"A Prince among Men": Re-examining the Relationship between the Church of England in South Africa (CESA), Hedrick Frensch Verwoerd, and the Apartheid State (1954–1966)

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Abstract

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) was constituted to help South Africa deal with the crime of apartheid. Faith communities were called to account for their actions or inactions because they, too, were actors during the apartheid era. The Church of England in South Africa (CESA) argued that it had been politically neutral. It defended its participation at Prime Minister Hedrick Verwoerd's funeral as an act of Christian charity and not an indication of its support of the state. This article interrogates this assertion in light of primary written archival sources. It will be argued that the church was not politically neutral during the apartheid years but actively sided with the state and opposed the Church of the Province of South Africa's (CPSA's) prophetic stance towards the state. It assisted Verwoerd in political disputes with the Anglican Church and, after his death, mourned him as a friend, not just a statesman. It will be argued that contrary to its submissions and its classification in the TRC Report, the Church of England in South Africa was a supporter of apartheid.

Keywords: CESA; church; government; apartheid; Hendrick Verwoerd; TRC

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Introduction

At the dawn of a democratic South Africa, the *Constitution of the Republic of South Africa Act 200 of 1993* (RSA 1993) called for a mechanism to help the country transition from an oppressive past into a democratic society. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) was established to aid this goal. The TRC was designed to be a public display of the illegitimacy of apartheid and an affirmation of those who had historically opposed it (Asmal, Asmal, and Roberts 1997, 10). Faith-based communities were among the groups invited to make presentations regarding their historical roles during apartheid (TRC 1998b, 59). The TRC Report (1998b, 59) states these communities were called to account because they were "involved and implicated" in the past being investigated by the Commission and could thus liberate themselves "from their self-imposed prison of guilt." The final report classified the historic roles of faith communities as either victims or agents of oppression (TRC 1998b, 65, 75).

The authors of *Facing the Truth: South African Faith Communities and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission* (Cochrane, de Gruchy, and Martin 1999), on which the TRC Report chapter on the role of faith communities during apartheid is based, were aware that some narratives presented before the Truth and Reconciliation Commission were not the complete picture. They concede that the "truth is something, ironically, that we will build on the back of lies, untruths and deceit" (Cochrane, de Gruchy, and Martin 1999, 7). The cause for this scepticism was that it was possible that the confessions of faith communities were not necessarily what they did but "what the churches *said* they did" (Bergen 2011, 85). Even the final Truth and Reconciliation Commission Report, hereafter the "TRC Report," purported to be the genesis of historical enquiry and not the final official account (1998a, 2). It was thus expected that the narratives presented to it would be used as starting points for further historical enquiry, just as it had hoped that the model it set for truth-telling would outlive the duration of the Commission. However, there has been little scholarly historical appetite to engage with the findings of the Commission beyond the critique of its epistemological assumptions. Philippe Denis (2017, 3) comments that "[t]he South African churches' confessions of guilt for their participation in apartheid were widely commented upon at the time, but have never been studied in depth by historians and scholars of religion." There has been a lack of scholarly engagement with the historical data undergirding the TRC findings.

This article will demonstrate this analytical weakness of the TRC Report by analysing primary written sources in light of the submission of the Church of England in South Africa, hereafter CESA, especially its claims of political neutrality and its relationship with the former Prime Minister of South Africa, Hendrick Frensch Verwoerd (b. 1901–1966). It will demonstrate that primary written sources contradict CESA's submission and will thus call into question the CESA's categorisation of political neutrality during the apartheid years.

A Brief History of CESA

CESA traces its genealogy back to the Anglican Church in the colonies that became South Africa—between 1863 and 1870, Anglican evangelicals, who later formed CESA, objected to the formation of the Church of the Province of South Africa, hereafter CPSA,[1] out of fear that such an institution would stifle Reformed Evangelical Anglicanism in the colonies.[2] They accused the CPSA of embracing Catholicism—which they understood as a reversal of the English Reformation. In 1938, a group of 11 settler-European Anglican congregations banded together and formed CESA. Indigenous mission churches from Natal and Transvaal later joined them. In 2013, CESA changed its operating name to the Reformed Evangelical Church in South Africa (REACH-SA).[3]

Political Neutrality during Apartheid?

In 1997, the TRC invited faith communities to answer questions about past human rights violations and to provide solutions on how the country can achieve reconciliation (CESA 1999, 1; TRC 1998b, 69). They were called to appear before the Commission because churches were "involved and implicated" as beneficiaries or victims of apartheid (1998b, 69). On 7 July 1997, CESA's Presiding Bishop, Joseph Bell (1997, 1), submitted a short written reply. He stated that the "denomination has always divorced itself from party political activities, but we encourage our members as individual followers of Christ, to become involved in public affairs." The written submission was followed by an oral submission in November 1997. CESA admitted that it participated in the state funeral of the late Verwoerd, an issue that had caused considerable pain and embarrassment to its members in the 1990s (CESA 1999, 2). It argued that such participation gave the wrong impression that it supported apartheid ideology, but it did not; it would have assisted in the funeral regardless of the dignitary involved (CESA 1999, 2). CESA (1999, 3–5) added that it was politically neutral during the apartheid years, and like most English-speaking churches, it was deceived by

1 The Church of the Province of South Africa was promulgated in 1870 with only five dioceses in South Africa (Davenport 1997, 52–63). In 2006, it changed its name to the Anglican Church of Southern Africa (ACSA). ACSA is in full communion with, but in no way subordinate to, the Church of England (CoE), and has to date expanded to 26 dioceses in southern Africa, comprised of eSwatini, Lesotho, Namibia, and South Africa, together with the South Atlantic Island of St. Helena. It is headed by the Primate or Metropolitan of the See of Cape Town (currently Archbishop Thabo Cecil Makgoba). It is part of an 80-million-strong association of 52 regional and national churches in 163 countries consisting of 42 provinces, four united churches, and six other churches of the Anglican Communion (Anglican Communion 2024).

2 The CPSA is now called the Anglican Church of Southern Africa (ACSA).

3 For an extensive discussion of the schism between CESA and the CPSA, see Beckman's (2011) "A Clash of Churchmanship?: Robert Gray and the Evangelical Anglicans, 1847–1872" and Bethke's (2020) "Anglican Ritualism in Colonial South Africa: Exploring Some Local Discourses between 1848 and 1884."

apartheid propaganda. It claimed to have utilised its influence on the government to privately urge officials to accelerate democratic change (CESA 1999, 4).

The TRC Report (1998b, 73–78) thus classified CESA as a victim of apartheid who only committed acts of omission by failing to act courageously against the state. Scholars who have commented on CESA's historical public theology have accepted the TRC assessment of it as a victim, not an agent of apartheid (see Cochrane, de Gruchy, and Martin 1999, 34–35; Meiring n.d., 7; Leeman 2016, 82). Because of their submission, Michael Jensen (2012, 120) further argues that "CESA … did not provide a theological justification for the apartheid policies of the South African government." Denominations such as the Dutch Reformed Church, hereafter DRC, was classified as an agent of oppression (TRC 1998b, 65–66). The current article will argue that examining primary written sources in CESA's archives paints a different picture than the Report—correspondence with Verwoerd points to an intentional support of government officials and the policy of apartheid.

CESA and the Colonial State

Since the settler-colonial era, CESA's church leaders enjoyed good relationships with government officials. It is illogical to expect that these would come to an end after 1948. Its predecessor in Natal was led by a colonial bureaucrat—Theophilus Shepstone (Mbebe 2023, 33; cf. Ive 1992, 66). CESA's second presiding Bishop, Stephen Bradley, records that on his arrival in Durban from Australia in 1936, he encountered difficulties with the Customs and Immigration Department because he had an Egyptian passport (Bradley 2003, 41–42). The quota of Egyptians allowed in South Africa was filled for that year; therefore, he was denied entry into South Africa. However, he was given two weeks to appeal; he travelled to Pretoria, where he met with Norman Bennet—then Rector of CESA's Christ Church Hillbrow (2003, 42). Bennet was a "commissioner to English public schools and made friends in high places" (42). Bradley informed him about his passport problem, and Bennet arranged a meeting with the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Justice—General Jan Smuts, who resolved the issue quickly (42).

CESA and the Apartheid State

The help flowed in both directions. There are historical pointers to CESA's support of the state before apartheid started in 1948. In September 1947, its legislative body, the General Synod, "[r]esolved that the incoming Vicar-General be asked to organise Propaganda for South Africa in England and Australia and to co-opt clergy and laity for this purpose" (CESA 1947, 5). The reference to South Africa, and not CESA, indicates the broad scope of the intended publicity for the benefit of the state (cf. Mills 1954, 2). That should be distinguished from publicity on behalf of CESA against its South African ecclesial rival, the CPSA; Synod was direct about it. For instance, in 1950, Synod urged for "[m]ore regular and intensive propaganda also approved" (CESA 1950, 3) following what was considered deliberate acts of persecution by the CPSA; further "Synod

resolved that the Registrar should draft a letter to the Archbishop of Cape Town,[4] when approved by the Vicar-General it should be sent" (CESA 1950, 3). The word "propaganda" in the context did not denote a negative connotation, such as disinformation, but was synonymous with publicity.

In 1954, the CESA Synod formally constituted a Propaganda Committee consisting of Stephen Bradley, Norman Bennet, Gordon Mills, R.J. Tyser, and Hebert Hammond. This committee had two functions: first, it had to respond to "misleading letters" by the Archbishop of Canterbury regarding CESA's conflict with the CPSA, and second, it had to produce and distribute pamphlets making known the positions of the church on "various matters" (CESA 1954d, 68). The broad mandate of this committee indicates that its members were trusted to represent the views of the church on ecclesial and other (undefined) matters. It should be noted that its composition did not include Indigenous members.

On 17 December 1954, this Propaganda Committee sent a letter titled "Political Bishops" to the Minister of Native Affairs—Hendrick Verwoerd. It sought to distance CESA from what it viewed as "uninformed and regrettable accusations and condemnation of the Dutch Reformed Church and certain Government policies by Anglo-Catholic bishops and clergy" (CESA 1954a, 1). It perceived the criticism against the DRC's support of apartheid to be akin to the perceived religious persecution it had suffered from the CPSA because of its Reformed and Evangelical theology (CESA 1954a, 2). Some in the committee understood the criticism of the CPSA towards the DRC and the state to be an attack on the Afrikaners and their way of life by people who "cared little for our country's background and traditions" (Bradley 1954, 1). They added that the criticism of the CPSA was inspired by Romanism within the CPSA (CESA 1954a, 2). It alleged that the "Anglo-Catholics"[5] (a short-hand used by CESA leaders at this time to refer to the whole CPSA) were not just opposed to "certain government policies," but were against the DRC itself and did not view its ministers as legitimate "because they were not ordained according to apostolic succession" (CESA 1954b, 2–3).[6] CESA thus sought to bring its theological differences with the CPSA into the criticism of apartheid in a bid to elicit sympathy with the state. This was an attempt to castigate the critique of apartheid as an indicator of opposition to Reformed Christianity (Clarke 2008, 147). The presence of five versions of this statement in CESA's archives points to it being drafted on 14 October 1954 and circulated to members of the

4 This a reference to the Archbishop of the CPSA, Geoffrey Clayton (1948 to 1957).

5 Anglo-Catholics are a strand of Anglican spirituality that stems from the mid-19th century Oxford Movement. It is distinct from Evangelical Anglicanism mainly due to its extensive use of ritualism in its services. Evangelicals argue that ritualism is a re-introduction of Catholicism; however, Anglo-Catholics regard their practices as consistent with Anglican doctrine and practice (see Bethke 2020, 12–13; Beckman 2011, 14).

6 This claim is historically uninformed, for the CPSA had considered a merger with the DRC between 1840 and 1870 (Suggitt 1998, 80). Moreover, the CPSA and the DRC had a cordial relationship as members of the South African Council of Churches. They even invited Archbishop Clayton to their Synod in 1949 (Clarke 2008, 57).

Propaganda Committee for their comments (CESA 1954b; 1954c; cf. Bradley 1954). Bradley's version of the draft argued that these bishops were not to be regarded as Anglicans at all—for they held to Romanist doctrines and practices (Bradley 1954, 2–3). Bradley (1954, 1) titled his version "Political 'Anglican' Bishops." He concludes it by pleading with the DRC to strengthen its fellowship with CESA and not to let criticism by "Anglo-Catholic bishops and clergy" soil the historic relationship of "help and fellowship" they had enjoyed over the years (1954, 4). Gordon Mills's (1954, 3) version of this letter ended with this line: "If needed we shall assist with information or otherwise at our disposal, we shall be very happy to do so."

Fred J. Barnard (1955, 1), the private secretary to Verwoerd, replied to the above letter on 2 February 1955, stating, "My Minister wishes me to assure you that he is most interested in the facts mentioned in your letter and will bring your letter to the attention of some of his colleagues. Dr Verwoerd is of the opinion that you should decide for yourself whether the general public should not, through the medium of the Press, be informed in regard to these matters."

Condemnation of apartheid by expatriate CPSA clergy, such as Trevor Huddleston and Ambrose Reeves, primarily through the English foreign press, concerned the government (Hachten and Giffard 1984, 230). The criticism of the CPSA was thus more politically potent in the public sphere. Having that criticism come from the Reformed Evangelical expression of South African Anglicanism was thus better coming directly from CESA instead of the state, hence Verwoerd's proposal that such a statement be made out directly to the press. Unknown to Verwoerd was that CESA did not need the encouragement; duplicates of this statement were already distributed to the press in South Africa, Australia, and England on 20 December 1954. The Political Bishops statement indicates it did not need to be encouraged; it had already ideologically cast its lot with the apartheid state despite its professed political disengagement (*contra* Bradley 1964a, 8; Newby 2002, 6 of 8).

The 1954 statement did not explicitly state CESA's views on apartheid but implied support for it as it attacked those who opposed apartheid. The word "apartheid" does not appear anywhere on the three-page statement or the draft versions. It merely rejected the CPSA position on "certain Government policies" as unfortunate and ignorant (CESA 1954a, 1; cf. Bradley 1954, 3–4). The context implies that it referred to apartheid. Additionally, CESA's reference to this statement in letters to the Postmaster-General in 1960 and to Betsie Verwoerd, the wife of Verwoerd, in 1966 referenced this statement as a sign of the church's alignment with the National Party—again without stating explicitly that it supported apartheid ideology (Bradley 1960a; Mills 1966, 1). Ironically, CESA did this while advising clergy not to get involved in politics but to be "salt and light" as individual voters (Bradley 1964a, 8; Wright 1963, 14–16).

The Political Bishops statement established CESA as an ally of the government and the DRC. The content of this statement was referenced in correspondence with other

government departments to avoid confusing CESA with the CPSA (Bradley 1958, 1; cf. Brandreth 1962). Additionally, Synod minutes (CESA 1955, 93) note, emboldened by the government's response, that CESA passed a resolution to act on the advice of the Minister of Native Affairs (Verwoerd), who had urged CESA to petition the Minister of Interior and other government departments to recognise CESA as the only church authorised to use the name "Church of England" in the country. This resolution also formed the basis for their request that the national census indicate that there was the Church of England in South Africa and the Church of the Province of South Africa—distinct denominations. It was insisted that the government and the press use the former title exclusively for CESA (Anonymous 1959, 6; Anonymous 1960, 5, *Church News* 1960, 7–8; Mills 1959).

The DRC's theology of race is well documented. The decision to align CESA with the DRC further indicates apartheid support and warrants the same classification in the TRC Report. CESA hastily defended the DRC—especially when its protestant theology of apartheid support was under attack. Consider the following press statement the Propaganda Committee issued on 11 June 1958. For some unexplained but blatant attempt to curry favour with the state, it condemned de Blank's criticism of the DRC, stating,[7]

> The Church of England viewed the bitterness and irresponsibility of Dr de Blank's attacks on the Dutch Reformed Church in South Africa, as reported in the United States of America, with dismay. It conveys its deepest sympathy to the Dutch Reformed Church, of which many pastors were intimately associated as fellow Protestants with the Church of England in South Africa in the last century. The Church of England expresses the hope that before the proposed inter-church conference can possibly be held, we will certainly not be present unless the Dutch Reformed Church demands the withdrawal of the archbishop and also unless the Dutch Reformed Church is free to attend the conference in person. (CESA 1958b, 1–2)

The CPSA had organised this meeting with DRC officials to discuss comments made by de Blank during a sermon in New York on 1 June 1958. He stated, "It is a sad commentary on the work of the DR Church in South Africa … that it spends a great deal of money on missionary work, but it believes in keeping its African and white congregations separate. It has a warped and inaccurate Calvinistic outlook" (in Clarke 2008, 147). Clarke adds that CESA joined other Protestant churches in condemning de Blank for this comment (2008, 147).[8] CESA regarded itself as Reformed. Thus, the attack on the DRC was perceived as an attack on the Reformation.

Benefits of Supporting the Apartheid State

De Gruchy and de Gruchy (2005, 975) assert that "[i]f the 'church clause' shocked the churches into action, the whole country was rudely awakened by Sharpeville." The

7 An Afrikaans version was sent to then Prime Minister Verwoerd (CESA 1958a).

8 CESA's letter was written on 11 June 1958.

killing of 69 and the wounding of 186 peaceful black protestors by the police at Sharpeville made the international community take notice of the brutality of the apartheid state (Ross 2008, 139). The ensuing protests in South Africa caused the state to declare a State of Emergency; the African National Congress, the Pan-African Congress, and their leaders were banned. Nelson Mandela, Albert Luthuli, Robert Sobukwe, and others were arrested and charged under the Suppression of Communism Act of 1950 (de Gruchy and de Gruchy 2005, 978). The Archbishop of the CPSA and the Bishop of Johannesburg, Joost de Blank and Ambrose Reeves issued condemnations of the apartheid state and the DRC for its support of it—resulting in the withdrawal of the DRC from the South African Council of Churches (de Gruchy and de Gruchy 2005, 987; cf. Phillips 1995, 95–103). Apartheid received wholesale condemnation from the international community, and foreign investment in South Africa declined significantly (de Gruchy and de Gruchy 2005, 979).

The censorship that followed the Sharpeville Massacre in the early 1960s was indiscriminate (Ross 2008, 141). It is informative that Stephen Bradley was also taken aback by the government's monitoring of his communication. His letters were returned to sender; a knitted pullover sent to him did not arrive, and the mail that arrived was opened or tampered with (Bradley 1960a, 1; 1960c, 2). Bradley was perplexed by why he was being monitored for political rhetoric. In a letter to the Postmaster, he requested an explanation and an investigation (Bradley 1960b, 1). In another letter to the Postmaster, Bradley insisted that the Postmaster was perhaps mistaken about his role and identity. He directed his attention to CPSA leaders, such as Joost de Blank and Ambrose Reeves, as perhaps the offenders he was mistaken for (Bradley 1960b, 1–2).

When Bradley received what he considered an unsatisfactory reply from the Postmaster-General, stating that the matter was receiving full attention, he instructed Gordon Mills (a member of the Propaganda Committee and an attorney by profession) to write to Verwoerd, then Prime Minister. Verwoerd referred the matter to Albert Hertzog, the Minister of Posts and Telecommunications, for an "urgent and thorough investigation" (Fourie 1960, 1). Again, in 1964, when Bradley and his wife needed a permit to enter the black reservations, Bradley wrote to Verwoerd's office directly, reminding him that he "knows us and what we stand for" while asking the Prime Minister to instruct the Minister of Bantu Affairs to grant the requested permit (Bradley 1964b, 1).

Mourning a Friend

When Verwoerd died in 1966, CESA's reaction to his death can also be used to measure its relationship with Verwoerd. South African religious leaders expressed horror at the manner of his death in their press statements (Anonymous 1966, 3). Contrastingly, one fifth of CESA's periodical (*Church News*) contained various pictures and statements mourning his passing. In the face of opposition to political pressure (not naming apartheid explicitly), Verwoerd's resilience was admired, and he was hailed as "a person sufficiently sure of himself that he could stand alone" (Church News 1966, 2–5). Others mourned that "a prince among men has been taken from us. He was gifted with great

intellect, developed almost to the level of prophetic vision" (*Church News* 1966, 2–5); his leadership and resolve in the face of opposition were compared to that of Israel's King David (*Church News* 1966, 2–5). They consoled themselves under the belief that his death had a cosmic lesson under the guidance of God: "perhaps the intention with this removal of the most indispensable man in our country is a calling from Heaven to move us to accept God again as the only indispensable one in our own lives and for the future of our people" (*Church News* 1966, 2–5). While others saw the abolition of apartheid as a struggle, CESA identified itself with Verwoerd's struggle for the rights of Europeans: "For us, the struggle remains. These are desperate days and a desperate act which has shadowed our hearts is but one of many in the upsurge of evil. It is to the Lord we must look" (1966, 5).

Additionally, a press statement was issued indicating the denomination's "thankfulness to God for [Verwoerd's] wise leadership and Christian witness" (Anonymous 1966, 3). The press statement further added that the denominational leadership had instructed all CESA churches to conduct special memorial services on Sunday, 11 September 1966, in honour of the fallen Prime Minister (*Church News* 1966, 5; Anonymous 1966, 3).

Bradley's participation at the funeral service appears to have been beneficial. It elevated the profile of a small denomination. Bradley saw himself as the "face of the English church" in South Africa (Bradley 1973a, 2; cf. Newby 2002, 6 of 8). The funeral service was also broadcast internationally on radio and television (British Pathé 1996). Because of this publicity, Bradley was admired by other Evangelical leaders for having his "own ministry within government circles" (Tooke 1975, 1).

Bradley participated in two events connected with the funeral; first, he read text for the sermon at the official state funeral in Pretoria. A friend of the Verwoerd family and Vice-Chancellor of Stellenbosch University, Jacobus S. Gericke, preached the sermon (Bradley 1973b, 1; Jones 1966, 1; South African Government 1966). Pictures indicate him walking alongside the casket with DRC ministers and the military (*Church News* 1966, 3). The second appearance was at a memorial service in the Groote Kerk in Cape Town, where, according to Clarke, he gave a eulogy praising Verwoerd (2008, 231).

In Robert Clarke's *Anglicans against Apartheid* (2008), Clarke notes that in 1966, Bradley sought to establish CESA's position in the Anglican Communion by soliciting support from the Evangelical Fellowship in the Anglican Communion (EFAC) in a bid to secure an invitation to the 1968 Lambeth Conference. CESA also enquired about the validity of the orders of CESA ministers outside of South Africa and to negotiate acceptable terms for reunification with the CPSA (2008, 231; cf. Bradley 2003, 143).[9] One of the leaders of EFAC, John Stott, arranged a meeting between then Presiding

9 The Evangelical Fellowship in the Anglican Communion was led by the Australian Archbishop Marcus Loan and Rev. John Stott (Clarke 2008, 231). Bradley's account differs slightly; he recalled that it was named the Evangelical *Alliance*, not the Evangelical Fellowship as stated by Clarke (2008, 144).

Bishop Stephen Bradley and the Archbishop of Canterbury, Michael Ramsey. Negotiations about its participation at the upcoming conference and the status of its clergy who had been ordained by the then-late CESA Presiding Bishop Fred Morris (1955–1960) ensued (Clarke 2008, 231).

Contrary to CESA's TRC claim of having participated in Verwoerd's funeral as an act of ecclesial charity, Clarke (2008, 231) asserts that Bradley's "eulogy in praise of Dr Verwoerd left no doubt regarding CESA's unfettered support of the government and its policies." At one of Bradley's meetings with Ramsay after Verwoerd's funeral, Bradley gave Ramsay a pamphlet of CESA's history and the aforementioned edition of CESA's *Church News* with a significant section dedicated to the passing of Verwoerd (Clarke 2008, 232). Ramsay was surprised by CESA's pro-government stance; he stated, "This aspect of the matter was rather an eye-opener to me … I was startled by Bishop Bradley talking rather in a way Dutch Reformed churchman might talk. I was led to suspect that this church must tend to a kind of 'spiritual' evangelism of saving souls with little relation to the context of life in which people live" (in Clarke 2008, 232). Ramsay was correct that CESA gave the impression of political disengagement, and its critique of the CPSA was about its prophetic witness, but CESA's professed apoliticism was employed as a veil to hide its support of the status quo.

Bradley was unsuccessful in securing an invitation to the 1968 Lambeth Conference. Instead, Ramsay, persuaded by the CPSA bishops, advised that any CESA clergy who sought to minister in any other region in the Anglican Communion needed to apply for conditional ordination in that region (Clarke 2008, 232; *contra* Ive 1992, 180). One may surmise that CESA's political ideology directly influenced its perception by Ramsay—entrenching the alienation of CESA from the global Anglican community.

This demonstrates that Verwoerd was not just any public figure to the leadership of CESA. He was one with whom the denomination enjoyed a long relationship. To regard the participation at his state funeral as mere Christian charity does not accord with CESA's sources, which point to a long relationship of assistance and collaboration. A reality which was admitted by Bradley (1966, 1–2) in the 1960s, but was omitted during the TRC hearings.

Concluding Remarks

The assessment that CESA was politically neutral during the apartheid years is not based on historical research but on an uncritical assessment of its submissions to the TRC. The above analysis of its relationship with Verwoerd points to its proximity to government officials, the government, and its support of apartheid ideology. Its criticism of the CPSA's prophetic stance is irreconcilable with political neutrality. It used its ecclesial rivalry with the CPSA to distinguish itself as reformed and pro-establishment. The statements of its Propaganda Committee indicate more than mere criticism of the Anglican church's views on apartheid but deliberate actions to align CESA with the DRC. Therefore, having separate classifications for the DRC and CESA is illogical.

The eulogies of CESA ministers after Verwoerd's death expressed more than respect for a statesman but an admiration for his Christian character. The TRC failed to investigate CESA's historic position beyond its two submissions. Instead, they deemed its repentant posture as sufficient and trusted CESA to be an authentic narrator of its history. The TRC Report was meant to be the first step in unmasking the past, but what it did not realise is that the narrative encompassed in its report would be used to validate a historically unsound narrative.

Alex Boraine hailed the South African TRC as the yardstick for all truth commissions (n.d., 4). The hearings on faith communities were held by Desmond Tutu to be "[p]robably the best of all the Truth Commission hearings" (in Meiring n.d., 1). However, closely examining its historical method reveals that it was deeply flawed. Its assessment of CESA submissions is uncritical. Scholars who have commented on CESA's historic public theology have argued along the same lines as the TRC.

Primary sources reveal that CESA had relationships with government officials from the colonial era. Those relationships did not end when leadership transferred to the Afrikaner Nationalists. Its Reformed theology brought it closer to the DRC and the National Party. The Synod's Propaganda Committee defended the church and the state with equal, if not more, enthusiasm. The church's response to state surveillance by explicitly pointing to its support of the government as the reason it should be cleared from suspicion contradicts its claim of historical political neutrality. CESA's love for and praise of Verwoerd after his death does not line up with the assertion made to the TRC.

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