


# *Ecclesia reformata semper reformanda: W.A. (Wim) Dreyer and the reformation of the Netherdutch Reformed Church of Africa*

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Prof. W.A. Dreyer played an important role in the continuous reformation of the *Nederduitsch Hervormde Kerk van Afrika* (NHKA). This contribution to his Festschrift is not about him. He would not want that. It is about the church and how his understanding of reformed ecclesiology became the basis on which the transformation from 'Volkskerk' to missional church took place. According to himself, that was his calling and his life's work. The importance of his contribution cannot be understood without the historical background in which it played out. Neither is it possible to envisage what really happened without acknowledging the theologians who played an important part in his life. This article therefore starts with a short overview of the history of the NHKA. It then proceeds with an overview of how important theologians in the NHKA influenced his ecclesiology. It concludes with three specific contributions that Prof. W.A. Dreyer made which makes him a key role player which led the NHKA on the way of *Ecclesia reformata semper reformanda*.

**Contribution:** Prof. W.A. Dreyer became an important church leader in the Netherdutch Reformed Church. His leadership resulted in important changes in the church and especially in the ecclesiology of the church. This article, which is part of his Festschrift, gives an overview of his theological contribution through the lens of *semper reformanda*. By doing so, it indicates how important is the role of church leaders. All the research is based on his scholarly work.

**Keywords:** Prof. W.A. Dreyer; Netherdutch Reformed Church of Africa; NHKA apartheid; ecclesiology; transformation; homosexuality.

## Introduction

*Ecclesia reformata semper reformanda* is a well-known and popular rallying cry in the Reformed tradition within Protestantism. But is it also a helpful slogan when considering the pros and cons, the possibilities, and the limitations, of church renewal. (Koffeman 2015:1)

This statement by Koffeman emphasises the importance of the phrase which this article wants to apply to the role of Prof. Wim Dreyer<sup>1</sup> in The Netherdutch Reformed Church of Africa (NHKA).<sup>2</sup> Dreyer himself states about *ecclesia semper reformanda* that it is: 'a contemporary expression of a reformed understanding of the church'. He continues: 'There is a growing consensus that churches are again in dire need of reformation, even fundamental transformation' (Dreyer 2017:1).

The phrase, which is ascribed to Jodocus van Lodenstein (1620–1677), who was an important figure in the Dutch Second Reformation. According to him, it means that although the Reformation reformed the doctrine of the church, the lives and practises of God's people also need constant reformation (Horton 2009 as quoted by Koffeman 2015:1). Karl Barth explains the importance further: 'The Church stands in the fire of the criticism of its Lord. It is also exposed to the criticism of the world and this criticism has never been altogether false and unjust. It has always needed, and it always will need, self-examination and self-correction.'

1.This article does not pretend to be a complete biography of Prof. W.A. Dreyer. As part of a festschrift with his retirement, it focuses on the positive contribution that he made during his time as church leader. It does not want to claim that Prof. Dreyer was the only person involved in the continuous reformation of the church and recognises the fact, that like in many other churches, various people played an important role.

2.Nederduitsch Hervormde Kerk van Afrika (NHKA).

**Note:** Special Collection: Wim Dreyer Dedication, sub-edited by Jaco Beyers (University of Pretoria, South Africa).

It cannot exist except as *ecclesia semper reformanda* – if only it had always understood itself in this light and acted accordingly! (...) Taking it all in all, the community of Jesus Christ in the world may at times be clothed with every kind of pomp and glory, but what a frail vessel it is, exposed to every kind of assault, and assaulted both outwardly and above all inwardly! (Barth 1956:690). Although it is true of the church, it became an imperative in the history of the NHKA after 1994.<sup>3</sup> Prof. W.A. Dreyer himself clearly states how the NHKA responded to the challenge after 1994. In an article titled *Ecclesia semper reformanda: The challenge to be church. Perspectives from the Nederduitsch Hervormde Kerk van Afrika*, he indicates how the period from 1995 to 2016 was a period of important change in the NHKA. In the words of Prof. Wim Dreyer: 'During the period 1995 to 2016 the NHKA underwent fundamental transformation. During this period, the Church Order was amended based on missional ecclesiology [*missio Dei*]; new liturgical formularies, greater liturgical diversity and a new hymnbook were approved; new mission strategies were developed and implemented; new models of ministry were implemented in context of smaller congregations; the theological justification of apartheid was rejected and ecumenical relations improved dramatically, including the lifting of the suspension by the World Communion of Reformed Churches and reinstatement to full membership'.

'During this process of transformation, the rallying cry of *ecclesia reformata semper reformanda* played an important role. It made it possible to understand that tradition could be transformed without losing the essential spirit and ethos of that tradition' (Dreyer 2017:8). There is also a clear understanding within church leadership that this process could never be completed. There is still much to do. But even more – if we understand the challenge to reform as a challenge 'to be church', we could never speak of *ecclesia reformata* but should rather speak of *ecclesia reformanda*, as Van Lodenstein proposed (Dreyer 2017:8).

This article which is part of the Festschrift on Prof. Wim Dreyer at his retirement from the University of Pretoria focuses on the role of Prof. Wim Dreyer as one of the important church leaders in the NHKA after 1994. It specifically focuses on his role in continuous reformation of the church. The conclusion to which the article comes is that Prof. Wim Dreyer played a very important role to make the rallying cry *ecclesia reformata semper reformanda* applicable to the NHKA. The author based his research on qualitative literature research and the article written from a church historical perspective. Relevant literature, which included books, scholarly articles and minutes from church meetings, were used for the research. The author also interviewed Prof. Wim Dreyer in person to create a historical framework for the research on his role as church leader.

3.The first democratic election in the history of South Africa was held on 27 April 1994.

## Historical context of the Nederduitsch Hervormde Kerk van Afrika

As already stated, the South African society changed radically after the first democratic election of 1994. The political policy of apartheid, which was introduced by the National Party government in 1948 and was supported by the Afrikaans Reformed churches, was officially abandoned by the new African National Congress government. This led to a major challenge to the NHKA, which officially had declared itself as a *Volkskerk*. This was according to the Church Law Article III<sup>4</sup> which was adopted in 1951 (Dreyer 2013a:2). In 1997, this article was replaced by Ordinance 4, which repeated that the NHKA was primarily a church for white Afrikaans-speaking people only.

This is confirmed by Dreyer (2006:1338) when he states the Church Order of the NHKA stated in Ordinance 4 that the church is a '*volkskerk*', meaning a church that is ethnically based and focused on the ministry to Afrikaans-speaking people primarily. He then continues to state that the church is a church with its own cultural, history, language and tradition (NHKA 1997:69). This was confirmed by an important document that was published in 1985 under the title: *Kerk en Wêreld 2000*. In this document the church's support for apartheid is described as follows:

'n Politieke beleid wat voorsiening maak vir gelyke en afsonderlike geleenthede skep die moontlikheid dat afsonderlike volke nie in die demografiese pot weggekook sal word nie. Die NHKA kan gevolglik moeilik, gesien sy begrip van homself as volkskerk, anders as om so 'n beleid in beginsel te steun nie. Hy sal sekerlik ook nie anders kan as om op te staan en by die voorstanders van afsonderlikheid getel te word nie ... Die Kerk oordeel dat, volgens die teleologiese norm wat hy gebruik, sy keuse ten gunste van afsonderlikheid nie in stryd met die etiese eis van die Skrif is nie.<sup>5</sup> (NHKA Kommissie van die AKV 1985:66–67)

It is this understanding of itself that put the church in a peculiar position together with other Afrikaans churches that supported apartheid. This is confirmed by the Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) which stated that the 'Afrikaans Reformed Churches were widely identified with Afrikaner nationalism and held to be complicit in apartheid' (Report of the TRC 1998:62).

It is against this background that Dreyer (2015) played an important role in reforming the church. In his own words:

4.Article III read as follows: Artikel III.

*Die Kerk, bewus van die gevare wat vermenging van blank en nie-blank vir altnew groepe inhou, wil geen gelykstelling in sy midde toelaat nie, maar beoog die stigting van eie volkskerke onder die verskillende volks-groepe, in die oortuiging dat aldus die bevel van die Here – 'Maak discipels van alle nasies' Matteus 28:19, die beste tot sy reg sal kom en dat die eenheid in Christus deur so 'n werkverdeling nie geskaad sal word nie. Tot die Nederduitsch Hervormde Kerk van Afrika behoort daarom net blanke persone.*

5:[A] political policy which makes provision for equal and separate opportunities, creates the possibility that separate nations will not be cooked together in the same pot. The NHKA can therefore in understanding itself as a volkskerk do nothing else but to support this policy. He can surely also do nothing else as to stand by to be counted with the supporters of separateness. The church is of the opinion that according to the theological norm that it uses, its choice in favour of separateness is not in conflict with the ethical demands of Scripture' [Translation by the author].

What is the real crisis of the church? Very often, clergy, churches and congregations experience a 'crisis' only when membership is in decline, resulting in financial hardship. Crisis is limited to stress which the church as institution experiences when structures, finance and traditions are under pressure. In this contribution, the point is argued that the real crisis of the church is not to be found in institutional challenges, but in the inability of the church to be what it already is. With reference to Karl Barth's ecclesiology, this contribution departs from the assumption that the real crisis of the church is not only to be found in external circumstances and influences but is primarily a question of the church not being able to 'be church'. Continuous reformation of the church is of utmost importance. (p. 1)

## Personal reformation

One of the outstanding attributes of people who played an important role in the reformation of a church is the fact that they went through a personal reformation. Although it falls beyond the scope of this article to go into detail on the matter, it is important to refer to a few important role players from the past. One of the outstanding figures in the history of the church is the apostle Paul, who had his Damascus Road experience, which is described in Acts 7 (cf. Ac 9:1–18). From the reformation, one thinks about Martin Luther (Estep 1986:114–115) and John Calvin (ed. Dowley 1977:380–382). Like so many church reformers in the past, Prof. W.A. Dreyer, according to himself, also went through a personal reformation. This started while he was completing his Doctor Divinitatis (DD) dissertation with the title: *Kerk, volk en owerheid – 'n Hervormde perpektief* in 1995. The question may be asked why this was so important in his life. The answer is to be found in the person of Prof. A.D. Pont, his church history lecturer at the Faculty of Theology at the University of Pretoria. According to Dreyer (Interview 08 March 2023), Prof. A.D. Pont had a huge influence on him as a student because of his sharp mind and his eloquence. This is clear from Dreyer's well-known conservative stance up until 2001.

Although a brilliant academic, Prof. A.D. Pont was a controversial figure in the NHKA. According to van Wyk, 'the life and work of Prof. Pont was closely linked to far reaching happenings, struggle and cataclysmic events in church, theology and politics during his 35 years of office' (Van Wyk 1992:515).

During the stormy years of the 1960s and 1970s, especially after the Cottesloe consultation, Prof. Pont became a staunch supporter of Article III<sup>6</sup> of the Church Order of the NHKA. It is this article that defined the church as a church for the white Afrikaner people alone [*Volkskerk*], and it led to a serious confrontation with one of his colleagues, Prof. A.S. Geyser (Van Wyk 1992:528). This confrontation reached a climax during the General Church Assembly of the NHKA in 1961 and 1964. According to Pont himself, this conflict was about nothing less than the ecclesiology of the NHKA (Pont 1990:11). It was not only in the church where Prof. Pont defended white segregation. He also became a controversial figure in society. Van Wyk (1992:532) emphasises that this

6. Article III became Ordinance IV in the Church Order of the NKHA in 1997.

was also because of his involvement in party-political issues. According to Prof. Pont himself, he cooperated in the founding of the *Herstigste Nasionale Party* (HNP), an ultra-right political party. According to Prof. Pont, it was his political involvement that led to the decision of the General Church Assembly of the NHKA in 1976, which banned any involvement of ministers of the church in political parties (Pont 1990:14). Pont is of the opinion that it is political alliance with the HNP that led to his suspension from the *Afrikaner Broederbond* in 1973, which according to him meant that he became an embarrassment to the church and many ministers.

Although Prof. Pont's point of view was not entirely part of Prof. W.A. Dreyer's understanding of the church and the calling of the church, it interested him enough and motivated him to study the relationship between church, culture, people and state, a theme that became the topic of his first doctoral dissertation. Dreyer formulates it in his own words: 'Since 1994 the Republic of South Africa has undergone profound political and cultural changes. The churches in South Africa (including the Nederduitsch Hervormde Kerk van Afrika as an Afrikaans-orientated church) need to evaluate the situation and come to a theological understanding of their relationship with the culture, people and government of South Africa' (Dreyer 1996:863). Dreyer emphasises that he realised that his research had to be to the advantage of the church with the main question: how the NHKA could rid itself of Article III (Interview Dreyer). Although Dreyer's conservative stance up to 2001 as editor of *Die Hervormer* is well known, it started to change after he was appointed at the University of Pretoria. The influence of colleagues and context in which he worked played an important part.

According to Dreyer himself, three theologians played an important role in his own rethinking of the continuous reformation of the NHKA.<sup>7</sup>

The first person was Prof. J.P. Oberholzer who started the debate on reforming the NHKA formally in 1995. It was in his opening address to a convention of ministers in 1995 where Prof. J.P. Oberholzer, one of the important critical voices in the church, pleaded for a new approach in ecclesiology as well as church praxis. Oberholzer was not only a professor of Old Testament Studies but also a former Dean of the Faculty of Theology at the University of Pretoria (UP) and also moderator of the General Assembly of the NHKA (Dreyer 2013b:1). According to Dreyer, his words 'reflected a growing impatience with an outdated ecclesiology' (Dreyer 2013a:1). In his address Oberholzer (1995) further pointed out:

[T]hat for several years there had been a pervasive sense that a more contemporary approach to ecclesiology was needed, which could lead to the transformation of the NHKA and a simplified approach to ministry. (p. 851)

7. This debate against Article III was started much earlier by Prof. A.S. Geyser. Prof. J.A. Loader later added to the discourse in the 1980s and 1990s. Van Aarde describes the important role of Prof. Geyser in his article: 'AS Geyser, teologiese dosent 1946 – 1961'.



A second theologian who had an important influence on Dreyer was Prof. T.F.J. Dreyer. Dreyer served several terms as moderator of the NHKA, and it was under his leadership that the NHKA adopted a vision: 'Our dream is that all people will believe in Jesus Christ as the only hope for the world' (Dreyer 2013b:3). According to Prof. W.A. Dreyer, this vision spoke of a more open, missional and inclusive ecclesiology (Dreyer 2013b:3). As the NHKA entered the 21st century, Prof. T.F.J. Dreyer became more outspoken in his criticism of the church. He was of the point of view that there was a high level of stagnation in the NHKA and that the church should enter a process of 'radical transformation' (Dreyer 2013b:3) It is this point of view amongst others which led the 68th General Assembly (2007) to decide to rewrite the Church Order of the church as one of the steps enroute to a new reformation in the church (Dreyer 2013b:3). Prof. Wim Dreyer, who became a member of the Executive of the General Assembly for the first time in 2001, was not only confronted by the theology of Prof. T.F.J. Dreyer, but acknowledges that it motivated him to change his own point of view.

A third important theologian who influenced Prof. W.A. Dreyer was Prof. J. Buitendag. Buitendag (2008), who became professor in Systematic Theology at the University of Pretoria, and paid specific attention to ecclesiology in his lectures and publications. According to Dreyer, Buitendag, who was also a moderator of the NHKA and Dean of the Faculty of Theology, was influential in bringing about a new understanding of the church. Under his leadership, the moderation of the NHKA hosted a National Colloquium from 27 April 2006 to 29 April 2006 at Hammanskraal. The theme of the colloquium was 'Identity and relevance of the NHKA in the 21st century'. In his opening address at the National Colloquium, he challenged the church to either enter a process of transformation or become irrelevant in the 21st century. He envisaged a church that would be more adaptable, like water that flows in a clear and life-giving stream (Dreyer 2013b:3).

With the specific challenges of the history of the NHKA and the influence of specific important theologians in the NHKA, Prof. Wim Dreyer answered to the call of playing his part in the reformation of the NKHA.

## The contribution of Prof W.A. Dreyer

The fact that Prof. W.A. Dreyer had an important influence on the ongoing reformation of the NHKA is undisputable. This statement is supported by the fact that he served in different capacities in the Executive of the General Assembly of the church. He acted as Vice Secretary, Secretary, Assessor, and Moderator during three different terms namely: 2001–2007, 2010–2016 and 2019–2023.<sup>8</sup> Although the reform in the church started long before 2010, it is important to note that many of the important changes took place during his terms as Moderator and Assessor.

8. Information provided by Prof. W.A. Dreyer.

## The reformation of the ecclesiology of the church

The acknowledgement of the influence that the above-named theologians had on the church and himself became more evident through the fact that Dreyer completed a second doctoral thesis in 2011. What makes this important is both the topic and the supervisor. The topic of the thesis was *Praktiese ekklesiologie en bedieningspraktyk met verwysing na die Nederduitsch Hervormde Kerk van Afrika*. The supervisor was Prof. T.F.J. Dreyer, one of the theologians who had a substantial influence on Prof. W.A. Dreyer. This confirms the fact that Dreyer realised that the NHKA needed serious reformation and transformation, and that it should start with the ecclesiology of the church. From his research, he concluded 2 years later: 'In my view, the NHKA needs to move from a typical presbyterial-synodal ecclesiological paradigm to a *missio Dei* paradigm, based on missional ecclesiology' (Dreyer 2013b:3). For Dreyer, the *missio Dei* of the church is central to missional ecclesiology. He describes his understanding of the concept as follows in line with Bosch (1991):

The essence of being church is to be found in its participation in God's mission to the world. As such, the *missio Dei* is the basis and point of departure for congregational ministry. (p. 467ff.)

Dreyer further emphasised that the focus of the church should be on the local congregation. During the 68th General Assembly of the NHKA in 2007, it was decided that missional ministry should be emphasised in congregations of the church (NHKA 2007:36–38). This was the first important step. During the next meeting of the General Assembly of the NHKA in 2010, the General Assembly clearly stated that missional ministry had as its point of departure, the great commission of Jesus Christ (Mt 28) and concluded that missional ministry should form an essential part of reformed ministry (NHKA 2010:235). These decisions would lead to the writing of a new Church Order for the church, a development in which Prof. W.A. Dreyer played an important role.

## A missional Church Order for the Nederduitsch Hervormde Kerk van Afrika

According to Prof. W.A. Dreyer, it was the reformation of the ecclesiology of the church that led to a noteworthy decision by the 68th General Assembly in 2007 (Dreyer 2022:93). It is noteworthy because the General Assembly had approved a new Church Order only 10 years ago, earlier in 1997. The decision which was approved read as follows:

*Die Algemene Kerkvergadering gee opdrag aan die Kommissie van die Algemene Kerkvergadering om 'n komitee van deskundiges uit al die teologiese dissiplines te benoem om die ekklesiologiese kontoere te omlyn waarbinne 'n kerkorde geskryf kan word. (NHKA 2007:196)<sup>9</sup>*

9. The General Assembly instruct the Commission of the General Assembly to appoint a committee of experts from all the theological disciplines to formulate the ecclesiological contours within which the Church order can be written (Own translation).

Dreyer states that the reason for this decision was the fact that the Church Order had to be more missional.<sup>10</sup> According to him, this was a clear indication that there was a need in the NHKA to think about the church in a new way in the light of the challenges that congregations of the church faced (Dreyer 2022:94) The transformation of being church and the establishment of missional ministry praxis in the church had to be carried by a Church Order that made it possible. Prof. W.A. Dreyer, together with other prominent theologians, played an important role in the compilation of the report with the title: *'Enkele ekklesiologiese kontoere vir die opstel van 'n nuwe Kerkorde* which was tabled at the 69th General Assembly in 2010' (NHKA 2010:522–534). Prof. J. Buitendag was the chair of the special committee which demarcated new ecclesiological contours for the NHKA. The report relied very much on the ecclesiology of the Protestant Church of the Netherlands (PKN). The report focused on biblical metaphors systemised according to the Trinity. This led to a fundamental mover from a presbyteral–synodical way of thinking about the church to a more organic understanding of the church. The Assembly approved the report and continued its previous instruction to revise the Church Order of the church accordingly. This resulted in the acceptance of a new Church Order for the NHKA by the 71st General Assembly in 2016. This new Church Order had a whole chapter which was devoted to missional ministry in the church (NHKA 2016:77–78). The Assembly accepted Proposal 1 unanimously. In the proposal with the heading: *'Kerkwees in die toekoms'* [Being church in the future], a specific *'Hervormde'* understanding of ecclesiology and being church was defined. According to Dreyer, it stated the essence and the calling of the church, which was the outcome of a 30-year-long process. Dreyer summarises it as follows:

- The essence of the church is not determined by the context of the church but by the essence of God.
- The church is an eschatological community that lives between the first and the second coming of Christ.
- The church is the creature Verbi: It is established through the proclamation of the living Word of God.
- The church lives organic as the people of God, the family of the Father, the body of Christ, and the temple of the Holy Spirit.
- The *Nederduitsch Hervormde Kerk van Afrika* (NHKA) is the visible manifestation of the one holy and universal church. The church lives in community [*koinonia*] with God and all humans.
- The church is called to proclaim the gospel to the world and lives missional. Mission in the church is not only one of the activities of the church but is part of the essence of God and therefore the essence of the church.
- Diversity is important, both in ministry and liturgy (Dreyer 2022:95).

Dreyer (2022) remarks on this important decision as follows:

In the long term it will become clearer to what extent this paradigm shift in ecclesiology influenced the functioning and the growth of congregations. The future will also tell if it can be

10.The author acknowledges that there is a difference in interpretation on this point, and that some members of the church saw the adoption of a new church order to get rid of Article III.

understood as church reformation, as *semper reformans semper reformanda*. (p. 95)

## Hervormde Kerk Resolution 41 (2016) on homosexuality

One of the important outcomes of the new direction that the church decided on was Resolution 41 (2016) on homosexuality which was accepted by the General Assembly of the NHKA in 2016. What makes it important is that the Assembly approved it by a large majority. This indicates that the church not only spoke about being a missional church but also took it seriously. One section of the resolution that relates to the Trinity of God, which also forms the essence of a missional church, reads as follows:

Jesus Christ, through the Spirit, helps people to live in the presence of God as complete human beings, including their sexuality. This is also true of people with a homosexual orientation. Therefore, the Church believes that all Christians, irrespective of their sexual orientation, are members of the body of Christ with full participation in the sacraments. This is an expression of the unity of the Church. (Janse van Rensburg & Dreyer 2021:211)

The second important part of the resolution is found in the following:

The General Assembly recognises that many people struggle with their own sexuality and that they can be traumatised because of different reasons. We are of the opinion that the trauma of members will not be served by big and final decisions of synodical meetings, but rather through the love and care which they receive in their communities of believers. That is why the discussion of sexuality must not take place in church meetings, but rather within pastoral discussions. (Janse van Rensburg & Dreyer 2021:221)

Janse Van Rensburg concludes that: Resolution 41 (2016) represents something of a 'third way' in terms of ecclesiastical decisions on homosexuality, avoiding hard or extreme points of view. This reconciliatory nature of the resolution is probably one of the important reasons<sup>11</sup> why it was met with little opposition from church members. 'Even the media and members of the public responded positively to the resolution' (Janse van Rensburg & Dreyer 2021:213). A careful reading of the second part of the resolution as quoted above and the remark of Janse van Rensburg clearly illustrates what Dreyer believed the NHKA as a missional church should be. It is the role of the local congregation as community of believers that should be a haven where the wounded can experience acceptance and the love of Jesus Christ.

## Conclusion

In the foreword of his book *Kerkwees in die toekoms*<sup>12</sup> Dreyer writes: At the beginning of the 21st century the future of reformed churches does not look good from a statistical

11.The author recognises that the approval of Resolution 41 was the outcome of a long process of deliberation in the church in which different theologians such as Prof. J. Buitendag, Y. Dreyer and E. van Eck made sure that the matter stayed on the Agenda of the General Assembly of the church. A new generation of clergy who was shaped by the theological training they received at the University of Pretoria also played an important part.

12.See References.

point of view. Attempts to revitalise congregations through other programmes did not work. He states and I quote:

What is necessary, is radical reformation, a new Church reformation which starts by a new understanding of what it means to be church. In the Reformed tradition, reformation is always according to the demands of the Word. Therefor we must listen anew to what the Word has to say on being church. (Dreyer 2022:1)

He then continues by stating that the book is the result of his involvement with the leadership of the NHKA since 2001, and his reflection on what it means to be church, with specific reference to the NHKA. He concludes the Foreword of the book by saying: 'My prayer is that the book will contribute to the fact that we will be a church with integrity in the future' (Dreyer 2022:3).

Looking at the contribution of Prof. W.A. Dreyer in the history of the NHKA, his leadership role in the NHKA made a difference. It is not without reason that he was elected twice as moderator of the church. As a colleague who is not a member of the NKHA, Prof. W.A. Dreyer played an influential role in steering the church away from a 'Volkskerk' in the direction of becoming a true missional church in the post-apartheid South Africa.<sup>13</sup> The price for this change did not come cheap. On 28 July 2013, 13 congregations of the Netherdutch Reformed Church of Africa [*Nederduitsch Hervormde Kerk van Afrika*] declared themselves independent and constituted as the '*Geloofsbond van Hervormde Gemeentes*' (Dreyer 2014:1).

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The author declares that they have no financial or personal relationships that may have inappropriately influenced them in writing this article.

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J.M.v.d.M. is the sole author of this research article.

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### Data availability

Data sharing is not applicable to this article as no new data were created or analysed in this study.

<sup>13</sup>Although the author recognises that other important events like the March 2009 Declaration of five theological professors of the Church played an important part in the schism in the Church and the contributions various important theologians played a huge role in the continuous reformation of the church, this article is a contribution to the Festschrift of Prof. W.A. Dreyer. The focus is to celebrate his contribution.

## Disclaimer

The views and opinions expressed in this article are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the official policy or position of any affiliated agency of the authors.

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