCSA, and concludes in a bid to answer the research questions: *Quo vadis* Prophetic Theology, and where have all the prophets gone?

Prophetic Theology and the Church Struggle against Apartheid

According to Vuyani Vellem, there is a very close link between Black Liberation Theology, Prophetic Theology and Kairos Theology.¹ Vellem goes on to argue that in South Africa, Prophetic Theology has been integrated into Liberation Theology. This was surely the case in the former Dutch Reformed Mission Church (DRMC). The then DRMC (NG Sendingkerk) played a pivotal part in providing a theological framework for the anti-apartheid movements.² The church struggle in South Africa during the 1980s had a very distinctive prophetic character. Frank Chikane termed the church during the struggle for liberation, as the “church of the streets.”³ Members were led out of church services, out of the act of worship, out of the encounter with God, unto the streets, into the encounter with evil. The church was moved to the streets because they saw the tears of Jesus in the tears of the children, women and men who suffered under the heinous atrocities of apartheid. The church knew then that the resurrection (*anastasia*) of our Lord is also the uprising of our people to rid themselves from the slavery of apartheid.

The rhetoric in the discourses of the black church during that time was firmly rooted in Black Liberation Theology, more specifically Prophetic Theology. By the late 1970s, the DRMC was strongly influenced by the prophetic nature of Liberation Theology, and the 1978 synod decision is a testament to that. The 1978 synod of the DRMC took

1 Vellem, V. S. 2010. “Prophetic Theology in Black Theology, with Special Reference to the Kairos Document.” *HTS Teologiese Studies/Theological Studies* 66 (1), Art. #800, 6 pages. <https://doi.org/10.4102/hts.v66i1.800>.

2 The NG Sendingkerk was established as a separate church in 1881 by the Dutch Reformed Church to serve the so-called coloured people. The Sendingkerk was for long controlled by the “mother-church” to maintain an accommodative stance towards apartheid.

3 Boesak, A. A. 1993. “The Church and the New World Order. South African Reflections.” In *The Future of Prophetic Christianity*, edited by D. L. Carmody and J. T. Carmody. New York: Orbis Books, 7–13.

cognisance of the Dutch Reformed Church's (DRC) document, *Ras, Volk en Nasie* (1974), which provided the theological justification for apartheid. Synod stated that the ideology of apartheid is largely supported by the theological and moral justification of the system.

During that synod, the DRMC took a decision that apartheid, as an ideology, and the moral and theological justification of it, could in no terms withstand the claims of the gospel of Jesus Christ. In fact, synod went a step further by declaring this moral and theological justification of apartheid a heresy.⁴ This was a clear and prophetic witness from the church that paved the way for establishing a countermeasure against the theology of apartheid.

The emergence of Prophetic Theology in South Africa in the late 1970s and early 1980s hugely assisted the various anti-apartheid movements in formulating anti-apartheid arguments. The theological declarations of the Belydendekring (BK) and Alliance of Black Reformed Christians in Southern Africa (ABRECSA) issued in 1979 and 1981 respectively, already then contained a very clear and distinctive prophetic character.⁵ For example, the declaration of the BK unmasks the irreconcilable and unrighteous nature of the theology of apartheid. It declares with a prophetic vision that God is always on the side of the victims of injustice and that God, through Jesus Christ, liberated His people from oppressive powers.⁶ The BK challenged the church by stating that the church as God's property should be standing where God stands: against injustice and with those who are denied justice.⁷ The prophetic nature of Liberation Theology provided the theological framework to spell out the prophetic role of the church in light of the oppressive system of the day.

The Belhar Confession and Kairos Document as Prophetic Theology

By the early 1980s, the fundamentals of Prophetic Theology had already taken root within the black church by way of anti-apartheid movements like the BK and ABRECSA. During the same time, two schools of thought emerged within the DRMC. On the one hand, there was the more conservative group that strove to maintain the status quo that it is not within the church's prerogative to prescribe any political policy to the government. This conservative group tended to lean towards traditional, Westernised theology. On the other hand, there was a more progressive group, led by a

4 Agenda en Handeling NGSK 1982, 25. (Agenda and proceedings of the Dutch Reformed Mission Church.)

5 The Belydendekring (BK) was composed of ministers, laymen and lecturers from four Reformed Churches in South Africa: the Reformed Church in Africa; the Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk in Afrika; the Nederduitse Gereformeerde Sendingkerk; and the Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk. The movement was originally formed to work towards the unity of the church. ABRECSA was formed within the Dutch Reformed Church family as a united front against apartheid. Its main objective was to get the sister churches to pronounce apartheid as a heresy.

6 Theological Declaration of the Belydendekring, 1979.

7 Theological Declaration of the Belydendekring, 1979.

young Allan Boesak, who took their cue from Prophetic Theology. This group ultimately influenced the reasoning of the DRMC in a profound way, which in turn influenced the theological landscape in South Africa in a profound way. With the announcement of a *status confessionis* and the subsequent decision to draft a confession, the DRMC was at the forefront of the church struggle against apartheid. The 1982 synod of the DRMC declared a *status confessionis* and reiterated the decision that the moral and theological justification of apartheid is a heresy.⁸ The DRMC understood the importance of seeking God's justice for all; the ministry of reconciliation being entrusted to the church and the unifying factor of the love of Jesus Christ. The DRMC did not only think prophetically, but it also acted as such.

With the adoption of the Belhar Confession in 1986, the DRMC firmly placed herself within the confines of Reformed and Prophetic Theology. The Belhar Confession, with its emphasis on unity, justice and reconciliation, was a prophetic vision in a country besieged with racial intolerance, injustices and violence. In essence, the Belhar Confession is nothing other than Prophetic Theology. In the words of the Belhar Confession, the DRMC not only prescribes an alternative society but also clearly declares her prophetic hope.⁹ This hope was rooted in the knowledge that things can be different, should be different, and ought to be different.

This author contends that the authors of the Kairos Document (1986) were influenced by the type of theology coming from the DRMC.¹⁰ Like the Belhar Confession, the Kairos Document emerged in a time when South Africa was literally burning. The state of emergencies saw high levels of violence and death. The church knew that South Africa was in a crisis and once again came with a prophetic vision within that crisis. The writers of the Kairos Document (1986) argued for the option of Prophetic Theology as opposed to State and Church Theology. All these authors had one factor in common: they understood the crisis and acted as true prophets within that crisis. The church embraced her prophetic role and inspired a generation to claim their God-given dignity.

Kairos is a Greek word that refers to a particular time, an opportune time, or a crisis—as the Kairos Document suggests.¹¹ It is a moment that distinctly marks a different period from another period. A Kairos moment is simultaneously a crisis and an opportunity. Vellem mentions that the Prophetic Theology flowing from the Kairos Document was like a “volcanic” eruption projecting out of the belly of the township during the 1985 state of emergency. Townships had become a site of struggle.¹² The

8 Agenda en Handeling NGSK 1982, 706.

9 The Belhar Confession 1986 consists out of three articles, i.e. unity, reconciliation and justice.

10 The Kairos Document was released in 1986 by a group of theologians and challenged the church to read the signs of the times and to embrace her prophetic role.

11 *The Kairos Document. Challenge to the Church. A Theological Comment on the Political Crisis in South Africa.* 1986. Braamfontein: Skotaville Publishers, 1.

12 Vellem, “Prophetic Theology in Black Theology,” 1.

launch of the Kairos Document and Prophetic Theology was a huge blow to the colonial assumptions that had captivated the church in South Africa for so long.

A Renewed Acquaintance with Prophetic Theology

It seems that with the dawn of democracy in 1994, URCSA went into a slumber and ceased to be prophetic as in the days of apartheid. It is not surprising that we regularly hear the comment that the church has lost its prophetic voice. If we look at how silent the church has become over key issues, we have to be honest and acknowledge the legitimacy of such comments to some extent. I believe even the church experienced a sense of utopia with the dawn of democracy, and thought that we had reached the “promised land.” The notable silence of the church in democratic South Africa on some key issues has left a void in society that was filled by those in the political arena.

I am further of the opinion that something is wrong with our theological perception. Somewhere along the line, we have forgotten a few things. What happened? Where have all the prophets gone? The banning of the ANC and PAC and other liberation organisations in the 1960s left a void that was filled by the Black Consciousness Movement. Towards the end of the 1970s, the Black Consciousness Movement was banned, and that void was filled by the United Democratic Front (UDF). When the UDF was banned in the early 1980s, that void was filled by the church. The DRMC was at the spearhead in filling that void. Prophets stood up in obedience to Jesus Christ to speak the Word of God. What is URCSA listening to today? What is URCSA seeing today? Allan Boesak reminds us that the church is not called to fill gaps, but to create gaps, to create a bridge and break down walls, so that the Word of God can fill the space.¹³

That statement was true then, and it is true now. State capture and all the drama surrounding corruption, the widening division between rich and poor, the growing unemployment and poverty rate, along with the alarming crime statistics, are only some of the challenges facing our young democracy. Then there are the burning issues of the expropriation of land without compensation and HIV/AIDS. Even though the ecumenical church made random comments on these issues, it is not nearly enough and not nearly as prophetic as the church was during apartheid. The vast majority of URCSA’s members live in previously disadvantaged communities and are directly affected by the challenges mentioned above. In light of this, we should ask the following questions: What kind of hope does URCSA offer to her members who find life still to be a struggle for survival, even in this so-called “new” South Africa? How can URCSA’s liturgies and worship be transformed to inspire her members to be agents of justice and peace in society? How does URCSA do pastoral care for her members living in those poor communities, especially to our brothers and sisters from the LGBTQ+ community who are still left outside? The author contends that URCSA must reacquaint herself with the Prophetic Theology that enabled her to embrace her prophetic role during the 1980s. It is of vital importance. Who will be the biggest loser if the church,

13 Carmody, D. L., and J. T. Carmody (Eds). 1993. *The Future of Prophetic Christianity*, 10.

URCSA, remains silent on these issues? Those who have been losing for the last three centuries and more in this country.

It is crucial for the church to regain her prophetic role. During this time, the keywords for the church must not only be democracy, but also justice; not only progress, but also humanity. The church must also say to her members: “Of course you must go out and vote, but we must be honest and say that to vote alone is not enough.” The church must be brave and be assertive of the fact that political power without economic power leads to new injustices. We have seen innumerable specimens of these injustices since the dawn of our democracy. URCSA must still speak on behalf of those who cannot speak and say it is wrong for South Africa to continue a situation in which whites were willing to sacrifice their political power if they can retain their economic power. URCSA must say to her members: “You must have economic power because that is justice.”

Boesak reminds us that part of the church’s prophetic role in the new dispensation cannot simply be to be the voice of the voiceless. That was apt during the days of apartheid, where the masses did not have a voice. URCSA, as a church with a rich prophetic history, must work towards that point in our history where the voiceless will find their own voice (LGBTQ+ etc.) because they have the right to help shape the destiny of their country with dignity.¹⁴ It is of vital importance that issues like reconciliation and justice be dealt with from the point of view of the oppressed and marginalised, rather from a historical and theological tradition that does not take the poor and the oppressed into account. Prophetic Theology helps us with this.

The Gift of a Kairos Consciousness

The church in post-apartheid South Africa should once again get reacquainted with the characteristic that was so prevalent during apartheid. The church should once again pick on the skill to read the signs of the time, the signs of the present situation. In other words, the church should get to know the present Kairos. Yes, South Africa is in a crisis. The church should analyse the pressing issues mentioned above, and we will discover that these signs represent the Kairos of our time and pose real challenges for the people of South Africa, of whom a large number are confessing Christians. From that analysis, the church can interpret the Gospel of Jesus Christ, thus setting off the prophetic response.

Taking the experience of the present Kairos into consideration, the church must direct a course of action. During the 1980s, the church was at the forefront of mobilising the masses to take action. This action may include calls for repentance and change and challenging the status quo, in this way influencing public opinion. This action confronts unjust practices and will allow the church to speak out in a prophetic manner.

14 Carmody, D. L., and J. T. Carmody (Eds). 1993. *The Future of Prophetic Christianity*, 12

The gift of a Kairos consciousness gives the church the opportunity to discern the signs of the time, to recognise a situation as a crisis that could be devastating for the broader community. The crisis in many ways was and still is created by the greed and indifferences of the powerful. The crisis is to their benefit—they profit from it; hence they refuse to recognise it as a crisis. Within the Kairos, the prophets in the Old Testament spoke with prophetic speech, speaking to those in power. The gift of a Kairos consciousness was a trademark of the church's struggle against apartheid. The church's response was loaded with clear prophetic speech, addressing the current crisis, but also projecting a hopeful future.

The church must see the current situation in South Africa as a crisis because those in power will not. In other words, the church should regain her Kairos consciousness, to see the crisis and speak to those in power. The church in South Africa stands in this rich prophetic tradition and possesses all the necessary knowledge of the past to address the current challenges of today. The dispensation and challenges of the day may have changed, but the same approach is required—a prophetic response.

Why Prophetic Theology?

Why the necessity for the church to reacquaint herself with Prophetic Theology? Outside of the fact that Prophetic Theology is spiritual, pastoral and prophetic, it also provides us with an apt methodology of critical social analyses, critical biblical interpretation to expose oppression in the Bible, and conveying a message of hope to the hopeless. A unique feature of Prophetic Theology is that it adopts a method that focuses on structural sin and injustices with the oppressed as a hermeneutical key for radical change.¹⁵

Unlike academic theology that deals with biblical themes in a systematic manner, Prophetic Theology deals with those aspects of the Word of God that have an immediate bearing on the critical situation in which the church finds herself.¹⁶ That is a facet of traditional theology—it lacks a constituent of social analysis. At times very little attempt is made to analyse what is actually happening in our society and why it is happening. It is not possible to make valid moral judgments about a society without first understanding that society.¹⁷ It appears as if URCSA has lost her prophetic edge on many crucial issues. Perhaps it is due to the assumption that URCSA deviated from Prophetic Theology and acquainted a more traditional and cautious type of theology. The notable silence on the present crisis in our country proves this point.

URCSA should once again become familiar with an adequate understanding of politics and political strategy. There is no way a truly prophetic church can bypass politics and political strategies. The church must analyse the political strategies because it is into

15 Vellem, "Prophetic Theology in Black Theology," 3.

16 The Kairos Document, 17.

17 The Kairos Document, 17.

this political situation that the church must bring the gospel of hope.¹⁸ It is then inevitable that there may come a time that the church must say to the government, based on the church's own political analyses, based on our obedience to the gospel of Jesus Christ and that all humans are created *Imago Dei*, we cannot allow you to continue in the same vein as you have done up to this point. There may come a time when the church tells the government that this current crisis compels us to call you to order.

A genuine prophetic response must always include a reading of the signs of the time, as the church did in the 1980s.¹⁹ This is what the prophets did in their times and what Jesus tells us to do. Prophetic Theology must always endeavour to do this. It must know what is happening, analyse what is happening (social analysis) and then interpret what is happening in the light of the gospel of Jesus Christ.²⁰ This means that the point of departure for Prophetic Theology will always be our experience of the present Kairos we find ourselves in.

Another element that makes Prophetic Theology so different is that it is always a call to action.²¹ A fact that we tend to forget is that the entire Bible was written under various periods of oppression. The people of God were always under oppression: from the Egyptians, Babylonians, and Persians to the Romans. In the situation of the Kairos, the biblical prophets called for repentance, conversion and change. The prophets were extremely critical of the status quo; they issued warnings about God's punishment, and in the name of God, they promised great blessings for those who change.²² Prophetic Theology is always confrontational. It confronts the evils of its time and speaks out against them. Prophetic Theology is never afraid to take a stand, and therefore prophetic statements always deal with good and evil, justice and injustice, God and the devil.²³ It is not surprising then that theology that is truly prophetic will always be controversial and in some circles unpopular. Prophetic Theology is reading the signs of the time, and despite all the criticism, it always brings with it a message of hope for the future. Prophetic Theology will always place a great deal of emphasis on hope.²⁴

Prophetic Theology and the two Daughters of Hope

I stated above that Prophetic Theology always brings with it a message of hope for the future. Given the current turbulent circumstances in South Africa, can we in any way have hope for the future? Allan Boesak answers this question in a very profound way in

18 The Kairos Document, 15.

19 The Kairos Document, 17.

20 The Kairos Document, 17.

21 The Kairos Document, 17.

22 The Kairos Document, 18.

23 The Kairos Document, 18.

24 The Kairos Document, 18.

his book, *Dare We Speak of Hope?*²⁵ Can Prophetic Theology give us any hope, and what will that hope look like?

In his book, Boesak refers to an expression of Augustine, and it reads as follows:

Hope has two daughters. Their names are Anger and Courage. Anger at the way things are, and courage to see that they do not remain the same.²⁶

Boesak states that we can only speak of hope if we speak of her two daughters, anger and courage. This perspective immediately gives prophetic hope a dynamic that is vibrant and radical. With this in mind, hope can no longer be an abstract, philosophical concept, but rather a transformative and progressive drive which is brought about by reflecting on the Kairos in the light of the Word of God. This hope is about life, and because it is about life, it is about justice and injustice.²⁷ In the same vein, Augustine challenges the government by stating:

What is government when justice is lacking? It is none other than a gang of robbers.²⁸

This prophetic hope, Boesak states, has two daughters, not characteristics or attributes, but children— anger and courage. The anger of hope means that one refuses to accept something that is wrong, that you refuse to accept the current state of affairs. The courage of hope calls one into action by purposefully attacking injustice and seeking justice. Courage understands the demand for justice.²⁹ Hope and courage go against the status quo. They challenge and confront. Anger is against the arrogance of power, against those who benefit from corruption, injustice and exploitation.³⁰ It is this anger that refuses to give in to hopelessness, which drives one to look away from despair. Courage stands up for those who are weak and vulnerable. This courage, Boesak states, knows no borders, and she fights against all odds and against all forms of injustice because she understands what is at stake.³¹

With the words “to stand where God stands; namely against injustice and with the wronged,” the Belhar Confession shouts out this message of courage and prophetic hope, “even though authorities and human laws might forbid them and punishment and suffering be the consequence.”³² The language of the Belhar Confession is the language

25 Boesak, A. A. 2012. *Dare We Speak of Hope? Searching for a Language of Life in Faith and Politics*. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans.

26 Boesak, *Dare We Speak of Hope?* 43.

27 Boesak, *Dare We Speak of Hope?* 44.

28 Boesak, *Dare We Speak of Hope?* 44.

29 Boesak, *Dare We Speak of Hope?* 45.

30 Boesak, *Dare We Speak of Hope?* 49.

31 Boesak, *Dare We Speak of Hope?* 49.

32 For the full text of the Belhar Confession, see Allan Boesak, “To Stand Where God Stands.” *Studia Historiae Ecclesiasticae* 34 (1) (July 2008): 143–172.

of hope, of prophetic clarity, of anger and of courage.³³ This prophetic character of the Belhar Confession is what makes the confession timeless, for as long as there are injustices, exploitation and vulnerable people created in the image of God, the Belhar Confession will always speak to that specific Kairos.

For the church to be a truthful witness in post-apartheid South Africa, she must once again be filled with this prophetic hope. She must once again be filled with this holy anger and rage—refusing to accept what is currently happening in our beautiful country; refusing to accept unethical leadership, corruption and all that it entails; refusing to accept the alarming high poverty, unemployment and crime statistics. The church refused to accept apartheid and segregation; the church must now refuse to accept the contemporary challenges crippling our people. To be filled with holy anger means that the church should be ready and willing to act. Mere theological statements will remain futile if not backed up by decisive action. This is not new to the church. This was the *modus operandi* of the church during the struggle against apartheid, and the results proved to be remarkable.

Prophetic Theology in Democratic South Africa

Vellem asked the question of whether Prophetic Theology is still appropriate in democratic South Africa.³⁴ According to him, it is not the essence of Prophetic Theology that needs to be changed in democratic South Africa. Vellem further argues that the suitability of Prophetic Theology in the context of democracy in South Africa could be redefined in mode, but not in essence.³⁵

The obligation to be a witness and raise our voices in the public sphere calls for a careful reading of the signs of our time from the perspective of the powerless. To preach a message of hope, which is a very indispensable category of Prophetic Theology, implies a discipline of understanding and analysing the context well. The narratives of the poor and their experience provide the necessary obligation for the church to proclaim the message from God through critical analysing of the policies and systems that undermine the development and interest of the poor. Prophetic Theology provides the church with adequate methodological tools to critically engage with the signs of our time.³⁶ Prophetic Theology also offers to be a valuable methodological resource for dialogue between various worldviews and paradigms in order to enhance the spirit of democracy in our country. Vellem notes that Prophetic Theology cannot only be reduced to a polemical mode of voicing concerns, but also in dialogical mode with others.³⁷ Prophetic Theology is, therefore, also a call by the church to the church to participate in

33 Boesak, *Dare We Speak of Hope?* 93.

34 Vellem, "Prophetic Theology in Black Theology," 5.

35 Vellem, "Prophetic Theology in Black Theology," 5.

36 Vellem, "Prophetic Theology in Black Theology," 5.

37 Vellem, "Prophetic Theology in Black Theology," 5.

the policymaking processes that are shaped by the voices of the poor, and to remind the powers that be that Jesus Christ is Lord over all spheres of life.

Conclusion

What is Prophetic Theology other than Reformed Theology? Prophetic Theology is not a new theology, but the same gospel brought about by the prophets and Jesus Christ Himself. Reformed Theology, Prophetic Theology, will always be radical. Reformed Theology in South Africa will always be black, liberating and public, especially from the perspective of the black church. The Reformed tradition can come alive for us when we stand where prophets stood, with those who suffer. Then, and only then, we will hear the witness of the prophets who have gone before us and learn from them. Here we can learn from John Calvin himself. Calvin understood that the radical witness called for by our faith can only happen if the church herself is re-formed. Maybe URCSA is in need of a re-formation. Our Reformed, and prophetic, heritage can only empower and enlighten us today as it is re-created. The theological formation of our ministers in URCSA needs to be revisited. Our theological training is preparing us to master and pass on the Reformed tradition, not to re-create it. Perhaps this is one of the reasons why URCSA has become silent—because her ministers cannot re-create a re-formation like our tradition calls us to do.

So, *quo vadis* Prophetic Theology? Where have all the prophets gone? I believe URCSA is in possession of this theology and that her prophets are not gone, just silent. During the church struggle, the church has shown that she is able to develop a Kairos consciousness, i.e. to read the signs of the time. The church and her prophets should re-discover that Kairos consciousness, re-discover that prophetic speech. Prophetic Theology should re-emerge and influence all spheres of life to give hope and direction. The influence of Prophetic Theology should be visible in the decisions and actions of every church council, presbytery and synod. Through sermons of prophetic nature, the prophets can assist her members with a language to voice their contemporary challenges through the lenses of their faith. This can help members to make that link between the gospel and the social, political and economic challenges in our society.

According to Nicholas Wolterstorff, God's majesty is a call to worship, as is God's grace a call to gratitude and God's will for our lives, a call to repentance. Liturgy is the answer to answer a heard call.³⁸ In the same way, the worth of our fellow human beings is a call, a call to treat them in a manner that is appropriate of their worth. Justice, as a key ingredient of Prophetic Theology, is also an answer to the heard call. URCSA has an opportunity to join liturgy and justice as answers to heard calls from the poor and marginalised in society. In the attempt to answer these calls, URCSA will assist giving a voice to those calls, thus making them more clearly heard.

38 Gornik, M. R., and G. Thompson (Eds). 2011. *Hearing the Call. Liturgy, Justice, Church and World. Essays by Nicholas Wolterstorff*. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, ix.

The Reformed faith played an immense role in the history of South Africa. For many, the Reformed faith in South Africa has two faces. It brought about so much with the theological justification of apartheid and racial segregation. Now the Reformed faith has yet another opportunity to help and create a better South Africa. I think the Reformed faith owes South Africa that much. I conclude with a passage from Allan Boesak's book, *If this is Treason I Am Guilty*:

With this faith, we shall yet be able to give justice and peace their rightful place on the throne of our land; with this faith, we shall yet be able to see beyond the darkness of our present into the bright and glittering daylight of our time; with this faith we shall be able to speed up the day when all of South Africa's children will embrace each other and sing: NKOSI SIKILELI I AFRIKA. GOD BLESS AFRICA—GUIDE HER RULERS—BLESS HER CHILDREN—GIVE HER PEACE!³⁹ [original capitalisation]

Biographical Note

The writer is a minister in the URCSA congregation of Citrusdal and a research fellow at Stellenbosch University. He obtained his PhD at the University of Stellenbosch in 2016. The title of his doctorate is *Allan Boesak en die Opkoms van die Teologie van Protes binne die NG Sendingkerk* (Allan Boesak and the Emergence of the Theology of Protest within the Dutch Reformed Mission Church).

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