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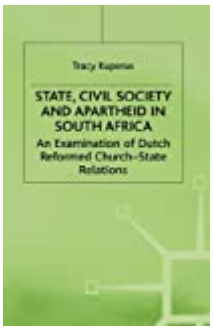

Tracy Kuperus. *State, Civil Society and Apartheid in South Africa: An Examination of Dutch Reformed Church-State Relations.* London: Macmillan Press, 1999. xviii + 211 pp. $99.95 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-312-21883-6.

Reviewed by Roger Beck (Department of History, Eastern Illinois University)

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In the early 1980s the elderly mother of an Afrikaner friend of mine was telling us the story of how the women's club at her Dutch Reformed Church decided to collect used clothing to distribute to the needy in her small town on the Rand. After collecting piles of old clothing they went around to all the poor, white families and let them take what they wanted. When they were finished, these very pious and well-intentioned ladies gathered what was left and took it to the local African township, where they sold it to an African church for distribution to the African poor. My friend's mother told us this story without a trace of guilt or expression of wrong-doing. But this was apartheid South Africa, where white Christianity and government mandated segregation, where the white civil society and the white state were closely intertwined.

The study of state and civil society relations has increased over the past two decades as scholars study and analyze the widespread regime changes occurring during this period. Some have argued that civil society, which can incorporate such organizations as churches, trade unions, families, social clubs, professional organizations, and neighborhood groups, has strengthened existing democracies, or brought democratic change to authoritarian regimes. In her very readable and well-researched study, Kuperus focuses on the Dutch Reformed Church (*Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk*, NGK) as a representative institution of South African civil society and seeks to examine "how and why the NGK's relationship to the groups within the white minority government dominating the South African state changed in conjunction with the development of race policy from 1934 to 1994." (p. xi) Kuperus places her study in a broader context as well by making it a case study to examine larger questions raised by the state-civil society debate. Some of the questions she addresses include, "what is civil society, what is its purpose, and is civil society necessary to the proper functioning of a democracy?" (p. ix) As a contribution to this larger debate, Kuperus creates a typology of state-civil society relations and concludes that "state-civil society relations are more complex and ever-changing than generally realized." (p. xi) Drawing on her findings from the South African case, Kuperus concludes that "civil society can and does exist in an authoritarian situation, although its function and purpose will be different from that of civil society within a democratic situation, and it can deter the establishment of democracy in the event that components of civil society identify themselves with exclusive, ethnic interests." (p. xi)

Following an introductory discussion on the various debates within the state-civil society literature, Kuperus presents her typology of state-civil society relations,

which consists of six interactions ranging from extreme cooperation to extreme conflict. (pp.16-21) These six interactions are cooptation or collaboration, mutual engagement, balanced pluralism, coexisting conflict, conflictual resistance, and enforced disengagement. The existence of any of these interactions is measured by the "similarity or differences on the positions taken by state ... and civil society leaders ... on policy matters and the official (or unofficial) interaction between state-civil society leaders," resulting in either cooperation, conflict, or some mix of the two. (p. 16)

Through her examination of relations between the NGK and the South African state, Kuperus usefully and concisely summarizes the development and importance of the NGK in South African civil society and the evolution of the white minority government from segregation through the various stages of apartheid.

Chapter 2 is also an introductory chapter, in which Kuperus describes how the NGK played an increasingly influential role in Afrikaner civil society from 1910 to 1933, and discusses some of the important social dynamics of the period, including the "poor white" problem, increased Afrikaner nationalism, and the ongoing debate over the ties between economic growth and segregation. Kuperus structures the remaining chapters by beginning each with an introductory historical and analytical overview of the period, followed by descriptions of the policies and positions of the state and the NGK, and ending with a conclusion that leads into the next chapter.

In Chapter 3, Kuperus applies her typology and takes up her analysis of state-church relations by describing the period from 1934 to 1947 as one of coexisting conflict. During this period, relations between the NGK and the United Party-dominated state were "characterized by moderate policy collusion and low to moderate official interaction." (p. 47) By the early 1940s, as the United Party split over support for Britain in World War II, NGK leaders increasingly transferred their support from the government to D.F. Malan's National Party.

In Chapter 4, Kuperus describes the relationship between the NGK and the state as one of mutual engagement during the so-called "baasskap" years of apartheid from 1948 to 1961. Generally during this period, Kuperus concludes, NGK leaders and Afrikaner politicians cooperated closely, agreed on the majority of policy issues, and supported Afrikaner domination of the political and economic spheres.

Chapter 5 focuses on the period from 1962 to 1978, when apartheid was at its zenith. Following her typology, Kuperus argues that this was a time of close collaboration between the NGK and the apartheid government. Both groups were committed to "three socio-political goals:

(a) white, mainly Afrikaner, dominance in the political and social arena,

(b) economic prosperity through the protection of capitalist interests, and

(c) the implementation of a racial policy that maintained ethnic purity and overcame the criticisms of 'negative' apartheid." (p. 103)

Kuperus points out that such close collaboration between a civil society institution and a state is rare because it requires a high degree of official interaction and policy collusion.

The years from 1979 to 1994, discussed in chapter 6, witnessed the collapse and demise of the apartheid system. This is Kuperus's most intriguing chapter because here she finds that, contrary to accepted opinion, that civil society organizations generally "help usher in the establishment of democracy," the "NGK, because of its identification with narrow, ethnic interests, resisted the establishment of democracy to a greater extent than the South African state," during this era. (p. 121) In her concluding chapter, Kuperus reiterates the main points of her study, followed by an interesting, speculative discussion about the role of the NGK in a non-racial democratic South Africa.

The author closes her study by offering theoretical conclusions about civil societies and how her own research on the South African case contributes to the larger debate and literature.

Tracy Kuperus has made a valuable contribution to our understanding of church-state relations in twentieth century South Africa. While there have been other studies on civil society organizations, such as the Broederbond, and studies on the role of some of these groups within the apartheid state, Kuperus situates her study within the global context of civil society-state relations and demonstrates how the South African case compares with other examples in recent history. Her state-civil society typology should prove valuable to other scholars in this field and become a useful tool to compare societies across time and space. I would recommend this book for scholars studying civil society-state relations and for anyone interested in religion, apartheid, South African history and why my friend's good Christian mother sold old clothes to Blacks.

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