

# **Cementing Belief: Tracing the History of Modernist Afrikaans Church Architecture, 1955-1975**

by  
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## **Declaration**

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## **Summary**

In this thesis I examine the phenomenon of Modernist Afrikaans Protestant church architecture in the South African built environment during the mid- to late 20<sup>th</sup> century. I trace the relation of the Afrikaner nation and the Church since the arrival of the first Dutch settlers to the consolidation of Afrikaner nationalist rule in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, as background to a discussion of the emergence and development of Modernist architecture in South Africa. This thesis investigates the Modernist Afrikaans churches which appeared in urban landscapes across the country, with specific focus on the work of two architects, A.P.S. Conradie and Pieter J. Pelsler, both of whom have not been researched or written about in depth. As such, this study aims to contribute valuable knowledge and information to the field of South African architectural history.

## **Opsomming**

In hierdie tesis ondersoek ek die fenomeen van Modernistiese Afrikaanse Protestantse kerk argitektuur soos wat dit tydens die 20ste eeu in Suid-Afrika ontstaan het. Hierdie werk volg die verhouding tussen die Afrikaner nasie en die Kerk sedert die aankoms van die eerste Nederlandse setlaars tot die konsolidasie van die Afrikaner nationalistiese regering in die 20ste eeu. Dit dien as agtergrond vir die bespreking oor die ontstaan en ontwikkeling van Modernistiese argitektuur in Suid-Afrika sowel as die Modernistiese Afrikaanse kerke wat in die stedelike landskappe reg oor Suid-Afrika verskyn het. Hierdie tesis ondersoek die werk van twee argitekthe, A.P.S. Conradie en Pieter J. Pelsler oor wie daar geen akademiese navorsing of skryfwerk gedoen is nie. As sulks, dien hierdie studie om waardevolle kennis en inligting aan die veld van Suid-Afrikaanse argitektoniese geskiedenis by te dra.

## **Dedication**

I dedicate this work to my parents and brother who have showed tremendous support throughout the research and writing of this thesis. Without their love, understanding and compassion, this work would have never been completed. This thesis is written in honour of A.P.S. Conradie and Pieter J. Pelsler, both prolific architects whose work is worthy of the highest commendation.

## **Acknowledgements**

I would like to thank my supervisor, Lize van Robbroeck for her patience, guidance, motivation and support. Without her insight into this topic and unwavering enthusiasm, I would not have been able to do this thesis justice. Furthermore I would like to extend my thanks to Basil Brink who encouraged and supported me throughout this journey. I hereby express my gratitude to Pieter J. Pelsler who was willing to meet with me and discuss his life, work and approach to church architecture. These sentiments are extended to the Conradie family who were both generous and eager to share their memories and personal archives of A.P.S. Conradie's work. Moreover I greatly appreciate the insight and wisdom which Schalk le Roux generously shared with me on this particular subject. I would like to sincerely thank Karen Minnaar and Isabel Murray from the NG Kerk in S.A. archives at the Stellenbosch University faculty of Theology. Lastly, I would like to express my gratitude to David Goldblatt who agreed to meet with me and discuss his ideas concerning the phenomenon of Modernist Afrikaans church architecture.

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## Introduction

“Politics is not necessarily the stuff of architecture, but if architecture is the ideas and ideals of society reflected in built form, what we see of what remains is still a reflection of those past ideologies, although now defunct” (Fisher & Clarke, 2014:15).

This thesis explores the radical shift in the appearance of Afrikaans Protestant church<sup>1</sup> architecture in the 20<sup>th</sup> century and aims to uncover the reasons for this sudden upsurge of Modernist churches. This requires an investigation into the history of the Afrikaner’s close affiliation with Protestantism and the role the Church played in the social, economic and political climate of South Africa in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. This background enables an investigation of how and why Afrikaner nationalism developed alongside architectural and cultural Modernism. This study culminates in an in-depth discussion of the work of two prolific Afrikaans architects who designed numerous Dutch Reformed Churches in the Cape Province during the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Due to the historical context in which these structures were built, my research questions whether these churches can be deemed as expressions of Afrikaner nationalism. Although the architects did not necessarily design these buildings with overt nationalist or political agendas in mind, it can be argued that the role they and their churches played in mid-twentieth century Afrikaner society served to bolster an Afrikaner nationalist agenda. In order to obtain information surrounding this personal aspect of the research, interviews with the architects, their family members and colleagues were conducted. The primary research resulted in the acquisition of valuable facts and information that adds to the academic databases on South African architecture.

Since Modernist Afrikaner church structures remain prominent features in towns and cities across South Africa, this thesis aims to uncover the reasons behind this structural, symbolic and visual prominence. This in turn necessitates an exploration of the various motivations for the designs and styles developed by individual architects. In line with this question, I aim to uncover the reason why the Church, as a highly conservative institution, agreed to the use of

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<sup>1</sup> The term ‘Afrikaans (Protestant) church’ is an umbrella term which refers to the three sister churches, namely the Dutch Reformed Church, the Dutch Restructured Church and the Reformed Church.

overtly Modernist designs for their religious structures. Although the South African architects of the twentieth century were following the architectural trends of their counterparts in Europe and the United States of America, the question the implementation of Modernist architecture for public and religious buildings remains vital to understanding the cultural climate in South Africa during the apartheid regime. It is at this point that the economic and cultural upward mobility of the white South Africans, and Afrikaners in particular, becomes essential to comprehending the phenomenon of Modernist architecture, which became a pervasive trend during the period of Afrikaner nationalist rule.

The reason for selecting this research topic stems from a long term interest in architecture. I was raised in Somerset West, and have been familiar with the Helderberg Dutch Reformed Church<sup>2</sup> since a young age. This overtly Modernist structure dominates the built environment in the surrounding landscape of the urban region of my youth.

My fascination with this church aesthetic inspired questions about local approaches to and adaptations of international, avant-garde architectural styles. Throughout my undergraduate courses in Visual Studies, I became aware of how art movements and architectural trends are informed and often influenced by socio-economic and political developments in the eras in which they emerge. In my Honours year, I embarked on an investigation of the relation between Modernist Afrikaans church architecture and Afrikaner nationalist ideology. In researching this topic, I uncovered numerous socio-economic and political connections that link the upsurge of Modernist Afrikaans church architecture to the political status of the country at the height Afrikaner nationalist rule.

As I delved into the literature surrounding the topic, I realized the extent of the gap within this field of South African architectural history. This hiatus was surprising, as this potentially rich topic combines issues such as the history of the Afrikaner nation in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, their dependency on and devotion to the Church and Calvinist beliefs, the rise of Afrikaner nationalism and the distinct use of Modernist architecture as an expression of upward mobility. This topic uncovers a crucial portion of the reasoning behind the foundation of and justification for the apartheid regime. It is vital to understand the Afrikaner nation's need to create an Afrikaner state and uncover the manner in which they sought to justify their

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<sup>2</sup> This church was designed by Pieter J. Pelsler, one of the chosen architects of this study.

campaigns by means of religious validation. In essence, this style of church architecture intended to speak to and for a burgeoning Afrikaner nation.

This study mainly adopts a historical approach because an in-depth consideration of context provides the only frame within which the sudden emergence of a radically Modernist church design can be understood.

As far as the theoretical framework is concerned, Louis Althusser's notion of 'ideological state apparatuses', as outlined in his seminal text 'Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses' (1971) serves as the foundation for my understanding of Afrikaans churches within the context of South Africa under Afrikaner nationalist rule. In his essay, Althusser refers to the Church as an ideological device which functions to support and validate the dominant political agendas of the state. As such, the ideological function of the Church becomes vital to unpacking the role this institution played in both ordering and regulating Afrikaner society throughout the course of the apartheid government.

As a means to comprehend the reasons for the upsurge of Modernist architecture in South Africa under Afrikaner nationalist rule, I consult Daniel Herwitz's chapter, 'Modernism at the margins' in Judin and Vladislavic's book entitled, *Blank\_\_: Architecture, Apartheid and After* (1999). In this text, Herwitz considers the various forms that Modernism (specifically architectural Modernism) takes on in a country such as South Africa. This study is further enriched by Avril Bell's concept of 'settler identities' as put forth in her 2014 publication, *Relating Indigenous and Settler Identities: Beyond Domination*.

In order to create a broad historical survey of the rise of Afrikaner nationalism, I relied on Herman Giliomee's comprehensive book, *The Afrikaners: Biography of a People* (2003). This helped me to gain a proper understanding of the intricacies surrounding the social, economic and political climate which held sway over the Afrikaner nation during the course of the apartheid regime. To elaborate this broad historical background with a focus on the economic status of the Afrikaners during the 20<sup>th</sup> century, I refer to Dan O'Meara's two seminal publications, *Volkskapitalisme: Class, Capital and Ideology in the Development of Afrikaner Nationalism 1934-1948* (1983) and *Forty Lost Years: The apartheid state and the politics of the National Party, 1948-1994* (1996).

To explain Modernism as a philosophical concept which translated into art and architectural movements, I consulted Richard Weston's *Modernism* (2001) which traces a chronological account of the various styles and political agendas that informed the different Modernist movements in nation states across the world. To investigate the manner in which Modernism developed and functioned alongside Afrikaner nationalism in South Africa during the course of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, I refer to various chapters on the topic in Judin and Vladislavic's *Blank\_\_*: *Architecture, Apartheid and After* (1999). Roger .C. Fisher and Nicholas J. Clarke's book, *Architectural Guide: South Africa* is crucial in the quest to understand how political agendas inform architectural movements, with the focus on the National Party governance and Modernist architecture in South Africa.

Little has been written on the topic of Modernist Afrikaans church architecture, yet there is a small amount of valuable sources that I consulted to gain insight into both the context and aesthetic features of these church structures. I draw on David Goldblatt's 1998 publication, *The Structures of Things Then* in which he not only touches on but examines the historical and ideological aspects of this architectural phenomenon. Furthermore I make use of Doreen Greig's book, *A Guide to Architecture in South Africa* (1971) in which she discusses the arrival, rise and appearance of Modernist architectural trends. Her descriptions of individual structures provided indispensable guidance for my own analyses.

Despite the gap that exists within the literature concerning this particular topic, there are a few key sources which investigate Modernist churches from this period. In her Doctoral dissertation, Noëleen Murray dedicates an entire chapter to Uytendogaardt's Brutalist church in Welkom. This chapter, entitled 'Bourgeois Afrikaner publics and Uytendogaardt's Dutch Reformed Church in Welkom West' helped me understand and critically analyse church commissions and the Afrikaner congregations' responses to these unconventional religious structures. Architect, Daan Kesting provides a broad historical overview of the architectural trends of Afrikaans churches in his Doctoral dissertation entitled, "Afrikaans-Protestantse Kerkbou: erfenis en uitdaging: 'n ondersoek na kerkbou met besondere verwysing na die gebruik en inrigting van die drie Afrikaanse (moeder) kerke, te wete die Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk; die Nederduitsch Hervormde Kerk van Afrika; en die Gereformeerde Kerk in Suid-Afrika" (1978). This encyclopaedic text helped me to form not only a basic understanding of the history of church architecture in South Africa, but also to gain insight into the importance of the Church and its design for Afrikaner congregations.

Federico Freschi's view on the major shift in Afrikaner architecture in the mid-20th century is fundamental to the formulation of this study. His text, "Afrikaner Nationalism, Modernity and the Changing Canon of 'High Art', 1948-1976" in Van Robbroeck's *Visual Century: South African Art in Context: Volume Two, 1945-1976* (2011) outlines the cultural developments that informed Afrikaner art and architecture during those years. The following books also provided information on the unfolding of Modernist architecture during the 20<sup>th</sup> century: R.C. Fisher's *Architecture of the Transvaal* (1998) and C.M. Chipkin's *Johannesburg Transition: Architecture and Society from 1950* (2008).

Additionally I conducted fieldwork excursions to the selected churches in order to consult their archives. In doing so, I uncovered valuable source material surrounding the architectural plans, construction costs and symbolism of each building. Interviews with the respective clergy were conducted to supplement the archival information and source material.

In order to gain information on the architects and their church structures, I accessed the NG Kerk in S.A. Archive at Stellenbosch University's Theology Faculty. Furthermore, I conducted a series of personal interviews with numerous architectural theorists such as Basil Brink, Schalk le Roux, Melinda Silverman and Ilze Wolff, as well as meeting with the architects, their family members and colleagues to gain further insight into their lives, work and specific church commissions.

The first chapter of this study deals with the social, economic and political history of the Afrikaner nation since the arrival of the first Dutch settlers in the mid-17<sup>th</sup> century until the consolidation of Afrikaner nationalist rule in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The establishment of the Afrikaner nation as a homogenous entity is examined according to Benedict Anderson's formulation of nationalism as put forth in his 1983 publication, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism*. Althusser's theory of the Church as an ideological state apparatus further informs this discussion.

The second chapter examines the arrival, development and nature of Modernist architecture, first in the international scene and then within the South African context. I determine what this mode of architecture signified and how the ambitions and tenets of Modernism coincided with the spirit of Afrikaner nationalism. The focus is on investigating the relation between Modernist Afrikaans church architecture and Afrikaner nationalist ideology.



The final chapter of this study focuses on the core theme of the research and includes an in-depth investigation of Afrikaans church architecture in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The focus is on four prolific Afrikaans architects who produced unique church structures during the course of their careers: Johan de Ridder, J. Anthonie Smith, A.P.S. Conradie and Pieter J. Pelsler. The main architects of this study are A.P.S. Conradie and Pieter J. Pelsler, who both practiced in the Cape Province during the latter half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The discussions include brief biographical introductions and an analysis of their interests in, and unique adaptations of architectural Modernism. As such, I look into their respective icons and international sources of inspiration. Furthermore, since there is little to no recorded descriptions or discussions of their work, this chapter includes critical analyses of the case study churches, including their respective styles, aesthetics and iconography. These analyses include both the interiors and exteriors of each structure, and provide discussions of the specific commissions, the symbolic value of each structure and how they feature in their specific rural, suburban or urban surroundings.

## Chapter 1 - Blood, Soil and the Boere Nation: A History of the Afrikaners

For the purpose of this study it is crucial to gain a thorough understanding of how the Afrikaner<sup>3</sup> state consolidated its power through the use of Ideological State Apparatuses,<sup>4</sup> in order to demonstrate the pivotal involvement of Church and state. The synthesis of Christian-Nationalism with Afrikaner economic and political power brought about Afrikaner national domination in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. One is able to situate the Dutch Reformed Church as the dominant ideological institution on account of the influence it had on the education system, culture and the Church's subsequent affiliation with the government's socio-political policies and economic strategies. Commenting on this relation between Church and state, Goldblatt<sup>5</sup> asserts the following,

Apartheid has its roots deep in Afrikaner Christian-Nationalism and was actively supported and propagated by the Afrikaner Protestant churches [...] There can be no-one in South Africa, Black or White, whose life was not profoundly affected by the tragic obsession of Afrikaner Christian-Nationalists with their own religious, national and racial identity, their will to power and ultimately, with the expression of all this in the ideology of apartheid (1998:14).

In light of this statement, Louis Althusser's theories concerning ideological functioning can be applied to South African governance during the apartheid years. In his essay entitled *Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses*, the French late-Marxist philosopher contends that ideology is, "the system of the ideas and representations which dominate the mind of a man or a social group" (Althusser, 1971:146). He investigates the material manifestation of ideology within society and examines the manner in which certain socio-economic structures instantiate their ideologies through institutions, also known as 'Ideological State Apparatuses'. Althusser differentiates between what he termed 'Repressive State Apparatuses' and 'Ideological State

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<sup>3</sup> In this study, 'Afrikaner' refer to the white, Afrikaans-speaking population of South Africa who culturally identify with the Afrikaner traditions.

<sup>4</sup> This term was developed by Louis Althusser, a 20<sup>th</sup> century philosopher who theorises how ideology informs our constitution as subjects (Barker, 2004:96).

<sup>5</sup> David Goldblatt, a renowned South African photographer is known to have, "...long eschewed the didactic aesthetics of South Africa's resistance-era documentary photography", an attitude which he has maintained throughout his career and earned him the title as one of the country's foremost documentary photographers (Maltz-Leca, 2009:227). Goldblatt's sentiments concerning the history of Afrikaner Protestant Church architecture are articulated from a photographer's point of view. These were issued in his seminal publication 'The Structures of Things Then', a photographic exploration of the physical structures which came to embody the history of racism and the remnants of apartheid's traumatic outcomes (Maltz-Leca, 2009:227).

Apparatuses'. The Repressive State Apparatuses function predominantly by repressive forces and to a lesser extent by ideology, as imposed by the government, army, police, courts and prisons. The Ideological State Apparatuses however function predominantly by ideology but as Althusser states, "...they also function secondarily by repression, even if ultimately, but only ultimately, this is very attenuated and concealed, even symbolic" (1971:138). The ideological institutions consist of the Church,<sup>6</sup> the educational system, the family, the media and cultural organisations. Citizens find themselves bound to the prevailing ideology of the state by means of accepting and associating themselves with the practices of these institutions. This system of ideological absorption interpellates<sup>7</sup> individuals as subjects who subscribe to the dominant belief system of their nation state (Althusser 1971:139). As the apartheid system developed and gained a larger and more devoted Afrikaner following, the alliance between Church and state fused into an inseparable bond. As such, the Church became the moral spearhead of the apartheid government as it justified and propagated the ethical reasoning behind its legislated segregation.

A brief overview of early to mid-20<sup>th</sup> century South African history is required to outline the socio-political context within which the Modernist Dutch Reformed Churches emerged. The ensuing discussion will therefore elucidate the social, cultural, economic and political factors that contributed to the rise and triumph of Afrikaner nationalism. In his study on the emergence of *Volkskapitalisme*,<sup>8</sup> O'Meara posits Afrikaner nationalism as a response to the class struggle (which will be discussed in due course) that permeated the greater Afrikaner ethnic identity in the first decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. However, he stresses that this nationalistic phenomenon is not merely tied to economic concerns, "Afrikaner nationalism was more than a passive response to class struggles. It developed as one of the organisational and ideological forms through which these struggles were fought out" (O'Meara, 1983:16). The development of this ideology derives from various factors which motivated Afrikaner ideologues to enhance the identity of the Afrikaner people. Moreover, it was through the promotion and realisation of the

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<sup>6</sup> Althusser states that the Church was hailed as the dominant Ideological State Apparatus in the pre-capitalist period of European history. The Church served not only a religious, but an educational, commercial and cultural function. With the Reformation and the advent of the modern capitalist system, Althusser argues that the educational system has replaced the Church as the dominant Ideological State Apparatus as it is regarded as the main contributor to the, "reproduction of the relations of production, i.e. of capitalist relations of exploitation" (1971:148).

<sup>7</sup> The Oxford Dictionary of English defines 'interpellate' as giving an identity to an individual or category by means of an ideology or discourse (Oxford Dictionary of English, 2003, s.v. 'interpellate').

<sup>8</sup> *Volkskapitalisme* refers to the economic movement which sought to mobilise the Afrikaner nation. Throughout his investigation of this phenomenon, O'Meara maintains that the rise of 20<sup>th</sup> century Afrikaner nationalism was the outcome of a cumulative fusion of Afrikaner capital and ideological concerns.

nationalist movement that a unique Afrikaner identity was constructed in the field of visual arts. Thus the history focuses on the upward mobility of the Afrikaners from dire poverty and disenfranchisement to full state and economic power. This narrative of Afrikaner community efforts towards the collective enrichment of Afrikaners found expression in the communities' establishment of the Church as the heart and soul of Afrikaner cultural life.

When contemplating nationalism as a tool of unification, it is necessary to delineate its distinctive features. According to Benn, nationalism comprises the following characteristics: that of a resolute devotion to the nation; the demonstration of unwavering support for the interests of one's own nation when competing against others and having a high regard for the distinguishing characteristics of the nation which promotes the preservation of the distinct national culture (2006:481). Benn captures the ideological nature of nationalism as follows, "each nation is entitled to an independent government of its own, that states are legitimate only if constituted in accordance with this principle, and that the world would be rightly organized, politically speaking, only if every nation formed a single state and every state consisted exclusively of the whole of one nation" (2006:481). This description sketches a utopian ideal of nationalism that excludes the often volatile consequences which follow from the quest to attain the sovereign nation state. Nationalism often arises as a collective response to injustice as experienced by an ethnic group whose social, economic, cultural and political interests have been relegated at the hands of a dominant group. The tension accompanying nationalism is therefore attributable to the struggle for power and dominance between the inhabitants of a given territory. This offers an explanation for the emergence of Afrikaner nationalism in the 20<sup>th</sup> century since the formation of an Afrikaner social identity<sup>9</sup> developed in reaction to the tangible threats of anglicisation following the British occupation of the Cape in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, and the subsequent victory of the British in the Anglo-Boer war (Giliomee, 2014:224-225).

Before delving into a discussion surrounding the upsurge and triumph of Afrikaner nationalism in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, one must briefly trace the genealogy of the Afrikaner people. As the descendants of the first European settlers at the Cape, the Afrikaners of the 20<sup>th</sup> century defined themselves as a distinct ethnic group whose cultural, linguistic, religious and racial origins

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<sup>9</sup> In the case of the Afrikaners, the social identity of the individuals form the overarching social identity of the ethnic group, as the term refers to, "...one's social roles, such as gender, racial, religious, political, ideological and national group membership. Typically these roles involve ways that a person's identity is similar to others, such as sharing a physical characteristic, speaking a common language, having a similar social class or socio-economic status, practising the same religion or living in a common region" (Davis, 2008:555).

derive from the synthesis of 17<sup>th</sup> century Dutch, French and German influences<sup>10</sup> (Novati, 2007:25). Despite their shared European ancestry, the settlers sought to create a unified social identity which required the recognition of the commonalities between the members of the immigrant groups. From the onset of the colonial endeavour, religion played a seminal role in shaping and defining the identity of these early settlers.

## 1.1 Early History

Since the earliest establishment of the Cape of Good Hope by the VOC,<sup>11</sup> religion played an important role in organising the fledgling society. The Dutch established the official church in the colony as an extension of the Reformed Church<sup>12</sup> in the Netherlands. The Calvinist<sup>13</sup> doctrine which permeated 17<sup>th</sup> century Dutch Protestantism, informed the religious beliefs of the settler community. Furthermore, the Church played a decisive role in the establishment of the colony. The Cape was granted official recognition as a permanent settlement with the appointment of Johannes van Arckel as the first minister of the Cape Reformed Church in 1665 (Ritner, 1974:16).

The early Reformed Church did not have centralising power as fragmented groups of colonists were migrating into the interior, yet religion acted as a defining force among the European settlers.<sup>14</sup> The arrival of the French Huguenots<sup>15</sup> at the end of the 17<sup>th</sup> century caused a greater

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<sup>10</sup> The Dutch established the Cape settlement to serve as a refreshment station for the fleets of the Dutch East India Company ships which travelled between Europe and the Dutch colonies in the East. During the course of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, the Cape colony saw an influx of German tradesmen and French Huguenots who fled their European motherlands due to religious and political persecutions (Giliomee, 2003:4-5).

<sup>11</sup> The VOC or Vereenigde Oost-Indische Compagnie is the Dutch name for the Dutch East India Company (Giliomee, 2003:1).

<sup>12</sup> The Reformed Church in Europe was established as a result of the Protestant Reformation which is defined as the official schism within Western Christianity. Reformists in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, led by John Calvin and Martin Luther, protested the rituals, doctrines, leadership and ecclesiastical structure of the Roman Catholic Church. Reformed Christianity (Protestantism) is by definition more conservative and strict. Subsequently it denied all forms of ornamentation, opulence and the extreme affluence which was associated with Roman Catholicism. The Reformation also played a significant role in the birth of Enlightenment subjectivity as individuals were given the tools to question authority. People were taught and encouraged to read, write, philosophise, question and reason. The Reformation saw to it that the Bible was legible and accordingly, Europeans started to gain independence from authoritarian institutions such as the Roman Catholic Church. With the birth of the Enlightenment, Europe saw the exponential growth of economic wealth. As a result, The Dutch East India Company (VOC) was successfully run for approximately 200 years (1602-1799) and is often described as the first multinational company in the world. (Witte, 2007:12-13).

<sup>13</sup> Calvinism forms part of the Protestant movement of Reformed religion. This form of early Calvinism asserts the existence of an omnipotent God who exerts a direct influence on the lives of individuals (Giliomee, 2003:177).

<sup>14</sup> The first two church buildings were erected in Stellenbosch (1687) and Cape Town (1704) (Kesting, 1978:561).

<sup>15</sup> The Huguenots were a large group of French refugees who fled France after the Edict of Fontainebleau which withdrew the Edict of Nantes granting religious toleration to Protestants. Their plight against the Catholic Church for the acceptance of Reformed Christianity earned the French Huguenots sympathy and acceptance from the

influx of settlers to the Cape. It can be argued that their quest for religious freedom formed the social and religious character of the European settlement. The process of unification among the settlers materialised under the auspices of the Church, “Perhaps because the Cape was not colonized by people of a single European nationality, the colonists were even more inclined to use their Christian identity as a political identity” (Giliomee, 2003:41).

The burghers started to single themselves out as a distinct social and cultural group due to their European heritage and shared religious convictions. The Reformed Church in the Cape accepted a strand of Baptist theology which argued in favour of the notion of an internal and inherent ‘saved’ population. This notion upheld that the unborn children of Christian parents were already ‘saved’ in the womb. Baptism is a sacred ritual which symbolised the alliance between God, the infant and her/his parents who are responsible for educating their child in the Christian faith. However, confirmation became the main catalyst for acceptance into the settler society. It became common practice that marriage within the burgher community was merely consented if both partners were confirmed members of the Church. Baptism and confirmation were practices which re-affirmed the burgher’s relations to the broader Christian and European communities within the colony (Giliomee, 2003:43). Although non-European members of the respective communities in the Cape Colony were accepted into the Church, as slaves and children from mixed-racial descent were baptised, these incidents were scattered and rare (Giliomee, 2003:44). Moreover, during this period of acclimatisation, the settlers held sway in the political and economic positions which were established by the Dutch East India Company.

During the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the social hierarchies impacted on the economic and political domains within the colony. Throughout their migration into the interior, the farming communities laid claim to tracts of land which were inhabited by the indigenous nomadic tribes of the Cape Colony. These inhabitants were either enslaved or driven off the land which the farmers proclaimed as their own. Moreover, decimation was brought on by diseases such as smallpox and others through contact with the settlers (Giliomee, 1975:21-22). Conflict situations escalated as the *trekboers*<sup>16</sup> moved eastward in search of grazing land for their livestock. Their encounters with the Xhosa, who presided over the eastern borders of the colony, became

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Dutch settlers. Their influence on the structure and content of local religious attitudes was powerful and crystallised the true Afrikaner character as fundamentally rooted in Protestantism (Saunders, 1994:135).

<sup>16</sup> The *trekboers* were a group of seminomadic subsistence farmers who expanded the frontiers of the colony by migrating into the interior. In addition to their search of better pastures for their livestock, the trekboers pursued social, economic and political independence from the structures which governed the settler community in the Cape, whilst retaining their Christian beliefs as a distinctive characteristic of their social identity (Penn, 1996:126, 129).

increasingly violent as the struggle for control over the land resulted in nine frontier wars between 1771 and 1877. Ultimately the eastern regions of the Cape colony were seized by the British forces who overruled the Xhosa chiefdoms (Goldblatt, 1998:12). This is but one of the incidents where the governing power of Afrikaners<sup>17</sup> was severely shaken by the British who annexed the Cape at the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

## 1.2 British Occupation

Prior to the official establishment of British rule, the Cape functioned as half way service station for British ships en route to their colonies in the East. Responding to the increasing threat of French military power, Britain occupied the Cape in 1795. This prevented the French from seizing the Cape and ensured the longevity of the British trade route. Before the Cape was formally placed under British command, the Dutch presided over the colony between 1803 and 1806. The realisation of the strategic value and economic potential of the Cape impelled Britain to reclaim ruling power over the colony (Saunders, 1994:48).

The Cape Colony was officially ceded to Britain in 1814, after which drastic attempts were made to anglicise the settlement (Saunders, 1994:55). Britain in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century saw the rise of capitalism, free trade and liberalism. Consequently, these principles were brought to the Cape which caused a radical transformation in the socio-economic and political climate of the colony. The newly established British rule sought to abolish monopolies, rationalise taxes, register title deeds and free the Khoi workers from their obligatory labour duties (Goldblatt, 1998:12). Systems of free trade and private enterprise increased wheat cultivation alongside wine- and wool exports which enabled the colony to generate its own profits. The eradication of free labour became a requisite for the free market economy to flourish. Furthermore, the Ordinance 50 of 1828 granted the Khoisan equality before the law. By 1834, slavery was officially abolished in the colony (Saunders, 1994:49-50).

However progressive these socio-economic may have been, the outcomes unsettled the customary lifestyle of many frontier farmers who depended on slave labour for the prosperity of their agricultural endeavours. The emancipation of slaves impaired the economic welfare of

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<sup>17</sup> During the course of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the settlers started to refer to themselves as ‘Afrikaners’, a term which was previously used in reference to members of the non-white population. However this name was not adopted by all non-British members of the settler communities as officials in the Cape Town region showed preference for title ‘Capetonians’ (Giliomee, 1975:26).



the Boers<sup>18</sup> as large numbers of Khoi workers left their previous employers and consequently declined all offers to prolong their labour upon the farming estates (Giliomee, 2003:146). Moreover, many Afrikaners became increasingly dissatisfied with lenient attitude concerning segregation within the Dutch Reformed Church. The outcomes of the second Dutch Reformed Church synod in 1829 concluded that no form of segregation in the Church would be tolerated as secure labour relations within the post-slavery era required the continuation of non-racial policies within the Church (Giliomee, 2003:122). Despite a large portion of the Afrikaner population's disapproval of the inclusive attitude within the Church, some attempts were made to counter segregation in church services.

In 1834, the Dutch Reformed Church appealed to their congregations to respect and endorse the non-racial sentiments which were raised in the previous synod (Adonis, 2002:114). Some twenty years after the 1829 synod, Nicolaas Hofmeyr (1827-1909), an Afrikaans Dutch Reformed Church minister who studied theology in Utrecht, returned to the Cape with the desire to promote missionary work among the Afrikaner congregations. Additionally he advocated a racially inclusive attitude in his congregation in Calvinia<sup>19</sup> whereby Hofmeyr welcomed non-Europeans to his church services and encouraged members of the congregation to involve their servants in family devotions (Giliomee, 2003:123).

Despite the efforts to promote and endorse the non-racial attitudes within the Church, many Afrikaners felt marginalised by the social and economic outcomes which resulted from British rule. The anglicisation of the Cape fuelled the formation of a group conception among the Afrikaners which included the following: fostering the spoken language, uniting under a single religious denomination and identifying with the Germanic customs of their European predecessors (Giliomee, 1975:26-27). This became a method of cultural preservation as British domination stifled the development of their social identity.

Institutionalised anglicisation threatened to abolish the Afrikaner culture of the Cape as English became the official language of the courts and government offices. Free schooling was offered by educational institutions which exclusively conducted instruction in English. Furthermore, attempts were made to anglicise the Church as Lord Charles Somerset<sup>20</sup> addressed the shortage

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<sup>18</sup> The term 'Boer' derives from the Afrikaans word for 'farmer' and denotes the settlers who farmed in the Cape region and were responsible for the establishment of agriculture in the colony (Saunders, 1994:43).

<sup>19</sup> During the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the Calvinia congregation along with those in Riversdal, Paarl, Stellenbosch and Cape Town assigned separate seating arrangements for the non-European members of the church (Adonis, 2002:114).

<sup>20</sup> Somerset was the governor of the Cape colony from 1814 to 1826 (Moodie, 1975:4).



of ministers by inviting reverends from the Scottish Presbyterian Church to the Cape. By 1837 more than half of the Cape Synod consisted of Scottish reverends, yet a number of prominent figures such as Andrew Murray, Henry Sutherland and Colin Fraser made concerted efforts to master the Dutch language before commencing their duties in the Cape (Hofmeyr, 2002:78).

In addition to the social and cultural changes which thwarted the accustomed lifestyle of the Afrikaner, economic factors contributed to the social upheaval between the two groups. A shortage of land, labour and security fuelled the vexation of countless farmers who were denied the right to own property (Giliomee, 2003:144).

### 1.3 The Great Trek

The increased frustration of many frontier farmers resulted in the mass exodus, known as the Great Trek which saw the migration of approximately 15 000 Afrikaners to the interior during the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century (Goldblatt, 1998:13). A Graaff-Reinet official, J.N. Boshoff, explains that one of the causes of the Great Trek hinged on the fact that non-European populations were increasingly encouraged to consider themselves, “upon an equal footing with the whites in their religious exercises in the Church” (Giliomee, 2003:123). The Afrikaners became a marginalised group within the colony due to the liberal policies of the British towards non-Europeans. Furthermore, the threat of cultural demise urged a majority of the Afrikaners to trek into unknown regions of the interior and establish a self-governing state. The pursuit of independence, whether it derives from religious, cultural or political incentives, defined the character of the Afrikaner populace throughout the course of the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries.

T. Dunbar Moodie<sup>21</sup> contends that the history of the Afrikaner people, as viewed in accordance with his notion of ‘civil religion’ is centred on the Great Trek. In his view, the Afrikaner civil religion is,

invariably associated with the exercise of power and with the constant regeneration of social order, it provides a transcendent referent for sovereignty within a given territory. The ultimate nature and destiny of political power is thus connected in the symbols of the civil faith and re-enacted by civil ritual. The origins, the extent and limits, and the final purpose of political sovereignty are all thereby set within the

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<sup>21</sup> T. Dunbar Moodie was a professor in Anthropology and Sociology at Hobart and William Smith Colleges, Geneva, New York. He completed his doctorate in Religion and Society at Harvard University and continued his research in the social, cultural, political and economic realities of apartheid South Africa. His seminal text entitled, *The Rise of Afrikanerdom: Power, Apartheid and Afrikaner Civil Religion* was published in 1975 (Moodie, 1975:1).

context of ultimate meaning; aspiration to sovereign power and the exercise of sovereignty are given transcendent justification (1975:296).

The Voortrekkers'<sup>22</sup> quest for self-sufficiency drove them to adopt a nomadic lifestyle which demonstrated their courage and endurance. Furthermore, their isolated existence ingrained a resolute devotion to a belief in the sovereign power of an omnipotent God. Throughout this period, 22 mother congregations were established for Afrikaner communities and the first church-villages were founded (Kesting, 1978:564). Moreover the Voortrekkers believed themselves to be 'God's chosen people' who associated their plight to break free from British ruling power and their exodus with the plight of the ancient Israelites who were in search of their own land. Upon arrival in the North Eastern territories, a group of Trekkers conceded that they arrived at the source of the Nile and aptly named their settlement 'Nylstroom' (Saunders, 1994:43). The most significant event of the Great Trek which informed the cultural and religious identity of the Afrikaner nation throughout the course of the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries was the Battle of Blood River in 1838.

Under the command of Pieter Retief, the trekkers who moved into Natal were lead to believe that they would be granted permission to settle in the region after forming a treaty with the Zulu king, Dingane. After fulfilling his section of the agreement, Retief and his men arrived at Dingane's village to settle the negotiation which would secure the procurement of the land for the trekker community. Despite the warnings which Retief had received from those who were familiar with Dingane's treachery, he continued to trust the king's orders and commanded his men to abandon their weapons before entering the kraal to finalise the treaty. Upon their arrival, the king's men seized the trekkers and proceeded to club them to death. The Voortrekker defeat continued as Dingane sent his warriors to kill the rest of the trekker groups which were dispersed among the Natal plains (Giliomee, 2003:165).

After gaining knowledge of this violent attack, Voortrekker leader Andries Pretorius led an army of 470 men to combat an army of approximately 10 000 Zulu warriors in December 1838 (Giliomee 2003:165). Prior to the battle, Pretorius encouraged the formation of a holy covenant between the trekkers and God, given a victory over of the Zulu army. Sarel Cilliers led the vow among the trekker commando whereby it was declared that the trekkers and their descendants would annually commemorate the triumph over the Zulus and build a church in honour of the sanctified victory. The covenant was formed on the 16<sup>th</sup> of December 1838, the day of the

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<sup>22</sup> The title 'Voortrekkers' was given to the Afrikaners who embarked on the mass migration into the interior (Saunders, 1994:251).

Voortrekker's triumph over Dingane's army (Janse van Rensburg, 2009:40). This date would become one of the most important quasi-religious days for the greater Afrikaner nation. Furthermore, some prominent Afrikaner figures who participated in the trek,<sup>23</sup> adopted a form of Calvinism<sup>24</sup> that hinges on the notion of predestination which motivates believers to take action and pave their own way towards a better future. In such a way, this would function as an indication of their salvation. Ultimately it serves as a tool to instil a sense of agency in a group of people who regarded themselves as the 'chosen few', as a means to reinstate their providential destiny.

## 1.4 Boer Republics

Despite their efforts to form a permanent settlement in Natal, the Afrikaners decided to continue with their migratory efforts after the British annexation of the region in 1843. This second wave of the Great Trek saw the Voortrekkers heading towards the surrounding regions of the Vaal River. Settlements were formed on either side of the river which concluded the trekkers' quest to establish their socio-economic and political independence. Thereby the common goal to preserve their shared cultural and religious values was achieved. This isolated group of migrants concluded their extensive and arduous journeys into the interior with the establishment of the two Boer republics, the Zuid-Afrikaansche Republiek (ZAR) in 1852 and the Republic of the Orange Free State (OFS) in 1854. Afrikaner ideals were restored in the constitution which included legislation surrounding religious practices, racial relations and other socio-economic concerns (Stokes, 1975:68).

The fight for independence from any association with British rule furthered the Afrikaners' desire to institute their own churches within the republics. The Cape Reformed Church maintained its policy of racial equity, which was a major cause of the Trek. Given their relentless pursuit for independence coupled with the staunch piety of the trekkers, the establishment of new religious organisations inevitably followed from the foundation of the

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<sup>23</sup> President of the ZAR, Paul Kruger, who left the Cape at age ten with his family to join the trek, was a firm believer in orthodox Calvinism (Giliomee, 2003:177). As with the ancient Israelites of the Old Testament, Kruger understood the sacred history of the Afrikaners whereby, "...God chose His People (*volk*) in the Cape Colony and brought them out into the wilderness" (Moodie, 1975:26).

<sup>24</sup> French-born Protestant Reformer and theologian, John Calvin fled France due to his Protestant beliefs which were not accepted by the strict Roman Catholic orthodoxy. During his time of refuge in Switzerland, Calvin compiled the *Institutes*, which was to become his masterwork. After the publication of the *Institutes*, Calvin became a renowned Reformation figure in Europe and was appointed as pastor of a French-speaking Protestant congregation who sought refuge in Strasbourg. It was during this time that he developed the notion of an elect or chosen people, whose divine destiny has been determined through the grace of God (Bouwsmas, 2015).

independent republics. Although the Afrikaners in the Orange Free State remained part of the *Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk* (NGK, Dutch Reformed Church), those who settled north of the Vaal River established the *Nederduitse Hervormde Kerk* (NHK, Dutch Restructured Church)<sup>25</sup> in 1853. Following from the initial schism, a faction of Afrikaners seceded from the *Nederduitse Hervormde Kerk* and founded the *Gereformeerde Kerk* (GK, Reformed Church) in 1859. Deemed as the most theologically conservative church, the *Gereformeerde Kerk* strictly adhered to the principles of orthodox Calvinist principles which were advocated by Paul Kruger,<sup>26</sup> a co-founder of the church. However, these divisions were not necessarily acrimonious. As Serfontein states, "...despite minor differences of doctrine and practice (the GK for instance, uses only paraphrased psalms in its worship services, rejecting hymns) in fact they are so close that transfer of membership is automatic from one to the other" (1982:127).

The migration to and settlement in the northern regions of the country was grounded in the trekkers' quest for independence. This was threatened upon the discovery of diamonds and gold in the Boer Republics,<sup>27</sup> which led to a large-scale influx of foreign investors, some of whom gained control over the fields and became mining magnates.<sup>28</sup> The rapid expansion and modernisation of Johannesburg, which accompanied the discovery of the Witwatersrand gold reef in 1886, alienated and divided the majority of the traditional agrarian Afrikaner communities in the region (Sadie, 1975:87).

The Afrikaners were divided into three socio-economic groups: first, the rentier landlords who accumulated wealth from leasing land on their large estates to workers and tenants. Second, the smaller landowners who gained their income in a similar manner but on a much smaller scale. Third, and at the bottom of the Afrikaner socio-economic tier, an increase in landless farmers saw the expansion of the *bywoner* class who became tenants or worked as

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<sup>25</sup> The *Nederduitse Hervormde Kerk* was founded by Dirk van der Hoff, a Dutch minister who propagated racial exclusivity which opposed the liberal attitudes of the Cape church. He continued to establish his own church on grounds of this doctrine (Dreyer, 2002:113).

<sup>26</sup> Kruger, who served as the first state president of the ZAR, adhered to the form of Calvinism which asserts the existence of an all-powerful God. Moreover this belief is supplemented by the notion of predestination and the subsequent conception of a chosen or 'elect' people which formed part of Kruger's understanding of the relation between the Voortrekkers and God (Giliomee 2003:177).

<sup>27</sup> Alluvial diamonds were discovered near Hopetown on the banks of the Orange River in 1867 and were later mined in Kimberley, a town in the Orange Free State. The discovery of diamonds in Griqualand West led to the British annexation of the area in 1871. This evoked a nationalist sentiment among the Free State Afrikaners who were ardently opposed to British infiltration (Heydenrych, 1992:149). Gold was first discovered and mined in the 1870s, yet after the unearthing of the Witwatersrand reef in 1886, the ZAR had the largest known gold reserves in the world (Grundlingh, 1992:184).

<sup>28</sup> Cecil John Rhodes, a self-proclaimed jingoist and British imperialist capitalised on his timely arrival in South Africa. Within the space of twenty years, Rhodes founded two major mineral extracting companies, De Beers Consolidated Mines and the Goldfields of South Africa Company (Giliomee 2003:233).

sharecroppers on the farms owned by the Boer landlords. Those who were unable to enter the agricultural sector migrated to the mining towns and entered the unskilled labour force (O'Meara, 1983:24). The outcomes of these demographic changes impacted on the structure of the economy which no longer solely rested on agriculture, but underwent rapid growth due to the burgeoning mining industry. Mining communities fuelled the demand for agricultural produce which effected the change from subsistence to commercial farming (Visser, 2014:199).

However, the decade following the Witwatersrand discovery brought rapid social, economic and political changes to the lives of the Afrikaner inhabitants in the Boer republics. The agricultural sector buckled under the rinderpest epidemic of 1896, which killed 90% of all cattle in Southern Africa. Moreover the imminent threat of British rule culminated in the Jameson Raid, a failed attempt to conquer the ZAR and seize Kruger's government. Towards the closing of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, a great disunity existed among the Afrikaner people caused by migratory movements which resulted from the rapid urbanisation of rural communities. Prominent figures in the Afrikaner societies voiced contesting definitions of whom and what qualifies as a 'true Afrikaner'.<sup>29</sup> Despite the conflicting opinions which were raised, the Raid sent a shock to the hearts of all Afrikaners and roused a national consciousness, calling for Afrikaner unification across borders, as Britain was determined to gain control over the republics (Giliomee, 1975:34).

The rapid growth of nationalist sentiments during the latter half of the nineteenth century was seen as a reaction by the Afrikaners towards the proliferation of British intervention in South Africa and subsequent threat of anglicisation. The plight of the Afrikaner nation to preserve and protect its language, religion and traditions from British intervention intensified the existing relation between the Dutch Reformed Church and the Afrikaner people.<sup>30</sup> It should be

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<sup>29</sup> In the Cape Colony the minister and activist of the language movement, S.J. du Toit propagated an exclusive profile of the Afrikaner whereby the promotion of the Afrikaner language and culture had to be upheld within the realm of the anglicised environment. Jan Hofmeyr (also known as 'Onze Jan') had a more inclusive approach to the question of Afrikanerdom whereby the linguistic and cultural influences of the English and Dutch were accepted. Moreover, in the constitution of the Afrikaner Bond, the first political organisation, Hofmeyr stated that despite their origins, all Afrikaners who concern themselves with promoting the welfare of the country, are welcomed to the union. In the republics, the Afrikaner leaders had their own divergent views. President Paul Kruger viewed the republican Afrikaners as 'God's Chosen People' and was vehemently opposed to the integration of foreigners into the Afrikaner communities (Giliomee, 1975:33-34). Schalk Burger, the chairman of the Volksraad endorsed a wholly exclusive definition of the 'Afrikaner', "...the word Afrikaner should be interpreted as Transvaaler. Everyone from beyond the borders of the Republic must be viewed as a stranger, no matter if he came from the Free State, the colony, England or Holland." (Giliomee, 2003:229)

<sup>30</sup> Dutch Reformed clergymen were at the forefront of the fight to retain Afrikaner language rights in the Cape during the 1880s (Giliomee 2003:204).

mentioned that many Afrikaner farming families were fairly isolated from one another and often only attended large communal gatherings on an annual basis. Religious celebrations such as *nagmaal*<sup>31</sup> were regarded as large-scale social occasions and maintained the strong cultural, communal and religious ties between rural Afrikaner families. Between the years 1839 and 1902, the number of Afrikaans Protestant mother congregations increased to a total of 265 (Kesting, 1978:565).

The turn of the twentieth century saw the Afrikaner nation traumatised and defeated after the devastation of the Anglo-Boer war of 1899-1902 (Saunders 1994:225). With the victory of the British, who gained control over the two Boer Republics, the war was seen as the catalyst which transformed Afrikaner national consciousness from a passive cultural to an actively political ideology. During the war, the British implemented a scorched earth policy whereby whole farms were burnt to ashes, food supplies were ruined and cattle were killed. Furthermore, the women and children who were left destitute after the obliteration of their homesteads were taken to concentration camps to prevent the Boer soldiers from obtaining food supplies. Approximately 27 000 women and children perished in the camps, while 30 000 farms were destroyed, and 5 000 Boer soldiers died in battle (Giliomee, 2003:256).

A nationalist awakening swept across the country and inspired a tenacious effort to rebuild the demolished structures and re-establish Afrikaner morale. Religion became a tool of unification as the Dutch Reformed Church supported the soldiers during the war and greatly contributed to uplifting the Afrikaner nation after the peace settlements were signed. The Church was involved with establishing orphanages for the children who were left orphaned after the devastation of the war and furthered the cultural preservation of the Afrikaners by promoting a Christian-National Education system in schools across the country (Hofmeyr & Nieuwoudt, 2002:161). However, the main concern of the Afrikaner people in the post-war period was of an economic nature. The agrarian crisis resulting from the devastating outcomes of the previous decade impelled Afrikaner leaders, “to salvage their people, in particular the poor, from ‘going under’ in an economic revolution conducted by an alien imperial power” (Giliomee & Schlemmer, 1989:8). The emergence of widespread poverty among the Afrikaners was a

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<sup>31</sup> *Nagmaal* is the Afrikaans word for communion, a service which took place every three months and greatly contributed to the intellectual and moral instruction of rural Afrikaners. Albertyn elaborates on the importance of these religious gatherings, “The social intercourse at such festivals which sometimes lasted from five to six days, - the catechism, the school instruction, the celebration of the Sacraments, the weddings, the widening of outlook, and the strengthening of the social sense – all contributed materially to the moulding of the young nation” (1932:52).



consequence of urbanisation that increased during the mineral revolution. However, it became an onerous social, economic and political concern after the war, since the Afrikaners were left impoverished without their agricultural property and were forced to adapt to the alien environments in the cities where they had to compete with the skilled African labour force (Giliomee, 2003:322).

In the years leading up to the consolidation of the four colonies and the forming of the Union of South Africa in 1910, the British colonial administration introduced measures to facilitate the emergence of commercial agriculture. Larger landowners became the catalysts of this capitalist farming development which followed from the traditional pastoralist approach to agricultural production. By 1908 the commercial farmers in the Boer republics had succeeded in removing a large portion of African and Afrikaner tenants from their estates in order to use the land for large scale production. This had dire implications for the Afrikaner *bywoners* who were driven off the land and left their pastoral environments to join the ever-expanding unemployed masses of urban Afrikaners, in the cities. An estimated total of 12 000 whites left their rural communities and were displaced within the industrial setting of busy urban centres in commercial towns and cities across the country (O'Meara 1983:26). The rising urbanisation had traumatic social consequences for the Afrikaners as they were placed in close contact with non-Europeans and English-speaking citizens. The question of assimilating and identifying with the newly forged white South African populace was challenging as the trauma of the war and memories of the concentration camps were alive and fresh in the hearts and minds of the Afrikaners. Defining the ethnic identity and fostering the language, culture, history and religion of the Afrikaner people raised questions surrounding the conception of a distinct form of nationalism which would consolidate a group conception and strengthen the ties between members of the *volk*<sup>32</sup> (Giliomee, 1975:36).

### 1.5 Years of Union

In terms of political developments during this period, the Afrikaners aimed to conciliate white South Africans within the Union which formed part of the British Commonwealth (Saunders, 1994:225). The South African Party (SAP) was formed in 1911 by the merging of the Afrikaner Bond in the Cape Colony and the Het Volk party from the Transvaal. It was led by Louis Botha and Jan Smuts, the Boer generals who aimed to placate the tensions between Afrikaans- and

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<sup>32</sup> *Volk* is an Afrikaans term for the Afrikaner nation or people.

English-speaking South Africans. It was supported mainly by capitalist farmers in the Transvaal after the SAP split in 1913. Conversely, General J.B.M. Hertzog broke away from the SAP and formed the National Party (NP) in 1914. It was grounded in a strong republican approach and was widely supported by the stock farmers as well as the smaller farmers who were severely affected by proletarianisation (O'Meara, 1983:26).

As before, authority figures and political leaders in the Afrikaner communities raised divergent definitions of nationalism within their own spheres as the need to consolidate the nation reached a climactic juncture. In October 1914 the Afrikaner Rebellion materialised after Prime Minister Botha's government decided to support Britain in the First World War against the German forces. The rebellion resulted from strong division which permeated the Afrikaner nation as many people were ardently opposed to assisting the British against the Germans who had been sympathetic towards the Boers during their war against Britain. In the end, it culminated in a poorly organised attempt to defy Parliament's decision to invade German South-West Africa (SWA) and resulted in a clash between policemen, soldiers and rebels, all of whom were Afrikaners.

Despite the loss of lives,<sup>33</sup> the rebellion exemplified the resurfacing of latent aggression and resentment felt by countless Afrikaners who were vehemently opposed to abiding by the rules of the British who had relentlessly destroyed their morale and seized their independence a mere twelve years prior to these events. The call for the formation of a cohesive nationalism which would bind the Afrikaners derived from this incident, as Anderson theorised that a nation, which constitutes the communities and individuals who subscribe to the nationalist ideology, "is imagined as a *community*, because, regardless of the actual inequality and exploitation that may prevail in each, the nation is always conceived as a deep, horizontal comradeship. Ultimately it is this fraternity that makes it possible, over the past two centuries, for so many millions of people, not so much to kill, as willing to die for such limited imaginings" (1983:16). The Afrikaners were a deeply divided people who had to combat a myriad of social, economic and political issues, but their obstinate resistance to British authority demonstrated the need for unification. Hertzog's National Party won a great deal of support in the 1915 elections on account of its efforts to salvage the rebels who received large fines and were sentenced to imprisonment (Giliomee, 2014:295).

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<sup>33</sup> The rebels were a group of approximately 11 000 Afrikaners, of whom 190 died, while 132 soldiers and policemen were killed (Giliomee, 2014:294)



In the period following the rebellion, the Dutch Reformed Church gained a political and ethnic character. This resulted from the efforts of D.F. Malan, a Dutch Reformed minister in Graaff-Reinet, who raised a series of persuasive statements at a Dutch Reformed Church conference in Bloemfontein. The conference was organised with the aim of averting a church schism as congregations in the Free State had split due to conflicting views regarding the government's involvement in the First World War. Malan declared that it was the responsibility of the Church, "to be national in character and to watch over our particular national interests, to teach the people to see in their history and origin the hand of God, and furthermore to cultivate among the Afrikaner people the awareness of a national calling and destiny, in which the spiritual, moral and material progresses and strength of the people is laid up" (cited in Giliomee, 2003:385). It was not long after this declaration that Malan became editor of the Afrikaans newspaper, *De Burger*<sup>34</sup> and leader of the Cape wing of the National Party. Malan justified his entry into politics by proclaiming his mission to prevent the political divisions in the Afrikaner societies from causing schisms in the Church. The fusion of politics and religion underlay the NP's policy for the preservation of the Afrikaner nation's unique character by fostering the language and culture. The SAP's focus wavered on this particular issue of ethnic preservation as their policies were more attentive on the Afrikaner-English reconciliation and insisted on the severance of Church and state (Giliomee, 2003:386).

Malan's newspaper, *De Burger* became involved with the plight to alleviate the rebels from their financial burdens.<sup>35</sup> Consequently, the *Helpmekeer Vereniging* which functioned as a mutual aid foundation, was established in the four provinces as a means to accumulate funds with the aim of aiding the rebels with the payment of their fines as well as compensating for the civil claims. The accumulation of contributions was slow before Malan published appeals in *De Burger*<sup>36</sup> which greatly stimulated the income of wealth.<sup>37</sup> By 1917, the foundation had successfully accumulated enough funds to cover the fines and compensate for the damages.

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<sup>34</sup> *De Burger* (the Citizen) was established by a petty bourgeois group who formed the *Nasionale Pers* (National Press) which aimed to publish a newspaper that would advocate pro-Hertzog ideologies. This initiative was led by W.A. Hofmeyr, a Cape lawyer and Afrikaner intellectual who, "...saw the golden opportunity to develop the national consciousness into a business consciousness". Consequently, Hofmeyr selected D.F. Malan to lead the National Party and edit *De Burger* (O'Meara, 1983:97).

<sup>35</sup> The claims of the rebels in the Free State and Transvaal amounted to an aggregated sum of £335 000 (Giliomee, 2003:386).

<sup>36</sup> Malan succeeded to clothe his appeals with nationalist sentiment. Statements such as, "No one who calls himself an Afrikaner can stay behind" and "Christians had to give to those in need" aligned the Christian duty to a form of philanthropic nationalism which appealed to a wider Afrikaner audience (Giliomee, 2003:386).

<sup>37</sup> J.E. de Villiers of Paarl pledged to contribute a sum of £500 if five hundred others contributed £100 each. From this point forward, many affluent and middle class Afrikaners started to donate money to the foundation (Giliomee, 2014:295).

The remaining balance of £92 000 was invested and utilised to establish the insurance companies, Sanlam and Santam (Giliomee, 2014:295). Both companies were vested in furthering capital and providing credit in the field of agricultural developments. Moreover, Santam and Sanlam promoted themselves as, ‘genuine Afrikaner people’s institutions’ (Giliomee, 2003:387). As the expansion and success of the companies steadily progressed to a prosperous status, the majority of farmers in the Cape, OFS and Transvaal supported the National Party.

## 1.6 Afrikaner Nationalism

It was during this time that Afrikaner nationalism became a fully-fledged national movement as the majority of Afrikaners were struggling to maintain their social, economic and cultural autonomy within a governmental system which sought to relegate their nationhood. In 1918, the Afrikaner Broederbond was established from a group who titled themselves, ‘Jong Suid-Afrika’. The role of the Afrikaner Broederbond was to unite and aid the Afrikaner nation which had endured a number of harrowing experiences<sup>38</sup> since the formation of the South African Union in 1910. The aims of the organisation included the following, “the promotion of a healthy and progressive spirit of unity among all Afrikaners aimed at the welfare of the Afrikaner nation; the cultivation of a national self-consciousness in the Afrikaner and the love for his language, religion, traditions, land and people, and the advancement of all the interests of the Afrikaner people” (cited in Giliomee, 2003:400-401). The Bond confined their membership to financially independent, Protestant, Afrikaans-speaking, white males who were concerned with the promotion of Afrikaner ideals in addition to fostering Afrikaner linguistic and cultural traditions. The organisation was formed in the Transvaal where the economic and political issues were far more acute than in the Cape. The establishment of the Bond exposed and broadcast anti-Cape sentiments which widened the division between northern and southern nationalist politics (O’Meara, 1983:59). However, the organisation enjoyed a successful growth rate and within ten years, thirteen branches were established, most of which were located in the Transvaal. At a conference in Bloemfontein, the Bond and approximately four hundred delegates from cultural organisations across the country founded the *Federasie van*

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<sup>38</sup> Of these traumatic experiences include the split of the South African Party in 1913 and the ramifications which followed from the Rebellion. Furthermore, agricultural production was dwindling as the influenza epidemic swept through the country. Consequently, the outcomes of the Rebellion drove a large group of rural Afrikaners to the cities, which amplified the poor white problem within urban environments throughout the country (O’Meara, 1983:59).

*Afrikaanse Kultuurvereniging* (Federation of Afrikaans Cultural Associations/FAK) which had the express mission of promoting Afrikaans.

Although the Bond initially comprised a select group of the Afrikaner elite,<sup>39</sup> the organisation went underground in 1922 and spread its influence to other nationalist centres in the country. The ideological leadership of the Bond was based in Potchefstroom under the guidance of J.C. van Rooy. Potchefstroom was the cradle of neo-Calvinist<sup>40</sup> beliefs and propagated Kuyperian doctrines which proclaimed that the, “immutable exclusiveness of ethnic nationalities, and that all the various spheres of national life were subsumed within God’s calling” (Moodie, 1975:99). During the late 19<sup>th</sup> to early 20<sup>th</sup> century, there had been a significant change in the Afrikaner’s approach to Calvinism as two opposing strands of Calvinism emerged throughout the consolidation of Afrikaner nationalist ideologies. Some ministers and theologians of the Dutch Reformed Church tended to endorse the accepted form of Afrikaner Calvinism which had informed church doctrine since the arrival of the first Dutch settlers. Central to this tenet of Calvinism is the notion that the Church and state are distinct entities, but that the former should sustain the latter. Conversely, Kuyperian neo-Calvinism, which held sway within the Broederbond, propagated a different approach to the question of Church and state relations as, “...the church, the family and the state were absolute and answerable only to God, and they also functioned as interlocking theocracies within society as a whole” (Saunders, 1994:59).

As mentioned earlier, the waves of nineteenth century neo-Calvinism which influenced the development of twentieth century Afrikaner nationalist ideals were theorised by the Dutch theologian and politician, Dr Abraham Kuyper. Under Kuyper’s influence, the movement of *verzuiling* or pillarisation transpired in the Netherlands which caused the division of the country into separate, self-sufficient groups who live according to certain religious convictions or ideologies. During the height of Kuyper’s influence, D.F. Malan absorbed his principles whilst studying in the Netherlands. Upon his return to South Africa, Malan was convinced that the survival of the Afrikaners depended on their ability to independently organise themselves as a means to uphold their religious, cultural and political identity within a multi-national nation state (Giliomee & Schlemmer, 1989:43).

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<sup>39</sup> The Bond consisted of clergymen, teachers, academics, professionals, farmers, white-collar workers and politicians (Giliomee & Schlemmer, 1989:45).

<sup>40</sup> Neo-Calvinism is a reformed version of traditional Dutch Calvinism. It formed part of a political movement which was initiated by the Dutch Prime Minister, Abraham Kuyper (Saunders 1994:59).

Professor H.G. Stoker from the Potchefstroom University for Christian Higher Education expanded on Kuyper's principle of '*soweriniteit in eie kring*' (sphere sovereignty) allowing the sphere to include the individual, the spheres of human relationships and the cultural spheres.<sup>41</sup> Each category and sphere is destined to be subjected to God's plan, but are interdependent and interconnected due to their common subjection to the will of God (Moodie, 1975:65). Kuyper also propounded the view that each sphere of human life, including education, economics, politics, the family and the arts had to operate under the command of God and not the Church. He was opposed to the Church exercising control over politics, education and the arts and confined religion as a function of the Church. Although the Afrikaners did not fully uphold the Kuyperian means of ordering the nation, the neo-Calvinists supported and implemented a system surrounding his conviction that, "Calvinists (but not the church) must found Christian institutions in all spheres of life" (Elphick, 2012:240).

As Ritner states, religion had always played a decisive role in the formation and development of the Afrikaner nation, "the Afrikaners remain one of the few Western peoples of the modern era whose values and customs are established by, and expressed through, their church" (1974:8). Their approach to the cultivation of Afrikaner nationalism therefore acquired a religious overtone whilst the nationalists became a more organised faction that strove to enhance the social, economic and political status of the Afrikaner people in the early twentieth century. Each of the following organisations were aligned to a religious ideology which arose from the need to foster the Afrikaner's language and cultural traditions. The Afrikaner Broederbond became affiliated with neo-Calvinist ideologies. The FAK originated from the Broederbond and concerned itself with language matters. In 1930, the *Afrikaanse Taal- en Kultuurvereniging* (Afrikaner Language and Cultural Association/ATKV) was formed on request from Afrikaner railway workers and within six years, it had more than 11 000 members and campaigned for the promotion of Afrikaans as the language of communication on the railways. By 1938, the ATKV had organised and successfully accomplished the cross country ox-wagon trek in commemoration of the Great Trek (Giliomee, 2014:301-302).

Due to this concerted ideological effort, the National Party triumphed in the 1924 election and the Pact government, which was formed by the alliance of the NP and the Labour Party, came to power under the leadership of J.B.M. Hertzog. Hertzog aimed to garner enough support from Afrikaner nationalists to reach the point where South Africa did not have to be subjected to

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<sup>41</sup> The following institutions, organisations and fields were included in Stoker's reformulation of the Kuyperian spheres: the Church, state, family, morality, law, science, art, language and economy (Moodie, 1975:65).

British ruling power. Within the following decade, it was acknowledged that South Africa was an independent and sovereign state. This decision was reached by the Statute of Westminster and endorsed by the Status Act of 1934 (Giliomee, 2014:299). Thereupon, the Afrikaner nationalists were able to make headway in becoming a more institutionalised and organised movement.

D.F. Malan became a minister within the Pact government and submitted legislation granting Afrikaans the status of an official language within South Africa. By 1933, the Bible was successfully translated into Afrikaans, which became a benchmark for the pro-nationalist progress. Despite the success the government achieved in promoting the Afrikaans language and culture, the socio-economic status of the majority of the Afrikaners remained a pressing social and political issue.

### 1.7 The Poor White Question and Economic Developments

White poverty had been a pivotal issue within the Afrikaner political community since the 1890s. The initial causes of this socio-economic phenomenon stemmed from the increase in subsistence farming, the rinderpest epidemic, and devastating losses of farmland, crops, homesteads and livestock during the Anglo-Boer war and the subsequent mass migration of unskilled rural Afrikaners to urban centres (Giliomee & Mbenga, 2007:281). In the 1920s, white politicians became increasingly concerned about the increase in white poverty, which was far less severe than the destitution which affected black and coloured communities. There were two reasons given for the concern expressed about white poverty. Firstly, that white control would be difficult to uphold if a large percentage of the white population was subject to acute poverty. Secondly, the Afrikaner elite saw the necessity of forming an exemplary white population to alleviate poverty among black and coloured people. The issue of white poverty peaked and coincided with the Great Depression of 1929. In that year, the Carnegie Foundation in New York agreed to fund the investigation of the poor white question in South Africa.

The Dutch Reformed Church was greatly involved with the Carnegie research study and aided in the appointment of local researchers, all of whom were Afrikaans. Within three years, the commission published a compilation of five reports and estimated that approximately 300 000 white citizens were classified as indigent. Of those impoverished citizens, it was calculated that 250 000 were Afrikaners. In a report by the Cape Dutch Reformed Church, a poor white citizen was defined as, “someone who lacked self-dependence and was not in the position to take care

of himself and his family” (Giliomee, 2014:304). Of the various solutions given by the commission, the most significant recommendation was to improve the educational, technical and vocational training for white citizens. Moreover, the Hertzog government granted loans to farmers and provided relief measures after the combined devastation of the Depression and drought which greatly affected the agricultural sector.

The Dutch Reformed Church furthered its role in the socio-economic and political spheres with the organisation of a national conference which sought to discuss and address the issue of white poverty and enhance its status to a top priority on the national agenda. The ultimate solution and eradication of this nation-wide problem would only materialise once Afrikaner communities accepted and took responsibility for the poor members of society. On this issue, Malan stated the following at the national conference, “They must not be merely objects of study and even less objects of charity... We must consider them and treat them as part of our volk” (cited in Giliomee & Mbenga, 2007:282).

As the provision for better educational instruction was established, the South African economy rapidly developed due to the sudden rise in the gold price. From 1933 onwards, the economy enjoyed an annual growth rate of 5%, which resulted in the country-wide increase in job opportunities. White citizens who were still enduring abject poverty were employed as unskilled labourers and given further training to improve their vocational skill sets (Giliomee, 2014:305). Despite this progress, the Afrikaners were grappling with an inferiority complex<sup>42</sup> as scathing comments were publicised concerning their inability to adjust to the intricacies of the modern, urban environment.<sup>43</sup> The Afrikaners were driven to prove themselves as a capable and independent nation, who despite their shortcomings, would rise above their inferiority.

Given the wide-spread economic crisis which permeated the greater Afrikaner nation, the need to establish a self-sufficient economic force was met with great fervour. In 1924, L.J. du Plessis, a legal scholar proclaimed the need for an Afrikaner bank. Four years later, Du Plessis

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<sup>42</sup> A study conducted by the Dutch Reformed Church describes the Afrikaner worker as follows, “His poverty, servitude and desperate search for work feeds a sense of dependency and inferiority... Feeling himself unwelcome, he presents himself poorly, he is timid, walks hat in hand and lacks the greater self-confidence of the English work-seeker. He wields no influence and no one intercedes on his behalf; his *volk* is small and subordinate to a world of power that backs up the English work-seeker. He is despised and treated as an inferior by other nations” (cited in Giliomee, 2003:406). What is evident from this description is the manner in which the Afrikaner has been cast as the sub-standard peer to his English compatriot, a comparison which fueled the Afrikaner nationalist movement.

<sup>43</sup> It was reported that Sir Carruthers Beattie, the vice-chancellor of the University of Cape Town addressed a public meeting on the question of the poor whites, by stating that they were, “intellectually backward and that there was something inherent in the Afrikaners that resulted in the phenomenon [of poor-white-ism] assuming such alarming proportions in their case” (cited in Giliomee & Mbenga, 2007:281).



was commissioned to draw up a report. It took six years for the establishment of Volkskas Bank to crystallise under the guidance of sixty Broederbond members. By 1940 its total assets rose to £572 000 and a year later, it was registered as a commercial bank. Furthermore, the Bond achieved commercial success with the establishment of two cooperative stores which were opened in Pretoria (Uniewinkels) and Bloemfontein (Sonop) (O’Meara, 1983:102-103).

The cooperation between the Broederbond organisations culminated in the *Ekonomiese Volkskongres* (Economic People’s Congress) which was convened by the FAK. The congress took place in October 1939 and it was decided that the focus would hinge on the transformation of the economic position of the Afrikaner. In preparation for the discussion, the FAK organised and successfully executed the re-enactment of the Great Trek, also known as the Centenary celebration of the Trek<sup>44</sup> which transpired in 1938. It was decided that the festivities of this nation-wide celebratory event would, “grip the *volk* and shake them into a realisation of the great destitution in which a large section [of the *volk*] lived” (Bezuidenhout, 1968:64). Moreover, it was the role of the politicians to use this opportunity to inform and remind the Afrikaner nation that those 300 000 impoverished whites were descendants of the Voortrekkers who took charge and completed the arduous journey to their freedom. It was the modern Afrikaners’ responsibility to assume their place in the industrial and commercial sectors within the urban centres and cities across South Africa. From a religious perspective, the *volk* was addressed by ‘Vader’ Kestell, a pastor who offered guidance to the Boer commandos during the Anglo-Boer war. Kestell launched a plea for the establishment of a *reddingsdaad* (deed of salvation) whereby the nation was obligated to rescue itself from poverty. His address was led by the slogan, ‘*n volk red homself* (a nation rescues itself) which became the motto of the greater economic movement (O’Meara, 1983:108).

With the preparations for the Economic People’s Congress well underway, it was decided that the reconciliation of two opposing ideas concerning the resolution of the economic crisis, had to be considered and successfully orchestrated.<sup>45</sup> Aiming to reconcile these divergent

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<sup>44</sup> The re-enactment of the Trek entailed two treks by nine ox-wagons which from left Cape Town in order to reach Pretoria and the site of the Battle of Blood River in northern Natal on the 16<sup>th</sup> of December 1938. A crowd of 100 000 people attended the event in Pretoria where the cornerstone was laid for the new Voortrekker monument. D.F. Malan, leader of the Purified National Party, addressed a crowd at the Blood River site by raising the problem of Afrikaner poverty and stating that it is the greatest issue which the Afrikaner nation has to face (Giliomee, 2003:432-433).

<sup>45</sup> One the one hand, there was a need to establish a straight-forward capitalist approach whereby finance companies had to reward their shareholders with profit. Conversely, a more utopian approach was offered which focused on finding solutions to the issue of white poverty by proposing the development of small businesses (O’Meara, 1983:110).

proposals, L.J. du Plessis stated the following on the issue of Afrikaner poverty and its demoralising effects on the Afrikaner nation in the opening address to the congress, “the new national economic movement sets for itself the goal of reversing this process; no longer to tolerate the destruction of the Afrikaner volk in an attempt to adapt to a foreign capitalist system, but to mobilise the volk to capture this foreign system and adapt it to our national character” (cited in O’Meara, 1983:111). Essentially, this was proposed in recognition of the need to establish a *volkskapitalisme* (people’s capitalism) for the Afrikaner nation.

C.G.W. Schumann, dean of the faculty of commerce at Stellenbosch University, advocated the capitalist approach in his paper which was presented at the congress. It was suggested that the Afrikaner had to develop entrepreneurial skills and focus on managing the ownership of capital. These advances could only be made through the mobilisation of the capital resources of the Afrikaner volk. The focus was placed on the agricultural sector which was the most financially secure section of the nation. Through the mobilisation of farming capital, the development of Afrikaner business in commercial and industrial sectors would increase (O’Meara, 1983:111).

Other proposals<sup>46</sup> were raised by Afrikaner economists which led to the outcomes of the congress. It was accepted that the mobilisation and centralisation of latent capital, unused money and loose savings in financial institutions would have to be transformed into productive capital.<sup>47</sup> In effect, the congress was one of the key turning points in the development and expansion of the Afrikaner nationalist movement.

## 1.8 Afrikaner Triumph and the ensuing ideologies of post-1948 South Africa

The Christian-Nationalist ideology succeeded in furthering the Afrikaner nation’s role as an influential ethnic group within the country. The purpose of this ideology was to link Christianity to the national heritage and future developments of the Afrikaner people.<sup>48</sup> This is but one of the many examples where the Church and state alliance aimed to fuse the Afrikaner

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<sup>46</sup> It was decided to establish a finance company that would function within the industrial and commercial sectors, similar to the great ‘finance houses’ of Johannesburg. The company would have a share structure, which exposed the crucial task which Sanlam and the Broederbond had to fulfil in light of the financial expansion plans. The company had to offer 100 000 preference shares to existing Afrikaner establishments, whereby it was devised that Sanlam would purchase 50 000 of these shares on the condition that the Broederbond would secure the volk to buy at least half of the 200 000 ordinary shares (O’Meara, 1983:113).

<sup>47</sup> It was decided that, “this is the most effective plan for the application of Afrikaner capital to improve the position of the Afrikaner in the commerce and industry of our country, and calls on the *volk* to support this undertaking, by taking up its capital” (O’Meara, 1983:114).

<sup>48</sup> As Giliomee and Schlemmer contend, “In the Christian-National scheme of thought the Christianization of an ethnic group enriched and ennobled its national identity” (1989:50).



cultural and religious traditions to the political arena. The Afrikaners, who adopted neo-Calvinism as developed by Kuyper,<sup>49</sup> believed that the Church, state and family had to function congruently under the guidance of God. Kuyperian revisionist ideals declared that the individual's relation to God could be mediated by the state and called for the alliance between Church and state whereby the establishment of a Christian political party was deemed necessary. It was through these developments that the Afrikaners became more aware of their divine purpose in society and strove to achieve economic prosperity. These conversions in Afrikaner nationalism hinged on the Christian-Nationalist reworking of the ideology.<sup>50</sup> The Dutch Reformed Church became increasingly involved with the formulations surrounding the Christian-Nationalist policies as the Federal Council of the Church proposed that education should be conducted in accordance with Biblical principles. On the question of including non-white citizens to this policy, the Church argued that in such a way, the education system would rightfully prepare coloured and African citizens to meet the demands of a Christian state and aid them in assuming their position within the national demographic. As such, Althusser's theories concerning the impact which ideology and state apparatuses exert over a group of people corresponds to the Church and state relation during the apartheid regime, "the school (but also other State institutions like the Church, or other apparatuses like the Army) teaches 'know-how', but in forms which ensure *subjection to the ruling ideology* or the mastery of its 'practice'" (Althusser, 1971:133).

During the 1940s, debates between liberal and conservative Afrikaners were held to determine and finalise the education policy in consideration of the African citizens. It was deemed necessary to implement varying educational standards and levels for white and African citizens as it was argued that the two races have different needs in terms of vocational training. In this period, the doctrine of Christian-National education was formulated and finalised as it was argued that, "the Afrikaners, whose culture and national aspirations had almost been destroyed by British hegemony, had a special obligation to guide the development of Africans in the only positive direction, that of national self-fulfilment" (Giliomee & Schlemmer, 1989:51). It was the sole duty of the Afrikaner to watch over the African and ensure that the spiritual and

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<sup>49</sup> Kuyper's conception and actions of Christian organisations are only valid if they are able to function and fulfil their duties within the world and their immediate community. The purpose which these organisations have to focus on fulfilling is their calling, which would implicate that a Christian political party would have to be in service of public justice (Goudzwaard, 1986:9).

<sup>50</sup> In his musings over these alterations, O'Meara states the following, "At the core of this new nationalist *weltanschauung* stood the notion of *volksgebondheid* – the belief that ties of blood and *volk* came first, and that the individual existed only in and through the nation. The *volk*, rather than the individual, was the divinely ordained basic unit of social organisation" (1996:41).

physical development of their fellow countrymen would serve national interests. The reason behind this formulation was given by a group of white South Africans who argued that it was their duty to function as pedagogical leaders for the Africans. However, it was reasoned that the Afrikaners had a greater responsibility in the fulfilment of this task as their ethnic and national development was rooted in Africa.<sup>51</sup>

Shortly after triumph of the National Party in the 1948 election, D.F. Malan stated the following with regard to the Afrikaner defeat of British hegemony, “Today South Africa belongs to us again. South Africa is our own for the first time since the Union of South Africa. May God grant that it will always be ours” (cited in Giliomee, 2014:331). Malan was not concerned with the prospects of a racial struggle, but focused his attention on the success of the Afrikaner nation as a political entity.

Christian-National education was implemented. As the ideology was organised around two poles (religion and national culture), the policy stated that all should be based on the teachings of the Bible. The Nationalistic focus fostered a love and appreciation of each individual student’s own culture. This formulation demonstrates the manner in which the Church and Nationalists adopted and reworked Kuyperian doctrines to suit the social and political needs of the Christian state. However, three years after the National Party came to power, the educational policy was altered to suit the needs of the different cultures and ethnicities. It was decided that separate schooling would best aid in the development of different cultures.<sup>52</sup>

This concept of separate development for the preservation of cultural traditions, which underpinned the Christian-Nationalist ideology, was introduced by three academics from the University of Stellenbosch who wrote an extended pamphlet on the positive impact which this social system would have on the diverse ethnic landscape of South Africa. The main idea behind this piece of work was to highlight the manner in which African citizens were struggling

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<sup>51</sup> B.F. Nel, a Christian-Nationalist stated the following with regard to the Afrikaner’s task in the development and implementation of African education, “[The] whites in South Africa are responsible for the spiritual awakening of the native and thus also for the direction in which this spiritual energy develops itself in future. This task rests the more heavily on the Afrikaner who came into being and grew up on African soil, and who, through bitter experience, has a deep understanding of the two ways the spirit can take in its development: that is, the ‘developmental’ direction on the denationalised spirit which is nothing but an imitative spirit, and the truly creative developmental direction which is the direction of the genuine culture creator, the national essence” (cited in Giliomee & Schlemmer, 1989:51).

<sup>52</sup> As the Eiselen report declared, “Educational practice must recognise that it has to deal with a Bantu child, i.e. a child trained and conditioned in Bantu culture... The schools must also give due regard to the fact that out of school hours the young Bantu child develops and lives in a Bantu community and when he reaches maturity he will be concerned with sharing and developing the life and culture of that community” (cited in Giliomee & Schlemmer, 1989:52).

to adapt to the urban environments in the large towns and cities. It was argued that the urbanisation of Africans led to moral decay and fostered a deficient sense of responsibility and discipline among those individuals. Proposed as the only viable solution, the authors strongly advocated the implementation of a total apartheid whereby African citizens would be withdrawn from the cities and relocated to territories in which they could practice their traditional customs, preserve their language and culture and develop within their own ethnic climate. To their minds, it was believed that by banning the black labour force from residing among the white citizens, the national evolution of the Afrikaner nation would materialise (Giliomee, 2003:467).

Despite the dramatic step towards this systemic separation, the Afrikaner nationalists were able to justify the apartheid concept by their willingness to grant the Africans every institutional and bureaucratic organisation which they would deem necessary for themselves, such as churches, schools, residential areas and governments. These institutions would be run according to their own cultural traditions and in this way, would aid in the development and improvement of the unique cultures within South Africa. However, two viewpoints surrounding the core of the apartheid concept materialised within the National Party. On the one hand, some placed emphasis on the foundations the Christian-National Education<sup>53</sup> system whilst a portion of the nationalists focused their attention on accentuating racial difference which, to their minds, brought the greatest disparity among the diverse communities. In some respects, the concept of racial purity was borrowed from Nazi Germany yet at that stage, many Afrikaner nationalists, including Hendrik Verwoerd, rejected the belief that non-whites were biologically inferior to white people. Despite these sentiments, the apartheid system continued to convey the message that, “black and coloured people were socially inferior, morally inadequate, intellectually underdeveloped and sexually unfit for intimate relationships” (Giliomee, 2003:469-470). This thinking was justified by the argument that racial exclusivity was essential for the Afrikaner nation to not only survive but prosper. Political survival was at the forefront of this reasoning; the Afrikaners did not enjoy the luxury of safety in numbers and were, in this respect, only able to ensure their prosperity through the exploitation and oppression of others.

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<sup>53</sup> Werner Eiselen was one of the key figures regarding the realisation a policy which, “...recommended a strict Christian-National education for blacks according to their ethnic nature, aptitude and background that would make it possible ‘to cultivate Bantu-worthy [sic] citizens’” (Giliomee, 2003:469).

With the expansion of Neo-Calvinist doctrines within the Broederbond, National Party leaders asserted that the apartheid system was modelled on the precedent set by the Dutch Reformed Church and its policies concerning the segregation of educational institutions and suburban areas. In 1947 D.F. Malan argued,

It was not the state but the Church who took the lead with apartheid. The state followed the principle laid down by the Church in the field of education for the native, the coloured and the Asian. The result? Friction was eliminated. The Boer Church surpassed the other churches in missionary activity. It is the result of apartheid (cited in Giliomee 2003:461).

The interwoven bond of the government, the Dutch Reformed Church and the Afrikaner Broederbond worked as a combined force for the effective implementation of the apartheid policies. J.H.P. Serfontein, who researched and documented the alliance of Church and state during the height of the apartheid regime, interviewed E.P.J. Kleynhans shortly after his election as moderator of the Dutch Reformed Church general synod in 1978. Serfontein enquired as to why the Dutch Reformed Church was eager to abide by the policies of the government, to which Kleynhans replied, “It is not the NGK [Nederduits Gereformeerde Kerk] which is following the government: it is the other way around. We were first with a policy of separate development which began in the 1850s when separate church structures were provided for each separate racial group to enable them to listen to the Word of God among their own people and in their own language” (cited in Serfontein, 1982:63-64). It was further argued that the establishment of separate churches for different racial groups originated from a missionary incentive, yet the structure of apartheid as a political ideology did not provide equal resources or opportunities for the non-white members of the population.

As part of his inaugural speech as Prime Minister in 1948, D.F. Malan acknowledged the National Party’s and the government’s reliance on God. He continued to profess the importance of the Christian faith and church institutions to the welfare of the Afrikaner nation. Consequently Malan declared that he would seek support from the Dutch Reformed Church in relation to political matters and asked the Church to pray for the welfare of the government. As Korf states, “It could effectively be said that Malan appointed the Church as the government’s watchdog” (2007:234).

In terms of socio-political policies, the state destabilised some church efforts with regards to educational endeavours. By the early 1940s, the government recognised the problematic outcomes of encouraging the growth of an urbanised, well-educated black population and

consequently the decision was made to reform black education. In 1949 the government was in full control of educational policies. Missionary schools and educational opportunities provided by liberal church groups collapsed. (Giliomee 2003:508). Established on the grounds of a different syllabus and fully implemented by 1953, the Bantu Education system was devised and, “designed to prepare Africans for their special, inferior place in Apartheid society” (Saunders, 1994:28). Moreover, the efforts to offer education for African pupils formed part of the missionary enterprise, resulting in of widespread illiteracy. By 1952, a mere three percent of African students received secondary education. Verwoerd’s Bantu Education Act (1953) shattered the spirit of the church schools that were intent on providing proper education.<sup>54</sup>

With the implementation of various Acts<sup>55</sup> separating white from non-white citizens, the apartheid government succeeded in implementing separate development to accommodate and suit the needs of the white populace. This was done with the aim of securing the social, economic and political advancement of the Afrikaner people. The apartheid system of governance enabled the Afrikaners to promote and celebrate their cultural heritage through the organisation and successful execution of various large-scale festivals. This included the inauguration of the Voortrekker Monument on the 16<sup>th</sup> of December 1949, an event attended by approximately 250 000 people. The success of the event did not rest on the Afrikaner’s acceptance and/or celebration of apartheid, but hinged on the formation and solidification of Afrikaner nationalism. The consolidation of a *volksbeweging* (nationalistic movement) during the 1950s was central to the realisation of the apartheid plan. Furthermore, the expansion of

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<sup>54</sup> For example, pedagogical provision was made by colleges that offered technical and professional training for both white and non-white students. In 1953, 82 colleges allowed attendance for whites and 54 accepted non-white students. A year after the implementation of the Act, there was a rapid decline in colleges which accepted non-white students. In 1954, there were 88 colleges for whites and a mere 21 for non-white students (Giliomee & Schlemmer, 1989:81). From this point forward, education laws tended to favour white students which resulted in massive social and economic inequality among the citizens of South Africa.

<sup>55</sup> These Acts include the 1949 Prohibition of Mixed Marriages Act which prohibited interracial marriage. This Act was followed by the 1950 Immorality Act which criminalised interracial sexual relations. Furthermore, 1950 Group Areas Act controlled interracial property transfers and provided racial groups with specific residential, urban and business areas and/or districts. The 1951 Prevention of Illegal Squatting Act permitted the government to demolish non-white squatters’ communities and/or slums and oblige white employers to supply housing for their non-white labourers who were granted permission to inhabit white residential areas within the cities. The 1950 Population Registration Act enforced formal racial classification as indicated on an identity card which was issued to all citizens over the age of 18. Consequently, apartheid functioned on the total separation of citizens which was enforced by the 1953 Reservation of Separate Amenities Act which divided the use of public and municipal areas according to racial classification. This Act generated the establishment of separate park benches, beaches, buses, train coaches, hospitals, schools, colleges and universities, which became an extension of the separate churches system (O’Meara, 1996:69-70)

Afrikaner wealth<sup>56</sup> was confirmed at the *Tweede Ekonomiese Volkskongres* (Second Economic People's Congress) in 1951.

Three years after the celebrations at the Voortrekker Monument, the tercentenary celebration of Jan van Riebeeck's arrival at the Cape was commemorated. The Van Riebeeck festival of 1952 has been described as one of the three largest and most significant cultural events in South Africa during the 20<sup>th</sup> century. It was held on the 6<sup>th</sup> of April 1952 in Cape Town, commemorating the arrival of the first Dutch settlers to the Cape. It marked a significant date for the Dutch Reformed Church that celebrated it as the advent of Reformed Christianity in South Africa. A.J. van der Merwe, a minister in the Groote Kerk in Cape Town stated the following in his speech at the festival, marking the significance of van Riebeeck's arrival, "...here a nation is born with its own soul...its own destiny" (cited in Botha, 2002:191). These responses from the Church fuelled the ever-increasing nationalistic sentiments which signified the consolidation of Church and state.

### 1.9 Resistance and Political Developments in the 1950s

Given the focus of this thesis, a comprehensive discussion of the socio-political developments in the 1950s is not necessary. However a brief account is provided since political resistance movements aimed to challenge the National Party's discriminatory legislations. The African National Congress (ANC)<sup>57</sup> posed the strongest opposition to the apartheid laws. Their aim was to single out the newly established acts which enforced the prejudicial treatment of non-white South Africans. Members of the party voluntarily defied the apartheid laws. Despite the fact that the offenders were harshly punished, the ANC's membership burgeoned. The government took charge and restricted the party's leaders which resulted in a decrease in financial stability and voluntary resistance action. In 1956, 156 people were arrested, some of

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<sup>56</sup> Since 1939, Afrikaner enterprises increased from 37 000 to 13 000, with an annual turnover of R 645 million in 1948-49 (Kruger, 1965:573).

<sup>57</sup> Founded in Bloemfontein on the 8<sup>th</sup> of January, 1912, the South African Native National Congress (SANNC) was formed to defend the rights of black South Africans. After the establishment of the South African Union (1910), new laws contributed to the systematic oppression of black citizens such as the Land Act which drove non-whites off farms and forced them to seek labour opportunities in urbanised environments. In 1923, the SANNC changed its name to the African National Congress (ANC) and became affiliated with the Communist Party. However, this alliance between the two parties was not harmonious in all respects. During the 1930s, the ANC was inactive after Josiah Gumede (ANC President) was voted out of power. The party regained power in the mid-1940s as it was transformed into a mass organisation. In 1944, a group of Fort Hare graduates established the Congress Youth League. Following the election of the National Party in 1948, the ANC presented the Defiance Campaign against Unjust Laws in 1951 which marked a mass movement against the apartheid laws. In the 1950s, former Congress Youth League officials became dominant figures in the party's leadership. Of these included Nelson Mandela, Walter Sisulu and Oliver Tambo (Saunders, 1994:3-5).



which were ANC activists. They were put on trial, but most of the charges were withdrawn, suggesting that the purpose of the exercise was to curb agitation. By the end of the 1950s, the ANC's mass resistance campaign had weakened as the governments' persistent oppression led to a loss in membership. Following this, a radical offshoot of the ANC was founded. The Pan African Congress (PAC) aimed to underscore the value of autonomous African organisation and coordination (Giliomee, 2003:512).

D.F. Malan was the Prime Minister of South Africa and leader of the NP from 1948 to 1954. He retired from politics at the age of 80, after a six-and-a-half year stint as the first leader of the apartheid government. He was succeeded by J.G. Strijdom. Under Strijdom's tenure, the NP's support increased as indicated by the 1958 elections. The apartheid government was voted in for a third time (Coetzer, 1992:272-273). Strijdom died on the 24<sup>th</sup> of August 1958 and was succeeded by the Dutch born scholar and politician, H.F. Verwoerd.<sup>58</sup>

The end of the 1950s marked a decade during which the Afrikaner people increasingly formed part of a *volksbeweging* by, "putting their imprint on the state, defining its symbols, making bilingualism a reality, adapting to an urban environment and giving their schools and universities a pronounced Afrikaans character" (Giliomee, 2003:491). In such a way, the Afrikaners had overcome their past difficulties and inferiority complexes which paved the way for the imminent prosperity of the coming decade. The number of Afrikaans Protestant mother congregations increased to approximately 1240 between 1946 and 1960, resulting in the construction of many new church buildings (Kesting, 1978:565).

### 1.10 The Winds of Change – Watershed and Wealth in the 1960s

The 1960s marked a decade of apprehension in South Africa. While the Afrikaners were becoming upwardly mobile, Afrikaner hegemony was increasingly threatened by rising

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<sup>58</sup> Verwoerd was a highly intellectual and driven leader and behind his reasonable façade, he stuck to a simple conviction: an inferior group would not attempt to request concessions if it was clear that there was no possibility of negotiations. In his first years as the leader of the NP and Premier of South Africa, Verwoerd revolutionised the racial rhetoric of the apartheid system. His notion of establishing self-governing homelands for black South Africans was conceived as conservative in its conception. In 1959, a new law was passed that abolished African political representatives in Parliament (Giliomee, 2003:519-520).

African nationalism, decolonisation to the north, racial tensions within the country<sup>59</sup> and mounting anti-apartheid consciousness abroad.<sup>60</sup>

The threat of the imminent African nationalism which swept the continent encouraged Verwoerd to continue with his strict and oppressive ruling system. He had received a great amount of criticism from fellow Afrikaner leaders.<sup>61</sup> Despite the disapproval of his leadership, Verwoerd continued with the referendum in October 1960 and the republicans achieved a narrow victory of 74 580 votes<sup>62</sup> (Giliomee, 2003:525).

After South Africa became a republic, the first challenge which the Afrikaner nationalists faced was the question of coloured people. Verwoerd failed to include them into his scheme of the independent homelands,<sup>63</sup> yet the issue was diminished when the coloured people showed no sign of support to the black protesters who partook in demonstrations after the Sharpeville and Langa incidents. A white minister of the Dutch Reformed Mission Church in Wynberg, Cape Town, David Botha, argued that the reason why the majority of coloured people were reluctant to join the African opposition movements were because they formed part of the white Afrikaner community. In his mind, coloured people shared the cultural, political and economic practices of white South Africans. Moreover, he endorsed the notion of a self-governing mission church, yet, “unlike most of his colleagues rejected the nationalist attempt to use it as justification for apartheid” (Giliomee, 2003:526). Despite any suggestions for a more inclusive system,

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<sup>59</sup> Social tension was mounting as the PAC set about organising a campaign to defy the pass laws. The campaign was set to take place in Sharpeville, a township on the eastern borders of Witwatersrand. On the 21st of March 1960 a large group of protesters gathered in the township and encircled a police station. The policemen panicked and opened fire on the group of protesters. In the tragic event, 69 people were killed and 180 were injured. News of the Sharpeville massacre spread and the event was universally condemned. A week after the shooting, the PAC and the ANC were officially banned and a state of emergency was declared at the end of March, which was only revoked on the 31st of August (Coetzer, 1992:287-288).

<sup>60</sup> From an international perspective, the South African government received harsh criticism from the British Labour Party as well as the ruling parties in India, Denmark and Canada, among other countries throughout the world. Foreign investments were withdrawn and the condemnation of armed violence against black people increased. On the 27th of March, there was a huge protest movement against the South African government which took place in London (Coetzer, 1992:288).

<sup>61</sup> Verwoerd was criticised by L.J. du Plessis, the Potchefstroom academic who wielded great influence on the Broederbond. Furthermore, the Afrikaner entrepreneur Anton Rupert suggested to Verwoerd that the guarantee for stability would only be reached if property rights were granted to urban Africans alongside the consent to purchase houses at discount prices. Verwoerd rejected this idea as it would create a sense of entitlement among African people and would further diminish the crucial segregation upon which the apartheid system was based (Giliomee, 2003:523).

<sup>62</sup> Verwoerd stated the following at the celebratory event, “We have risen above pettiness and selfishness... The English-speaking and Afrikaans-speaking sections have become like the new bride and bridegroom who enter upon the new life in love to create together and live together as life mates” (cited in Giliomee, 2003:525).

<sup>63</sup> The homelands were established in the early 1960s for specific ethnic groups. There were a total of ten which included the Transkei, Ciskei, Bophuthatswana, Venda, KwaNdebele, KwaZulu, KaNgwane, Lebowa, QwaQwa and Gazankulu (Giliomee & Mbenga, 2007:350).



Verwoerd upheld his decisions and wholly rejected the idea of offering coloured seats in Parliament, as he believed it would lead to miscegenation.

The next challenge involved the Afrikaner Protestant churches. A turning point was reached at the Cottesloe Conference which took place in December 1960. Representatives of three Afrikaner churches, namely the Transvaal Dutch Reformed Church, the Cape Dutch Reformed Church and the Hervormde Kerk met to discuss matters concerning race relations in South Africa (Botes, 2002:194). The conference resulted in agreement that all people have the right to own land in the country in which they resides and to participate in the government. It was also decided that no scriptural proof existed which endorsed the ban on mixed marriages; that migrant labour had detrimental effects on the family nucleus; job reservation was to be replaced by more reasonable labour system; and that coloured people should be given seats in Parliament. Verwoerd rejected these conclusions and drew on the Broederbond to support his view on the matter. Early in 1961, all three Afrikaner churches condemned the Cottesloe resolutions as the Broederbond had countless church ministers as members. All three churches withdrew from the World Council of Churches, the organisation which was responsible for the conference. Consequently all the Afrikaner churches refrained from criticising the apartheid government until the mid-1980s (O'Meara, 1996:106-107).

Verwoerd then announced his decision to withdraw South Africa from the Commonwealth at the Commonwealth Conference in March 1961. The majority of Afrikaners deemed this a national triumph. Two months later, on the 31<sup>st</sup> of May 1961, the Republic of South Africa was officially declared (Scher, 2014:342-343). The five years between 1961 and 1966<sup>64</sup> marked the most prosperous years for the apartheid government. The country underwent one of the largest economic booms in the history of South Africa as foreign capital and investments were streaming into the economy.

Despite the optimism which the Afrikaners enjoyed in the early years of the 1960s, the political opposition did not rest and took matters underground. After the banning of the ANC and PAC, each party formed an armed military wing. Umkhonto we Sizwe (MK, meaning 'Spear of the Nation') was led by Nelson Mandela. Arrested in August 1962, Mandela delivered a moving

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<sup>64</sup> In March 1966, Verwoerd managed to lead the NP to its biggest electoral triumph<sup>64</sup> as the National Party won 126 seats, the United Party won 39 seats and the Progressive Party attained 1 seat in Parliament.

speech<sup>65</sup> at the Rivonia Trials<sup>66</sup> in 1963 (Scher, 2014:346). After being found guilty of organising and perpetrating acts of government sabotage, Walter Sisulu, Nelson Mandela and Govan Mbeki were sentenced to life imprisonment on the 12<sup>th</sup> of June 1964. The ANC was then forced to re-establish itself as a resistance party in exile (Grundlingh, 2008:143).

In 1966 the apartheid government reached the pinnacle of its power as the National Party was in the lead, all political resistance movements had been suppressed and the country basked in an economic surge which led to the enormous upward mobility of the white minority. However, the Verwoerdian era came to an abrupt end on the 6<sup>th</sup> of September 1966 after Verwoerd was stabbed to death by a parliamentary messenger at the House of Assembly in Cape Town. A week after his death, B.J. Vorster,<sup>67</sup> the Minister of Justice was elected as the Prime Minister and leader of the National Party (Du Pisani, 2014:349).

During his first term, Vorster had to negotiate the greatest fault line which formed in the Afrikaner nation. The terms were coined by W.J. de Klerk of Potchefstroom who witnessed the burgeoning division between the *verligtes* (liberals) and *verkrampes* (conservatives) Afrikaners. The *verkrampes* were opposed to Vorster's policies concerning African diplomats, non-white international sport teams, increase in interaction with and inclusion of English-speaking South Africans to the previously exclusive Afrikaner political realm and his lenient attitude towards immigration. Feeling threatened by the betrayal of *verkrampes* leaders within his own party, Vorster compelled them to either proclaim their full devotion to him or abandon his political party. An in-house political crisis point was reached at the Transvaal NP congress in September 1969 after which four NP members established the Reconstituted National Party (*Herstigte Nasionale Party* – HNP). Although the HNP gained no seats in the

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<sup>65</sup> He declared, "During my lifetime I have dedicated myself to the struggle of the African people. I have fought against white domination, and I have fought against black domination. I have cherished the ideal of a democratic society in which all persons live together in harmony and with equal opportunities. It is an ideal which I hope to live for and to achieve. But if needs be, it is an ideal for which I am prepared to die" (cited in Scher, 2014:346).

<sup>66</sup> A great number of ANC leaders were arrested after the police raided their smallholding in Rivonia (Scher, 2014:346).

<sup>67</sup> B.J. Vorster was deemed a more pragmatic leader than Verwoerd as he set out to implement the plan for separate development by finalising the homelands policy. By that point, the Bantu Authorities Act and the Promotion of Bantu Self-Government Act had been passed which made it possible to proceed with the implementation of the homelands policy. The concept behind this strategy was to ensure that black people would live as citizens in their own territories which would be run with its own government, administration and facilities. Black people would gain citizenship of their homelands and would lose their right to reside in South Africa as a result of losing their South African citizenship. As this was taking place on a national front, Vorster received harsh criticism and mounting pressure to terminate the apartheid system from international anti-apartheid organisations<sup>67</sup> (Du Pisani, 2014:349).

1970 election, Vorster became fanatical about fostering Afrikaner unity in order to prevent future divisions splitting the Afrikaner nation (Du Pisani, 2014:351-352).

Alongside the political ramifications which shaped this decade, the 1960s marked an era of enormous prosperity for the Afrikaner people as the economy had an average growth rate of 6% per annum in the closing years of the decade (Grundlingh, 2008:144). Despite the fact that the Afrikaners were still earning less than the English in terms of total annual income (45% versus 55%), they were gaining a sense of financial independence and success.<sup>68</sup> It is important to note that the economic growth brought about a series of changes to other facets which affected the Afrikaner nation as E.P. Thompson discerned, “There is no such thing as economic growth which is not, at the same time, growth or change of a culture” (cited in Grundlingh, 2008:146). The 1960s marked the change to a more liberal attitude towards capital as the slogan of the previous decade “save for stability” was replaced by “spend for success” (Grundlingh, 2008:146). Although the national increase in wealth was a positive move forward for the Afrikaners, the focus on material gain had corrosive effects on the traditional Afrikaner culture. Moreover the sudden economic upward mobility<sup>69</sup> divided the Afrikaner nation along class lines. The Dutch Reformed Church was aware of the detrimental impact that this would have on the future of the Afrikaner nation.<sup>70</sup> The social, material and cultural identity of the Afrikaner changed as the focus was geared towards a conspicuous demonstration of the newly acquired wealth as an “emerging culture of demonstrative display of the new tokens of prosperity” replaced the previously prudent and miserly approach to capital of the early Afrikaners (Grundlingh, 2008:149).

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<sup>68</sup> Gert Pretorius, an Afrikaner business man stated the following in 1968, “We are no longer under the impression that we are other men’s inferiors so far as business acumen is concerned...while we certainly have not beaten them, I think I am justified in claiming that our inferiority complex is a phenomenon which no longer plagues the new generation” (cited in Welsh, 1969:271).

<sup>69</sup> Economic mobility refers to the awareness of holding the ability to improve one’s economic status. The procurement of wealth is measured by an increase in income. Moreover, it has been defined as follows, “Economic mobility describes the ability of people to move up or down the economic ladder within a lifetime or from one generation to the next” (Sawhill & Morton, 2007:1).

<sup>70</sup> Moderator of the Dutch Reformed Church, J.S. Gericke noted the following on the disunity in the Afrikaner nation which surfaced during the 1960s, “The city has seriously deepened the chasm between prosperous Afrikaners and their less well-off countrymen, between those with status and those of more humble station, between the learned and the uneducated. Contact between the upper echelons and the lower classes has disappeared almost completely. Even in the church we no longer engage with one another, because we have good neighbourhoods and poor neighbourhoods, and the boundaries between our congregations are determined by these residential areas. The city has in fact created class divisions among us and even a considerable degree of snobbishness” (cited in Grundlingh, 2008:148-149).

## 1.11 Turbulence and Political Destabilisation in the 1970s

The first year of the new decade started with the realisation of an acute shortage of skilled workers. Due to the fact that the Afrikaners steadily rose to the upper-middle class echelon, employers were obliged to train coloured, Indian and black workers to occupy senior positions in their companies. Moreover, the government was forced to expand on black education and black students increasingly enrolled in secondary educational institutions. However the employment opportunities for these graduates declined. During the 1960s, 97% of black graduates left school with the guarantee of employment, yet the percentage dwindled to 72% in the 1970s (Giliomee & Mbenga, 2007:347). This formed part of the reason for the infamous Soweto uprisings of 1976.

Another challenge which affected the socio-economic and political climate of the 1970s was the expanding black populations in towns and cities across the country. By 1970 there were 5 million black people residing in urban areas as opposed to 2 million in 1946 (Giliomee & Mbenga, 2007:348). The end of the decade saw vast townships developing on the perimeters of towns and cities as black labourers were forced to devise alternative living arrangements due to the homelands policy,<sup>71</sup> which generated in an increase in migrant labour. Although the government showed little concern for this issue in the early years of the decade, the problems which accompanied migrant labour started to affect the country's economy. By the mid-1970s the three decades of sustained economic growth had come to an end<sup>72</sup> (Giliomee & Mbenga, 2007:358).

These socio-economic changes culminated in the one of the most significant events in the history of South Africa. By the mid-1970s the Black Consciousness movement gained enormous support as its leader, Steve Biko stated, "The masses of black people within the country will increasingly become defiant" (cited in Giliomee & Mbenga, 2007:362). A large-

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<sup>71</sup> The homelands policy resulted in the relocation of 1.9 million black people between 1962 and 1982. This increased to 3.5 million when the group areas removals by the government forced non-whites to leave their residential areas and relocate to their newly designated suburban environments. Despite the lack of job opportunities in the homelands, they had a population increase of 57% between 1970 and 1980. A decrease in agricultural production in the homeland territories caused the citizens to become increasingly dependent on migrant labour (Giliomee & Mbenga, 2007:358).

<sup>72</sup> It is noted that the average annual growth rate reduced from 4.5% during the first 30 odd years of apartheid to 1.65% between the years 1976 to 1994. Inflation and the total costs of apartheid had started to surface as the main causes for the economic decline. These included the restraints on the training of coloured and black labourers, the shortage of funding for coloured and black education, the decrease in productivity of workers and the long distances which migrant labourers had to travel due to the Group Areas Act and homelands policy (Giliomee & Mbenga, 2007:358).

scale protest movement was organised in June 1976 due to a lack in political rights, the system of influx control, pass laws, the education system's unwillingness to allow black pupils to gain knowledge by use of mother-tongue instruction and the lack of funding for non-white students. Two decades prior to the planned demonstrations, Afrikaans had been identified as the 'language of the oppressor' by the Soweto residents.<sup>73</sup> As a result, a mass demonstration was organised for the 16<sup>th</sup> of June 1976. Approximately 20 000 Sowetan pupils marched in protest against the Bantu Education Act's decree that Afrikaans had to be an official language of instruction in their schools. A journalist, John Kane-Berman wrote the following on the events which took place that day, "Police vehicles rushed to the scene...The pupils taunted them and they responded with teargas...Apparently no order from the police to the marchers to disperse was heard, and a senior police officer admitted at the time that no warning shots had been fired either. The first child to be killed was evidently a thirteen-year-old schoolboy Hector Pieteron, apparently by a bullet fired at him directly from behind. Several other youngsters were also shot dead. Then, in the words of one newspaper, 'All hell broke loose'" (cited in Giliomee & Mbenga, 2007:364).

After the Soweto uprisings, violent demonstrations broke out in townships throughout the northern Free State, the Transvaal, Natal and in the northern Cape. They continued across the country and by October 1977, between 600 and 700 people had been killed. A month after Steve Biko died in police custody under horrific circumstances,<sup>74</sup> Jimmy Kruger (the Minister of Justice) banned all the Black Consciousness organisations. The callousness with which the government treated Biko's death and the student uprisings had disastrous consequences for the National Party and the apartheid government. Vorster's failure to dismiss Kruger worsened the political situation (Giliomee & Mbenga, 2007:365).

A leadership crisis in the NP materialised in the wake of the Soweto uprisings, Biko's death, the publication of two books on the Afrikaner Broederbond, which released lists of 13 262

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<sup>73</sup> The results from a survey in 1972 indicated that 98% of young Sowetans were strongly opposed to being taught in Afrikaans as the official language of instruction. In 1976 it was decided that schools in Soweto had to teach arithmetic and mathematics in Afrikaans despite the fact that most teachers and students had an extremely poor command of the language (Giliomee & Mbenga, 2007:364).

<sup>74</sup> Seriously ill at the time, he was given no proper medical attention and was transported in the back of a police van, naked and shackled, for a journey of 800 kilometres to Pretoria during which he died. At the hearing on the subject of his death, Kruger stated that Biko's death had, "left him cold" (cited in Giliomee & Mbenga, 2007:365).

members,<sup>75</sup> and the so-called Muldergate Scandal of 1978.<sup>76</sup> The scandal forced Vorster to resign from office. Connie Mulder, for whom the scandal was named, had served as the leader of the National Party in the Transvaal since 1974, was also forced to resign from his position and forsake his future as the next Prime Minister (Saunders, 1994:178). Following this series of ill-fated incidents, P.W. Botha<sup>77</sup> was elected as the leader of the National Party and the Premier of South Africa on the 28<sup>th</sup> of September 1978.

A year before his election as Prime Minister, Botha initiated a secret nuclear weapons programme, which resulted in the production of six nuclear bombs. This was deemed necessary by Botha and the military as they believed South Africa faced a ‘total onslaught’ and was confronted by countless national and international threats to abolish the apartheid system. In 1979 he was determined to manage the fine balance between holding onto the current system and adapting it in order to circumvent a social, economic, political and military crisis as he stated, “We are moving into a changing world, we must adapt or otherwise we shall die” (cited in Giliomee & Mbenga, 2007:368). ‘Adapt or die’ became the slogan of his regime as the second last leader of the apartheid government who directed the country throughout the precarious decade of the 1980s.

## 1.12 In Conclusion – The Modern, Secularised Afrikaners

On a socio-economic level, the Afrikaner nation continued throughout the 1970s with the modernisation process that had characterised the 1960s. A magazine article published in July 1968 stated that everything was geared towards achieving the following, “overtime work, women had to earn money – children in crèches or left in the care of servants, debt and repayments over many years. As long as the display of prosperity could be sustained and the impression of being modern could be created” (Grundlingh, 2008:148). Wealth was measured by the cars which people drove and the houses they resided in. The American Cadillac served

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<sup>75</sup> One of these books was written by the political journalists Ivor Wilkins and Hans Strydom and was originally published in 1978. Entitled ‘The Super Afrikaners: Inside the Afrikaner Broederbond’, this book exposed the secret workings of the organisation and included the most comprehensive list of Broederbond members to date. The other book, ‘Brotherhood of Power: An Expose of the Secret Afrikaner Broederbond’ written by J.H.P. Serfontein, was published in the same year and included up-to-date information on the workings of the secret organisation (Moodie, 1980:127).

<sup>76</sup> The Muldergate Scandal exposed the misuse of secret government funding which was used to buy control of the English press (Saunders, 1994:178).

<sup>77</sup> Previously Botha was elected as the Minister of Defence in 1966. One year later, the government passed a law which introduced compulsory military conscription for all white males. By 1972, this obligatory conscription was extended to one year. Prior to the Soweto uprisings, there had been very little resistance to this service (Giliomee & Mbenga, 2007:349).



as the pinnacle automotive status symbol and the demand for custom-designed houses in wealthy neighbourhoods skyrocketed (Grundlingh, 2008:150). As the upper-middle class Afrikaners increasingly became world citizens since their focus was geared towards material consumption, there was a marked decline in their adherence to the strict religious prescriptions of the Dutch Reformed Church. It was noted that by the 1970s, the Afrikaner elite had, “become increasingly secularised in reality, if not formally” (Grundlingh, 2008:152). Several surveys which were released in the 1970s reinforced this claim. A survey which was undertaken in 1973 by members of the Afrikaner nation, revealed that more than 20% of the sample participants doubted the Biblical miracles, original sin, fall of man and the godliness of Christ. A further 55% of the participants deemed it possible to lead a religious life without belonging to a church, 44% stated that it was not necessary for a Christian to attend church and 41% claimed that the Church did not hold authority over their lives. This study revealed that the more liberal stance towards the Church and religion, evident in the rest of the developing Western world, came from the younger generations and people from the higher socio-economic groups, in other words, the people who were at the forefront of modernised development in the greater social context. Of this grouping, it was determined that 80% of them were convinced that they had the right to differ with the sermons of the minister (Alant, 1975:104).

It would thus appear that the Church did not have as much holding power over the Afrikaner nation as before. The socio-political divide between the *verligtes* and *verkramptes* started influencing the division between the liberal and the more traditional/conservative church-goers. By 1974, a greater number of Afrikaners were far more independent of the traditional church conventions when it came to matters of ethics and religion. For the modern Afrikaner, church attendance had more to do with showing respect for the tradition than with the matter of attaching sincere value to the practices. In terms of the political climate of the late 1970s, the Dutch Reformed Church suffered a crisis of support with its national following. More and more Afrikaners started to question the government’s policies in terms of a humanitarian light. The nation-wide strikes and anti-apartheid demonstrations of the mid-70s created a sense of instability and the Afrikaner minority doubted the National Party’s ability to offer them the necessary safety and protection.<sup>78</sup> Seeing as the burgeoning economic mobility of the 1960s induced a marked change in the ostensibly impenetrable Afrikaner culture, the adherence to

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<sup>78</sup> Allport stated the following on the co-operation of socio-political and religious ideologies, “The chief reason why religion becomes the focus of prejudice is that it usually stands for more than faith – it is the pivot of the cultural tradition of a group. The clergy of a church may, and often do become defenders of a culture...In defending the absolutes of their faith, they tend to defend their ingroup as a whole” (cited in Alant, 1975:110).

the conventional dogmas and customs of the Dutch Reformed Church had declined. An observer of this change in the Afrikaner social and cultural climate noted the following, “He is becoming more of a South African than an Afrikaner; he is even becoming a world citizen; and this will increasingly be the case in a world where the trend is towards uniformity in thought” (cited in Grundlingh, 2008:152).

Alongside their questioning of the traditional conventions of the Church, their suspicions concerning the authority and stability of the government and their increase in wealth, the Afrikaners became aware of their cultural superiority and measured themselves to their international counterparts in the developed Western world. This is indicative of a growing self-conscious sense of modernity among the Afrikaners (Freschi, 2011b:23). They shared an interest in luxury goods, material possessions and cultivated a taste for modern music, art and architecture. In this respect, the Afrikaners were able to compete with the Americans and Western Europeans on an economic, social, intellectual and cultural level. However, despite the increasing secularisation of the Afrikaners, the number of Afrikaans Protestant mother congregations grew to 1704 by 1977 (Kesting, 1978:566). Consequently, many of the church buildings which were constructed during the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century adopted Modernism as the dominant mode of architecture. Moreover, the economic upward mobility of the Afrikaner nation clarifies how they were able to erect such a large number of new church structures. These churches ultimately functioned as one of the greatest structural symbols of Afrikaner ascendancy.



## Chapter 2 - Modernist Manifestations of Nationalism: A Brief History of South African Modernism

As demonstrated in the preceding chapter, South Africa in the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century was marked by large scale inequality. This not only influenced the social, political and economic spheres, but also affected change in the cultural landscape. With the white Afrikaner minority's ascendancy to power, and this demographics' consequent accumulation of wealth and upward cultural mobility, white South African professionals became increasingly cosmopolitan and thus tended to measure their cultural attainment against their counterparts in Western Europe and the United States of America. Previously labelled as a 'backwards people', the Afrikaners in particular, sought the cultural capital accompanying their new found political power and economic growth, and aimed at inclusion in the global modernisation movement.<sup>79</sup>

For the purposes of this thesis, it is necessary to understand the developments which determined the cultural climate of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Accordingly, distinctions should be drawn between the terms 'modernisation', 'modernity' and 'Modernism'. Modernisation, an outcome of the Industrial Revolution, is characterised by a range of technological advances, political developments<sup>80</sup> and economic processes which affected global change in both the social and cultural spheres (Harrison, 1997:6). In its broadest definition, modernity<sup>81</sup> is regarded as the zeitgeist of the modern era which pertains to the social conditions and experiences of modernisation. It is characterised by the break with established values and traditions, resulting

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<sup>79</sup> By the 1960s, Afrikaner nationalism had developed beyond the backwards-looking rhetoric which defined the rise of the movement in the 1930s and 1940s. During these formative years, the focus hinged on commemorating the plight, survival and valour of the Voortrekkers and the Afrikaners who experienced the devastation of the Anglo-Boer war. The notion of survival as well as the need to overcome the struggles of the past informed these early stages of nation-building (Freschi, 2011b:13). In the years succeeding the victory of the National Party, the Afrikaners had reached the height of social, political and economic stability, as Freschi states, "young, middle-class Afrikaners in the 1960s and early 1970s – riding the crest of an economic boom and living in a state that aggressively and jealously promoted their well-being – could enjoy a prosperity and concomitant sense of confidence and cultural superiority that would have been unimaginable for their parents" (2011b:23). The economic and cultural maturity of the Afrikaner nation was reflected in the field of visual art. The modern and abstract forms which dominated the "canon of 'high-art'" signalled the "assertive and self-conscious modernity" of Afrikaner nation and its social imaginary (Freschi, 2011b:24).

<sup>80</sup> This includes the rise of bureaucracy, democratisation and increasingly powerful nation states (Heynen, 1999:10).

<sup>81</sup> Heynen distinguishes between different interpretations of modernity. Borrowing from Jurgen Habermas's understanding thereof, the programmatic approach to modernity (as formulated in Enlightenment philosophy) involves the autonomous development of various domains (morality, science, art). The project of modernity culminates in the practical application of these domains towards the improvement of human life. For Habermas, the importance of modernity resides in the fact that the future is formed by the present (Heynen, 1999:11-12). Another philosophical interpretation stems from Jean Baudrillard, who accepts the understanding of modernity as involving the rejection of traditions and the desire for improvement, but places emphasis on its transitory nature. Modernity's incessant drive for change results in the divergence from its core principles and values whereby it ultimately declines into a cycle of change for the sake of change (Heynen, 1999:12).

in an approach to life which embraces transformation and evolution. Consequently, the experience of modernity elicited the development of progressive contemporaneous artistic movements. Those movements, which resonated with the desire for progress, fall under the broad descriptor of 'Modernism' which manifested in visual art, music, literature and architecture (Heynen, 1999:10). Modernism may therefore be regarded as a cultural phenomenon of the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early to mid-20<sup>th</sup> centuries.

It is a challenge to find a concise definition of Modernism since there are a number of ambiguities embedded in the term. For the purposes of this thesis I quote Paul Wood in full, since he provides a comprehensive account of this term:

Much hinges on how 'modernism' is understood, and there tends generally to be a slippage between relatively inclusive and exclusive usages. The most exclusive sense, which is particularly associated with the writing of the American critic Clement Greenberg and the formalist tradition of which he was part, restricts authentic 'modernism' to an increasingly 'purified' lineage of abstract art. Such art aimed at producing intensified aesthetic effects in spectators through the composition of the forms and colours of the paintings themselves, which were understood as autonomous pictorial entities with, at best, only a secondary reference to the world of physical things. This gave rise to the idea of a modernist 'mainstream', running from the late work of Paul Cézanne, through Henri Matisse and Piet Mondrian to Jackson Pollock, Mark Rothko and others, and culminating in the 1960s. It has become almost routine in recent 'post-modernist' art history and criticism to caricature this approach as involving an arid, even haughty sense of the elevated experience of art: a conception of art as, if not entirely careless of the world, then offering itself as a kind of rarefied compensation for its trials. Even a more sympathetic account would have to concede that modernism in its narrower sense remained focused on the technical and formal properties of the work of art, and its aesthetic effect on the emotions of its 'disinterested' spectator.

According to a broader understanding, 'modernism' becomes a synonym for the wider modern movement in art often described as the 'avant-garde' (another multivalent term with its own problems of definition). On this understanding it denotes the succession of 'isms' ranging from Cubism and Surrealism to Abstract Expressionism, Dada, Pop Art, and many more. These include practices that were marked not so much – or not only – by the pursuit of aesthetic value, as by a variegated and, to the outsider, often eccentric engagement with the multifarious

experience of modern life: technology, alienation, commodification, tensions between subjectivity and the collective which mark all our lives – all of us, that is, whose experience has been that of the developed West during the twentieth century (2004:1).

Similar to Wood’s definition of ‘Modernism’ in art, Modernism in architecture refers to the development of various movements which generated tangible responses to the modern age in the built environment. This chapter will explore the changes and new approaches to architectural planning and design which informed the expansion of Modernist architecture in both international and South African contexts. Accordingly, this discussion precludes the focus of the next chapter which will examine the rise and development of Modernist Afrikaans Protestant church architecture.

## 2.1 The development of International forms and variations of Modernist Architecture

Modern architecture emerged at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century as new forms and building styles aimed to defy the architecture of the previous era which concerned itself with the detailed construction of opulent buildings for the elite. The new generation of architects condemned not only the triviality of ostentatiously decorative designs,<sup>82</sup> but aimed to resolve the socio-economic division which it had perpetuated as, “architecture itself had become a symbol of inequality” (Hughes, 1991:167). In pursuit of fulfilling their utopian aim of social reform, Modernist designers began to focus their attention on the essential functional<sup>83</sup> concerns of architecture. This move towards design based on rational principles was aided by advances in building technologies coupled with the use of new materials which included reinforced concrete and structural steel (Richards, 1961:45). Some of the essential design philosophies of Modernism derived from the early work of Frank Lloyd Wright. His revolutionary use of space in the Unity Temple (1905-07) had a great impact on the development of European Modernism (Weston, 2001:54-7). As a discipline informed by socio-economic and political developments,

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<sup>82</sup> One of the key sources which informed this attitude was Adolf Loos’s seminal text entitled ‘Ornamentation and Crime’, published in 1908. Loos denounced the decorative aspects of architecture by declaring it immoral and decadent. He subsequently advocated for the austerity which later characterised modern architecture (Hearn, 2003:16).

<sup>83</sup> An abbreviated version of the following quote by American architect, Louis Sullivan, has been popularly adapted as the definitive principle of Modernist design, “It is the pervading law of all things organic and inorganic, of all things physical and metaphysical, of all things human and superhuman, of all true manifestations of the head, of the heart, of the soul, that the life is recognisable in its expression, that form ever follows function. *This is the law*” (Sullivan, 1896:408).

architecture was also profoundly affected by the First and Second World Wars.<sup>84</sup> The radical changes which followed these events resulted in new modes of expression in modern architecture.

Regarded as a complex phenomenon, modern architecture is characterised by a great variety of styles, influences and occasionally, opposing ideologies. The latter will be demonstrated by providing a brief and perforce oversimplified summary of two European variants of inter-war modern architecture. The Bauhaus school,<sup>85</sup> established in the democratic Weimar Republic, promoted egalitarian ideals in architecture and the built environment. Due to the devastating effects of the great inflation (1922-1923), the Republic faced a national housing crisis. The Bauhaus architects aided in the resolution of the issue with the design and construction of mass housing projects, resulting in economical, functional and tasteful residences (Hughes, 1991:195). Their work culminated in the *Weissenhofsiedlung*, a housing project intended for workers, which adhered to the following statement in the Weimar Constitution, “reconstruction could only take place on a basis of total equality” (cited in Weston, 2001:135). Conversely, Rationalism, a prevalent architectural movement in Fascist Italy, adopted Modernism to reflect the dominant political ideologies of the time (Ghirardo, 1980:109). The Rationalists had won the approval of Mussolini who opened their 1931 exhibition in Rome (Weston, 2001:172). A prime example of Rationalist architecture is Giuseppe Terragni’s state-funded ‘Casa del Fascio’ in Como which was built in accordance with Mussolini’s declaration, “Fascism is a house of glass into which all can look” (cited in Weston, 2001:172). It is therefore clear that the stripped aesthetic of architectural Modernism lent itself to a variety of often contrary ideological statements.

By the end of the 1920s, it was apparent that modern architecture had proliferated in Europe. In France, Le Corbusier had published his revolutionary ideas on architecture and design in *Vers une Architecture*<sup>86</sup> (Towards a New Architecture) in 1923 (Weston, 2001:107). A group exhibition entitled *Die Wohnung*, was held in Stuttgart in 1927 and featured the work of

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<sup>84</sup> After 1945, architects in Europe were given the task of redesigning and reconstructing the cities and urban spaces that were damaged during the war. This enabled them to devise new aesthetic landscapes within these urban environments.

<sup>85</sup> Founded by Walter Gropius in 1919, the Bauhaus is recognised as one of the most influential schools of art, design and craftsmanship (Whitford, 1984:7-9). As prescribed in the Manifesto, the Bauhaus endorsed collaborative efforts between artists and craftsmen. Moreover the school aimed to eradicate the hierarchy between fine arts and craft. Due to the implementation of these aims, the Bauhaus precipitated a radical reformation in art education (Whitford, 1984:10-12).

<sup>86</sup> This book contained Le Corbusier’s infamous and highly contested declaration, “the house is a machine for living in” (cited in Weston, 2001:108).

architects from all over Europe. The exhibition was accompanied by the construction of the *Weissenhofsiedlung* which included structures designed by Ludwig Mies van der Rohe, J.J.P. Oud, Walter Gropius and Le Corbusier (Hughes, 1991:195). Most of the buildings were designed according to the unadorned “cubic constructional style”, with the exception of a house by Hans Sharoun (Weston, 2001:135). The geographical range of the structures featured in the *Die Wohnung* exhibition, confirmed that modern architecture was an international phenomenon (Weston, 2001:135). Moreover the uniformity of the *Weissenhofsiedlung* pointed to the establishment of a particular mode of Modernist design, which was later exemplified in Le Corbusier’s Villa Savoye<sup>87</sup> (1929-1931). This structure, described as, “the cube the Cubists never painted – a pristine white box, raised on twenty-six delicate columns, above a curving ground-floor wall, the skinlike tautness of its stucco walls emphasised by long strips of sliding windows”, is regarded as the finest example of what became known as the International Style (Hughes, 1991:191).

The term ‘International Style’ was popularised by the architectural historian Henry-Russell Hitchcock and architect Philip Johnson who hosted and curated the seminal 1932 exhibition ‘Modern Architecture: International Exhibition’ at New York’s Museum of Modern Art (Weston, 2001:168). In their co-authored book titled ‘The International Style’, the curators identified the three main principles of modern architectural design, which include, “...treating the building as a *volume* defined by surfaces, not as a mass; formal *regularity*, resulting from proportional control and an orderly structure; and the *avoidance of applied decoration*” (Weston, 2001:168). The former two principles refer to the essential structural requirements of the International Style whilst the latter pertains to the aesthetic austerity which characterised this mode of design.

Hitchcock and Johnson’s exhibition featured the structures of approximately fifty architects from sixteen countries, which included the work of world renowned architects Walter Gropius and Le Corbusier (Brink, 2011a:2). The iconic features of the International Style were epitomised by these architects, who pioneered this pervasive 20<sup>th</sup> century architectural phenomenon. The significance of their roles as historic figures was later confirmed by Philip

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<sup>87</sup> The Villa Savoye is the structural prototype of Le Corbusier’s ‘Five Points of Architecture’ which was published in 1926. These guidelines stipulated the following: 1) The use of columns (*pilotis*) upon which to raise the structure, 2) The exclusion of load-bearing walls in the interior which allows for open planning (*plan libre*), 3) The use of non-load-bearing external walls (*façade libre*), 4) The inclusion of long, horizontal windows (*fenêtre en longueur*) and 5) A flat roof which is to be used as a garden (*toit jardin*) (Millais, 2015:103).

Johnson, “Monuments last much longer than words. Civilisations are remembered by buildings. There’s nothing more important than architecture” (cited in Gay, 2008:289).

In response to the homogeneity propagated by the International Style, a new approach to modern architecture developed in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. According to Kenneth Frampton, Critical Regionalism is characterised by the use of Modernist building materials and techniques whilst endorsing a culturally sensitive, context specific approach to architecture<sup>88</sup> (1992:315). As such, it aims to defy the obliteration of distinctive expressions of regional culture as perpetuated by the universalising approach of centrist architecture. This is achieved by the inclusion of idiosyncrasies in the design of a building which is based on the structural principles of International Style Modernism. Frampton deems the work of the Spanish architect J.A. Codrech as a prime example of Regionalism, owing to his designs which resulted from a fusion between local traditions and universal tendencies (1992:317). Another prolific European architect, Alvar Aalto, pioneered Critical Regionalism in Scandinavia. His designs are mindful of local conditions and the natural environment. His Regionalist tendencies are exemplified in the Villa Mairea, Finland, as his distinctive use of form and local materials resonate with the Finnish landscape (Weston, 2001:186). Deemed as universally prevalent as the International Style, Critical Regionalism is a global phenomenon recognised especially in the work of Portuguese, Mexican and Argentinian architects (Frampton, 1992:317-319).

Despite its vast impact on global design, modern architecture failed to fulfil its goal of creating utopian societies through design based on rational and functional principles. The architects, who were ardently idealistic, set out to design utopian living schemes for urban inhabitants, yet this dream dissolved as the architecture was divested of its social vision and stood as the hallmarks of power and representation. In conjunction with the increasingly consuming mass culture which accompanied the advent of Modernism, architecture became the lived reality of mass production whereby people were forced into stark and hostile urban residences<sup>89</sup> which

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<sup>88</sup> Frampton’s formulation of Critical Regionalism is derived from Paul Ricouer’s theory of hybridised culture: the inevitable outcome of the intersection between regional and global culture, as put forth in Ricouer’s 1961 essay ‘Universal Civilisation and National Cultures’ (Frampton, 1983:148).

<sup>89</sup> An example is Le Corbusier’s unappealing solution to mass-housing, the infamous Unité d’Habitation apartment block in Marseilles. This bleak concrete megastructure was designed to house 1600 people in 340 apartment units (Millais, 2015:106). Prior to completion, the blue prints were beset with issues which included poor ventilation in bedrooms and living areas as well as the ceiling height below the legal minimum. Despite the non-compliance with French building regulations, Le Corbusier was granted permission to continue with construction (Millais, 2015:110). After the residents had moved in, more palpable issues were found with the building. The heating system was problematic, the sound insulation for the apartments failed and resulted in noise pollution, the fire protection system was flawed and Le Corbusier’s solution of fixing concrete *brise soleils* (sunshades) did not fully comply with the orientation of the building, resulting in the ineffective regulation of natural light and heat (Millais, 2015:112-113). Consequently, the project has been subject to an



became centres of crime and poverty. As such, the Modernist housing projects became symbols of dehumanisation and alienation (Huysen, 1986:186).

The collapse of Modernist architecture was declared by Philip Johnson, who retrospectively admitted to the ruin of its objectives, “It was one of those illusions of the 20s [...] We were thoroughly of the opinion that if you had good architecture the lives of people would be improved; that architecture would improve people, and people improve architecture until perfectibility would descend on us like the Holy Ghost, and we would be happy ever after. This did not prove to be the case” (cited in Hughes, 1991:165). From a philosophical perspective, this failure of Modernist architecture is elucidated by Michel Foucault during an interview with Paul Rabinow. In the discussion, Foucault describes his view on the complex relations which exist between space, power and knowledge. One of the conclusions drawn from the interview is summarised as follows, “Foucault argues that abstract (and in the West highly valued) words like ‘liberty’ and ‘rationality’ refer neither simply to ideas nor to practices – but to sets of complex exchanges between the two [...] It means that architects and other social managers cannot guarantee that their designs will secure liberty or rationality” (During, 1993:161). For the purposes of this thesis, it is important to note that Modernist architects were also co-opted into different ideologies and political regimes such as Fascism, as previously mentioned with regards to the Rationalists in Italy, communism and in the South African context, Afrikaner nationalism. Examples of the latter will follow in the ensuing discussion of Modernist architecture in South Africa.

## 2.2 Modern Architecture in South Africa

Before elaborating on the finer details of how Modernism developed and functioned alongside the foundation phases of Afrikaner nationalism, one should explore the reasons behind its arrival in South Africa. Daniel Herwitz investigates the different varieties of modern architecture that emerged in what he contentiously identifies as the cultural margins (referring to countries such as China, South Africa and Brazil) as opposed to the centres of modern art and architecture (Europe and America) (1999:406). Preceding his discussion on the

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incessant stream of criticism as Mumford states in 1963, “Le Corbusier betrayed the human contents to produce a monumental aesthetic effect. The result is an egocentric extravagance ...” (cited in Millais, 2015:109). Tzonis voiced the following critique in 2001, “Le Corbusier’s Unité points to the ecological devastation, the destruction of the natural landscape and the decline of the sense of joy of life” (cited in Millais, 2015:109). Despite the wide-ranging condemnation of this structure, Le Corbusier was fortunate enough to have evaded the dramatic declaration by Charles Jencks who announced the demise of modern architecture with implosion of Minoru Yamasaki’s Pruitt-Igoe housing project in St. Louis on the 15<sup>th</sup> of July 1972 (Huysen, 1986:186).

development and implementation of modern architecture in South Africa, Herwitz asks the following,

How does Modernism get itself invented where urbanisation is fragmentary; patterns of intellectual, cultural, economic and political dependency remain colonial; institutions, criticism, nationalist ideologies and the fetish of cultural commodities exist haphazardly if at all; the circle of artists is small; populations are split between subaltern and élite; economies are rudimentary, and life is stultified by the colonial yoke and the repression of indigenous traditions? (1999:406).

He contends that the answer to this convoluted question of Modernism at the ‘margins’ lies in the shadows of a dependency on the former colonial centre. With regards to South Africa, Modernism resulted from the ongoing affiliation of white South Africans<sup>90</sup> to their European forebears. Herwitz asserts that South African Eurocentrism functions as a “badge of identity” which involves the settler’s desire to claim and justify social as well as cultural difference from indigenous populations (1999:407). This mode of Eurocentrism gave rise to an early form of South African modern architecture that imitated the models emanating from the centre. This above exegesis, however, offers a limited explanation of settler identification and cultural production at the ‘margins’, “Eurocentrism is but one form that modernism (and modernity generally) at the margins take, even in South Africa, and it is but one response to the split self of late colonialism” (Herwitz, 1999:407). Herwitz’ notion of a ‘split self’, derives from the settler’s experience of alienation from both indigenous and European cultures coupled with the desire to belong in the new environment (Bell, 2014:9). Accordingly, the need to construct an ‘authentic’ national identity arose as, “the settlers were themselves doubly *inauthentic* – both modern and out of place” (Bell, 2014:27). The crisis in settler identity may lead to the appropriation of indigenous forms which function as expressions of locality and aids in the authentication of the new national culture. However this is but one strategy which settlers use to create and express their new identity. As an example, South African architects employed different methods to generate a variety of local Modernist forms in the built environment which functioned as expressions of their distinct architectural identity. The techniques included the consideration of the regional climatic conditions, the use of local building materials and the application of traditional (local colonial) architectural forms and elements in the design of Modernist buildings.

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<sup>90</sup> The two settler communities (English- and Afrikaans speaking white citizen) resulted in two, distinct settler colonial identities within the South African context.



Following from this discussion of the production of Modernism at the ‘margins’, it is important to point out that Modernism, as a product of modernity, follows a pattern of continuous reinvention. This assertion derives from the transitory conception of modernity. In her formulation thereof, Heynen refers to the development of modern art which is characterised by continuous change and reinvention. She relates this characteristic feature of modern art to Baudrillard’s notion of modernity as he, “sees the cycle of modernity, in which crisis succeeds crisis, as running away with itself” (Heynen, 1999:12). As such, constant transformation informed the development of modern architecture in South Africa, resulting in variant forms adopting both International Style and regionalist characteristics.

### 2.3 Variations of modern Architecture in South Africa

Modern architecture in South Africa first took root in the form of the International Style, which was locally pioneered by the ‘Transvaal Group’<sup>91</sup> in the 1930s (Greig, 1971:61). Led by Rex Martienssen, the Transvaal Group were a covey of gifted graduates from the University of the Witwatersrand (Wits) School of Architecture who drew inspiration from the work of Le Corbusier (Gerneke, 1998:208). In accordance with the structural and aesthetic traditions of the International Style, their early work amounted to, “a small collection of unusual looking houses and blocks of flats, having smooth white walls, large windows and flat roofs and a fine disregard for the lessons embodied in Baker’s<sup>92</sup> work with regard to the Transvaal climate” (Greig, 1971:63). Their architecture was informed by the Eurocentric approach as exemplified in House Stern (1934) designed by Martienssen, Fassler and Cooke which replicated the structural elements of Le Corbusier’s Villa Stein (1927) in France (Herwitz, 1999:413). Due to their attachment and strict adherence to the International Style, the Transvaal Group considered themselves as part of a global cultural and aesthetic revolution. Despite their

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<sup>91</sup> Consisting of a small group of graduates, the members of the ‘Transvaal Group’ became avid supporters of the avant-garde and fought for the acceptance of Modernism at the University of the Witwatersrand School of Architecture. Consequently their work placed the Transvaal on the international map of Modernist architecture. One of the founders, Rex Martienssen, became the co-editor of *The South African Architectural Record* and changed the face of this journal to suit his stylistic preferences. In 1931, Martienssen published his article entitled, ‘The International Tendency’ which resonated with the creed of the International Style (Gerneke, 1998:208-209). However, due to various disputes between the editor and Martienssen, the Transvaal Group leaders decided to launch their own radical publication. On the 1<sup>st</sup> of April 1933, the first and last issue of *zero hour* was brought out. Copies of this journal were distributed abroad and reached the likes of the world renowned architect and urban visionary, Le Corbusier, who stated that it was, “amazing to find something so alive in that far away spot in Africa beyond the equatorial forests” (cited in Gerneke, 1998:209).

<sup>92</sup> Sir Herbet Baker was an English architect who trained in London. In 1892, he came to South Africa and stayed for twenty years, completing the designs of Groote Schuur, the house of Cecil John Rhodes, the Union Buildings in Pretoria, and occupied himself with the restoration work of Cape Dutch homesteads and churches (Saunders, 1994:26).

prominence as the local pioneers of modern architecture, their slavish imitation of European Modernism proved to be ill-suited for the weather conditions of the Transvaal. From the mid-1930s, local architects began to modify this purified and imported form of Modernist architecture.<sup>93</sup> Deviating from the rigidity of International Style Modernism, Norman Eaton and Douglas Cowin started to include certain structural features, such as wide eaves and pitched roofs, in the design of buildings. As such, their designs were more considerate of the local climate (Gerneke, 1998:211).

Eaton and Cowin's work instigated the Regionalist approach to modern architecture in South Africa. Fisher describes it as a more personalised form of architecture which considers the local context and attends to the various regional factors of the given environment (1998:140). By the 1950s, Regionalism had become a popular mode of architecture in South Africa. The following discussion will touch on various Regionalist tendencies and other Modernist architectural developments in three South African cities.

Johannesburg was the first city to adopt modern architecture in its urban landscape due to the above-mentioned 'Transvaal Group' which played a pivotal role in this development (Fisher, Le Roux, Murray & Sanders, 2003:69). Seventy kilometres north of Johannesburg, Modernism made its first appearance in the form of Art Deco architecture in Pretoria. The Regionalist movement in the city only started gaining ground after the Department of Architecture and Quantity Surveying was established at the University of Pretoria in 1943 (Fisher, 1998:126). The architects who graduated from the University soon made a significant mark in the local built environment as they greatly contributed to the development of what Fisher labels as, 'Pretoria Regionalism' (1998:123). In his description thereof Fisher states that it, "reflects a particular response to nature and landscape through the economical use of naturally available and industrially produced materials with an empirical response to climate, all of which tempered the emergent tenets of the Modern" (1998:123). Furthermore, he claims that Afrikaner origins were crucial to the development of Pretoria Regionalism. As a large urban centre in the Transvaal, Pretoria housed a significant population of destitute Afrikaners who faced severe economic challenges after the devastation of the Anglo-Boer War early in the 20<sup>th</sup> century which, alongside the Great Depression (1929) led to what popularly became known as 'the poor white problem', as discussed in the previous chapter. After a number of financial aid

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<sup>93</sup> It has been speculated that this move away from International Style architecture was for practical reasons. The Transvaal Group's signature use of flat roofs and large, exposed windows caused issues with insulation, waterproofing and light control (Gerneke, 1998:211).

organisations<sup>94</sup> were established to counter Afrikaner poverty, the Afrikaner community in Pretoria slowly started to prosper (Fisher, 1998:134). The growing need to erect houses, churches and public buildings in the most economically viable manner called for architects and builders to critically examine their designs and methods of construction. Moreover architects had to be sensitive towards the needs of a conservative community with strong agrarian ties.<sup>95</sup> This was achieved by the strategic use of local materials and the careful consideration of the climate and landscape (Fisher, 1998:140). Alongside Norman Eaton, whose work is exemplary of Pretoria Regionalism, this particular architectural movement was pioneered by the group of students from the Pretoria School of Architecture who graduated shortly after the National Party's triumph in the 1948 elections. These graduates were caught up in the ideological fervour which permeated Afrikaner society after the consolidation of Afrikaner nationalist rule. This young corps of architects flourished due to readily available funding for state commissions, locally manufactured building materials, the acceptance of the Modernist aesthetic and the will to develop a unique cultural identity in the field of architecture (Fisher, 1998:126). Among the early graduates from the Pretoria School were Johan de Ridder and Jan van Wijk, who both became prominent Afrikaner architects (Fisher, 1998:126).

The founding of the Pretoria School coincided with the seminal 'Brazil Builds' exhibition in January 1943 at the Museum of Modern Art in New York which, "moved modern architecture out of the preserve of the privileged and into the public realm and established it as an expression of newly independent statehood" (Fisher, 1999:229). The catalogue of the exhibition became a crucial source of inspiration for South African architects, including some of the graduates from the Pretoria School. One of the first buildings which showcased the influence of Brazilian-inspired Modernism was Helmut Stauch's Meat Board Building of 1952 (Fisher *et al.*, 2003:69). Furthermore, as the administrative capital of the country, Pretoria came to express the Afrikaner nationalist government's aspirations in the built environment. The aim was to get the city recognised as the centre of an upwardly mobile nation state. Among the buildings reflecting these ambitions was Meiring, Naudé and Moerdijk's<sup>96</sup> Transvaal

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<sup>94</sup> These included the Mutual Aid Association or *Helpmekaar Vereniging* which branched out in the establishment of Santam and Sanlam. At a later stage the following companies were founded by Afrikaners in aid of the Afrikaner cause: Avbob, Sasbank, Volkskas Bank and Uniewinkels (Fisher, 1998:134).

<sup>95</sup> Afrikaner culture in the early decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century was still greatly informed by the Afrikaner people's close affinity to the local landscape and the belief in their divine right to claim ownership of the land (Fisher, 1998:139). These sentiments had to be carefully negotiated and considered within the urban reality of Pretoria in the 1940s and 1950s.

<sup>96</sup> Different spelling of Moerdijk's surname appear in the literature, fluctuating between 'Moerdijk' and 'Moerdyk'. The former will be used throughout the writing of this thesis and the latter 'Moerdyk' only features in reference to his 1935 publication.

Provincial Administrative Building of 1962, which demonstrated Brazilian Modernist influences<sup>97</sup> (Fisher *et al.*, 2003:69-70).

The influence of Brazilian Modernism, particularly the designs of Oscar Niemeyer and Lúcio Costa, was adopted by the architect Issy Benjamin whose practice (Crofton and Benjamin) in Durban mirrored the Regionalist aspects of Brazilian architecture. Angela Butler states the following on the Brazilian regionalist influence on his work, “Benjamin developed a style that was sensitive to site conditions and local climate. In his compact and highly functional internal organisation, he creates the illusion of space by using features such as angled walls, perspective views and corner windows” (cited in Fisher *et al.*, 2003:70-71). Another influential architect who founded the ‘Natal School’ of Durban Regionalism was Barrie Biermann, a senior lecturer and associate professor of architecture at the University of Natal. It is said that the impact of Brazilian Modernism is best captured in the architecture of the Biermann house which was designed by its owner upon his return from a visit to Brazil in the early 1960s. Biermann’s influence was extended through the work of his students who established the ‘Building Design Group’ and continued to reinvent their own interpretations of the fusion of Brazilian and Durban Regionalist Modernism (Fisher *et al.*, 2003:71).

Modern architecture only took hold in Cape Town during the 1930s and the 1940s after the appointment of Professor Thornton White as the Head of the University of Cape Town (UCT) School Of Architecture. His influence had a substantial impact on the development of the built environment during the preliminary years of Modernism in Cape Town, as Gilbert Herbert testifies, “The advent of Professor Thornton White to the Chair of Architecture, early in 1937, was significant in the Cape Town story. A change in direction in the School of Architecture soon became apparent, and in a year or two the exhibited work of the school was much more modern in spirit” (1975:227). Prior to White’s appointment at the Cape Town School, the local attitude towards Modernism was deemed to be quite conservative and hostile. Even after it was established in the Cape, the development of modern architecture gathered less strength and speed than in the Transvaal<sup>98</sup> (Fisher *et al.*, 2003:71).

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<sup>97</sup> The Transvaal Administration Building shows structural similarities to Oscar Niemeyer and Le Corbusier’s Ministry of Education and Health building in Rio de Janeiro, which include, “fins on a grid to accommodate flexible dry partitioning, pilotis, an articulated roofscape, the wings forming freestanding volumes in urban space” (Gerneke, 1998:218) .

<sup>98</sup> Twenty years after the unification of South Africa (1910), the development and acceptance of new architectural tendencies, such as Modernism, was somewhat delayed in the former British colonies, “Cape Town and Durban were traditionally more staid and the architecture, like their citizenry, aligned with the tried and trusted, avoiding the brashness of the experimentations on the Reef” (Fisher & Clarke, 2014:13). As such, one

After the advent of the apartheid regime, there was a significant increase in planning and construction work in Cape Town which included the Native Housing projects in the surrounding townships and plans for the Foreshore Scheme (Fisher *et al.*, 2003:71). Some of the prominent architects practicing in Cape Town included German-born Pius Pahl who trained at the Bauhaus before immigrating to South Africa and establishing his Capetonian practice in 1952 (Joubert & Wiid, 1990:24). He was mostly involved with designing residential buildings which ranged from private to commercial real estate. A number of Polish architects who trained in Liverpool founded thriving practices in Cape Town. Among them were Roaman Soltynski and Maciek Miszewski, both who became part-time lecturers at the UCT School of Architecture (Fisher *et al.*, 2003:71-72).

South African born architects, Revel Fox and Gabriël Fagan were able to synthesise the spatial qualities of the Cape Vernacular<sup>99</sup> with their own approaches and interpretations of Modernism which resulted in a mode of architecture unique to the Cape region (Barker, 2012:36). In the process of Fox's first commissions which consisted of small projects, he sought to revise theoretical approaches to accommodate the practical concerns of constructing with limited funding and basic technology. Throughout his career, his design themes reappeared in varying forms. One of his most popular themes, described as "the pure white flat-roofed box with horizontally banded windows" was modified to suit specific climatic regions and would later become known as the "Fox boxes" (Fourie, 2005:12). The work of Gabriël Fagan is informed by his personal design philosophy. Fagan believes that, "...a really thorough understanding of one's own vernacular architecture to be an essential and also the soundest basis, for continuing creation" (Barker, 2012:40). He has developed a series of ten design principles entitled

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could argue that the Capetonians remained greatly attached to the architectural tendencies of the colonial era, which include Neo-Classicism and Herbert Baker's Cape-Dutch Revivalism (Fisher & Clarke, 2014:12).

<sup>99</sup> The Cape Vernacular tradition refers to the ongoing mode of architecture which developed in the Cape region since the 17<sup>th</sup> century. Over the course of 300 years, it has progressed through different responses to site, culture, climate and technological advances in the building industry. Barker contends that it has undergone four major shifts (2012:36). The first phase is characterised by the Dutch rural tradition, whereby dwellings took on the combination of Khoi and Dutch architectural solutions. The essential elements of these dwellings were single-storey, freestanding buildings finished off with a thatched roof which strongly contrasted the whitewashed walls. Such houses are to be found in the coastal towns of Arniston, Struisbaai and Paternoster. The second phase was informed by Georgian influence which included the use of narrow passageways, verandas and window shutters to suit the climate of the region. The Herbert Baker School is known as the third phase of the Cape Vernacular tradition. It had its roots in European and British regional traditions and placed a greater emphasis on structural design (Barker, 2012:36-37). The fourth Vernacular interpretation is derived from the work of the 20<sup>th</sup> century architects, Gabriël Fagan, Pius Pahl and Revel Fox. Their designs extended the Cape Vernacular tradition to include influences from Modernism, as Barker states, "The attenuative design approaches recognised the restraints of the vernacular while contextualising Modern Movement attitudes to space making, technology and climatic response. This approach layered a functional determinism on an established, formal and technological tradition" (2012:37).

‘Learning from the Vernacular’. These principles are based on three essential qualities which inform vernacular architecture: a regard for place, the skilful use of technology and of symbol (Barker, 2012: 40).

Fagan’s constant use of specific spatial typologies and design methods informed his work in such a way that he created his own vernacular, typified in his design intentions and inspirations. As such, Fagan makes use of ‘chic’ Modernist trends and looks to the work of Le Corbusier for inspiration. In the design of his houses, Fagan invariably employs the same spatial typology, which consists of a rectangular main room surrounded by smaller offshoot spaces (Barker, 2012:40). The Cape vernacular tradition developed by Fox and Fagan featured mainly in the design of residential buildings (Barker, 2012:42).

Another prominent and influential architect from the UCT School is Roelof Uytenbogaardt. His approach to design was informed by a respect and appreciation for the work of Le Corbusier and Louis Kahn, the American architect under whom he completed his post-graduate studies at the University of Pennsylvania (Murray, 2010:79). Uytenbogaardt is best known for his Werdmuller Centre (1976) in Claremont and the University of Cape Town Sports Centre (1977), both which were designed according to the brutalist<sup>100</sup> aesthetic (Brink, 2011b). Uytenbogaardt’s legacy is tied to the controversial design of the infamous Werdmuller Centre which received large-scale negative public reception in Cape Town. Despite the critical response, architects felt that the building constituted an outstanding local architectural achievement, “Arguing that the city ‘was not ready’ for this ‘forward thinking’ approach, architects express the significance of the building as demonstrating an exemplary manifestation of Corbusian modernism in Cape Town” (Murray, 2010:123).

Various public and commercial buildings in the Cape were designed by architects based in other South African cities. One such architect, Jan van Wijk, was involved with public construction projects in the region and received the commission to design the *Taal Monument*

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<sup>100</sup> The term ‘brutalism’ refers to the use of the structural material, *béton brut* (raw concrete) which is left without subsequent finishing. This particular mode of design was made famous by Le Corbusier whose roughly worked forms were deliberately used to emphasise the raw concrete. Coined in England in 1954, the term ‘brutalism’ was used in reference to Le Corbusier’s concrete structures at Marseilles (1947) and Chandigarh (1951) and is consequently applied to describe other buildings which emphasise over-exposed structural surfaces (Cowan, 1973:25-26). Moreover, Greig states the following about the influx of Brutalism in South Africa (as part of an introduction to her paragraph on Uytenbogaardt’s Dutch Reformed Church for the Welkom West congregation), “Brutalism, a philosophy of building and design which evolved during the 1950s and 60s, is being explored by several South African architects, in varying degrees of depth, to exploit the use of structural and untreated materials such as timber, brick and concrete, and for the undisguised expression of a building’s functions” (1971:224).



(Afrikaans Language Monument) in Paarl. This sculptural monument is an example of modern architecture, and was purposefully commissioned to promote Afrikaner nationalism (Fisher *et al.*, 2003:71). Inaugurated in 1975, the Monument was erected in commemoration of the establishment of the *Genootskap van Regte Afrikaners* (The Society of the True Afrikaners) which primarily concerned itself with the transformation of Afrikaans from, “an inferior language, a ‘*kombuistaal*’ (kitchen language) into one fit for professional conversation, publication and a means of full cultural and political expression [...] this goal was tied to a desire for a cohesive national identity, dependent on land and language (Beningfield, 2004:509-511). As such, the structure is said to celebrate the status of the Afrikaans language and culture which flourished during the height of Afrikaner nationalism in the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century.

As an overtly symbolic edifice, the Monument consists of concave and convex concrete structures which represent the various European, African and Asian (Malay) languages and cultures which impacted on the development of Afrikaans (Beningfield, 2004:513). The main structural entity is the tapering obelisk, which stretches 57 meters above the foundation level and triumphantly rises beyond the other smaller pillars and structures (Rossouw & Van Zyl, 2016:301). It is said to symbolise Afrikaans as a burgeoning language and was designed according to the descriptions of the language as expressed by the renowned Afrikaans literary figures, C.J. Langenhoven and N.P. van Wyk Louw. The former describes Afrikaans as, “a hyperbolic curve, reaching into the blue South African sky” whereas Louw regards it as the language which binds Africa to Western Europe and further likens it to a double edged sword (Beningfield, 2004:511-512; Rossouw & Van Zyl, 2016:300-301). The architect drew inspiration from these sentiments and accordingly incorporated them into the design.

The sharp lines of the tallest column depict the concept of the sword, whilst the blunt edge of the structure symbolises the continuous growth and expansion of the language (Rossouw & Van Zyl, 2016:301). Van Wijk’s use of concrete as well as the fluidity of forms conveys the notion of progress which affirms the modern status of the Afrikaner nation. Moreover, the vertical authority of the obelisk, as the dominant structural entity of the Monument, is a pronounced visual representation of the maturation of the Afrikaner language and people who victoriously overcame their status as a perceived inferior, incompetent and defeated nation. As such, the confidence of the Afrikaner nation as a powerful and pervasive entity is brazenly captured in the Modernist design of this monument.

## 2.4 The Influence and Impact of Socio-Economic and Political conditions on modern Architecture in South Africa

The expansion of modern architecture in South Africa was accompanied by the utopian spirit that is deeply ingrained in the programmatic and progressive concept of modernity. Heynen refers to it as, “a project of progress and emancipation” (1999:11). As such, modern architecture was greatly concerned with creating utopian spaces wherein large numbers of people would be able to live, work and travel in the most efficient manner possible. This utopian scheme was implemented by employing rational and functional architectural design which would, hypothetically, vastly improve and revolutionise the appearance and use of urban spaces. Hughes gives expression to these ideas in the following statement, “The home of the Utopian impulse was architecture rather than painting or sculpture. Painting can make us happy, but building is the art we live in; it is the social *par excellence*, the carapace of political fantasy, the exoskeleton of one’s economic dream. It is also the one art nobody can escape” (Hughes, 1991:164).

As mentioned earlier, modern architecture emerged in South Africa in the 1930s, a period of rapid economic expansion. Moreover it was during this time that the distinct “metropolitan character” of cities in the country was established (Freschi, 2011a:157). Prior to the Second World War, the export of gold and diamonds bolstered the economy which enabled a greater influx of imported modern building materials to supplement the use of locally manufactured stone, bricks and cement. These advances facilitated the local manifestation of International Style architecture, which was pioneered by the ‘Transvaal Group’ who made use of modern industrial materials such as reinforced concrete, steel and sheet glass (Greig, 1971:63-64). The outbreak of the War brought the import of building materials to a close. Consequently, the government endorsed and enabled the growth of the local industrial building materials industry. This resulted in the production of structural steel, cement, pre-fabricated concrete elements, laminated timber, fine bricks and sheets of glass that equipped architects to venture into their own experimentations with Modernist designs and techniques (Greig, 1971:65).

Modernism was not merely an ideology shared by architects, but became a currency among builders in the construction industry. The use of cheaper, locally produced materials was not only the most popular choice, but also became the most economically viable way in which to construct (Herwitz, 1999:410). Technological advancements, industrial expansions and new-found structural design methods meant that more buildings could be erected at a cheaper rate



in order to keep pace with the rapid urbanisation in cities such as Bloemfontein, Johannesburg and Pretoria.

It has been argued that there are two set purposes whereby Modernist architecture commits itself to the fulfilment of the utopian dream (Greig, 1971:66). The first task concerns itself with creating functional yet pleasurable urban spaces which would meet the human need for a psychological, visual and environmental balance between nature and man-made structures. The architect is seen to work in conjunction with engineers, town planners, urban designers and sociologists in order to create new forms which would meet the public's needs (Greig, 1971:66). The next objective of Modernist architecture is more concerned with design on a micro level. It focuses on the planning and construction of individual buildings such as apartment- and office blocks, exhibition halls, universities, cinemas, railway stations, shopping centres, churches and administration buildings. Greig asserts that these projects are more likely to have an instant appeal than those architectural undertakings that are more sociologically inspired and involve urban design on a macro level. Both forms of architectural design were made possible due to technological advances in the South African construction industry from the 1930s onwards,

the resultant variety of architectural expression is an indication of the creative possibilities of an architecture splendidly liberated by the realised potentials of new materials. It ranges from the statement of religious aspiration which is evident in the free, upward sweep of roofs supported on laminated plywood to the verticality of the geometrical skyscraper which has become a symbol of big business (Greig, 1971:67).

Due to its low-cost nature, modern architecture proved to be the solution to many socio-economic problems in South Africa. It can be argued that the arrival of modern architecture in South Africa not only facilitated aesthetic and cultural advancements in urbanised areas, but also facilitated greater socio-economic and political developments in preparation for the new Afrikaner nation state. There is a strong political and ideological undercurrent to Modernism which puts Modernist architecture in service of nation building in South Africa, as in Europe. It can be claimed that Modernism and nationalism work in conjunction to further their respective expansive ventures. Bozdogan argues that architecture which contributes to the project of nation building functions as, "a powerful vehicle through which political leaders and professional architects sought to imagine the nation where it does not exist" (2001:294).

It is important to recognise the contributions of Modernist architects and their ideas of social reform to the realisation of the apartheid government's ventures. The native housing schemes that shaped the appearance of the apartheid city in the 1950s and 1960s were first conceived and developed by architectural students from the University of Witwatersrand two decades prior to their implementation (Japha, 1999:423). In 1938, Kurt Jonas, a Marxist and student of architecture at the Wits School, criticised the Transvaal Group for their elitist aestheticism which exposed their lack of concern with the task of devising practical housing solutions for the rapidly urbanising masses (Japha, 1999:424). In the following year, Jonas organised a congress on the topic of town planning. He aimed to inspire architects to engage in transformative projects and realise the potential of their roles as contributors to transformations in the built environment. Prior to the congress, a group of architectural students, led by Jonas, were involved with a thesis project on the topic of 'native housing'. The outcome of this thesis resulted in the design of a town scheme for 20 000 inhabitants (Japha, 1999:424).

Initially conceived at the University of Witwatersrand, the issue of housing projects had spread throughout the profession. In the early 1940s, Norman Hanson, a leading figure in South African architecture recognised the need to consider social and political factors in the discipline. As a member of the Transvaal Provincial Institute, Hanson organised the 1943 'Rebuilding South Africa' exhibition which addressed and offered solutions to the local housing crisis (Japha, 1999:427-428). Some of the recommendations for these solutions were drawn from Lewis Mumford's seminal text, 'The Culture of Cities' (1938). Mumford advocated a regionalist approach which would accommodate and reflect the social habits and cultural values of a particular community (Japha, 1999:428). The approach of 'science-based' design, which was also raised at the 1943 exhibition, involves the analysis and consideration of psychological, sociological and economic factors in preparation for urban design and town planning. Ultimately, the proposal for the ideal organisation of residential areas was the "neighbourhood unit" (Japha, 1999:429). The fusion of the regionalist approach and the neighbourhood unit, "offered very specific possibilities for physically reinforcing South African patterns of urban segregation" (Japha, 1999:430). After state-sponsored studies on 'native' rural and urban housing schemes were conducted and revised, the final plans materialised in the development of the Witbank and KwaThema projects which coincided with the advent of the apartheid government (Japha, 1999:432). However the architects who initially launched the idea of mass-housing projects could not foresee the future applications of their ideas, especially in terms of the apartheid government's use thereof. As such, one cannot

overlook the role that Modernist ideas played in the development of authoritarian apartheid strategies for spatial segregation.

The question of architects' complicity with the ideological implementation of apartheid is not simple, and demonstrates how, as was the case in Europe, Modernism lent itself to ideological appropriation. In terms of structural design, architects received commissions which included specific instructions to plan the layout of buildings in accordance with the legislated segregation prescribed and enforced by the apartheid government. An example is Helmut Stauch's post office in Pietersburg (now Polokwane) built in 1959. He was given the difficult task of designing the post office to accommodate the segregation of races and include separate halls, 'European' and 'non-European', for the different races to access cashiers and make use of writing ledges (Peters, 2004:542). Both halls were to be easily supervised and administered by the head cashier. Stauch resolved the design of the building by arranging the counters in an L-shape formation and including separate entrances for both races (Peters, 2004:543). Although architects such as Stauch were aware that their designs promoted and reinforced the aims of apartheid, they would hardly turn down commissions. It has been argued that architects were as driven by the need for creative expression as the need to generate an income. Despite this view, Peters argues that any architect who accepted a commission, such as the post office in Pietersburg, "demonstrates a willingness to implement the segregation process" (2004:543). As previously mentioned, Modernist architects had to submit to the dominant political ideology of the time and as such, both individual buildings and urban design schemes were manipulated to promote the ideals of racial segregation as propounded the apartheid government.

The power which the Afrikaner ideologues had gained after the 1948 election victory of the National Party, called for a reinvention of the nation's cultural and aesthetic appearance. The notion of separate development required that the population would be segregated according to race and forced to reside in separate residential areas<sup>101</sup> which was accompanied by the need to promote formal distinctions in the aesthetic appearance of the various urban and suburban spaces. It will not be read as a mere coincidence that the apartheid state adopted Modernism as a stylistic preference for the structural expression of the newly established Afrikaner political, economic and social power. Secure in their conviction that they had God on their side, the

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<sup>101</sup> This was enforced by the Group Areas Act of 1950 which required the establishment of urban and residential areas for different race groups (Giliomee, 2003:505).

Afrikaner nation found a utopian state which allowed for the exclusive development of the Afrikaner people.

The triumph of Afrikaner nationalism under National Party rule and the creation of an exclusive, utopian society for white, in particular Afrikaans, South Africans, may be understood in terms of Michel Foucault's view of the relationship between 'utopia' and totalitarianism. "Utopias are sites with no real places. They are sites that have a general relation of direct or inverted analogy with the real space of Society. They present society itself in a perfected form, or else society turned upside down, but in any case these utopias are fundamentally unreal spaces" (Foucault, 1986:24). Defined as an 'unreal space', the notion of utopia requires the collective commitment to a universal understanding of what constitutes the good life and what does not. This however forces individuals to sacrifice freedom of thought, liberty and autonomy. Foucault relates the notion of utopia with that of totalitarianism as he states, "The search for a form of morality acceptable by everyone in the sense that everyone would have to submit to it, seems catastrophic to me" (cited in Dreyfus & Rabinow, 1982:119).

The social, economic and political success of the Afrikaner nation during the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century was seen as a sign of salvation, and it was deemed necessary to externalise the victory of the Afrikaner nation in newly planned town- and cityscapes. The Afrikaners' power and triumph led them to impose their conceptions of what constitutes a 'utopian society' upon the entire South African population. As such, it is argued that the Modernist designs of individual buildings aided in "asserting nationalist spatial identity" (Murray, 2007:51). Moreover the planning and organisation of urban environments, which functioned as part of apartheid modernity greatly contributed to establishing and upholding the policies of racial segregation (Murray, 2007:51). As such, the modernisation of South African architecture functioned as a suitable expression of the triumph of the Afrikaner nation.

During the height of the apartheid regime in the 1960s, larger projects involved the work of Afrikaner architects who were consciously and willingly designing in aid of the expansion of Afrikaner nationalism. The establishment and design of the Rand Afrikaans University (RAU) in Johannesburg was conceived in accordance with strong nationalist lines. The idea was developed and overseen by the chairman of the Broederbond, Gerrit Viljoen. Subsequently Willie Meyer and Jan van Wijk were appointed as the architects of the project. RAU became one of the biggest and most outstanding ventures of the Broederbond in Johannesburg (Chipkin, 2008:315-316). The brutalist design of the structure is exemplified by the pylons

built with reinforced concrete (Peters, 2008:314). The blocks frame the amphitheatre, a space designed as a public assembly point for students. As such, the design of the structure embodies a characteristic symbol of Afrikaner culture: “The RAU campus is allowed a reference which is crucial for Afrikaner nationalism: the circular arrangement of the buildings and the tightly enclosed interior space are not simply panoptic, they also reproduce the image of the laager” (Herwitz, 1999:417). The symbolic use of the laager as an expression of Afrikaner culture and identity first featured in the greatest monument to Afrikanerdom, the Voortrekker Monument, as designed by the outspoken advocate of Afrikaner nationalism, Gerard Moerdijk.

## 2.5 Moerdijk and ‘Afrikaner’ Architecture

The architectural expression of Afrikaner nationalism, as exemplified by the RAU campus and van Wijk’s *Taal Monument*, derived from Gerard Moerdijk’s quest to establish a distinctly ‘Afrikaner’ architecture. Regarded as one of South Africa’s foremost architects of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Moerdijk was driven by the threat of anglicisation and dedicated his life and work to the proliferation of Afrikaner nationalism. A harrowing childhood experience informed his life-long devotion to the Afrikaner cause, as Moerdijk had been incarcerated with his family in the Standerton concentration camp during the Anglo-Boer War (Vermeulen, 1999:13). Aware that the trauma of the War was deeply embedded in the psyche of the Afrikaner people, Moerdijk made a concerted effort to elevate the status of the Afrikaner nation. Shortly after joining the Broederbond, he established his practice and began designing memorials to honour heroic Afrikaner figures. Moerdijk came to realise “that death holds opportunity for imbue ment of meaning through using memorialising in service of the Afrikaner Christian Nationalist cause” (Fisher & Clarke, 2010:152). His status as the *volksargitek* (architect of the Afrikaner people) was subsequently achieved by the inauguration of several memorials across South Africa (Fisher & Clarke, 2010:154). Versatile in his profession, Moerdijk was a prolific church architect, designing over eighty churches for different Afrikaans Protestant denominations (Fisher, 2006b:130). Ultimately his career culminated in procuring the commission to design the Voortrekker Monument in Pretoria (Fisher & Clarke, 2010:155).

In the early 1920s, Moerdijk and the renowned Afrikaner landscape artist, J.H. Pierneef<sup>102</sup> voiced their grievances concerning the lack of a distinctly ‘Afrikaner’ architecture in one of

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<sup>102</sup> Jacob Hendrik Pierneef was born on the 13<sup>th</sup> of August 1866 in Pretoria from Dutch and Afrikaner parentage (Pretorius, 1990:27). His early years were spent in his city of birth where he had developed his exceptional artistic talent. His carefree and stable childhood was brought to an abrupt end with the outbreak of the Anglo-Boer War in 1899 as his family fled the country and settled in the Netherlands. Advised by his godfather, Anton

the first Afrikaans magazines *Die Boerevrou* (Fisher & le Roux, 1989:s.p.). Pierneef expressed his need for a dwelling that would be at home in the fields of Transvaal; he deemed the Cape houses inappropriate in their strange landscape and beyond it, saw them to be "*on-Afrikaans*" especially with their foreign and elaborate gables. He praised the vibrant Afrikaner literature and art and mourned the backlog of architecture, but understood this lack, as the Afrikaner nation had yet to be born (Fisher & Le Roux, 1989:s.p.).

In the following decade, Moerdijk declared that the British occupation of South Africa from 1806 onwards stunted the development of Afrikaner architecture and consequently necessitated a break with the imported, 'colonial' architecture of the time. He states the following in his book entitled *Die Geskiedenis van Boukuns*,

Feitlik al die geboue – woonhuise, skole, openbare geboue, ens. – wat gedurende die eerste 30 jaar na 1902 opgetrek is, is namaaksels van uitheemse geboue, sonder verwantskap aan of skakel met die tradisie, geskiedenis of lewenswyse van die Suid-Afrikaanse volk. Nou eers begin die Afrikaner weer na te dink oor tradisie op kunsgebied. Oral word kuns- en kultuur-verenigings gestig en ons word attent gemaak op die verskil tussen die uitheemse en die inheemse (Moerdyk, 1935:98).

[Virtually all buildings – residential buildings, schools, public buildings, etc. – which were erected during the first 30 years after 1902, are copies of foreign buildings, without holding any associations with or connections to the traditions, history and lifestyle of the Afrikaner *volk*. For the first time, the Afrikaner nation is starting to rethink matters regarding expression of tradition in the field of visual arts. Art and culture organisations are being established and we are becoming aware of the difference between the foreign and the local - author's own translation].

In 1936, Moerdijk was awarded the commission to design the Voortrekker Monument to commemorate the forefathers of the Afrikaners. It became the crowning achievement of his career (Vermeulen, 1999:128). This task, which offered him the opportunity to fulfil his goal

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van Wouw, Pierneef had enrolled at a prestigious art school in Rotterdam (Pretorius, 1990:31-32). Five years after his return to South Africa, his work was first exhibited in 1908 which launched his career in the local art scene. Throughout his life time, Pierneef had fervently contributed to the development and promotion of Afrikaner culture. He was elected vice-president of the *Afrikaanse Kultuurvereniging en Toneelskool* (Afrikaans Culture Society and Theatre School) in the early 1920s and proceeded to promote the work of Afrikaner playwrights (Pretorius, 1990:55). His cultural involvement continued throughout his life as he became an honorary member of the cultural society of Reddersburg in 1930, formed part of Transvaal Committee for the Voortrekker Monument project and was elected vice-president of the *Afrikaans Kunsvereniging* (Afrikaans Art Society) in 1931 (Pretorius, 1990:78). His Afrikaner nationalist attitudes are best captured in his depictions of uninhabited South African landscapes. These portrayals correspond to the myth of the seemingly unclaimed territories which permitted the Voortrekker's to declare ownership as they ventured through the country. Pierneef's work expressed the Afrikaner's inalienable right to the land (Freschi, 2011b:10-11)



of developing a unique mode of architecture distinct to the Afrikaner nation, presented itself at a volatile juncture in the socio-political history of South Africa. The 1930s gave rise to the delicate formation of an inclusive white nationalism: the fusion of Afrikaner nationalism and British imperialism which resulted from the coalition of political rivals, Hertzog and Smuts, who established the United Party (Freschi, 2011a:157). The combination of the new political climate and the rapid urbanisation culminated in new architecture of public buildings which either embraced Beaux Art Classicism or “the self-consciously modernistic Art Deco<sup>103</sup> style” (Freschi, 2011a:159). The decorative features of these buildings included sculptures and murals depicting the heroic and triumphant narratives of both the English- and Afrikaans speaking white populations of South Africa.<sup>104</sup> These narrative elements were crucial to the formation and credibility of this new nationalism (Freschi, 2011a:159-161).

One could argue that Moerdijk, as an ardent supporter of Afrikaner nationalism,<sup>105</sup> incorporated Art Deco style architecture in the design of the Voortrekker Monument<sup>106</sup> to aid in the expression of the Afrikaners as a modern nation. The Monument became one of the most important and powerful visual signifiers of Afrikaner nationalism<sup>107</sup> and represented the triumphant status of the Afrikaner nation. During construction, the nation-wide centenary celebrations of the Great Trek took place between August and December 1938. It is regarded the cultural *tour de force* that secured the triumph of Afrikaner nationalism<sup>108</sup> (Templin,

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<sup>103</sup> Art Deco is a term, “normatively (if not specifically) applied to buildings erected during the 1930s which show the typically ‘modernistic’ applied decorative details of the period” (Freschi, 1997:30).

<sup>104</sup> Juta’s murals in the Pretoria City Hall portray both the Great Trek of the Afrikaners in 1838 and the arrival of the British settlers to the Cape in 1820 (Freschi, 2011a:163).

<sup>105</sup> Devoted to Hertzog’s National Party, Moerdijk boasted that he was an, “Afrikaner Nationalist’s nationalist” (Fisher, 2006a:73)

<sup>106</sup> The construction of the Voortrekker Monument started in 1937 and was completed (twelve years later) in 1949 (Steenkamp, 2006:250).

<sup>107</sup> Before the design had been finalised, the Central Voortrekker Monument Committee emphasised that the structure would have a truly South African design. Ironically the Monument displayed structural similarities to the Völkerschlachtdenkmal (1913) in Leipzig, Germany (Steenkamp, 2009:151-152)

<sup>108</sup> Between the 8<sup>th</sup> of August and the 16<sup>th</sup> of December 1938, nine ox wagons ventured through the country in the re-enactment of the Great Trek. Six ox wagons congregated in Pretoria at the site of the Voortrekker Monument, two had moved eastwards towards Natal and met at the site of the Battle of Blood River and the last ox wagon toured the surrounding regions of the Cape. The wagons visited sites of battles, graves and the home towns of Voortrekker leaders *en route* to their final destinations (Templin, 1999:399). The ox wagons journeyed through numerous of towns during their four month ventures and were met with zealous religious anticipation, “Dozens, sometimes hundreds, of people would come out to meet the caravan as it neared the town. Worship services were held, prayers beside the wagons were for good luck, and for the continued perseverance towards nationalist ideals” (Templin, 1999:410). The centenary celebrations culminated in the gathering of approximately 200 000 Afrikaners at the site of the Voortrekker Monument on the 16<sup>th</sup> of December 1938 to witness the laying of the corner-stone (Templin, 1999:397). Alongside the nation-wide elation, Templin states that the centenary celebration, “...provides a very clear example of myth-building, or ideological construction, part history and part embellishment, all for the sake of eliciting national self-consciousness and strengthening civil religion in the face of certain real or perceived crises in their culture” (1999:401).



1999:399). The inauguration of the Voortrekker Monument took place on December the 16<sup>th</sup> 1949, a significant date that honours the covenant which was formed with God on the 16<sup>th</sup> of December 1838.<sup>109</sup> Moerdijk, who designed several Afrikaans Protestant churches throughout South Africa, proceeded to incorporate church design into the interior layout of the Monument. The interior is so structured that annually on the 16<sup>th</sup> of December at noon, a ray of sunlight penetrates the dome and illuminates the words ‘We for Thee South Africa’ which are carved out on the Cenotaph as a means to illustrate the vow between God and the Afrikaner nation (Steenkamp, 2006:251).

The design of the Monument is the conflation of both modern and indigenous forms. Moerdijk replicated the zig-zag motifs of the Great Zimbabwe ruins as a decorative element in his Modernist Art Deco style structure. The Monument is encircled by a laager of ox wagons and includes symbolic depictions of the Voortrekker’s plight during the Great Trek (Vermeulen, 1999:128). This combination culminated in the creation of an Afrikaner *volksargitektuur* (people’s architecture) which, “makes a claim for the authenticity of the modern Afrikaner’s uniquely African origins and their consequent right to its bounty” (Freschi, 2011a:171).

As previously discussed, the question of authenticity becomes problematic in the formation of settler identity as the settlers are neither European nor indigenous. Bell comments on this issue by stating, “in settler societies it is another people’s cultural traditions that are appropriated, involving complex strategies of denial and justification to claim them as the settler’s own” (2014:32). This ‘settler strategy’ to authenticate their national identity is exemplified by Moerdijk’s the use of zig-zag patterns from Great Zimbabwe which featured on the exterior of the Monument. Moerdijk discusses his interpretation thereof,

Die driehoekvormige lys stel die vrugbaarheid of water voor. Die motief is sinnebeeldig van die verordening wat aan Abraham gegee is, ‘Wees vrugbaar en vermenigvuldig uself’ waaruit die gedagte voortvloei om Suid-Afrika ‘n witmansland te maak en te hou (cited in Vermeulen, 1999:133).

[The triangular cornice depicts fertility or water. The motif is symbolic of the command given to Abraham, ‘Be fertile and multiply’ from which the idea arises to

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<sup>109</sup> The formation of this covenant became one of the most significant events in Afrikaner history and references the Afrikaner triumph over the Zulu army led by king Dingane (Saunders, 1994:43). Giliomee states the following on the legacy of this momentous slice of Afrikaner history, “Afrikaner nationalism of the next century considered Blood River the battle that ‘saved’ the trek and secured the victory of Christianity and ‘civilisation’” (2003:165).

make South Africa the land of the white man and keep it that way - author's own translation].

As such, Moerdijk asserted the Afrikaner's right to govern. Moreover he captured the brash confidence of national pride through structural design whilst pertaining to the inherent duality of nationalism which Benedict Anderson identifies as located between the objective modernity and subjective antiquity of the nation (1983:14). Homi Bhabha elaborates on this dualism which he terms "the double-time of the nation" (Freschi, 2011c:95). According to Freschi, this complex form of nationalism is concerned with simultaneously advocating its claim to an ancient and significant past whilst promoting itself as a progressive and upwardly mobile entity (2011c:95-96). The Voortrekker Monument epitomises this paradox as it signifies a vital slice of Afrikaner national history through the lens of "modernistic Art Deco" architecture (Freschi, 2011c:96).

## 2.6 Moerdijk and the development of Modernist Afrikaner Reformed Church Architecture

Moerdijk's *volksargitektuur* did not merely apply to his memorials and monuments. His abhorrence of colonial architecture pertained to the 'un-Afrikaans' appearance of 19<sup>th</sup> century neo-Gothic Afrikaans Reformed church structures<sup>110</sup> which acted as a reminders of foreign influences in the country. The Afrikaners regarded the Church as one of the most fundamental bedrocks of their communities. Conscious of this conviction, Moerdijk proposed the replacement of neo-Gothic church buildings with more appropriate designs which he candidly campaigned for by stating, "No matter how poor, how humble his home is, the Afrikaner always gives generously to the building of his church. This is one of the most worthy character traits that distinguishes our people. The church and religion are still at the centre of Afrikaner society, despite all modern trends, a fact which bears testimony to the value of tradition and history" (cited in Fisher, 1998:132).

Moerdijk, who was the first to publish solutions for the development of an architectural style unique to the Afrikaners and their churches in *Kerkgeboue vir Suid-Afrika* (1919) as well as in *Die Geskiedenis van Boukuns* (1935), was not the only architect who broke with the traditions of the past (Le Roux, 2008:22). His quest to find a unique 'Afrikaner architecture' for churches

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<sup>110</sup> The Dutch Reformed Churches which were built during the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century for the following congregations: Montagu, Clanwilliam, Prins Albert, Malmesbury, Ladismith, Oudtshoorn, Calvinia and Beaufort West, are classified as neo-Gothic structures (Le Roux, 2007:110).

was accompanied by the work of Wynand Louw<sup>111</sup> who also experimented with new approaches to church architecture in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century (Le Roux, 2008:23).

In *Die Geskiedenis van Boukuns*, Moerdijk criticised the architecture of the ‘foreign’ church structures, as he found the neo-Gothic style unsuitable to the local climatic conditions and cultural heritage of the Afrikaner nation. He argued that Gothic architecture is associated with the expansion of Roman Catholicism and the consequential persecution of Protestants in Western Europe. Since the French Huguenots, who fled Europe and settled in South Africa at the end of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, are the ancestors of many Afrikaners, Moerdijk opposed the use of Gothic elements for the exterior design of Afrikaans Protestant churches (1935:102). Moreover, he argued that the interior layout of the neo-Gothic churches did not comply with the liturgy of Dutch Calvinism<sup>112</sup> (Moerdyk, 1935:101-103). With the development of his church designs, Moerdijk incorporated variations of the centralised plan which often included fan-shaped seating arrangement to best accommodate the preaching of the sermon (Fisher, 2006b:130). In terms of the exteriors of his churches, Fisher contends that Moerdijk drew influences from the Romanesque (1998:132). On this matter, Le Roux asserts that, “Gothic details were reasoned out of the external appearance of churches and classical and Renaissance styles were presented as examples which could be imitated” (2007:100). It is evident that Moerdijk did not adhere to one particular mode of architecture for his churches as he was known to blend various historical elements in his designs (Greig, 1971:44-45).

Wynand Louw worked alongside Moerdijk and was responsible for the design and expansion of approximately 120 churches in South Africa and neighbouring countries (Le Roux, 2008:25). In consideration of the liturgical requirements for Afrikaans Protestant congregations, Louw’s church structures were either designed according to variations of the cruciform or octagonal plan and contained fan-shaped seating layouts (Le Roux, 2008:28-29).

Deviating from the appearance of Moerdijk and Louw’s church designs, Johan de Ridder<sup>113</sup> who graduated from the Pretoria School in 1950, started designing radically Modernist

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<sup>111</sup> A prolific church architect, Wynand Louw has been referred to as the ‘first Afrikaner architect’ prior to and since his death in 1967 (Le Roux, 2008:24-25).

<sup>112</sup> In the Dutch Calvinist tradition, the preaching of the doctrine is central to the religious service. As such, Moerdijk proposed an alteration in the layout of Dutch Reformed Churches from the Latin (typical of the neo-Gothic churches) to the Greek cross, to enhance the acoustic qualities of the space and improve the visibility of the pulpit for the congregation (Moerdyk, 1935:101-102).

<sup>113</sup> Johan de Ridder was born in Pretoria in 1927. He was raised in the Reformed Church and remained a devout member throughout his life. During his childhood, De Ridder gained first-hand exposure to the cultural events which contributed to the rise of Afrikaner nationalism. His mother, Cecile de Ridder (also known as ‘*Tannie Volkspele*’) was the chief organiser of traditional Afrikaner folk-dances at both the inauguration of the Voortrekker

Afrikaans Protestant churches in the 1950s. De Ridder's designs, which were stripped of ornamentation and decorative details, resonated with the asceticism of the Reformed doctrine<sup>114</sup> (Chipkin, 2008:230). His work, alongside other architects, signalled the advent of Modernist Afrikaans Protestant church architecture, which became a pervasive architectural phenomenon across South Africa. Greig comments on this appearance of these churches,

An important manifestation of South African architecture of great interest and variety has emerged in the design of new churches, sometimes in the most unexpected and out of the way places. Many belonging to the Dutch Reformed Church, notably those designed by Johan de Ridder, represent a complete break with the traditional Gothic or Byzantine forms which had been used for many years. Now tall, slim spires are designed like spears or as ladders, symbolically stretching from earth to heaven, a reminder of Jacob's vision at Bethel. In both Dutch Reformed Churches and those of the Roman Catholic faith, laminated timber trusses and curving beams, natural timber ceilings of South African-grown timber, brick and stone combined with concrete, steel, plastics and glass are used in sophisticated ways with the lines of the building directed upwards – a romantic version of Gothic which makes the most of the play of space and drama of revealed construction (1971:70-71).

This visible transformation in Dutch Reformed Church architecture, going from the use of neo-Gothic modes of design in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century, to the implementation of Modernism in the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, corresponded to the need of the Afrikaners to define themselves as an exclusive nation in the local context.

The advent of Modernist architecture in South Africa, as discussed, demonstrates the way in which the ideological appearance of Afrikaner nationalism was visually captured in the design of structural entities. Considered as the centre of Afrikaner cultural and traditional life, the Dutch Reformed Church adopted a modern appearance as a means to correspond to the

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monument in 1949 and cultural ceremonies at the *Van Riebeecksfees* in Cape Town in 1952 (Le Roux, 2008:27). De Ridder trained as an architect at the University of Pretoria and was one of the first graduates from the Pretoria School. Shortly after graduation, he entered into a partnership with Jaap Woudstra and opened their practice in 1951. After Woudstra passed away in 1953, De Ridder managed the practice and became a prominent figure in the Pretoria architectural scene. He earned his reputation as an influential Afrikaner architect due to the estimated total of 35 Afrikaans Protestant churches which he designed in his signature high-Modernist style. In 1991, Johan de Ridder retired and his son, Tienie took over the practice and has been managing it since (Le Roux, 2008:27).

<sup>114</sup> One of the distinctive traits of Protestantism, which was carried through since the Reformation, is the outright opposition to and rejection of the religious iconography and imagery typically found in Roman Catholic Churches. The Protestants contended that the opulent decadence of Catholic Churches distracted the congregation from the service (Du Toit, 1966:28).

Afrikaner's ambition of being regarded as a modern nation. In the following chapter, I shall discuss the development of Modernist Afrikaans Protestant church architecture in detail, with reference to the work of two prolific Afrikaans architects who designed radically Modernist Dutch Reformed Churches in the Cape Province at the height of Afrikaner nationalism in the 1960s and 1970s.

### **Chapter 3 - Brutalist Bell Towers and Face Brick Façades: Modernist Dutch Reformed Church Architecture**

As discussed in the first chapter of this study, the Dutch Reformed Church played a pivotal role in the development of Afrikaner social and cultural identity since the arrival of the first European settlers until the consolidation of Afrikaner state power in the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Regarded as one of the most fundamental bedrocks of Afrikaner society, the Dutch Reformed Church functioned as a unifying force which, after the large-scale urbanisation of the Afrikaners, became a powerful vehicle to uplift the volk. During the course of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the Church aided in the political and economic mobilisation of the Afrikaners and furthermore endorsed the apartheid policy. At the height of Afrikaner nationalism, as discussed earlier, the authority of the Church was indisputable, due to the consolidation of Church and state power. It was at this historic juncture that the Afrikaners flourished as an upwardly mobile nation whose accumulation of wealth and cultural maturity enabled them to measure themselves against their counterparts in the developed Western world.

In chapter two, I traced the development of modern architecture in South Africa, focusing on the manner in which various international movements influenced, and was adapted to the particularities of the South African architectural scene. As an increasingly powerful and wealthy nation, the elite class of urbane, professional and educated Afrikaners aimed to establish a unique aesthetic identity in the fields of art and architecture. This led to an experimentation with new forms, materials and building techniques to express a newly aspirant Afrikaner identity in the architecture of monuments, civic buildings and churches.

Throughout the course of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, a revolution transpired in the architecture of Afrikaans Protestant churches as Afrikaner architects critically reconsidered and subsequently altered the design of their religious structures. Not only were the interior layouts of the churches reordered to suit the liturgical requirements of Dutch Calvinism, but the outer appearance of these structures were radically transformed, signalling a decisive break with the neo-Gothicism which dominated church architecture in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The emergence of Modernist Afrikaans Protestant church architecture not only attested to the advent of a new mode of architecture, but expressed the Afrikaner's identity as a modern nation in the built environment.

This chapter focuses on the period of high Modernism in South African architecture, particularly as it pertains to the height of Afrikaner Nationalism. As an increasingly secure

and economically confident nation, the Afrikaners had the means to invest in their communities. This resulted in newly erected residential and public buildings and led to an increase in the construction of churches for Afrikaans Protestant congregations. Given the broad scope and varied approaches to Afrikaans Protestant church architecture during this period, this chapter is focused on specific instances of Modernist Dutch Reformed Church architecture in the Cape Province during the 1960s and 1970s. I will investigate the churches of two prolific Afrikaner architects to explore the relationship between Afrikaner nationalism, religion, material prosperity and modern architecture. This includes in-depth, descriptive analyses of each structure due to the fact that there is very little written about Conradie and no recorded research on Pelsler.

I will commence with a discussion of the advent of Modernist Afrikaans Protestant church architecture in the 1940s and 1950s, in reference to the work of the Afrikaner architects Johan de Ridder and J. Anthonie Smith. However, it is important to note that the phenomenon of Modernist church architecture was not unique to South Africa. The pioneers of international modern architecture experimented with new methods of design for religious structures, which instigated the development of certain trends in Afrikaans Protestant church architecture. The following examples demonstrate the varied approaches to Modernist church design.

### 3.1 International Examples of Modernist Church Architecture

In Brazil, Oscar Niemeyer was commissioned to design the St. Francis of Assisi Church in Pamphula, Belo Horizonte. This church (figure 1) was completed in 1942 and resulted in a dome-like structure, consisting of four concrete parabolic arches which span over the nave, altar, annexes and sacristy. Distinctive features of this unconventional structure include the mosaics that cover the exterior wall surface as well as the asymmetrical, free-standing bell tower which tapers towards the ground (Lemos & Jackson, 1995:233-235). As stated in the previous chapter, Brazilian Modernism greatly impacted on the development of modern architecture in South Africa. Roberts and Cassells' church in Bloemfontein (figure 2), which was originally built for the Church of Jesus Christ of the Latter Day Saints in 1959, bears a striking resemblance to Niemeyer's church. The structural similarity can be drawn between the concrete parabolas of Niemeyer's structure and the barrel vaults of Roberts and Cassells' church (Verster, 2013:75).





Figure 1: Exterior of Niemeyer's St. Francis of Assisi Church, 1943 in 2011. Photograph by Edgar Jiménez. (Wikipedia Commons).



Figure 2: Northern elevation of Roberts and Cassell's Church, Bloemfontein, 1959 in 2012. Photograph by Wanda Verster. Courtesy of the photographer.

European examples include Modernist churches for congregations in France and Finland by Le Corbusier and Alvar Aalto. Le Corbusier's Chapel of Notre Dame du Haut at Ronchamp in France, completed in 1955 is described as an expressive, sculptural concrete structure (Pardo, 1971:24). As seen in figure 3, the thick, sloping walls, curved roof reminiscent of billowing sails and the irregular arrangement of slot windows exemplify Le Corbusier's deviation from the cubic symmetry which dictated his early work (Pardo, 1971:25-26)



Figure 3: Chapel of Notre Dame du Haut at Ronchamp, 1954 in 2005. Photograph by Sandra Cohen-Rose.

In 1958, Alvar Aalto completed his Vuoksenniska church in Imatra, Finland (figure 4). The three curved sections on the east side of the exterior correspond to the interior layout of the church which consists of three consecutive halls divided by a set of sliding partitions (Banham, 1962:126). Taking the importance of light and acoustics into account, Aalto's design includes the careful placement of vertical windows and a skylight which illuminate the altar. Additionally, the curved walls and vaulted ceilings enhance the acoustic qualities of the space (Jencks, 1973:177-179). A striking feature of exterior design is the stark contrast between the horizontal lines created by the row of windows dividing the copper roof and the white substructure and the pronounced verticality of the tall, white church tower. This church inspired certain design elements as seen in the work of the South African architect, Pieter J. Pelser.<sup>115</sup> The similarities between Aalto and Pelser's approaches to church architecture will be clarified in the discussion of Pelser's churches.



Figure 4: Church of the three crosses in Imatra, Finland, 1958 in 2005. Photograph by MKFI. (Wikipedia Commons).

In the United States of America, Frank Lloyd Wright completed the early-Modernist Unity Temple in 1908 for the Unitarian Congregation in Oak Park, Illinois. This building (figure 5) exemplifies Wright's masterful use of reinforced concrete, which is expressed in the obstinate solidity of exterior (Weston, 2001:54). The most important feature of the structure is the layout and design of the interior, "Wright cites this church as his first real expression of the idea that the space within creates the reality of the building" (Heyer, 1967:63). His use of

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<sup>115</sup> Although his name invariably appears as 'Pieter J. Pelser' on the cornerstones of his church buildings, Pelser lists his full name as 'Pieter Johannes Charles Pelser' in his curriculum vitae, compiled in November 2014 (Pelser, 2015c). The former will be used in reference to Pelser throughout the writing of this thesis and the latter will only feature in the biographical introduction.

light, which penetrates the interior through the clerestories and grid of roof lights, adds to the vertical character of the space which creates a sense of volume (Cantacuzino, 1966:12).



Figure 5: Unity Temple, 1908 in 2007. Photograph by Ivo Shandor. (Wikipedia Commons).



Figure 6: First Unitarian Society Meeting House in Madison, WI, 1951 in 2012. Photograph by s.n. (Wikipedia Commons).

Approximately 40 years later, Wright completed his church for the Unitarian Society in Madison, Wisconsin in 1951. Wright sought the architectural solution to create an ideal space for worship. It was found in the shape of a triangle, which determined the layout of the structure. The symbolism of the building is expressed in the triangulated copper roof, as seen in figure 6, which emulates, “the gesture of hands in prayer” (Nicholson, Wright & Wright, 1962:44). The triangular design of this church is significant to the development of Modernist church architecture in South Africa. In his book on the principles of Reformed church architecture, Koorts asserts that Wright’s Unitarian church in Madison inspired the *Kappiekerk*<sup>116</sup> (translated by Peters and Kotze as the ‘bonnet church’) which became a

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<sup>116</sup> The design of the *Kappiekerk* consists of a double-pitched roof which reaches ground level. This gives form to a triangular façade which often includes glazed fenestration (Koorts, 1974:60).

popular design for Afrikaner Protestant churches since the 1950s (Koorts, 1974:60-61; Peters & Kotze, 2013:35).

### 3.2 Modernist Approaches to the design of Afrikaans Protestant Churches

A wide range of styles resulted from the Modernist approaches to church design by various South African architects. Since the Church is recognised as playing such a central role in the Afrikaner cultural imaginary, Afrikaans theologians and architects recognised the need to establish a set of principles for the design of these churches. The three seminal guideline texts which were published for this purpose are: *Beginsels van Protestantse Kerkbou* (1954) by A. van Selms, *Sinvolle Kerkbou* (1966) by H.D.A. du Toit and *Beginsels van Gereformeerde Kerkbou* (1974) by J.M.J. Koorts. All three authors contend that the layout of the interior is the most important aspect to consider in church design and that it hence had to be planned in accordance with the requirements of the Reformed church service (Van Selms, 1954:8; Du Toit, 1966:6-7; Koorts, 1974:7). Since the Reformation, the pulpit was regarded as the focal point in the church. Essentially, the church building should function as a meeting place of God's Word, the sacraments and members of the congregation. The layout had to make provision for a space of congregation but also had to facilitate the preaching and reception of the Gospel (Botha 1961:22).

The importance of the pulpit and preaching of the Word is clearly visible in the work of Johan de Ridder. One of the main principles which guided his church architecture stems from a consideration of the liturgical requirements for the Reformed service (Le Roux, 2008:39). The outer appearance of De Ridder's church buildings are expressive of the period in which students and practicing architects gained exposure to international architectural developments in Europe and the United States of America. As such, his Reformed Churches in Parys (1955) and Waverley, Pretoria (1959) are both variants of the *Kappiekerk*. Although De Ridder contends that he did not imitate the design of Wright's Unitarian Church in Wisconsin (which I discuss at more length later), the dominance of the triangular form in both of these structures is evident (De Ridder, 1993:2).



Figure 7: *Gereformeerde kerk Parys* (Reformed church Parys), 1955 in 2016. Photograph by Lukas Steenkamp. Courtesy of the photographer.

De Ridder's church in Parys is said to be the first of its kind in South Africa (Du Toit, 1966:41). As seen in figure 7, the main feature is the roof which extends to the foundations in the form of an A-structure, where tie-beams of reinforced concrete connect both bases of the two steel trusses (De Ridder 1993:2). In terms of symbolism, De Ridder likened the dramatically pitched roof, which serves to create an expansive interior, to hands in prayer (1993:2). In the interior, a fan-shaped seating layout maximises the visibility of the pulpit to enhance the experience of the sermon for the entire congregation.

Another distinctive feature of the Parys church is the free-standing bell tower. De Ridder did not regard a church tower as essential for his religious structures and considered it as a dispensable appendage to the building (Büchner, 1962:202). Büchner contends that his use of a bell tower serves practical, symbolic and aesthetic purposes<sup>117</sup> (1962:202).

Given the year in which this radically Modernist church was completed, it stands as a bold visual representation of the cultural maturity towards which the Afrikaner nation was aspiring, alongside their newly acquired social, economic and political power. As such, Goldblatt deems De Ridder's churches as, "expressive of the revolution", in reference to the changing social imaginary of the Afrikaner nation after the victory of the National Party in the 1948 elections (Goldblatt, 2016).

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<sup>117</sup> Firstly, the tower can either house a bell or clock and aids in the identification of the structure as a religious building. In terms of symbolism, the tower signifies an earthly connection to the heavens. Aesthetically, it serves to create compositional balance (Büchner, 1962:202)





Figure 8: *Gereformeerde kerk Totiusdal* (Reformed Church Totiusdal), 1959 in 1960. Photograph by Argiteksfirma Johan de Ridder (Wikipedia Commons).

Experimentation with the triangular form and bell tower resulted in De Ridder's eclectic design for the Reformed Church in Waverley, Pretoria (figure 8). Instead of erecting a separate tower structure, he incorporated a multiple bell tower as part of the central shaft above the entrance of the church. The triangular shape of the exterior represents the Holy Trinity according to the architect's own interpretation of the symbolism of the structure (Botha, 1961:39). De Ridder states the following on the design of this building,

The church was a visual symbol of aspects of our faith, while simultaneously retaining the basic idea of the Reformation that all external symbols should be avoided. I couldn't accept a complicated architecture. I wanted simple wall surfaces, big roof surfaces, a plain, striking building with height and unity between interior and exterior... The triangle is essentially religious with a very vertical and spiritual character. Preaching of the Word is not confined to four walls. It must go out through big windows at the top and front of the church, which is like a megaphone with the preacher at its apex (cited in Goldblatt, 1998:233).

Despite the use of some standard Modernist architectural features, De Ridder's church designs can be deemed as particularly South African, given his consideration for the specific religious requirements of the Afrikaans congregants served by his church designs. However, the extent to which these churches should be deemed uniquely South African, however, remains debatable. For instance, De Ridder's use of the triangular form is dominant in both these designs and although De Ridder affirmed his admiration for the work of Frank Lloyd Wright, he refuted any allegations that he emulated Wright's Unitarian Church in Madison, Wisconsin,

There are some invalid claims that this design was an imitation of the famous church by the American architect Frank Lloyd Wright. I will state that I am a fan of his

work but this accusation is unfounded. The design is my own and spontaneously evolved from the previous considerations about the same time as Wright's church (De Ridder, 1993:2).

Despite the fact that De Ridder denied any accusations of replication, one cannot overlook the fact that both his churches (in Parys and Waverley) were built several years after the completion of Wright's Unitarian church. Even if De Ridder had not seen Wright's church before commencing his own designs, one cannot deny that the latter instigated an architectural trend in Dutch Reformed church buildings in South Africa.



Figure 9: *NG gemeente Peacehaven* (Dutch Reformed congregation Peacehaven), 1957 in 1957. Photograph by Argitektsfirma Johan de Ridder (Wikipedia Commons).

De Ridder, who was responsible for Modernist churches since the 1950s, was predominantly involved with the design of structures for Reformed Church congregations.<sup>118</sup> However he was but one of the change agents who contributed to this phenomenon and was not the first South African architect (see below) to experiment with Modernist approaches to church architecture. Although De Ridder is known as the first architect to design *Kappiekerk* churches, he was responsible for a diverse range of church designs which deviated from the double-pitched roof aesthetic of those in Parys and Waverely. An example is his Dutch Reformed Church in Peacehaven, as seen in figure 9. Research has been conducted on De Ridder's church designs for congregations in the Transvaal and Orange Free State by Le Roux, Fisher and Goldblatt. The focus will be turned to similar developments in the Cape and

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<sup>118</sup> It is ironic that some of the most radically Modernist structures were designed by Reformed Church which is deemed as the most morally and theologically conservative of the Afrikaans Protestant sister churches (Goldblatt, 1998:233).



I will investigate the work of three prolific architects who graduated from the University of Cape Town (UCT).

### 3.3 J. Anthonie Smith (1910-1997)

The first Afrikaner architect to have designed a Modernist church is J. Anthonie Smith who was born in Aberdeen, Cape Province in 1910 to an ardently pro-nationalist father.<sup>119</sup> After completing his school career at Jan van Riebeeck High School in Cape Town, Smith commenced his studies in architecture at UCT and graduated in the mid-1930s (Le Roux, 2008:25-26). He had established his practice in Cape Town in 1937 before opening smaller offices in Johannesburg, Port Elizabeth, Uitenhage and Queenstown (Le Roux, 2010). Although he is best known for his church architecture, Smith was involved with the design of the airports in Cape Town and Port Elizabeth as well as office buildings in the Cape region (Le Roux, 2008:26). Smith's churches, of which he designed more than 60, reflect not only a break from the neo-Gothic tradition, but from those designed by Moerdijk and Louw. During his time at the UCT School, Smith studied the design of theatres, which played a pivotal role in his approach to church architecture, especially regarding the seating arrangements and acoustic qualities of the interior (Le Roux, 2008:26).

Smith's first overtly Modernist church was completed for the Dutch Reformed congregation in Ladismith in 1942, as seen in figure 10. He graduated from the UCT School prior to the appointment of Prof Thornton White whose influence had a significant impact on the development of Modernist architecture in Cape Town. Due to the hostile attitude towards the radical Modernism of the 'Transvaal Group', Capetonian architects during the 1930s adopted, "a more mediated form of modernism" as they gained inspiration from European Modernist architects such as Ostberg from Sweden, Mendelsohn from Germany and Dudok from the Netherlands (Van Graan, 2007:54). It is apparent that Smith drew inspiration for the exterior appearance of his Ladismith church from the work of W.M. Dudok (Le Roux, 2008:34). This claim is validated by noting how the brickwork and tall, rectangular tower of Smith's church

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<sup>119</sup> Johannes Anthonie Smith, father of the architect, was a journalist, artist and outspoken supporter of Afrikaner nationalism who published his anti-British sentiments in his first book, *Brit en Boer*. After working as a journalist for various Afrikaans newspapers in different cities throughout the country, Smith senior settled in Cape Town where he was appointed as the art critic for *Die Burger* newspaper in 1928. Smith junior, adopted his father's passion for Afrikaans and proceeded to promote the professional use of the language by compiling the first set of architectural plans, including the specifications and bill of quantities, in Afrikaans (Le Roux, 2008:26-27).

bears a striking resemblance to Dudok's design for a conservatoire in Hilversum, the Netherlands (figure 11).



Figure 10: Ladismith Dutch Reformed Church, J.Anthonie Smith, 1942 in 2015. Photograph by the author



Figure 11: Snelliusschool, W.M. Dudok, 1932 in 1995. Photograph by I.J.Th. Heins (Wikipedia Commons).

Smith's source of inspiration resonates with the following statement by Biermann who comments on the development of Modernist architecture in South Africa,

The introduction of the art of modern building in South Africa actually derives from the influences from Holland on the style of building Afrikaans churches. With the guidance from this influential source the Afrikaner community as a whole was to more rapidly ally themselves with the modern developments in architecture than would otherwise have been the case (cited in Fisher, 1998:133).

Goldblatt describes the Ladismith church as, "the most radically modern church yet seen in Afrikaans Protestantism" (1998:230). The design of this church signifies a break with the more traditional appearance of his first church for the Dutch Reformed congregation in Bellville, which was inaugurated in 1940 (Bergh, 2009:9). Although both churches contain fan-shaped seating arrangements which enables all members of the congregation to face the pulpit, the

visible difference between the exteriors of these two churches signals a definite change in Smith's approach to design (Liebenberg, 2014:82-83).



Figure 12: Exterior of Bellville Dutch Reformed Church, J. Anthonie Smith, 1940 in 2016. Photograph by the author.

Since this was his first commission, Smith adopted a somewhat conventional approach to the exterior design of his church for the Bellville Dutch Reformed congregation. As seen in figure 12, the exterior of this church contains structural influences from the neo-Gothic, visible in the streamlined, modernist rendition of a Gothic arch which frames the entrance of the building. However, the clean and simplified aesthetic of the exterior, consisting of smooth white wall surfaces and narrow, vertical strip windows, indicates of a move towards the modern. For the church interior, Smith introduced his own solution for the layout and design of the space. The plan of this church is in the form of a square and marks a decisive break from the cruciform and centralised plans as seen in the work of Moerdijk and Louw (Le Roux, 2008:33). Although Smith continued to use the fan-shaped seating arrangement (figure 13), the shape of the ground plan changed from a square to a wedge in future projects (Le Roux, 2008:37). Given the year in which the Bellville church was completed, it is not surprising to find that congregations and church councils were hesitant to accept a design which broke with conventional church architecture (Le Roux, 2008:35). As his first commission, one could speculate that Smith was cautious in his design approach as a means to secure future commissions for similar projects.<sup>120</sup>

<sup>120</sup> In conversation I had with the architect, Pieter J. Pelser who designed a large number of churches for various Afrikaans congregations throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the following was disclosed about church design and the

After the completion of the Bellville Dutch Reformed Church, Smith ventured towards more boldly Modernist approaches for his church structure



Figure 13: Interior of Bellville Dutch Reformed Church, J.Anthonie Smith, 1940 in 2016. Photograph by the author.

Before discussing the history of Ladismith, it is interesting to note that there is a commemorative monument from the 1938 centenary celebrations of the Great Trek on the site of Smith's Bellville church, as seen in figure 14.



Figure 14: Commemorative Memorial of the 1938 Ossewa Trek, Bellville Dutch Reformed Church, 1940 in 2016. Photograph by the author.

During the nation-wide celebrations, countless monuments and memorials were erected on the grounds of schools, town halls, farms and churches in honour of this historic event (Heunis,

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architectural profession. Before a church council appoints an architect, they determine his professional competence through gaining knowledge of his prior commissions for other congregations (Pelser, 2015b).

2008:36). Marschall comments on the unveiling of these commemorative memorials in some 500 towns which were visited by the ox-wagons during the re-enactment of the Trek:

This tradition of selective remembering and historical fabrication has shaped our idea of the Great Trek as a spontaneous, but well-organised, consolidated event. It was the shared heritage of the Voortrekkers, construed as divinely ordained, that constructed the Afrikaner nationalist identity. The celebration of the Great Trek – through monuments and rituals – functioned as a powerful unifier and assisted in forging a coherent Afrikaner identity (2005:24-25).

The fact that this monument, as a historic and commemorative symbol, was placed on the site of a church which, at the time of its construction, was deemed to be of the most modern churches in South Africa, is significant (Bergh, 2009:9). These two structural entities stand in contrast with one another as they communicate a seemingly paradoxical message. On the one hand, the centenary monument forms part of the visual rhetoric which Freschi regards as the, “backward-looking and sentimental evocation of the landscape and historical heroes” whereas Smith’s church proclaims the progressive and future-oriented Afrikaner social imaginary which was on the cusp of a radical transformation towards modern nationhood (Freschi, 2011b:24). This exemplifies what has been posited as an integral stage in the formation of a new nationalism, which simultaneously celebrates and claims its historic origins whilst expressing its status as a modern entity as, “the imagined past gives it legitimacy, while a forward-looking modernity enables it to take its rightful place as a viable and progressive entity within a community of nations” (Freschi, 2011b:15). As such, the centenary celebrations of the Great Trek is seen as the rubicon moment for the Afrikaner nation which united the volk under the auspices of a shared heritage<sup>121</sup> and subsequently ignited the Afrikaners to boldly shape their identity as a progressive and modernising people.

Goldblatt comments on the impact of the centenary celebrations on the development of the Afrikaner nation and their architecture,

I think it’s terribly important to locate the origin of the new movement. It was the 1938 *Ossewa Trek*. That was fundamental [...] Burgersdorp was turning out young *predikante* who were radical. Their radicalism consisted in the fact that suddenly the Afrikaner volk were becoming united, which they had never been before and they were expressing their national feeling, at first in this Voortrekker movement

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<sup>121</sup> In his writings on the transition from agrarian to industrial society, Gellner contends that “a kind of cultural homogeneity” is crucial to the development of nationalism (2001:293).

which developed out of 1938 [...] That whole movement caught fire. It was a very powerful social movement and if it weren't for the war, I think we would have seen, almost certainly, a new architecture growing out of Anthonie Smith's work in Ladismith (2016).

Smith's church in Ladismith was indeed indicative of the revolutionary forces which swept the Afrikaner nation at the time of its completion in 1942. Moreover, the history of this congregation and their church building's corresponds to Moerdijk's call for Afrikaner congregations to replace their old churches with new structures, which should not only adhere to the liturgical requirements of the Reformed service but visibly deviate from the appearance of neo-Gothic churches (Moerdyk, 1935:101-103).

Thirty years prior to the completion of Smith's church for the Ladismith congregation, the need for a new, centrally located church was raised in 1912. Essentially the congregation wanted to replace the 'old church'<sup>122</sup> (figure 15) which is a typically neo-Gothic structure designed by Carl Otto Hager and completed in 1874. Due to a lack of funding, the project for the new church was put on hold. This venture was only resumed after the appointment of a new minister, Dominee Potgieter, in 1938 (Goldblatt, 1998:229-230). Moreover, the congregation received a large donation in 1937, which was added to the existent building fund. Given the fact that the new minister was appointed in a momentous year for Afrikanerdom,<sup>123</sup> one could speculate that he was not only inspired to bring, "his parish into accord with the changing spirit of the time", but aimed to ignite a surge of enthusiasm among his congregation by engaging them in a new project (Goldblatt, 1998:230). This claim is validated by the fact that the minister encouraged the congregation to raise funds for the new church, which was achieved within two years.

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<sup>122</sup> This building is described as "*die ou kerk*" (the old church) in the centennial commemorative publication of the congregation (Badenhorst, 1951:33).

<sup>123</sup> The appointment of the new minister to the Ladismith congregation transpired in the same year as the nationwide centenary celebrations of the *Ossewa Trek* in 1938 (Goldblatt, 1998:230).



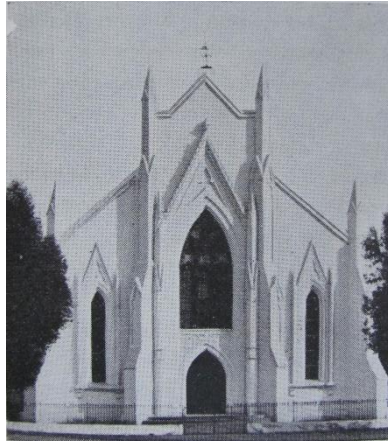


Figure 15: Façade of Carl Otto Hager's Dutch Reformed Church Ladismith, *N.G. Gemeente Ladismith, K.P. 1851-1951* [Dutch Reformed Congregation Ladismith, K.P. 1851-1951]. (Badenhorst, 1951:33). Courtesy of the Dutch Reformed Church Ladismith.

The final decision to proceed with the building project was reached towards the end of 1940 and J. Anthonie Smith had consequently approached the minister with the assurance that he could design a church for 1100 people at a cost of £12 300 (Goldblatt, 1998:230). Smith's design was accepted and at this significant point in his career, he was afforded the opportunity to build his first radically Modernist church. Although his structure was an improvement on Hager's church in terms of the seating and interior design (which was better suited for Dutch Reformed services), the unprecedented Modernism of Smith's church speaks volumes of the revolutionary spirit which infused Afrikaner communities at the time, as Goldblatt states, "Smith's church was more than different; it was a radically designed church for radically revitalised Afrikaners. It was a new church for a new time" (1998:230). The willingness of the church council and congregation to accept this design not only pertains to the Afrikaner's close affinity to the Church, but is indicative of their need to be recognised as a unique, self-sufficient and modernising nation.

Smith continued to design churches much in the same idiom as his structure in Ladismith. He was commissioned to design a church building for the Dutch Reformed congregation in Wolseley. The church (figure 16) was inaugurated in August 1943 and described in a local newspaper as an, *aanskoulike kerkgebou* (spectacular church building). It cost a total of £12 000 to construct (NG Gemeente Wolseley, 1988:15).





Figure 16: Exterior of J. Anthonie Smith's First Dutch Reformed Church, Wolseley, *Halfeeuftesviering van die Ned. Geref. Gemeente Wolseley, 1938-1988* [Half Century Celebration of the Dutch Reformed Congregation Wolseley, 1938-1988]. (s.n., 1988:50). Courtesy of the Dutch Reformed Church Wolseley.

It is evident that Modernist church architecture, as produced by Smith, was becoming increasingly favourable among Afrikaner congregations. Moreover, this church, like the one in Ladismith, was completed during the Second World War and led to the use of locally manufactured building materials. Although this structure was completed for one of first congregations in the Cape Province to approve of an unconventional design for their new church building, this trend was still in its infancy as the following was written about this bold, geometric structure in the 'Worcester Standard & Advertiser' newspaper,

Dit sal nog 'n tydjie duur voordat die huidige geslag hom sal kan versoen met die teenswoordige ultra-moderne uiterlike van kerke soos die op Wolseley (cited in NG Gemeente Wolseley, 1988:17).

[It will take some time before the current generation will accept the ultra-modern exterior appearance of churches such as the one in Wolseley – author's own translation].

Although these 'ultra-modern' churches may have taken some time to gain public acceptance, in the period after 1945 there was a noted surge in the establishment of new Afrikaans Protestant congregations<sup>124</sup> throughout the country (Kesting, 1978:231). Many of the churches which were built for these parishes embraced Modernist architecture and Smith, De Ridder and their contemporaries instigated a noteworthy change in the appearance of the Afrikaans Protestant religious structures. This upsurge of new congregations corresponds

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<sup>124</sup> Kesting notes that between 1946 and 1961, the estimated total of new congregations which were established was 33, 47 per annum. Furthermore, the greatest instances of church building for congregations took place between the years 1950 to 1953 and 1958 to 1962 (Kesting, 1978:231).

with and demonstrates the upward mobility of Afrikaners under the National Party, with Afrikaans communities investing capital in the establishment of these modern churches. This not only serves to illustrate the importance of the Church as a symbol of Afrikaner cultural values and the importance of religion for the Afrikaner community and state, but also displayed, at the time, the new political status of the Afrikaner volk. The drive to national identity was well served, and its progressiveness illustrated, by the adoption of Modernist design tenets.

Throughout the following decades, Smith continued to design an array of Modernist churches and experimented with new approaches to the appearance of religious structures. The progression towards greater Modernism is visible when one compares his first church for the congregation in Wolseley to the second, which he designed after the former was destroyed in an earthquake in 1969 (NG Gemeente Wolseley, 1988:71). The final cost of the second church, which was inaugurated in 1974, amounted to R 147 650 (translated into the current currency, this amounts to R 6 491 326) (NG Gemeente Wolseley, 1988:46-47). It is interesting and significant that the Dutch Reformed congregation of Wolseley, which had enormous expenses after the devastation of the earthquake, were willing to invest such a large sum towards their church, and even more significant that the congregation was ready to accept a Modernist design for the new building (NG Gemeente Wolseley, 1988:71). By now, 26 years after the Nationalists came to power, Afrikaner capital and was well established, and clearly Modernism, along with this upward mobility, had also become widely accepted as a signifier of progressiveness and cosmopolitan sophistication.

The main structural element of the second church is the solid, free-standing, delta shaped tower with triangular openings at the top and bottom, as seen in figure 17. The unconventional design of this striking concrete structure gives the church a futuristic appearance and attests to Smith's use of modern building materials.



Figure 17: Exterior of J. Antonie Smith's Second Dutch Reformed Church, Wolseley, *Halfeeufeesviering van die Ned. Geref. Gemeente Wolseley, 1938-1988* [Half Century Celebration of the Dutch Reformed Congregation Wolseley, 1938-1988]. (s.n., 1988). Courtesy of the Dutch Reformed Church Wolseley.

The shape of this tower structure can be analysed in two ways. In the first instance, the gentle incline of the tower, which culminates in a blunt pinnacle, may allude to the gesture of two hands in prayer. As such, this structure can be read as a symbol of gratitude. The second interpretation of the symbolism derives from the following statement in the congregation's half-century commemorative publication,

Naak en ontbloot van eie krag het almal besef daar is net een krag, net een veilige skuilplek, onder die vlerke van die Almagtige, God en Vader (NG Gemeente Wolseley, 1988:71).

[Naked and deprived of their own power, everyone realised that there is only one power, one safe refuge, under the wings of the Almighty, God and Father – author's own translation].

It is evident that Smith concealed the church building from the public as it is defensively nestled behind the expansive white tower structure. In this regard, the tower resembles a white dove which protectively shields the congregation behind its wings. Thus the tower structure serves as an expressive symbol of God's protective power.

When viewed in relation to other buildings in the townscape, this church complex victoriously dominates the built environment. As such, it asserts the triumph of the congregation who not only survived the earthquake, but were able to express their gratitude by erecting a greater monument to the glory of God. Once again the exceptional appearance of this Modernist structure, which radically differs from that of the previous church,

demonstrates the Afrikaans Protestant community of Wolseley's wealth and their status as a proud, triumphant and modernised people whose upward mobility is showcased in their church architecture.

It is interesting to note that the same concept of design was used by Smith for the De Tyger Dutch Reformed Church in Parow. This building was also completed in 1974 (Le Roux, 2010). As seen in figure 18, Smith made use of a white, free standing tower structure which is supported on a gothic arch and leads to the entrance of the church building. This tower consists of a central core, framed by curved wing walls on either side.



Figure 18: De Tyger Dutch Reformed Church, Parow, J. Antonie Smith, 1974 in 2015. Photograph by the author.

Given the fact that this church was built for a congregation in a more cosmopolitan urban environment (Parow lies on the outskirts of Cape Town) Smith could have strategically used this design to attract not only members of this congregation but Afrikaners from the surrounding community to the church. As stated in the first chapter, a study conducted in the early 1970s revealed that members of the Dutch Reformed Church had abandoned their strict adherence to the dogma of the Church as many congregants no longer attended church as an indispensable part of their lives. As such, one could speculate that Smith designed this overtly futuristic tower structure, which exerts a message of progress, to attract younger members of the urban community to the church. In this regard, the Modernist appearance of this building gives the church a progressive image and demonstrates its willingness to adapt to and grow with the times.

### 3.4 A.P.S. Conradie (1925-1999)

Located approximately two kilometres from the De Tyger church is another radically Modernist church building, designed by the Cape Town based Afrikaner architect, A.P.S. Conradie for the Parow Oostersee Dutch Reformed congregation. This church is one of six Dutch Reformed Church buildings<sup>125</sup> in the Cape Province designed by Conradie. Before discussing his work, commissions for Dutch Reformed Churches and signature approach to architecture, a brief biographical summary is provided.

Albertus Petrus Snyman (A.P.S.) Conradie was born on the 16<sup>th</sup> of November 1925 in Rawsonville where his father was stationed as a missionary. Raised in a religious household, Conradie remained a devout Christian throughout his life. At the age of 9, his family relocated to Parow, where Conradie completed both his primary and high school education (Conradie, 2015). After matriculating, he worked as a financial clerk for a local railway company. During this period, he was severely marginalised due to his speech impediment which impelled him to pursue his passion for architecture (Jansen & Van der Merwe, 2015). Having saved enough money to fund his tertiary education, Conradie commenced his studies in architecture at the University of Cape Town in 1947 (Le Roux, 2015). As a passionate and diligent student, he excelled during his time at the UCT School and developed his unique approach to architectural design. Labelled as the ‘golden boy’ of his class, Conradie graduated from UCT in 1951 and received a distinction for his final thesis project (Jansen & Van der Merwe, 2015; Steele, 2016). Shortly thereafter, he started practicing as an architect and registered at the ISAA (Institute of South African Architects) in 1952 (Conradie, Albertus Petrus Snyman, s.a.). The first large-scale commission which he received was for the B.S.B. (Boere Saamwerk Beperk) Woolstore and Administration Building in the Epping Industrial Area near Cape Town. Completed in the mid-1950s, this project featured in a six page article in the *Architect and Builder* magazine (Woolstore and Administration Block for B.S.B., Cape Town, 1957:58). Thereafter his career flourished as he received countless commissions to design houses, residential buildings, shopping malls, and public buildings in the Cape region, including the Muizenberg high school, Robertson police station and a public library in Parow (Van der Merwe, 2015). For the greater part of his career Conradie’s practice was based in Parow but was later relocated to his residential address in Durbanville. In terms of his personal life, Conradie married, had four

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<sup>125</sup> Conradie designed the church buildings for the following Dutch Reformed congregations: Op-die-Berg (inaugurated in 1966), Swartland-Noord in Malmesbury (1968), Cradock-Noord in Cradock (1971), Eendrag in Despatch (1975) and Uitenhage-Winterhoek in Uitenhage (1977) (Conradie, 1966-1977: Personal Collection).

daughters and passed away at the age of 74 on the 26<sup>th</sup> of December 1999. In his obituary, he is described as a brilliant architect, artist, fierce patriot and ardent supporter of the Afrikaans language (Le Roux, 2015). It is clear that Conradie, like Smith and De Ridder, identified very closely with the Afrikaner cause, and saw his work as fundamentally compatible with the Nationalist Party's broader promotion of a more progressive Afrikaner imaginary, in keeping with the Afrikaner's economic and political ascendancy.

Conradie's unique approach to architectural design can be attributed to the ardour with which he completed his commissions. A former colleague, Derick Jansen, remembers Conradie as a meticulous and accomplished designer who was light years ahead of his contemporaries in the field of architecture (Jansen & Van der Merwe, 2015). Upon entering his churches, the attention to detail displayed in the interior design clearly resonates with Jansen's description of Conradie's character and work ethic.

As a prolific architect, Conradie's designs for houses and churches were regularly featured in architecture journals, magazines and other forms of printed media (Conradie, 2015; Van der Merwe, 2015). His work visibly deviated from other South African Modernist structures which were built between 1952 and 1979.<sup>126</sup> In terms of Conradie's approach to architecture, Van der Merwe contends that,

Dit is meer sinvol om te praat van 'n regionale interpretasie van die organiese Modernisme soos ingegee deur die leringe van Frank Lloyd Wright (2015).

[It makes more sense to speak of a regional interpretation of organic Modernism as demonstrated by the work of Frank Lloyd Wright – author's own translation].

One can easily relate this statement to Conradie's work by examining the symbolism and choice of materials which features in the design of his first Dutch Reformed Church building for the Op-die-Berg congregation, which is located in the Koue Bokkeveld region. He received this commission in 1962, ten years after he started practicing as a professional architect (Van der Merwe, 2011:31). Subsequently, he is listed by Kesting as one of the leading figures in the field of Afrikaans Protestant church architecture between the years 1961 and 1980 (1978:236). His design for the church in Op-die-Berg received a great deal of attention as it featured in numerous newspapers and magazines after completion in 1966 (Conradie, 1966-1977: Personal Collection). This project was also significant as Conradie

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<sup>126</sup> It is said that Conradie's architectural career spanned a period of 28 years, from 1952 to 1979 (Van der Merwe, 2015).



was given the opportunity to design the religious structure and principal building for a budding religious community who established one of the last *kerkdorpe*<sup>127</sup> (church villages) in South Africa.

As with many other towns which started out as *kerkdorpe*, the settlement of Op-die-Berg arose from a farming community's need to form a new congregation and establish their own place of worship (Bezuidenhout, 2011:177). As an overtly religious settlement, the name of the town, Op-die-Berg (which was initially chosen as the name of the congregation)<sup>128</sup> derives from the Biblical verse Genesis 22:14 and is displayed as such in the foyer of the church (figure 19) (Van der Merwe, 1986:10).



Figure 19: Plaque in foyer of Dutch Reformed Church Op-die-Berg, 1966 in 2015. Photograph by the author.

The founding of Op-die-Berg as a town and Dutch Reformed congregation began in 1954. Members from the Ceres Dutch Reformed mother congregation, who resided in the surrounding regions of the Koue Bokkeveld, decided to secede and establish their own parish. Seven years later, the Dutch Reformed congregation Op-Die-Berg, consisting of approximately 300 members, was founded in 1961 and held their services on *De Keur*, a local farm. This was

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<sup>127</sup> Fransen states the following on the process of establishing a *kerkdorp*, as it typically transpired in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, "A request for *afstigting* (secession) from the parish under which the area resorted would be directed to the church council in question, where possible with the support of prominent farmers, and offers of financial support. Once approved by the regional 'Ring' and the Synod, and preferably with a good word from the governor of the day, a suitable spot would be sought, with a farm or part of a farm available for sale, preferably roughly equidistant from other towns" (2006:28). Fransen continues by stating by that the purchasing of sites would lead to the eventual construction of a church building, around which members of the congregation would erect houses and other municipal buildings (2006:28).

<sup>128</sup> During a church council meeting, two suggestions for the name of the new congregation were given: 'Koue Bokkeveld' and 'Op-die-Berg', of which the latter was favoured and consequently chosen (Van der Merwe, 2011:25).



to become the official meeting place of the congregation for the following five years before in the inauguration of their own church building (Van der Merwe, 1986:4-5).

### 3.4.1 The Dutch Reformed Church of the congregation Op-die-Berg (1966)

The construction of this church transpired during what is regarded as the most prosperous period of Afrikaner rule. Between the years 1961 and 1966, the economic and political power of the Afrikaner nation had peaked. In terms of developments in the built environment, Modernist architecture had become the dominant mode, especially among Afrikaner architects. Murray contends that, “modernism became ‘domesticated’ as the style of choice for use in the latter part of the twentieth century in the service of Afrikaner nationalism” (2007:51). The ensuing discussion of Op-die-Berg validates these claims.

In the early 1960s, the church council focused their attention on the construction of the church building and rectory. The building commission, consisting of the minister and three members of the church council, visited a number of churches in Cape Town and the surrounding regions to scout for suitable architects. The following architects were short-listed: J.M.J. Koorts, W. Bronkhorst, J. Anthonie Smith, H. Sikkel and A.P.S. Conradie and they were asked to visit the site and submit their proposals to the church council (Van der Merwe, 2011:30-31). In November 1962, A.P.S. Conradie was appointed (Van der Merwe, 2011:31).

It should be noted that this was Conradie’s first commission to design a Dutch Reformed Church. In comparison to the other candidates who had previously designed churches for Afrikaans Protestant congregations,<sup>129</sup> it seems unusual that the church council would select Conradie. When Gert van der Merwe, a deacon who served on the church council and building commission was questioned as to why Conradie was chosen, the answer seemed to elude him. When told that this was Conradie’s first Dutch Reformed Church, Van der Merwe answered that the combination of Conradie’s deep faith as a Christian as well as his distinctive approach to design, as seen in the architecture of his houses, secured his place. Van der Merwe recalls Conradie to have stated the following in his address to the church council,

Ek kan julle nie met my woorde oortuig nie, julle moet na my werk kyk. My werk moet praat (Van der Merwe, 2016).

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<sup>129</sup> The other candidates are listed as established church architects in Kesting’s comprehensive study on Afrikaans Protestant church architecture: W. Bronkhorst was involved with the design of church structures since 1924, J. Anthonie Smit since 1940, H. Sikkel since 1942 and J.M.J. Koorts since 1960 (1978:235-236).

[I cannot convince you with my words, you will have to look at my work. My work will have to speak on my behalf – author’s translation].

Clearly, the Christian faith and Protestantism in particular, played a defining role in this community. The Afrikaner nation’s deep aversion to Roman Catholicism is revealed in the narrative of the building of this church: J.D.J. Brand was appointed as the builder of the church<sup>130</sup> and rectory despite the fact that his tender exceeded that of J.A. Peters. The building commission’s preference for Brand owes to the fact that Peters belonged to the Roman Catholic Church. The following was recorded in the minutes of a church council meeting regarding this matter,

Hierdie kerkraad, Op-die-Berg, erken en handhaaf die beginsel dat ons kerk Protestants en Gereformeerd is en sal ons kerklidmate en volksgenote hierin voorkeur gee wanneer volksvreemde elemente kompetierend op die spel is (cited in Van der Merwe, 2011:31).

[This church council, Op-die-Berg, acknowledges and upholds the principle that our church is Protestant and Reformed and as such, we will give preference to our members of congregation and fellow citizens when foreign elements come into play – author’s own translation].

At this point, it becomes evident why the church council had appointed Conradie as he is said to have, “designed the church on his knees” (Van der Merwe, 2016). As a devoutly religious man, Conradie was often found in his study praying for guidance whilst working on a design or new project (Conradie, 2015). Hence the religious symbolism in Conradie’s design not only fulfils the mandate of the congregation but also reveals Conradie’s own convictions and his interpellation as an Afrikaner, via the ideological state apparatus of the church.

Considering the historical context in terms of architectural developments, it is not surprising that Conradie was given the following instructions for the design by the church council,

Hy moet ‘n kerkgebou ontwerp van “moderne style met behoud van wesenlike dinge wat die kerkgebou waarlik kerk maak.” (cited in Van der Merwe, 1986:6).

[He must design a church according to the modern style whilst retaining the material requirements which will truly make the church building a church – author’s own translation].

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<sup>130</sup> The tender for the construction of the church building amounted to R 87 378 (Van der Merwe, 2011:31).

In his 1966 guideline text for church design, which was published at the height of high Modernism in South Africa architecture, H.D.A. du Toit laments the lack of uniquely South African styles which resonates with the spirit of the times. He continues to critique both neo-Byzantine and variants of *Kappiekerk* churches as either outdated or foreign and impractical (Du Toit, 1966:39-41). Although it is clear that Conradie was influenced by Frank Lloyd Wright's approach to design,<sup>131</sup> especially regarding Wright's conception of 'organic architecture',<sup>132</sup> his design for the Op-die-Berg church is both unique and original, since it reflects his signature approach and resonates with the natural elements in the surrounding environment. True to the Modernist tradition, Conradie's designs are functional as they were conceived in accordance with the practical uses of the building. Moreover, Conradie paid attention to the aesthetic qualities of his structures and added an element of playfulness with his use of colour, building materials and recurring shapes and patterns (Van der Merwe, 2015).

The church, which was designed for a rural community who had established their congregation and settlement in a desolate and uncompromising environment just over fifty years previously, dramatically declares itself. Goldblatt describes this structure as follows, "Of the many triumphant churches built in the 1960s perhaps none expressed the spirit of the times with greater conviction and clarity than Conradie's Op-die-Berg. Dominant over the unyielding landscape, it celebrated the ascendancy of the volk and its faith" (1998: 234). In Goldblatt's photograph of the church, as seen on page 141 in *The Structure of Things Then* (1998), it appears to emerge from the soil with the tapering, white, needle shaped tower dramatically asserting itself against the backdrop of the Skurweberge mountain range. When viewed from a closer perspective, one becomes aware of the detail in the exterior design.

With regards to a regionalist approach, Conradie considered the various climatic conditions of the surrounding environment. The church is an A-framed structure consisting of a double-pitched roof which meets at the white tower. This design is specifically suited for the Koue

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<sup>131</sup> Conradie cites Frank Lloyd Wright as his main source of inspiration, "As to 'who' influenced me, this certainly can mostly be laid at the door of Frank Lloyd Wright. I understood what he was trying to do with his designs. Although I never tried to imitate him, the warmth, tranquility, functionality, and honesty of his designs certainly influenced my way of thinking, but at the same time led me to develop my own style in terms of what we of what we ourselves have in a way of nature, climate, a distinct way of life, etc. I always had the feeling that he would have understood my aims and my thoughts, and this gave me tremendous support and also confidence and boldness in my designs in a world in which I was pretty much alone" (cited in Goldblatt, 1998:234).

<sup>132</sup> Jones states the following on Wright's formulation of organic architecture, "For him, it encompassed a number of attitudes: the building should be integrated into its site, and materials should be used with respect for their inherent natures. In planning, separate elements should be articulated according to their uses but at the same time integrated into a coherent whole" (1996:498).

Bokkeveld region which is known to receive snowfall during the winter months. The façade of the church, as seen in figure 20, consists of various materials, including the sandstone from the Skuweberge region which covers the exterior wall surfaces from the foundation level to the gable fenestration and features in the corner cladding of the tower.



Figure 20: Façade of Dutch Reformed Church Op-die-Berg, A.P.S. Conradie, 1966 in 2015. Photograph by the author.

The roof, which almost reaches ground level, seems to rise from the earth in conjunction with the sandstone wall. Conradie's use of this particular building material as well as the gentle incline of the roof structure, resonates with the following,

A building should appear to grow easily from its site, shaped to harmonize with its surroundings if Nature is manifest there, and if not try to make it as quiet, substantial and organic as She would have been were the opportunity hers (Wright, 1925:11).

In accordance with Wright's statement, the blue stained glazing of the gable fenestration closely matches the colour of the sky. Conradie thus contends, "In the intense blue of the glass we must perhaps see the 'blue of our heavens' (as in the national anthem). On certain days this is actually the precise colour of the sky there" (cited in Goldblatt, 1998:235). In this respect, certain elements in Conradie's design imitate the natural surroundings and once more adhere to Wright's tendency to source inspiration from nature (Wright, 1925:11). Moreover, Conradie's design stood in accordance with Wright's notion of organic architecture,<sup>133</sup> not

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<sup>133</sup> Wright defines organic architecture as follows, "By organic architecture I mean an architecture that develops from within outward in harmony with the conditions of its being as distinguished from one that is applied from without" (1925:25).

only because he looked to nature for inspiration, but aimed to defy the separation of the exterior and interior spaces of his building (Van der Merwe, 2015).<sup>134</sup> He strove to create a sense of cohesion in his design and furthermore succeeded to obliterate any divisions between different levels and spaces within the church; this was achieved by the consistency in his use of colours and materials. In line with principles of organic architecture, it becomes evident that this church was intended to be a harmonious and unified structure, as propagated by Wright (1925:13).

Upon entering the church, one is confronted with the overwhelming attention to detail in each aspect of the design. The foyer serves as an introduction to the interior of the church where Conradie skilfully repeats shapes, colours and building materials, as seen in figures 21 and 22. The sandstone, which features on the exterior of the structure, is found in the interior as it unobtrusively appears in the foyer, surrounding wall surfaces of the nave and behind the pulpit as it contrasts the smooth texture of the varnished wood.



Figure 21: View of the liturgical centre, Dutch Reformed Church Op-die-Berg, Conradie, 1966 in 2015. Photograph by the author.

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<sup>134</sup> Testifying to the influences of modern architecture, Conradie states the following about the Op-die-Berg church, “Furthermore we also have a saying in architecture: ‘Form follows function’, and if you were to study the plans of the building, you would see that it is here also truly the case that what is ‘external’ reflects what is ‘internal’” (cited in Goldblatt, 1998:235).



Figure 22: View of the organ and choir gallery, Dutch Reformed Church Op-die-Berg, Conradie 1966 in 2015. Photograph by the author.

Similarly, the colour scheme of the exterior, consisting of white and varying shades of blue and brown, is mirrored in the interior. Borrowing from nature, the cobalt blue of the stained glass panels in the gable fenestration features in the carpeting, the diamond shaped lighting fixtures and glazed decorations which appear throughout the interior. Another prominent feature is the recurring diamond shape which is found in the patterns of the linoleum floor in the foyer, the shape of the organ, the main luminaires, coloured glass decorations and the illuminated fixture above the pulpit (Conradie, 2015). When questioned about Conradie's persistent use of this shape, Jansen attributes it to both his need to create aesthetic harmony and brand the designs of his buildings in his own signature style. Jansen contends,

Daar is geen rede daarvoor nie. Dit is net mooi, dis anders en dis ingewikkeld. As jy met 'n driehoek vorm begin in jou plan, gaan jy met hom op na die dak. By hom was dit baie tegniek [...] Daar was nie 'n spesifieke rede, anders as estetika nie [...] Aps het sy styl ontwikkel na 'n punt toe, waar as iemand anders dit probeer na-doen, dan kon hy sê, 'kopiereg'. En hy het al een of twee manne se fooie terug gekry wat hom naby probeer *copy* het (Jansen & Van der Merwe, 2015).

[There is no reason for it. It is just aesthetically pleasing, different and intricate. If you start with a triangular shape in your plan, you will implement it throughout the entire structure. For him it was very much about technique. There was no specific reason other than aesthetics. Aps developed his style to a point where if anyone tried to imitate it, he could claim 'copyright'. And he received compensation from one or two men who did try to copy him – author's translation].



Although there is no evidence of Biblical symbolism which can be attributed to the diamond shape, certain structural features of the church bear symbolic value. Conradie believed in incorporating all decorative and symbolic elements in the design of both the exterior and interior space. Opposed to the use of any foreign ornamental appendages or decorations in a structure, Conradie's ideas concerning ornamentation correspond to those expressed by Wright,

Decoration is dangerous unless understood thoroughly, unless you know that it means something good in the scheme as a whole, for the present you are much better off without it [...] Appliances or fixtures as such are undesirable. Assimilate them together with all appurtenances into the design of the structure (1925:10).

Conradie believed that every detail involved with the design of both the interior and exterior of a building should complement each other. Consequently, he incorporated religious symbolism in the design of the Op-die-Berg church, according to his personal design preferences

In terms of the exterior, Conradie refers to the Skurweberge sandstone as, "the stone of the neighbourhood" and relates his use thereof to the following Biblical sentiment, "to us our God has always been the Rock on which we build" (cited in Goldblatt, 1998:235). In contrast to this modest and unobtrusive symbolic reference, Conradie made a bold religious statement with the design of the church tower. As the dominant structural element of the exterior, the needle shaped tower and the white cantilevered slabs above the front entrances, resembles a double-edged sword which points towards the sky (Muller, 2015). It represents the connection between heaven and earth and furthermore refers to the Biblical metaphor of a sword, as expressed in Ephesians 6:16-17, "In every battle you will need your faith as your shield to stop the fiery arrows aimed at you by Satan. And you will need the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit – which is the Word of God".

The main symbolic element in the interior is the eight-pointed star, as seen in figure 23, which is located in the centre of the diamond shaped light fitting above the pulpit. It symbolises Christ as a guiding light for his followers (Muller, 2015).





Figure 23: Star above pulpit, Dutch Reformed Church Op-die-Berg, Conradie, 1966 in 2015. Photograph by the author.

Conradie conceived of the church as a, “community building” for a devout Dutch Reformed congregation and extended his concerns beyond the technical challenges and aesthetic qualities of the design (cited in Goldblatt, 1998:235). As such, Conradie stated the following about the liturgical requirements which he took into consideration whilst planning the interior layout of the church,

it is important to leave enough room for the liturgical actions, that is, the preaching of the Word, Communion, baptism, the solemnisation of marriages, the acceptance of new members, as well as the presentation of members of the consistory and also funeral services [...] The pulpit must dominate, because the preaching of the Word is the main thing (cited in Goldblatt, 1998:235).

As seen in figure 24, the nave consists of three sets of pews which are arranged in a fan-shaped formation that centres on the pulpit. Conscious of the practical uses of the church building, Conradie arranged the pews to frame the liturgical space which contains the communion table, baptismal font, pulpit and an additional lectern. At the opposite end of the interior is the gallery which faces the pulpit and consists of choir pews and the organ. When viewed from the liturgical space, as in figure 25, the gallery seems to hover above the pews as each aspect of the design is wholly integrated and works in accordance to form a harmonious and coherent whole.



Figure 24: Nave and liturgical Centre, Dutch Reformed Church Op-die-Berg, Conradie, 1966 in 2015. Photograph by the author.



Figure 25: Choir gallery, Dutch Reformed Church Op-die-Berg, Conradie, 1966 in 2015. Photograph by the author.

The design of the interior attests to the fervour with which Conradie completed this commission. Clearly he regarded this project as a unique opportunity to design a religious structure for a community of believers who were intimately involved with the construction of their own church building (Goldblatt, 2016). The members of the congregation not only raised funds towards the completion of the church and rectory, but were closely involved with the

actual building process as some are said to have collected and delivered loads of sandstone rocks to the construction site (Van der Merwe, 2016). Moreover, the process of designing and constructing the church for such a cohesive community led to the formation of close friendships and ties between Conradie and members of the congregation. Conradie knew the minister, J. Hurter, since his childhood in Rawsonville and that Conradie's wife had a family connection with J.D.J. Brand, the builder of both the church and rectory. Furthermore, after the completion of this commission, Conradie was approached by J.W. Bell from the congregation to design his house in Op-die-Berg (Conradie, 2015). These accounts merely attest to the unity and the close connections which were formed in a devoutly religious Afrikaner community.

The entire town and congregation of Op-die-Berg came into existence due to the diligence and tenacity of an Afrikaner community who seized the opportunity to establish their own settlement and place of worship in the same manner in which their forefathers had done. Given the social, economic and political context in which the founding of Op-die-Berg took place, it is evident that this community was afforded the prime opportunity to establish a self-sufficient settlement. Conradie acknowledges the triumph of the founders of this *kerkdorp* in his concluding statement on this commission,

The church also emerges from their hard work and the blessing on it. Possibly also the desire to give your own people the best God as enabled you to do. Perhaps also the vision of seeing your people emerging victorious, and that your own people deserve the best, equal to the best which any country in the world has to offer [...] In the end something like this becomes a confession of who you are, where you have come from, and where you are going. May I conclude by saying that Op-die-Berg is therefore a manifestation of all these things in a person. What stands there is perhaps the deepest essence of the Afrikaner people as I have experienced and witnessed it (cited in Goldblatt, 1998:235).

These overtly patriotic sentiments expressed by the architect makes clear the close imbrication of state, religion and capital at the height of the Afrikaner nationalist regime. Religious sentiments are effectively overridden by the unashamed proclamation of the church as signalling the triumphant arrival of the Afrikaner nation as an upwardly mobile, superior and modernistic entity. Given that this statement overtly links the church and the Afrikaner nationalist state, the broad base of the church may symbolise the Afrikaner's ownership of the land, whilst the verticality of the needle shaped tower, boldly proclaims the power and

prosperity of the Afrikaner nation. Also, the overt Modernist design of this structure signifies the aspirations to cultural maturity of the Afrikaner nation in the 1960s.

Upon entering the modest town of Op-die-Berg, one encounters a general store, petrol station, police station, a number of houses, the local primary school, and Conradie's Dutch Reformed Church. As such, the town and its Modernist church building attests to both the wealth and success of the founders of Op-die-Berg, who established this settlement at the peak of Afrikaner prosperity. However, in light of its current context, it can rightfully be asserted that this building stands as a monument of a bygone era in the history of South Africa and the Afrikaner nation.

### 3.4.2 The Dutch Reformed Church of the congregation Swartland-Noord, Malmesbury (1968)

While Conradie was completing the commission for Op-die-Berg, he was approached by the newly seceded Swartland-Noord Dutch Reformed congregation to design their church building in Malmesbury. A member of the church council, L. de J. Louw, had suggested Conradie after he had designed Louw's farm house, 'Klein Amoskuil', in the early 1960s (Le Roux, 2015). Conradie's building is the second Dutch Reformed Church in Malmesbury which is listed as one of the oldest *kerkdorpe* (thus making it one of the oldest settlements) in South Africa (Fransen, 2006:97). In 1743, the commissioner, Baron van Imhoff proposed the founding of two new parishes in the surrounding regions of the Cape in order to, "promote the spiritual well-being of the outlying communities" (Fransen, 2006:97). In addition to the churches in Paarl, Stellenbosch and Cape Town, Van Imhoff's proposal led to the establishment of the Roodezand (Tulbagh) and Zwartland (Malmesbury) districts and congregations. Officially founded in 1745, members of the Zwartland congregation erected their first church building in 1751. Within the following century, the population of the town increased and the need for a larger church resulted in the construction of the current building which was completed in 1860. Designed by Grove, this neo-Gothic church, as seen in figure 26, suffered great structural damages shortly after its completion. After having undergone a number of repairs, this church monumentalises the rich history of this Dutch Reformed congregation (Hoevers, 2009:153).



Figure 26: Grove's Dutch Reformed Church, Malmesbury, 1860 in 2016. Photograph by the author.

Located approximately 1.2 kilometres from this neo-Gothic building, lies Conradie's Modernist church for the Swartland-Noord Dutch Reformed congregation which, as seen in figure 27, is distinctly visible from the site of Grove's 19<sup>th</sup> century structure as the tall, slim church tower protrudes in the surrounding townscape. Given its placement in the urban environment, the design and location of Conradie's church resonates with the explicit notion that the church should dominate the town layout and thus signal the centrality of religion in Afrikaner culture and society, as articulated by Kesting,

In view of the urban architectural prominence of the church building, the building should logically be seen as the predominant feature in modern city planning. Moreover, the church building should feature prominently in the company of secular buildings in our cities, suburbs and towns, and not the reverse (1978:570).



Figure 27: Tower of Conradie's Swartland-Noord Dutch Reformed Church from Grove's church, Malmesbury, 2016. Photograph by the author.

This church was inaugurated four years after the Swartland-Noord congregation had officially seceded from the Dutch Reformed mother congregation in 1964 (Amptelik N.G. Kerk Kaap, 1964:326). As recorded in the minutes of a church council meeting on the 17<sup>th</sup> of August 1964,

Conradie had received the commission to design the church and was instructed to provide seating for approximately 540 members of the congregation. After completion in 1968, the Conradie's church was described in a local newspaper as follows,

Hierdie tempel, so aantreklik van buite sowel as van binne, met sy pragtige, hoë spitstoring, wink die pelgrim al van ver (Swartland-Noord N.G. Kerk Word Ingewy, 1968:1).

[This temple, so attractive from the exterior as well as the interior, with its beautiful, high tower, beckons the pilgrim from afar – author's own translation].

Given the time of this church's completion, Modernist architecture, as Turnbull states, was customary for the design of new Afrikaans Protestant church structures,

Die argitektoniese voorkoms van kerke in Suid-Afrika is besig om 'n rewolusionêre verandering te ondergaan [...] Oral in die land verrys kerke met die 'moderne voorkoms' (1965:5).

[The architectural design of churches in South Africa is undergoing revolutionary changes. Churches bearing a modern appearance are emerging all over the country – author's own translation].

In accordance with this observation, H.D.A. du Toit advocates for the use of contemporary designs for church buildings as he deems the appearance of neo-Gothic details as wholly inappropriate in newly erected churches (1966:5) Consequently Du Toit contends that architects should design churches which stand in accordance with the contemporary, modern spirit of the times (1966:39). As such, architects were urged to experiment with new, Modernist approaches in the design of church buildings during the 1960s.

Inaugurated merely two years apart, the design of Conradie's church in Malmesbury, as seen in figure 28, bears a striking resemblance to his structure for the Op-die-Berg congregation. He made use of the same geometric design for the church towers which are clad with pre-cast terrazzo slabs. Moreover, his trademark use of glass, wood and stone strongly features in the design of this church, in addition to the white terrazzo slabs as found on the exterior wall surfaces and gable façade.





Figure 28: Swartland-Noord Dutch Reformed Church, Conradie, Malmesbury, 1968 in 2015. Photograph by the author.

Van der Merwe describes this church as a “sculpture”, an observation which, in conjunction with Conradie’s use of sharp angles and geometric shapes, attests to the striking appearance of this structure (Jansen & Van der Merwe, 2015). As seen in figures 29 and 30, the interior space attests to Conradie’s love for carpentry<sup>135</sup> as his use of wood features in the panels covering the wall surfaces, the pulpit and lectern, main luminaires and curved pews which form a fan-shaped seating arrangement and frame the liturgical space. The church has an octagonal, centralised plan which, in conjunction with the arrangement of the pews, enhances the visibility and audibility of the minister for all members of the congregation.



Figure 29: View from gallery, Swartland-Noord Dutch Reformed Church, Conradie, Malmesbury, 1968 in 2015. Photograph by the author.

<sup>135</sup> Conradie’s developed an appreciation for wood from his father who was a skilled carpenter. This greatly influenced his approach to architecture and interior design, as wood prominently features in many of his buildings (Goldblatt, 1998:234).





Figure 30: View from pulpit, Swartland-Noord Dutch Reformed Church, Conradie, Malmesbury, 1968 in 2015. Photograph by the author.

Similar to his design of the Op-die-Berg church, the organ forms part of the gallery space and faces the pulpit. In terms of decorative elements, Conradie had abandoned his persistent use of the diamond motif, as it is only found in the shape of the lighting fixtures which feature on the wall surfaces and in the design of the main luminaires. In the vein of his church in Op-die-Berg, this structure demonstrates Conradie's adherence to Wright's concept of organic architecture which is described as follows, "Within the geometric discipline, spaces could be allowed to interpenetrate one another without loss of control, flowing from room to room and from inside to outside, breaking the box and encouraging continuity with earth and nature" (Jones, 1996:498). Accordingly, Conradie's use of wood in the interior extends to the exterior as the wooden panels, found on the perimeters of the ceiling, features in the external verge soffits. In terms of the colour scheme, the use of white which dominates the expansive ceiling and features in the diamond shaped lighting fixtures is mirrored in the exterior, as both the church tower and exterior wall surfaces are covered with white terrazzo slabs. The repetition of colours and building materials in both the interior and exterior, results in a structure which forms a harmonious, coherent whole.

When viewed in opposition to Grove's neo-Gothic building, this Modernist church attests to a break with the past as, "modernism became the means by which Afrikaner advancement could make its mark on cities, distinguishing itself from the British imperial styles" (Murray, 2007:51). The estimated total cost of construction for this Modernist church building amounted to R 151 142 (translated into current currency, the cost amounts to R 10 336 433), which indicative of the affluence and prosperity of this congregation (Louw, 2014:3). As such, the account of this church resonates with the following statement concerning South African architecture in the 1960s,

Faith in the South African architect's inclination to engage in formal experiment is also reminiscent of that period, supported in this case by the radically inequitable distribution of wealth in favour of whites. This faith is partly a matter of a desire for the image of progress, and the typically colonial impetus to keep up with the latest cultural importation; but is also rooted in the sensibility of rugged individualism (Owen, 1989:42).

The Modernist design of this church structure not only attested to the radically unequal distribution of wealth that resulted from Afrikaner affirmative action in the decades following the 1948 election, but is also expressive of "the rugged individualism" of the personal design preferences of architects, which in turn served to demonstrate the cultural maturity of the Afrikaner volk, which had battled their image as culturally backward during the years of Union.

### 3.4.3 The Dutch Reformed Church of the congregation Parow Oostersee (1973)

Four months after the inauguration of the Swartland-Noord church, Conradie received the commission to design a church building and rectory for the Parow Oostersee Dutch Reformed congregation<sup>136</sup> on the 28<sup>th</sup> of August 1968 (Brand, 2007:13). Prior to the completion of Conradie's church, the congregation held their services in the school hall of the Hoër Handelskool Parow (Brand, 2007:13).

Inaugurated in November 1973, the design of this church, as seen in figure 31, marks a visible change in Conradie's architecture. In the first instance, he replaced the sharp, geometric design of his church towers in Op-die-Berg and Malmesbury with the smooth, curved contours of the Parow Oostersee tower which culminates in a blunt pinnacle. The exterior of this striking structure consists of white terrazzo slabs which frames the fenestration that surrounds the building. Deviating from the designs of his previous churches, Conradie incorporated projecting hoods which echo the slope of the windows.

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<sup>136</sup> The history of this Dutch Reformed Church can be traced back to the 6<sup>th</sup> of November 1967. This date marks the official establishment of the Parow Oostersee congregation after members of the Parow-Oos mother congregation were granted permission to secede (Brand, 2007:13). As such, Parow Oostersee became one of the twelve Afrikaans Protestant congregations in the Parow area (Olivier, 2007:1).



Figure 31: Exterior of Parow Oostersee Dutch Reformed Church, A.P.S. Conradie, 1973 in 2015. Photograph by the author.

The fenestration surrounding the structure not only allows for natural light to penetrate the interior, but afford members of the congregation a view beyond the confines of the building. Moreover Conradie's use of wood in the interior, as seen in figure 32, contributes to the warmth and tranquillity of this space wherein one becomes aware of Conradie's assiduous attention to detail. The sophistication of decorative details features in the design of the main luminaires, the wooden patterns on the stair balustrade that leads to the choir gallery and shapes of the window panes as seen in figures 33, 34 and 35. As such, the interior space attests to Conradie's impeccable design capabilities.



Figure 32: View from pulpit, Parow Oostersee Dutch Reformed Church, Conradie, 1973 in 2015. Photograph by the author.

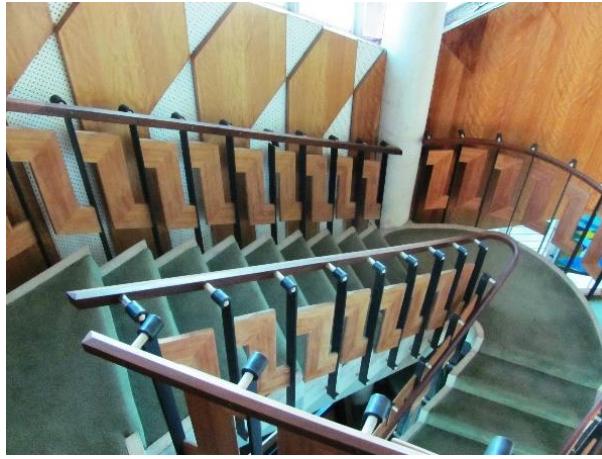


Figure 33: Detail of balustrade, Parow Oostersee Dutch Reformed Church, Conradie, 1973 in 2015. Photograph by the author.



Figure 34: Main luminaires, Parow Oostersee Dutch Reformed Church, Conradie, 1973 in 2015. Photograph by the author.



Figure 35: Window panes, Parow Oostersee Dutch Reformed Church, Conradie, 1973 in 2015. Photograph by the author.

In terms of the interior design, the series of stained glass panels which surround the interior became a matter of conflict between Conradie and the minister. As an adherent to Wright's conception of organic architecture, Conradie's approach to ornamentation resonates with the following, "Pictures deface walls more often than they decorate them. Pictures should be

decorative, incorporated in the general scheme of decoration” (Wright, 1925:11). In accordance with Wright’s statement, Conradie was vehemently opposed to the appearance of any foreign decorative elements within his buildings, as he meticulously designed his interiors to include that which he deemed as appropriate forms of decoration (Conradie, 2015). During the process of designing this church, Conradie was informed that the stained glass panels of the artist, Jan Visser, which depict various symbols and Biblical scenes, will feature in the interior. The artist and minister of the Parow Oostersee congregation were well acquainted which secured Visser’s commission (Conradie, 2015). The inclusion of Visser’s work sparked a great controversy, as it infringed on Conradie’s punctilious approach to design. In spite of the tension which developed between Conradie and the minister, the completed church includes 32 of Visser’s stained glass panels, as seen in figure 36 (Liebenberg, 2014:92).

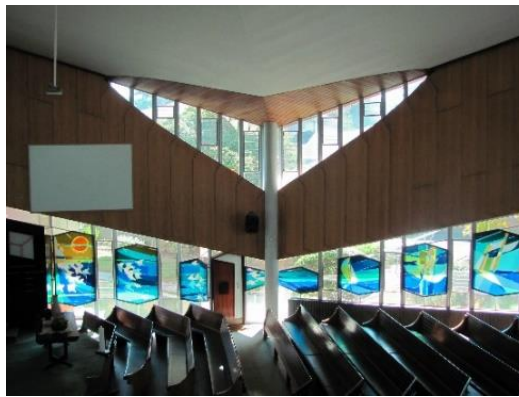


Figure 36: Stained glass panels, Parow Oostersee Dutch Reformed Church, Conradie, 1973 in 2015. Photograph by the author.

Although the aforementioned issue generated some tensions and hostilities, Conradie produced a bold and intricately designed structure which triumphantly emerges among the residential buildings in Parow.

#### 3.4.4 The Dutch Reformed Church of the congregation Uitenhage-Winterhoek (1977)

Conradie’s final church structure was completed for the Winterhoek congregation in Uitenhage. Inaugurated in 1977, this church was completed towards the end of his professional career and showcases a maturity in the design aesthetic (Van der Merwe, 2015). The most prominent feature of the exterior, as seen in figure 37, is the white, tapering church tower, positioned in the centre of an A-framed roof structure. The expansive interior is devoid of excessive and detailed design elements yet showcases Conradie’s distinctive use of wood



which features in the pulpit, pews, lectern, and panels that cover the wall surfaces surrounding the organ (figure 38). The serenity of the interior space is a result of the simple design of the white ceiling panels and rectangular luminaires in addition to natural light which filters through the fenestration, as seen in figures 39. The only playful aspect of the interior design is found in the patterned linoleum floor of the church foyer.



Figure 37: Exterior of the Uitenhage Winterhoek Dutch Reformed Church, A.P.S. Conradie, 1977 in 2015. Photograph by the author.



Figure 38: View of the pews and organ, Uitenhage Winterhoek Dutch Reformed Church, Conradie, 1977 in 2015. Photograph by the author.



Figure 39: View of pulpit and liturgical centre, Uitenhage Winterhoek Dutch Reformed Church, Conradie, 1977 in 2015. Photograph by the author.

The Uitenhage-Winterhoek church is one of three Dutch Reformed churches which Conradie designed for congregations in what is currently known as the Eastern Cape. He obtained the commission for this church after the Uitenhage-Winterhoek church council took note of his structure for the Cradock-Noord congregation (Conradie, 2015). While his churches for the congregations Cradock-Noord (1971) and Despatch-Eendrag (1975) bear a striking resemblance to the design of his Parow Oostersee structure (Conradie, 1966-1977: Personal Collection). There is a notable change in the design of the Uitenhage-Winterhoek church. Although there is no given reason for this change, one can speculate that the shift is linked to the simplification of his design aesthetic which typified his later work (Van der Merwe, 2015).

### 3.4.5 In Conclusion

Conradie's structures reflect not only his adoption of Wright's theory of organic architecture but attests to the work of a gifted architect who expressed his aptitude for creating aesthetically pleasing, yet functional spaces whilst maintaining a sense of cohesion with his use of colours, patterns and materials. Van der Merwe describes Conradie as a,

vormgewer van ruimtes in pas met die plaaslike konteks, met 'n sterk ekspressionistiese aanslag (eerder as die sober taalgebruik van seker tydgenote). Hierdie ekspressie, en met die detail van sy ontwerpe – gestroomlyn maar eweneens elaboraat – is die vergestaltung van 'n behoefte om 'n sekere gevoelswaarde mee te bring wat die mens wil oplik (2015).

[designer of spaces in accordance with the local context, with a strong expressionistic appearance (other than the more sober aesthetics of certain



contemporaries). This expression, in conjunction with the detail of his designs – streamlined but somewhat elaborate – is the crystallisation of a need to inspire a sensation which uplifts the human spirit – author’s own translation].

Although there are some developments in Conradie’s structures, he continued to employ the same basic design elements to the exterior of his churches which invariably feature a prominent, tapering white church tower situated in the centre of the gable façade. Moreover he remained consistent with his use of terrazzo, wood, glass and incorporated indistinguishable decorative details in his interior designs. One key aspect of Conradie’s approach is the ‘element of surprise’ as found in the intricate geometric ornamentation of his interior designs. Despite the fact that he had only designed six Dutch Reformed Churches throughout the course of his career, Conradie produced structures which are rich in symbolic and decorative elements. His experimentation with new forms and approaches is indicative of the freedom which architects were afforded with the designs of Dutch Reformed Churches during the period of high Modernism in South Africa. The ensuing discussion of the work by the prolific church architect, Pieter J. Pelsler, demonstrates the wide range of divergent forms and appearances of church buildings produced by one designer.

### 3.5 Pieter J. Pelsler

As previously stated, the phenomenon of Modernist Dutch Reformed Church architecture gave rise to a great variety of designs. The Dutch Reformed Churches designed by Pieter J. Pelsler showcase a certain uniformity regarding their interior layouts given the strictly practical and functional concerns which dictated his approach. However Pelsler experimented with different designs for the exteriors which gave rise to a fascinating array of Modernist Dutch Reformed Church structures.

Although Pelsler contends that his designs do not derive from an adherence to any school of thought or architectural movement which determines the appearance of his buildings,<sup>137</sup> it is clear that he strictly adheres to the dictum of modern architecture, ‘forms follows function’ (Pelsler, 2015e). As such, his designs stem from both the practical and liturgical concerns of the interior space, including the lighting, ventilation, acoustics and seating arrangements. The consideration and structural organisation of these elements centres on accommodating the

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<sup>137</sup> In conversation with Pelsler, it is clear that he is vehemently opposed to the imitation of specific styles or modes of design as he believes that the functional and theological requirements of a church should determine the form and not a preconceived idea pertaining to either neo-Gothicism or typically Modernist forms of architecture (Pelsler, 2015a).

preaching and reception of the Gospel, which Pelser regards as the cardinal function of a church. In essence, his designs derive from the desire to best accommodate the needs of a community of believers and moreover showcase the union of his two greatest passions, Christianity and architecture (Pelser, 2015a). Before discussing his church structures, a biographical introduction serves to foregrounds his distinctive approach to architecture.

Pieter Johannes Charles Pelser was born on the 24<sup>th</sup> of March 1933 in Constantia, Cape Town where his father worked as the manager and winemaker on the farm, Mount Prospect. After completing his school career at Wynberg Boys' High School, he enrolled for the course in architecture at the University of Cape Town in 1950 (Pelser, 2015c). His decision to pursue a career in this field stemmed from his passion for sketching and resonated with his artistic interests. During his time at UCT, Pelser befriended a fellow student, Roelof S. Uytenbogaardt, who commenced his studies in architecture in 1951. Brink states the following on the relationship between Pelser and Uytenbogaardt who were, "drawn together by common interests and a shared Christian faith. They held regular prayer meetings with one Douglas Jennings on campus. Their friendship was characterised by mutual assistance resulting, for instance, in Pelser's rendering a drawing for Uytenbogaardt's Rome Scholar submission in 1957" (Brink, 2015). In terms of their devotion to Christianity, both Pelser and Uytenbogaardt had strong ties to the Dutch Reformed Church. Uytenbogaardt was raised to follow, "a set of strict Calvinist principles which he intermittently deviated from and returned to at different periods of his life" (Murray, 2010:13). Conversely, Pelser's prolific involvement with the Dutch Reformed Church and religious organisations<sup>138</sup> not only influenced his career in architecture, as he claims to have designed approximately one hundred churches for various denominations, but played a central role in his life. Pelser met his wife, Almarie, through his involvement with the 'Jeug-tot-Jeugaksie' youth ministry programme in 1974 (Pelser, 2015c). Pelser obtained his B.Arch degree from UCT in 1954 opened his practice in Cape Town shortly after graduation. He commenced his professional career with the design of a factory building for the South African Leadworks Company in Lansdowne. After finalising the plans for this structure, Pelser embarked on a four month tour through Western Europe with his former classmate, Fred Lighton. Upon return to Cape Town, Pelser was appointed by Prof. Thornton

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<sup>138</sup> During his lifetime, Pelser was a member of the Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA) in Cape Town and served on the councils of the Bible Institute of South Africa, the Graduate Christian Fellowship and various Christian Student Associations in the Cape Province. Moreover, he presided over the Sunday school divisions for Dutch Reformed congregations in Constantia, Wynberg and Stellenbosch, practiced as a lay preacher and was both the chairman and organiser of three national conferences for Dutch Reformed ministers. He has since published five books on the topic of the Bible and it's relation to evolutionary theory (Pelser, 2015c).

White to complete the plans and oversee the construction of a new architecture school in the United Kingdom (Pelser, 2015c).

During the course of the following years, Pelser accepted an assistant lecturing post at the UCT School, worked in architectural firm in London and completed numerous design projects, including the Friedheim apartment building in Rondebosch, Cape Town (Pelser, 2015b; Pelser, 2015c). In 1963 he established his practice, 'Uytenbogaardt & Pelser. Architects, City Planners and Colour Consultants' in the Bible House on Greenmarket Square, Cape Town (Brink, 2015; Kotze & Peters, 2013:37; Murray, 2010:95). During their three year partnership, this practice was responsible for the design of the Van Zyl clothing shop (1964) in Paarl, the church for the Welkom West Dutch Reformed congregation (1966) and the Bonwit Clothing Factory (1967) in Salt River (Brink, 2011; Brink, 2015; Murray, 2010:90). Both the Van Zyl shop and Bonwit factory received the Bronze Medal from Cape Provincial Institute of Architects in 1964 and 1968 (Brink, 2011; Kotze & Peters, 2013:38). As far as the Dutch Reformed Church in Welkom was concerned, Uytenbogaardt was the principal architect of the commission and Pelser merely featured as member of the project team (Pelser, 2015b; Murray, 2010:95).

After terminating the partnership with Uytenbogaardt<sup>139</sup> in 1966, Pelser continued practicing and received his first commission to design a church building for the Dutch Reformed Mission Church congregation in Belhar in 1968. This momentous commission was made possible by his friend, a minister and moderator of the Dutch Reformed Mission Church, David Botha (Pelser, 2015b). Despite his commitment to the Church and involvement with related organisations, it is somewhat surprising that Pelser had spent a total of fourteen years as a practicing architect before obtaining the opportunity to design a church. As was the case with many architects practicing in the 1960s, the process of receiving such a commission usually transpired through connections between the architect and business acquaintances or family members, as was the case with Uytenbogaardt and his project for the church in Welkom.<sup>140</sup>

Pelser recognises that the design of the church was influenced by structures of the American architects Frank Lloyd Wright and Louis Kahn (Pelser, 2015a; Pelser, 2015b). Moreover,

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<sup>139</sup> The dissolution of the partnership resulted from personal and work-related differences which formed between Pelser and Uytenbogaardt (Brink, 2015).

<sup>140</sup> The following has been disclosed about the Welkom West project, "Uytenbogaardt's involvement in the commission for the church building, worth a contract sum of almost sixty-eight thousand rand, appears to have been through his brother-in-law, Dominee Dana Minnaar who was the first minister of the congregation of Welkom West" (Murray, 2010:94). Letters of correspondence, dating from 1963, reveal that the two men had been considering various architectural ideas for the project (Murray, 2010:94).

Pelser deems the appearance of this structure as wholly inappropriate for the provincial town of Welkom and its populace, which he described as follows,

Dis nie eers die meer verligte Afrikaner soos in die Kaap nie. Dit is die Transvaalse soort van Afrikaner, Vrystaatse Afrikaner, so dit moes seker 'n hengse skok vir hulle sisteem gewees het, om daardie kerk te sien (Pelser, 2015b).

[They are not the more liberal Afrikaners from the Cape. They are the Transvaal Afrikaners, Free State Afrikaners, to see that church must have been a huge shock to their systems – author's own translation].

Pelser reveals the following about his process of church design. The first course of action requires the observation of the terrain in order to determine the size and gradient of the site. As in the case with his first church in Belhar, the plot was restricted in size due to the pre-existing church hall which occupied a large portion of the proposed site. This church has a rectangular plan and is a modest structure which to his mind bears no features of his distinctive approach to his subsequent church architecture (Pelser, 2015a). Despite numerous attempts to locate this church building, I, in conjunction with Pelser, was unable to trace this church within the Belhar region.

Regardless of the spatial setbacks which influenced the design of the Belhar church, this commission was greatly successful as it launched his career as a prolific church architect who proceeded to design countless churches for Dutch Reformed congregations in Southern Africa.<sup>141</sup>

### 3.5.1 Dutch Reformed Church of the congregation Bellville-Riebeeck (1973)

Pelser's second project was for the newly seceded Bellville-Riebeeck Dutch Reformed congregation located in the northern suburbs of Cape Town. Due to the proximity of Belhar to Bellville, one can speculate that news of Pelser's successful first commission reached the Bellville-Riebeeck church council which led to his appointment. Established in 1968, Bellville-Riebeeck became one of seven daughter congregations to secede from the Bellville Dutch Reformed mother congregation (Roos, 1984:16). During the 1960s, Bellville, one of the burgeoning northern suburbs of Cape Town, housed an ever-increasing Afrikaner population.

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<sup>141</sup> Alongside approximately 25 Apostolic Churches and 5 churches in Malawi, Pelser was responsible for the design of numerous Dutch Reformed Churches, including those for congregations in Bellville, Melkbosstrand, Caledon, Saldaha, Somerset West, Kleinmond, Plettenberg Bay, Worcester, Constantia, East London and Outjo in Namibia (Brink, 2015; Pelser, 2015a; Pelser, 2015b).

Having acquired municipal status in 1940, Bellville saw an influx of rural Afrikaners who flocked to the city to educate their children and form part of a rapidly growing commercial sector (Albertyn, 1972:28). Bellville soon displayed symbols of its affluence and by, “the 1950s costly modernist municipal centres bore testimony to combined ethnic and civic self-confidence, as well as to rapid economic growth” (Bickford-Smith, Van Heyningen & Worden, 1999:186). Furthermore, in 1962 Sanlam, which is described as “the Afrikaner financial giant” had opened its headquarters in Bellville (Bickford-Smith, Van Heyningen & Worden, 1999:186). The upwardly mobile Afrikaners who resided in the area were able to afford the construction of a new, Modernist church building which would not only house their fellow members of congregation, but assert their ascendancy at the height of Afrikaner nationalism. The Bellville-Riebeeck church was officially inaugurated in April 1973 and (as noted on the plans of the church), the final cost of the building and rectory amounted to R 167 983 (which translated into the current currency amounts to R 8 271 482) (Pelser, s.a.: Card 143; Terblanche, 2015b).

Regarding the design of this church, Pelser’s adherence to the ‘form follows function’ dictum becomes apparent in the following statement,

Hoe meer funksies, hoe meer word die suiwer vorm van enige selfstandige funksie aangepas om ‘n gesamentlike geheel te vorm. Die eindproduk is dus ‘n ‘sintese’. Die tweede vlak van vereistes is die beligting (dag en/of nag), die ventilasie, die siglyne, en die koste van elk (Pelser, 2015e).

[The more functional aspects there are, the more likely it becomes that the pure form of any independent function is modified to form part of a coherent whole. The end product is thus a ‘synthesis’. The second level of requirements concerns the lighting (day and/or night), the ventilation, the line of sight and the cost of each – author’s own translation].

The pure practicality of Pelser’s approach is evident in the both the exterior and interior design of the building. The exterior appearance (figure 40), is defined by the mono-pitched roof structure, consisting of profiled metal sheeting, which is visually dynamic as it seems to rotate in a descending arc to low, human-scaled entrance doors. The most prominent feature of the exterior is the hollow, irregularly-shaped, quadrilateral concrete church tower which rises from the roof and symbolises the connection between heaven and earth, as the roof structure slowly ascends from human scale and culminates in the vertically oriented tower structure. The symbolism of the church tower has since been impeded by an array of antennae which surround

the apex of the tower. Pelser laments the appearance of these unappealing fixtures, and does not comprehend the reason for their installation (Pelser, 2015a). In conversation with the groundskeeper, Kobus Terblanche, it was revealed that the current lack of funding in the congregation compelled the church council to allow for the installation of these antennae as a means to secure a steady income.



Figure 40: Exterior of Bellville-Riebeeck Dutch Reformed Church, P.J. Pelser, 1973 in 2015. Photograph by the author.

Upon entering the building, one experiences a sense of compression due to the low ceiling which mirrors the slope of the roof. This sensation is almost immediately alleviated when moving from the foyer to the church interior (figure 41) as the steadily rising ceiling leads to a simple and tranquil space consisting of three sets of pews which are ordered in a fan-shaped arrangement. Natural light penetrates this white interior space through the horizontal strip fenestration, situated on the verge of the rear wall surface and ceiling, as seen in figure 42. In this way, both the minister and members of the congregation are spared from direct sunlight. Pelser incorporated a set of skylights which centre on the pulpit, providing ample illumination for the congregation.



Figure 41: Interior of Bellville-Riebeeck Dutch Reformed Church, Pelser, 1973 in 2015. Photograph by the author.





Figure 42: View of Strip Fenestration, Bellville-Riebeeck Dutch Reformed Church, Pelser, 1973 in 2015.

Photograph by the author.

Furthermore, he designed the building to include an expansive hall adjacent to the core interior space which provides seating for approximately 300 people (Terblanche, 2015a). This space is used for larger church services during Easter and Christmas celebrations. The core church space and the hall are separated by tall sliding doors, a design solution which is also found in Aalto's church in Vuoksenniska (Banham, 1962:126). Although he never revealed that he explicitly borrowed design ideas from Aalto, Pelser professes high regard for the Finnish architect whose practice he visited in 1955,

Ek het die voorreg gehad om in Alvar Aalto se kantoor te wees in Finland [...] Ek het baie gehou van sy werk [...] Hy was toevallig nie daar nie, maar dit was nou 'n voorreg om daar te wees (Pelser, 2015a).

[I had the privilege of visiting Alvar Aalto's office in Finland. I really liked his work. Coincidentally he was not in, but it was a privilege to be there – author's own translation].

The Bellville-Riebeeck church attests to Pelser's practical approach that aimed to best accommodate the needs and practices of a community of believers. The next church, inaugurated in 1973, was designed for the members of an Afrikaans Dutch Reformed congregation, in the predominantly English-speaking suburb of Constantia in Cape Town.

### 3.5.2 Dutch Reformed Church of the congregation Constantia (1973)

Inaugurated in the same year as the Bellville-Riebeeck church, Pelsers design for the Constantia Dutch Reformed congregation has a vastly different appearance. This congregation seceded from the Dutch Reformed congregation Zwaanswyk on the 9<sup>th</sup> of October 1968 (NG Gemeente Zwaanswyk, 1993:5). Although there is no evidence as to why Pelsers was commissioned for this project, one can speculate that it was due to the fact that he resided in the area and was a member of the congregation (Pelsers, 2015c; Pelsers, 2015d). Pelsers cites this project as the only commission for which he received specific instructions concerning the appearance of the building. The church council had requested a typically Cape Dutch church which impelled Pelsers to withdraw from the project. He voiced the following as part of his counterargument to the church council,

‘Maar hoe kan julle dit doen?’ Toe sê ek, ‘Maar dit is onprakties. Julle wil ‘n doelmatige kerk hê, wat ek vir julle kan gee.’ Toe word ek nou weer aangestel (Pelsers, 2015a).

[‘How can this be done?’ Then I said, ‘But it is impractical. You want a functional church, which I can give you.’ Thereafter I was reappointed – author’s own translation].

After his reappointment, the only concession which Pelsers made to accommodate the initial request was to design a white church. The exterior appearance of the church (figure 43), with its white walls and clean lines is a typically Modernist, regional interpretation of Cape Dutch architecture. It seems that Pelsers had designed this Modernist church, with reference to the historic Cape Dutch buildings (such as the Groot Constantia manor house) in the area (Erasmus, 1995:10). As is the case with most regionalist movements, structures are designed to convey a specific cultural identity within the built environment (Cooke, 2015:1). Therefore it can be argued that the Constantia Dutch Reformed church subtly refers to a kind of architectural trope for historical Cape Afrikaner identity.



Figure 43: Exterior of Constantia Dutch Reformed Church, P.J. Pelser, 1973 in 2015. Photograph by the author.

The rectangular church tower is situated in the centre of the double-pitched roof structure. Covered by vertical slats, the tower structure mirrors the vertical strip windows which feature on the adjacent wall surface. Deviating from the Bellville-Riebeeck church, Pelser designed the hall as an independent building, separate from the core church interior. This allowed for the implementation of his ideal interior design (figure 44), which consists of a fan-shaped seating arrangement whereby pews are situated on a slope which descends towards and frames the liturgical space.

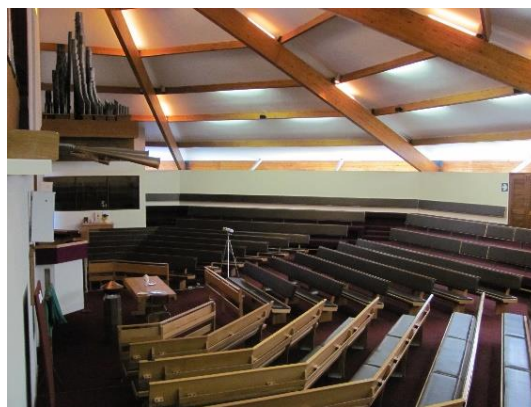


Figure 44: Interior of Constantia Dutch Reformed Church, Pelser, 1973 in 2015. Photograph by the author.

This interior arrangement is likened to the shape of a cupped hand, as the fingers represent the aisles which separate the pews and the palm denotes the liturgical centre that houses the pulpit (Pelser, 2015a). The design of the interior showcases Pelser's distinct solution for lighting and ventilation as he incorporated horizontally oriented, adjustable glass slats which surround the interior. The lack of windows create an intimacy within the interior, which provides seating for approximately 440 people (Coetzee, 2015). At present, the congregation consists of 171 members of which approximately 70 regularly attend the Sunday services. This attests to the dwindling numbers in church attendance (Coetzee, 2015). Shortly after its completion, Pelser

recalls a Dutch Reformed minister from nearby congregation who praised the design of this church,

Ek onthou die minister, Piet Koornhof [...] en toe hoor ek dat hy loop weg van sy kerk af na die Constantia kerk vanweë die atmosfeer van daardie kerk en hoe lekker dit is om kerk te gaan daarso en toe sê ek, ‘Wel baie dankie dominee Koorenhof, dankie vir die kompliment.’ Want dit is wat ek probeer het, dat dit lekker moet wees, dat dit doelmatig moet wees en dit het eintlik vir jou ‘n gehewenheid gegee dat jy daar is en jy sien hierdie lig wat van bo af kom en ‘wow’, jy weet? Dit beantwoord aan hierdie vertikale konneksie wat ‘n mens wil hê, deur die dak (Pelser, 2015a).

[I remember the minister, Piet Koornhof, and then I heard that he leaves his church for the Constantia church due to the atmosphere which it inspires and I said, ‘Well thank you minister Koornhof, thanks you for the compliment.’ Because that is what I tried to achieve, that it should be pleasurable, functional and that it should elevate your spirits as you see the light which penetrates the interior from above and ‘wow’, you know? It answers to this vertical connection which one strives to have, through the roof – author’s own translation].

The interior of this church inspires a sense of awe, yet due to the current lack of funding, the maintenance of the structure has been neglected (Coetzee, 2015). As seen in figure 45, the skylight above the pulpit is clogged due to an accumulation of dirt and debris. Consequently the illumination of the pulpit as well as the symbolic connection between the minister and members of the congregation to the heavens has been hindered due to poor maintenance.



Figure 45: View of skylight, Constantia Dutch Reformed Church, Pelsler, 1973 in 2015. Photograph by the author.

### 3.5.3 Dutch Reformed Church of the congregation Helderberg, Somerset West (1974)

The following church which Pelsler designed was for the Dutch Reformed congregation, Helderberg in Somerset West. This church was inaugurated in September 1974 (Smit, 1994:14). In 1969, Helderberg became one of four Dutch Reformed congregations to secede from the Somerset West mother congregation, forming part of the history of this 19<sup>th</sup> century *kerkdorp* (Smit, 1994:3-5).

The town of Somerset West originated from an area of arable land at the foot of the Hottentots Holland mountain range, as this terrain was divided into farms since the early 18<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>142</sup> This region slowly developed over the course of the century until the need to establish a formal settlement arose. As was custom in 19<sup>th</sup> century, villages were founded by the consecration of a church and Somerset West, became one of many *kerkdorpe* in the Cape. In April 1817, a handful of local farmers acquired a section of the Cloetenburg farm to demarcate a place of worship and establish a congregation. Three years later, the first church, a typically Cape Dutch building, was inaugurated in February 1820 (Smit, 1994:3-4). Over the course of the following century, the congregation flourished as the settlement surrounding the parish expanded. In 1903, Somerset West had attained municipal status (Albertyn, 1974:109). Due to an increase in permanent residents in the area, three congregations seceded from the Somerset West Dutch Reformed Church, which include the congregations in Strand (1912), Grabouw (1934) and Gordons Bay (1952). In March 1941, the Somerset West congregation inaugurated their new church building, a neo-Renaissance structure designed by the brothers W.H. & H. J. Louw (Hoevers, 2009:246; Nederduits Gereformeerde Kerk Somerset West, s.a.). Approximately 15 years later, the old Cape Dutch church building was granted to the local Dutch Reformed Mission Church congregation (Smith, 1994:5).

The need for expansion within the congregation was raised during a church council meeting and the decision to secede and establish a daughter congregation was reached on the 10<sup>th</sup> of August 1965. A *feesfonds* (jubilee fund) was created to raise funds for the procurement of a plot upon which to construct the church building for the new congregation. On the 14<sup>th</sup> of May 1969, the final decision for secession was reached and in September of the same year, the Helderberg congregation, consisting of 473 members, was founded (Smit, 1994:7-8). During

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<sup>142</sup> W.A. van der Stel acquired the Vergelegen farm in 1700 upon which he established a homestead, vineyard, granary and planted an assortment of fruit trees (Erasmus, 1995:13).

the following four years, the members of this congregation, who held their services in the De Hoop Primary school hall, were actively involved in the collection of funds towards the payment of the site and construction of their church. In January 1971, the decision was reached to proceed with the construction of the church and in October, the council had appointed Pieter J. Pelser as the architect for the project. As noted in the minutes of church council meeting held on the 24<sup>th</sup> of July 1972, objections were raised against the proposed model of the interior which Pelser had presented to building commission. Doubts were expressed about the stairway leading to the entrance of the church, the seating arrangement for the members of the church council and the fact that the vestry was situated beneath the church building. After a number of modifications to the design, the final plans for the church were accepted in April 1973. Due to the wealth of this congregation, consisting of a number of affluent farmers, they were able to afford the proposed cost of the building which amounted to R 197 130 (Smit, 1994:10-11). After the sixteen month period of construction, the church building was inaugurated on the 21<sup>st</sup> of September 1974. Pelser regards this commission as his most successful,

Maar dit is nou eintlik, as ek dit nou self mag sê, ‘n skitterende kerk, vir alles wat ‘n kerk moet doen (Pelser, 2015b).

[But it is actually, if I may say so myself, a brilliant church, for everything which a church should be – author’s own translation].

Recognised as a prominent landmark in the town, the exterior of this pale, shell-like structure, as seen in figure 46, consists of a single pitched roof which culminates in a curved tower. As such, the façade of the building emulates the outline of a left hand. The tower, as the dominant feature of the exterior, represents an index finger pointing towards the heavens and symbolises the connection between heaven and earth. The adjacent cascading curves which frame the liturgical space of the interior, resembles the silhouette of the latter three fingers which rest in the palm of the hand (Smit, 1994:13).





Figure 46: Exterior of Helderberg Dutch Reformed Church, P.J. Pelsler, 1974 in 2015. Photograph by the author.

In conjunction with the pronounced verticality of the tower, the smooth, white, off-shutter concrete wall surfaces contributes to the visual dominance of this church structure within the surrounding townscape. The visibility of this unconventional structure is expressed in the following description by Retief Koch, as recorded in the congregation newsletter of September 1974,

Kom jy uit ‘n oostelike of suidelike rigting, sien jy dit van ver af – van so ver as Gordonsbaai, en kom jy nader en gaan die Lourensrivier oor en maak jou draai in Hoofstraat, Somerset-Wes op, dan staan dit daar reg voor jou – die hoë wit suil. Uit die Strand sien jy dit en uit Melkbaai, en kom jy uit die weste van die Kaap se kant, dan sien jy dit kort nadat jy Firgrove verby is...die hoë wit suil, die toring van die nuwe kerkgebou van die gemeente Helderberg (cited in Smit, 1994:14).

[You will see it from afar as your approach from the east or the south, as far as Gordons Bay, and as you cross the Lourens River and turn into Main road, Somerset West, it is right in front of you, the tall white obelisk. You can see it from Strand and Milk Bay and as you enter from the west, you see it shortly after passing Firgrove...the tall white obelisk, the tower of the new church building of the Helderberg congregation - author's own translation].

The corners of the curved step-backs appear to be directly influenced by a recurring refrain in Alvar Aalto's buildings, as seen in the Maison Carré (1959), Bazoches-sur-Guyonne in France and the Parish Centre (1962) in Wolfsburg Germany (Brink, 2016). The layout of the interior moreover corresponds to Aalto's church in Vuoksenniska, Finland wherein the organ and choir gallery is located to the right of the liturgical space (Banham, 1962:127). In terms of the similarities between these two structures, the Helderberg congregation decided to enlarge the church interior with the construction of a church hall which is separated from the core of the interior by a set of sliding partitions. Although Pelsler was not involved with the design of this addition to the building, he had purposefully situated the church on the plot to allow for further

construction. It should be noted that the design of the hall was completed by a former student of Pelsers who attended his lectures at the UCT School (Pelsers, 2015b).

The church attests to Pelsers' functional approach as his distinct solution for lighting is visible in the interior (figure 47). He predominantly made use of skylights which allow for both natural and artificial light to illuminate the pulpit, liturgical space and pews. Moreover, adjustable ventilation slats are found in the walls surfaces surrounding the nave (Pelsers, 2015a). The acoustic qualities of the space are enhanced by the design of vaulted ceiling.

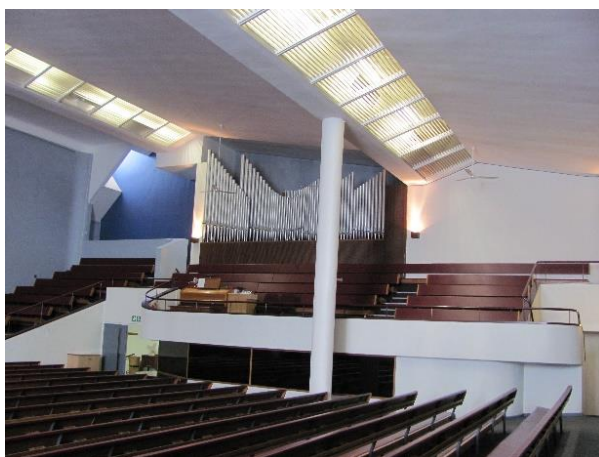


Figure 47: Interior of Helderberg Dutch Reformed Church, Pelsers, 1974 in 2015. Photograph by the author.

A vital aspect of any church interior is the visibility not only of the pulpit for all members of the congregation, but the visibility of each other. The church is carefully designed to avoid the separation of the congregation, as the mother's room is fitted with tinted glass which allows for a view of the minister and congregation. Moreover, the seating for the church council is adjacent to the choir gallery, which allows council members a full view of the entire congregation. The only separation is between those occupying the mother's room and those seated in the gallery. Pelsers comments on this as follows,

dié in die moederskamer kan nou alles sien, van die mense en van die preekstoel en goeders, maar hulle kan nou net nie die koor sien daar bo nie, maar ek bedoel, jy kan nou nie bloed uit die klip uit tap nie (Pelsers, 2015b).

[those situated in the mother's room are able to see everything, from the people to the pulpit, but they just do not have a view of the choir above them, but I mean, you can't draw blood from a stone – author's own translation].

The affluence of the Helderberg Dutch Reformed played a defining role in the life of the congregation who have organised countless tours, including visits to Tallinn in Estonia,

Bulgaria and Mozambique and has since organised numerous outreach programmes in the surrounding communities (Smit, 1994:40-45). Moreover, in 1979, 78% of the congregation voted against secession and in favour of the construction of the new church hall as a means to solve the issue of space for the burgeoning congregation. In 1982, the estimated cost of this new structural addition amounted to R 300 000. Completed in 1983, the new hall, alongside the original church interior, provides seating for approximately 1700 people (Smit, 1994:24-25). At present, this congregation consists of an estimated total of 4200 members, of which between 900 and 1100 attend church services on a Sunday (Viljoen, 2015). As such, the tall white obelisk of Pelser's church structure not only announced the establishment of an affluent congregation in 1974, but continues to declare the existence of a formidable and overtly religious Afrikaner community.

### 3.5.4 Dutch Reformed Church of the congregation Caledon West (1978)

The final church in this discussion was designed for the Caledon West congregation and forms part of the Caledon Dutch Reformed history which spans a period of two hundred years. Settlement in the region dates to the late 17<sup>th</sup> century as the natural hot springs in the region were discovered in 1689. Renowned for its curative properties, travellers who flocked to the springs, settled in the area and by 1708, the first grazing rights were granted to Ferdinand Appel (Fransen, 2006:155). This instigated the establishment of a prosperous farming community who found the first Dutch Reformed parish in 1811. The Caledon congregation erected their first church building in 1813, a modest traditional thatched roof structure (Fransen, 2006:155; Hoevers, 2009:41). Approximately 62 years later, the congregation moved to a neo-Gothic church, designed by Carl Otto Hager, which was inaugurated in 1876 (Hoevers, 2009:41). This cruciform structure with its tall, Gothic spires, provided seating for approximately 1000 people and became a prominent landmark in the town (Fransen, 2006:161; Hoevers, 2009:41). As was the custom in many Afrikaans congregations in the early to mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, this remarkable structure, alongside the original thatched roof church, was demolished. This is deemed as the, "most deplorable losses that unfortunately were not at all unusual in local Dutch Reformed Church practice. The loss of the Hager church was nothing short of disastrous" (Fransen, 2006:155). This act of destruction was actually in response to a call by Moerdijk for Afrikaner congregations to replace their old, neo-Gothic buildings with more 'suitable', modern structures. This incident demonstrates how the cultural landscape of both the cities and small-town South Africa was engineered by state ideologues such as Moerdijk following Nationalist

victory. The careful and systematic demolition of the remains of a British settler aesthetic (neo-Gothic) in favour of regional Modernism was carefully orchestrated to reshape the imaginary of the Afrikaner as a progressive and cosmopolitan volk.

The Gothic church was replaced by a smaller, more modern structure, designed by Bronkhorst from the Louw & Louw architectural practice. Erected in 1959, this church features Gothic detailing, rendering it reminiscent of Hager's church (Skein, 2013:10).

The rich history of the Caledon Dutch Reformed history continued, as the congregation turned a new leaf with the official establishment of the newly seceded Caledon West congregation in 1973. Caledon West was the last of six Dutch Reformed congregations<sup>143</sup> to secede from the mother congregation (Skein, 2013:13). The need for secession arose due to a lack of space in the Caledon Dutch Reformed Church and was validated by the results of a church survey which indicated that 95.1% of the congregation were in favour of establishing a daughter congregation (Skein, 2013:12).

After seceding, the Caledon West congregation held their church services in the *NG Kerk Sentrum* (Dutch Reformed Church Centre) until the inauguration of their own church building in April 1978. The process of planning the construction started in 1973 as it was decided that the site of the old prison would house the new church complex (Skein, 2013:15). In August of the following year, an official building commission was established which primarily concerned itself with appointing an architect and financing the construction (Skein, 2013:18). On the 23<sup>rd</sup> of September 1975, Pieter J. Pelsers was awarded the commission to design a church which would provide seating for 600 people (Skein, 2013:19-22). The construction process attests to the fervour with which the entire congregation approached the erection of their own church building as local farmers aided in the demolition of the old prison which occupied the site of the new church (Skein, 2013:20).

The estimated cost of the church complex, which includes the vestry, kitchen, classrooms and hall, amounted to R 300 000 (in today's currency, this translates into R 8 588 372) (Pelsers, s.a.: Card 134; Skein, 2013:22). Owing to Pelsers's functional and economic approach to church design, the final cost of the complex, as indicated on the architectural plans, was R 269 420 (Pelsers, s.a.: Card 134). Due to a lack of funds, however, the congregation requested a loan of R 150 000 from the *NG Kerk in Suid-Afrika* (Dutch Reformed Church in South Africa) which

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<sup>143</sup> These congregations include Bredasdorp (established in 1838), Villiersdorp (1858), Greyton (1918), Riviersonderend (1922) and Hermanus (1934) (Skein, 2013:13).

awarded a grant of R 125 000. Various members of the congregation also offered loans, including R 10 000 from J.F. de Kock and R 5000 from W.C.N. van Schalkwyk (Skein, 2013:24). Despite various financial and structural issues, the church was inaugurated on the weekend of the 29<sup>th</sup> and 30<sup>th</sup> of April 1978. The ceremony was attended by Izak L. de Villiers, the minister of the Constantia Dutch Reformed congregation for which Pelser designed the church building in 1973 (Skein, 2013:25). The mere fact that both congregations shared the same architect, attests to the cohesion of the Dutch Reformed community in Cape during those years.



Figure 48: Exterior of Caledon West Dutch Reformed Church, P.J. Pelser, 1978 in 2015. Photograph by the author.

Pelser's design of this church, as seen in figure 48, resulted in a Brutalist structure clad with light grey face brick. The tall, off-shutter concrete tower extends from the core structure and consists of three equally spaced fins. The symbolic value of the tower is explained by Pelser in the following statement,

'n Kerkoring is 'n 'vinger wat opwys' na die EEN in wie ons glo. So ook hierdie een wat van ver gesien kan word, en wat dus ook as 'n daaglikse herinnering dien van ons geloof. Maar buiten dit bestaan hierdie besondere toring uit drie dele wat op hulle beurt herinner aan die wese van God, wat, hoewel EEN, bestaan uit die Vader, Seun en Heilige Gees. Net soos die drie dele van die toring afsonderlik geïdentifiseer kan word maar tog op 'n punt saamvloei, so ook het ons in ons geloofsbestaan daaglik te make met die afsonderlike werkinge van die 'lede' van die Drie-eenheid. En verder, net soos die funksie van die gebou, (Kerk, Konsistorie, Portaal) almal hul plek vind tussen die uitgestrekte suile (of arms), so moet elke

lidmaat hom op sy verskillende bestaansterreine en werksaamhede werp in die uitgestrekte arms van ons Drie-enige God, Vader, Seun en Heilige Gees (cited in Skein, 2013:35).

[A church tower is a ‘finger which points’ towards the ONE in who we believe. As with this one which can be seen from afar, and serves as a daily reminder of our faith. Aside from this, the remarkable tower consists of three parts which reminds us of the being of God, which, as ONE, consists of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Just as the three sections of the tower can be individually recognised yet unite at one point, we in our religious convictions, encounter the separate workings of the ‘members’ of the Holy Trinity. Furthermore, just like the function of the building, (Church, Vestry, Foyer) find their place among the extended columns (or arms), every member should cast himself in the arms of our God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit throughout his daily existence and endeavours— author’s own translation].

Pelser’s concern with functionality is evident in this explanation as he underscores practical application of the symbolism to the lives of his fellow Christians and members of the congregation. This distinct feature of Pelser’s approach is apparent in the following description of the interior,

Die gebruik om die kerk van agter vol te maak, is in ons kerk ingewortel. Met die beplanning van hierdie kerk is probeer om hierdie gebruik te beëindig. Gevolglik is die deure langs die voorkant sodat banke van voor af volgemaak kan word. Verder het die banke geen armleunings nie om mense te ontmoedig om sommer dadelik op die punt van ‘n bank te gaan plek inneem. Hopelik sal dit help om mense te laat instap en banke van die middel af vol te maak (cited in Skein, 2013:35-36).

[The custom of filling the church from the back is ingrained in our conception of the church. The plan of this church sought to put an end to this custom. Consequently the doors are placed at the front which enables the filling of seats from front to back. Moreover, there are no arm rests to discourage people from taking a seat at the end of the pews. Hopefully this will encourage people to enter and fill the pews from the middle – author’s own translation].

The church interior, as seen in figure 49, is designed in the same idiom as Pelser’s church in Constantia, which emulates the shape of a cupped hand. The pews are arranged in a fan-shaped formation and are separated by narrow aisles, representing the outstretched fingers. In terms of the lighting and ventilation, Pelser included horizontal strip fenestration which he positioned



at the rear of the interior. Below the window panes, he incorporated adjustable ventilation slats which allow for fresh air to enter the space.

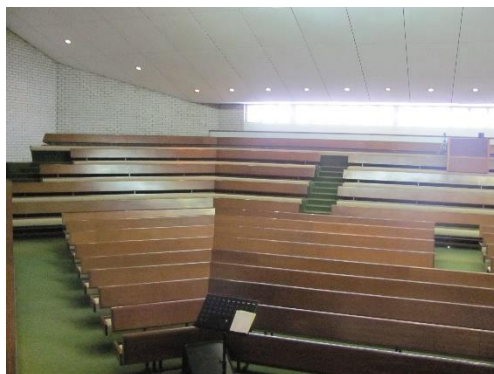


Figure 48: Interior of Caledon West Dutch Reformed Church, Pelser, 1978 in 2015. Photograph by the author.

A skylight illuminates the pulpit and liturgical space, which prevents direct sunlight from hindering the vision of both the minister and members of the congregation. As in the Helderberg church, the organ and choir gallery is situated above the mother's room (figure 50) and the vaulted ceiling enhances the acoustic qualities of the space. Pelser's choice of green carpeting is well-suited for the Caledon congregation as it mirrors the colour of the fields in the surrounding landscape.

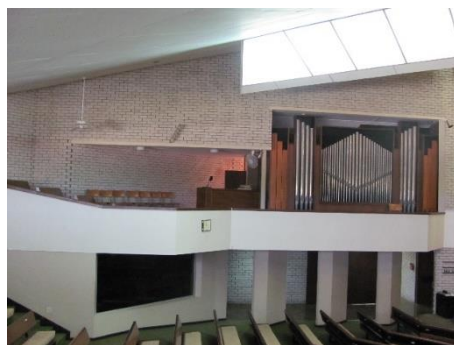


Figure 50: View of organ, choir gallery and mother's room in Caledon West Dutch Reformed Church, Pelser, 1978 in 2015. Photograph by the author.

The interior of this church corresponds to Pelser's ideals of church design,

Die fokus van die uitleg/beligting/ventilasie/vormgewing moet saamsmelt om op die kansel te fokus, want die funksie 'Kerk' is die verkondiging van die Woord (Pelser, 2015e).

[The focus of the layout/lighting/ventilation/form should merge to focus on the pulpit, as the function of the 'Church' is the preaching of the Word – author's own translation].

As such, both the arrangement of the functional aspects and the preaching of the Gospel determines the layout of the interior.

### 3.5.5 In Conclusion

Pelser is deemed as a prolific church architect who was responsible for the design of approximately one hundred church buildings and complexes across Southern Africa. As noted in the discussion of his commissions for Dutch Reformed Churches in the Cape, Pelser made use of vastly different designs for the exterior of his church buildings. When questioned about the divergent appearance of these structures, Pelser alludes to the principle of practicality and functional design which dictates his approach to architecture,

Ek het nooit enige ontwerp idee sonder 'n rede wat met die funksie verband hou, voorgestel nie [...] Ek het elke ontwerpsbesluit aan 'n funksie gekoppel [...] Ek het nooit probleme met kerkrade ondervind nie, juis omdat ek elke aspek van die ontwerp met sukses kon verduidelik, soos om deur funksionele argumente voor te hou (Pelser, 2015d).

[I never suggested any design concept without connecting it to a functional concern. I related every decision concerning the design to a function. I never experienced problems with the church councils, simple because I could defend every aspect of the design, by means of arguing for its functionality – author's own translation].

Although Pelser borrowed certain design elements from Aalto, Brink insists that his designs are his own.

Though influenced by or having allusions to Aalto's work in certain instances, Pelser's designs are not directly derivative or mere copies of the Master's buildings. This is borne out by the diverse styles evident in these buildings, which demonstrate and affirm Pelser's ability and skill to produce a range of original, personalised buildings with unwavering confidence (Brink, 2016).

## 3.6 An Overview of the Phenomenon of Modernist Afrikaans Protestant Churches

This chapter has focused on the Modernist Afrikaans Protestant churches designed by four prolific Afrikaner architects, but it must be noted that, in his comprehensive doctoral study of the subject of Afrikaans Protestant church architecture, Kesting lists 21 leading figures in the field of church architecture between the years 1961 and 1980, which is otherwise known as the

period of high Modernism in South African architecture (1978:236). Although the number of Modernist churches built during this period is unknown, a vast number of churches which were erected, often in the most remote environments.



Figure 51: Exterior of Dutch Reformed Church Leeu-Gamka, n.d. in 2016. Photograph by the author.

Figure 51 shows a Modernist church which I encountered in the provincial town of Leeu-Gamka *en route* to Bloemfontein in 2016. Although it is recorded that this Modernist structure replaced the old Dutch Reformed Church which was erected in 1922, there is no record of either the architect or date of completion of this modern church building (Nederduits Gereformeerde Kerk Leeu-Gamka, s.a.). In addition, academics specialising in the field of South African architecture have professed their limited knowledge of Conradie and Pelsler.<sup>144</sup> It is evident that this phenomenon, which in layman's terms is often referred to as, "those ugly churches", offers a range of opportunities for further investigation.

It is evident throughout the course of this chapter that these architects drew inspiration from their international counterparts. However, stylistic imitation was not limited to church architecture as Fisher and Clarke contend,

Stylistically, South African architecture has either paralleled or followed, and even lagged behind its European progenitors. For instance, although Cape Dutch is a style recognised as truly South African, it can also be used as a survivor of Baroque styling [...] South African architects closely followed international trends during

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<sup>144</sup> In an article published in *Die Burger*, Prof Schalk le Roux from the University of Pretoria asks, *Wie was die argitek A.P.S. Conradie?* (Who was the architect A.P.S. Conradie?). This question, which features as the title of the article, is accompanied by images of the Op-die-Berg church (Le Roux, 2011:5). Moreover, in their article on Uytenbogaardt's Welkom West Dutch Reformed Church, Walter Peter and Paul Kotze from the University of the Free State writes the following, "The identity of Pelsler, the reasons for the formation of their practice and the choice of practice style could not be established" (Peters & Kotze, 2013:43).

the Apartheid years, especially during the period of the cultural boycott when national, provincial and municipal governments all commissioned large-scale complexes (2014:14-15).

While South African architectural Modernism might rightly be described as derivative, one could argue that, although both Conradie and Pelsler were influenced by the work of Wright and Aalto, their church designs were singular insofar as they met the requirements of Dutch Reformed services. Furthermore, these structures were not government funded commissions but were financed by the members of the respective communities and congregations. As such, one could argue that they were not deliberately erected in service of Afrikaner nationalism. However, due to the origins of this architectural trend, which coincided with the upsurge of Afrikaner nationalism in the late 1930s and the socio-political context in which this phenomenon flourished (1960s and 1970s), it is patent that they form part of the pro-nationalist visual rhetoric.



Figure 52: Afrikaans Language Monument, 1975 in 2016. Photograph by the author.



Figure 53: Street view of Caledon West Dutch Reformed Church, Conradie, 1978 in 2015. Photograph by the author.

One can compare the spires and towers of the church structures to the Modernist monuments,<sup>145</sup> such as the Afrikaans Language Monument near Paarl as seen in figures 52 and 53. However it should be noted that these churches were privately funded in contrast to the monuments which state funded projects. Despite this fact, the Modernist churches allude to the intricate imbrication between religion, capital, upward mobility and Afrikaner nationalist power. Moreover, in line with Althusser's theory of ideological state apparatuses, the Church as well as other apparatuses are not state owned but are ideologically in league with the state and its policies.

One of the reasons why Modernism became the mode of choice for church architecture owes to the fact that it signified a break with past styles (such as neo-Gothicism and Classicism) which symbolised Anglicisation and British rule. Moreover, modern architecture conveyed an image of progress which the Afrikaner strove to express not only in their architecture, but in the fields of literature and fine art (Freschi, 2011b:23-24).

One could argue, therefore, that although these churches cannot be described as state structures per se, insofar as they were not state commissioned or funded, they were intrinsically informed by Afrikaner nationalist rhetoric, an ideology that was discursively dispersed throughout Afrikaner communities, and in particular through ideological state apparatuses such as schools and churches. The imbrication of religion and ideology in South Africa under Nationalist Party rule is beyond dispute, and this account of the social, cultural and religious processes underpinning Protestant church design in four prominent architects' oeuvres testifies to the close interweaving of Afrikaner religion, capital and ideological power.

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<sup>145</sup> In terms of the exterior, the Brutalist design of Pelsers church in Caldeon corresponds to the rise of 'New-Brutalism' which characterised the appearance of newly constructed buildings in the 1970s that were erected in service of Afrikaner nationalism (Fisher & Clarke, 2014:15). In this regard, one could liken the tall, concrete church tower to the tapering columns of Van Wijk's 1975 *Taal Monument* (Language Monument) as seen in figure 52. Completed in 1978, this church conveys the final attempt of the Afrikaners to assert their dominance in the built environment, as the tower structure, visible from the national highway which passes above the town, forcefully protrudes among the residential buildings in the area as seen in figure 53.

## Conclusion

Modernist Afrikaans Protestant church architecture forms a pervasive feature of the South African built environment and alludes to the period of Afrikaner rule in South African history. In this thesis I have considered the history of the Afrikaner nation, its relation to the Church as an essential part of Afrikaner social identity and how this association impacted on the development and outcomes of the apartheid state. A broad historical overview was accompanied by a discussion of Modernist architecture as a global trend which trickled down into the South African architectural scene. The reasons for its arrival and expansion within the local context were explored and cast within the socio-economic and political framework of South Africa in the mid- to late 20<sup>th</sup> century. The question of how this trend permeated the realm of Afrikaans Protestant church architecture was explored in the third chapter of this study with a discussion of the work by the prolific Afrikaner architects, Johan de Ridder and J. Anthonie Smith. The crux of this thesis hinged on an in-depth discussion of eight churches designed by A.P.S. Conradie and Pieter J. Pelsler.

Although I expected to find more tangible links between the architects, their designs and the political aspects of Afrikaner nationalist ideology, it became clear from interviews that these architects were predominantly motivated by architectural concerns. It should however be noted that both architects are Afrikaners and practiced as professional architects during the height of the apartheid regime. Thus one cannot overlook the fact that their designs are ideologically bound to the socio-economic and political climate of that time. The fact that their churches were privately funded, for instance, makes these churches a visible sign of the newly acquired wealth of Afrikaner communities and congregations during the time of their construction. Moreover the overt Modernist aesthetic of these churches not only showcases the aptitude of the architects who designed these churches but was also made to signify the cultural progressiveness of the Afrikaners during the period of Afrikaner nationalist rule. The sheer number of churches built during the mid-to late 20<sup>th</sup> century not only indicates the economic upward mobility of the Afrikaners but also point to the close connection between the church and the Afrikaner people. Implicated, of course, is the role of the Church in providing religious justification for the apartheid system. However, on a congregational level, these churches, as community initiatives, signify the intimate relation between individual members of the congregations and the Church as institution.



Recommendations for further study include an exploration of the Modernist architecture of numerous *Vrye Gereformeerde Kerke* (VGK, United Reformed Churches) which were built during the same period as the Modernist Afrikaans Protestant churches. The VGK's were designated for 'coloured' congregations, and many of these churches were designed by Afrikaner architects who were involved with similar projects for Dutch Reformed, Dutch Restructured and/or Reformed Churches. The use of Modernist architecture for the VGK's is an interesting topic as it shifts the focus of church architecture away from a purely Afrikaner perspective and allows space for exploration of the relation between the Afrikaner state and the 'coloured' people who lived under the apartheid regime. Due to the scope of this thesis, this avenue could not be explored, but leaves space for further research and investigation by other academics within the field of Visual Studies and/or architectural history and theory.

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