

2005-08-16T14:47:31Z

Ben Marais (1909-1999): The influences on and heritage of a South African Prophet during two periods of transformation

<https://hdl.handle.net/2144/39>

"Downloaded from OpenBU. Boston University's institutional repository."

CHAPTER 4

NATIONALISM: TWO PERIODS OF TRANSFORMATION

1. INTRODUCTION

The heading “The two periods of transformation” could be considered an alternative to “Nationalism in South Africa”. While the second heading would be more precise, it is deemed too general and does not convey the significance of change – development, tensions, rise and fall, stagnation – affecting various forms of nationalism that shared the same geographical area – Southern Africa – though attempts were made to modify this – through Apartheid. Thus, central to the theme of nationalism is the theoretical – policy orientated – framework in which each nationalism was to be provided for. This in itself, as it is indicated in Chapter 3, is also subject to certain nations sense of superiority, patronage and fears at different times in the history of South Africa during the 20th century. The heading “Nationalism: Two Periods of Transformation” contains an indication of a thematic treatment and a temporal structuring of the period with further thematic undertone “transformation”.

In this chapter, the central theme of “nationalism” is considered as a typical socio-cultural and political concern which influenced all aspects of life, including the relations between people, the religious institutions, and which considered a major dilemma for many, like Ben Marais, who considered himself an Afrikaner, but could not identify with Afrikaner nationalism and its political policies.

2. THE FIRST PERIOD OF TRANSFORMATION

When Ben Marais was a year and some months old, in August to September 1910, five consecutive articles on “The Race Question”¹⁴⁹ appeared in *De Kerkbode*. After indicating the significance of the race question, or concerning the Africans, the first

¹⁴⁹ Naturellen Vraagstuk.

article (25 August 1910:115 emphasises the disproportion between the population groups. Only two are considered – whites one million, and Africans 9 million. Furthermore, the task of the church to evangelise the Africans is emphasised, indicating the relevance of the prominence given to the Mission Policy of the NG Kerk. Besides the responsibility to evangelise the Africans, the responsibility of the “Christian nation”¹⁵⁰ is emphasised. That is, “the responsibility to govern the Africans that encircle us in a Christian way.”¹⁵¹ The “evangelised heathendom (sic)” were to be governed according to Christian principles. The article also indicates the essence of the race problem – African problem: How best to govern the Africans? The alternatives that are considered indicates the paternal attitude of the white Afrikaner church towards the Africans living in Southern Africa.

Each of the other four articles then looks at particular aspects of the problem of race. In the second article (1 September 1910:130), attention is paid to “the indigenous in their social condition”,¹⁵² in which a negating view is taken on African civilisation. In the third instalment (8 September 1910:146), it is asked what rights, if any, should be granted to the Africans. In clever rhetoric, in which the name of Booker Washington is used regarding responsibility and word play between rights and privileges (recht en voorrecht), this article indicates that Africans cannot be granted rights because they are not able to fulfil certain duties, and like the second instalment (1 September 1910:130) has a higher regard for European civilisation than African civilisation. The fourth article in the series on the African Question (15 September 1910:163) considers one right that should be granted to blacks, which is, education. Apart from restricting the education possibilities to primary education (secondary to a few and no mention of tertiary), and emphasising that education must be conducted in the mother tongue – contrary to education policy in the early 1970s, and considering African educational needs in terms of the labour class, and condemning the Gam Theology of the cursed nations, the article states (15 September 1910):

“But the black races have not – to use scientific language – reached the stage in evolution, the level on which development takes place, on which

¹⁵⁰ Christen volk.

¹⁵¹ “... de verplichting om de naturellen die ons omringen op Christelijke wijze te regeeren.”

¹⁵² “De inboorling in zijn maatschappijliken Toestand.”

the Christian nations find themselves, and therefore the black races are necessarily, when considering the white races, in a position of being the lesser.”¹⁵³

A second right is considered in the last of the articles in the series (22 September 1910:179), being the right to vote. In the voice of the church (NG Kerk), the emphasis moved progressively away from considering the race problems in the context of the church towards a statutory and political context. This is indicative of the shift in ecclesiastic contemplation on race issues in the NG Kerk during the first period of transformation, in which Africans became more negated and the interests of the Afrikaner nation promoted at the cost of the African people.

Within the demarcated first period of transformation, 1900 to 1948, there was not only a consolidation of Afrikaner Nationalism but also of African Nationalism. There was a distinction between Afrikaners promoting Afrikanerdom and Afrikaners who were English orientated, as experienced in Graaff-Reinet, where two NG Kerk congregations existed within the same geographic boundaries, and two Afrikaans High Schools were functioning, the distinctions based on political affiliations, which coincided between being Anglo-orientated or Ultra-Afrikaner orientated (Naudé 1995), and in Steynsburg, where clear lines were drawn between church and school along political affiliation (Aucamp Interview 20 September 2002).¹⁵⁴

The first period also saw the consolidation of Africans, forming a political platform in the form of a political party, based on the Indians early protests against discriminatory laws and treatment, under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi. The first leaders of the African political voice, with which African Nationalism is associated, came from the ranks of the church, similar to the leaders of the Afrikaner nationalism, though the Afrikaners had a stronger military orientation due to reflection on the Anglo-Boer War and because their leaders were generals in this war.

Apart from the two world wars, the Anglo-Boer War, the process of deruralment and

¹⁵³ My translation.

¹⁵⁴ See also Roodt (1976) for a general overview of the history of the NG Kerk congregation of Steynsburg.

urbanization, the 1st period experienced severe poverty, resulting in the “Poor white Question”¹⁵⁵ and tensions with Africans in the labour market (Macquarrie 1933). The period also saw the emergence of strong labour unions and the emergence of a labour market shift, from white to more commercially feasible black mine workers. The country’s infrastructure was also developed more fully, with improved railway and road facilities.

3. THE SECOND PERIOD OF TRANSFORMATION

The 2nd period, 1948 to date [open ended] saw not only the industrialisation of many more towns taking place, but also the technologicalisation, and in the last decade the computerisation of telecommunications, industries, commerce, education and the civil service, not to mention the emergence of television and video in the media. The advancements in progress have been immeasurable, save in comparison to the European countries and Northern America, and other African countries that did not experience growth. Much of this development was due to the major sales of gold and diamonds.

During the second period of transformation there were Afrikaners who consolidated their endeavours to promoting Afrikanerdom, their language and culture, and there were Afrikaners who were becoming more aware of the other, of the plight of the other races. At the same time, many of these endeavours had their origins in the first period, especially the 1930s, indicating the restrictions of the transformation model being used.

Where the 1st period saw the rise of Afrikaner nationalism, the 2nd period saw its consolidation, a greater rift taking place between its original close relationship between church, media, society and politics, each perusing its own interests. For African Nationalism, the 2nd period saw the emergence of a greater awareness of international and Pan-African awareness, the militarisation of their attitudes towards other nations, and greater emphasis being placed on cultural heritage than on progress. The 2nd period also saw the emergence of a rich African class and a polarised poverty stricken mass, where the Afrikaners had a smaller poverty problem and a stronger middle class and a powerful rich class.

¹⁵⁵ Armblankevraagstuk.

4. OVERLAP IN THE PERIODS OF TRANSFORMATION

It is contended that in South Africa the whole 20th century can be termed as a time of transformation in the country. This would be akin to the diverse peoples in the country coming to terms with themselves and others, thus, transformation in human relations. Each generation has had to come to terms, not only with their predecessors, but with the other. As the generations overlapped, so the two periods could be seen to form part of a greater whole.

5. THE VARIOUS FORMS OF NATIONALISM

In *The Two Faces of Africa*, Ben Marais (1964b) considers Afrikaner and African nationalism under the same banner of African nationalism. According to Ben Marais, Afrikaner and African nationalism are not dissimilar. He distinguishes African Nationalism from Tribalism (Marais 1964b:110):

“It is, I think, essential to point out at the very outset that much of so-called African ‘Nationalism’ is in fact not nationalism at all but tribalism pure and simple. In every state or part of Africa there is a general reaction against colonialism or white domination, but within most of the African State there are very deep tribal rivalries ... Nationalism is the modern trend. Where the tribal loyalties become loose or obsolete, nationalism flourishes. Nationalism epitomises the new African’s desire to rediscover his dignity by projecting himself into the modern world....”

Nationalism is seen by Ben Marais, in this context, to be a phenomenon of Western Culture, thus of western civilization. This consideration is made more complicated by Ben Marais’ view that nationalism should fall away within the church (1964b:139), which as it was constituted during the greater part of the 20th century, was a western orientated institution.

The idea of Afrikaner and African nationalism being related, though in tension is expressed by S. Marks and S. Trapido in their article, “The politics of race, class and nationalism” (1987:1). They claim that the objective of “white Afrikaner nationalism”, during the 20th century in South Africa, was “the capture of the state by the white Afrikaner nation”, and in so doing, “has confronted its counterpart, a pan-South African black nationalism”. The objective of Black Nationalism was the search for “the

incorporation of Africans into the body politic”. The minority communities – Coloureds and Indians, then, according to Marks and Trapido (1987:1), have constructed an own sense of community as a response resulting from a “deliberate manipulation of group differences to prevent interracial class solidarity”.

Where Shillito (1933), maintains that nationalism should be considered in religious terms, it could as easily be considered in political, cultural, historical, philosophical or sociological terms. To understand the nationalistic climates in South Africa, prevalent during the twentieth century, consideration would have to be given to each of these aspects. To undertake such a enterprise would take up several volumes, and would not be conducive to understanding Ben Marais as a prophet of the twentieth century. However, it would be most important to indicate that political, religious, social, economic, cultural and ethnic/race, considerations all play a part in the nationalistic climates of South Africa in the 20th century. Furthermore, the various forms of nationalism share a common history, though interpreted differently.

While Ben Marais only considered two forms of nationalism, Afrikaner and African, there are more forms of nationalism present in Southern Africa. The consideration of only two forms of nationalism in the South African context is restrictive. Afrikaner and African nationalism did not come to being in a vacuum, moreover, many of the impulses within Afrikanerdom and African nationalism came from other nationalities. It would be most simplified to state that the Afrikaner and African nationalism developed in reaction to English colonialism. The inter-influences are a bit more complex, where distinction, concerning Afrikaner and African nationalism is concerned, must be made between British Imperialism and English Colonialism. Furthermore, the role of differentiated Afrikaner attitudes in the distinguished geographic regions should be considered, including the role of the Germans in South West Africa (Namibia) and the Indians in Natal and Transvaal. By treating the various “other” nationalisms in this section, the complexity of the South African society regarding nationalism is emphasised, but more importantly, a better understanding of the two selected forms of nationalism can be achieved.

Ben Marais (1964b:7) relates the problem of nationalism and colonialism to his youth, and also draws an abbreviated comparison of situation and influence to America:

“When I was a child in the Great Karroo (sic) in the heyday of colonialism in Africa hardly any questions were ever asked about matters of race or subject races. The Good God had set the patterns and ordained the white man boss. Then slowly through two world wars there was the dawn of a new day. The problem of races, of subject peoples or minorities, suddenly moved to the centre of the world’s interest. It is occupying the minds of Africans to such an extent that what happens in connection with the solution of America’s race problem is of far more consequence to the African mind than all the untold millions America pours into Africa.”

Financial and material relief is temporary in nature, only a comfort, but does not substitute for the violations of one people against another. In the Viljoen interview (1986), Ben Marais considered colonialism in the light of paternalism, which gave rise to the feeling that whites were superior.

In considering the problem of land in Natal, Swanepoel (1997) presents an African perspective on nationalism in South Africa. He claims that the conflicts between the different people go back far further than Apartheid. Thus as a criteria for considering the history of South Africa, Apartheid is quite restricting. This is working within the scope of this restriction, with the knowledge that Apartheid and the forms of nationalisms form only part of the greater whole, albeit important.

It is important to consider what is understood under nationalism since it is used differently by different people and in different ages, some see it positively and other negatively.

6. THE TERM “NATIONALISM”

Nation (*The Pocket Oxford* 1977):

“ ... A people or race distinguished by community of descent, language, history, or political institutions.”

Nationalism (*The Pocket Oxford* 1977):

“ ... patriotic feeling or principles or efforts, policy of ~ independence....”

Thus distinguished, by denotation is that “nationalism” signifies a group set against another due to its inherent facilities; and by connotation that “nationalism” is a collective term identifying communality by that which the use of the term indicates.

Kriek (1971:12) considers the Latin root of nation, *Natio*, which he suggests originally implied an undeveloped tribe. It, then, was a group of people that belonged together due to a common heritage. As a social unit it would have been larger than a family but smaller than a “clan”. The use of the term would thus have changed over the years, to eventually serve as a collective word indicating a group of people that have a communality of sorts. As Kriek (1971:13) aptly quotes from a report by the Royal Institute of International Affairs:

“... the word ‘nation’ has meant different things to different people at different times and in different languages.”

According to the study of K.W. Deutsch (Kriek 1971:17), the following conclusions could be reached on the term “nation” with which “nationalism” is associated:

“... that the term ‘nation’ does not contain a biological content and has little or nothing to do with race; that a general relation is emphasised concerning a people’s physical environment, and events in the past (common history); that a communal and unique thought world is present with the individuals of the same ‘nation’ and that values, thoughts and emotions are shared; that there are linking habits and practices and memories in the thought world of such individuals that encourage them to participate in specific roles such as leaders and followers; that these linking practices and roles are institutionalized in the form of social institutions; that there is a communal attraction to the symbols that a positive relation is established between those who manipulate the symbols and those who accept it; that all these aspects – that is: relation to environment, past, leaders, institutions and symbols – form structures that strengthen each other and maintain the whole; that these clear formations of social behaviour are called collective personality or culture; that these social patterns have bearing on the personality structures of individuals; that the personality of every person and to a certain extent his ‘nationality’ contains his “conscience” or “will”; that every individual can change his nationality, or at least his position therein and attitude towards it, but that this is a very long process; that nationalism and nationality has a historical origin and development.”

Central issues of concern to “nationalists” (besides the use of the masculine case!) appear to be: land; the preserving of biological heritage; appreciation of symbols; leadership styles; common history; cultural heritage and traditions; and communal personality and thought world. Furthermore, it is believed that a nation comes to being, to stand in contrast to another entity.

7. THE DIFFERENT FORMS OF NATIONALISM

The rise of nationalism, in relation to the reaction against English rule, on the one hand Afrikaner, and on the other African, can only be understood in the South African context if Indian nationalism in South Africa were also taken into consideration. Indian nationalism fell greatly outside Ben Marais’ primary concerns. It is treated here in broad strokes, to indicate its essence and the inter-relatedness of the various forms of nationalism in South Africa.

a. Indian Nationalism

Within the history of nationalism in South Africa, the history of Indian Nationalism takes in a most prominent position for its organised opposition to both English and Afrikaner authorities and serving as an inspiration to African Nationalism. The central character, associated with the rise of Indian Nationalism in South Africa is Mahatma Gandhi, who arrived, when he was 23 years old, to represent an Indian settler in a court case. He set sail from Bombay in 1893.

The threat of the “Mohammedans” – Muslims was not as prevalent a theme in the discrimination against the Indians after their arrival in the Natal Colony in the 1860s and in the Republic of Transvaal after 1881; neither was there concern over their commercial thrift. Thus, Gandhi ascribed the problems of race to the economic system on which South African Society is based (Ali 1994:14), and not to matters of religion, culture or education. Though, these aspects were used in legislature, like the 1911 law restricting Indian passage on grounds of education, and the 1913 Marriage Act which implicated that Indian traditional marriages were no longer recognised.

The prominent theme in the political aspects of Indian Nationalism that was owned by Gandhi, and which he introduced, was the concept *Satyagraha*, which was an effective weapon of non-violence, in which the effective instruments of influence were passive resistance, non-cooperation and civil disobedience. Thus, the first resistance, effective as it was, against racial discrimination in South Africa was organised in the Indian community.

Apart from starting a newspaper through which the Indians could voice their grievances, Gandhi organised an Indian Ambulance Corps in the Anglo-Boer War. However, he realised that the anti-Asian laws, casual as they were under the Boers, were diligently implemented by British officials. Chamberlain would not help the Indians of Transvaal (Ali 1994:14). Gandhi though had a dilemma during the Anglo-Zulu wars of 1906, which as a British subject, he resolved by identifying with the British and choosing to serve the wounded Zulus.

A further consideration of Indian Nationalism and the forms of nationalism prevalent in South Africa is the fact that Indian Nationalism clearly defines the differences in the triangular struggle between the British, the Boers and the Africans for South Africa. It is also interesting to note that the Indians were seen as a threat due to their positioning between the whites and blacks. One of the problems was that the daughters of poor whites often times found employment in Indian shops, and thus ended up being drawn into Indian families, while Indians inter-married quite freely also with black people.

Through the Indians, Gandhi's perspective of the Zulu people, distinguished from the European sentiments, it is also discernible to appreciate the diverse attitudes towards black people on the one hand, and raises the question asking about the true nature of African culture, and whether it was as backward and barbaric as implicated. Gandhi saw (Ali 1994:19) "that they [the Zulus] were at once noble at heart, of dignified bearing, with refined manners and learned in natural science." This positive appreciation differed from the European consideration of the Africans as "so primitive that for civilising purposes they are almost a clean slate" (Ali 1994:19).

While Gandhi was a deeply religious man, considered by Ben Marais to be a polytheist, as well as a political figure, whose struggles lay the foundation of the African National Congress – through the activities of the Natal Indian Congress, it appears that Ben Marais only considered him in the light of his religious life and not concerning his political and legal endeavours in South Africa (Viljoen Interview 1986). Though, in 1958 when the Indian population was subjected to forced removals, they drew up a petition. Ben Marais was one of the people who objected to the removals and the law enforcing the removals. On 28 January 1959, a letter of Ben Marais was published in *Die Kerkbode*, in which he requested the church to formulate a point of view on the moving of Indians as part of the execution of the Group Areas legislation. According to Ben Marais this was unfair and was not defensible according to Christian principles.

On the eve of India's independence in 1946, Nehru raised the banner of revolt against racial discrimination in South Africa at the United Nations (Ali 1994:25).¹⁵⁶ This set the scene for international attitudes towards South Africa, and concretised in 1975 when South Africa was totally isolated in accordance to a resolution of the General Assembly of the United Nations. Resolution 3411 (XXX) unequivocally declared that "the racist regime of South Africa is illegitimate and has no right to represent the people of South Africa" (Ali 1994:25). Nehru also supported the petition of Julius Nyerere¹⁵⁷ of Tanzania to exclude South Africa from the commonwealth, directly as a result of the events at Sharpsville (1961).

Thus, not only Indian Nationalism in South Africa, but also the Indian Nation it influenced, contributed towards the resistance to and breaking down of a political dispensation.

¹⁵⁶ It is interesting to note that Ben Marais heard Nehru speak at the Taj Mahal during his second visit to India in 1960. He had previously, in 1939, chosen to visit the Taj Mahal instead of conducting an interview with Mahatma Gandhi (Meiring 1979:82).

¹⁵⁷ "To vote South Africa in, is to vote us out" (Ali 1994:26).

b. English Nationalism

Besides considerations on the lesser and greater of the evils between English Colonialism and British Imperialism as experienced in South Africa (Ross Interview 27 November 2001), and the NG Kerk's opposition to imperialism (Hofmeyr & Pillay 1994:165), the presence of English nationals in South Africa had a major effect on the relations between the different people, the Boers, Africans and Indians, also geographically determined: Western and Eastern Cape, Natal, Transvaal and Orange Free State. To unravel these sentiments in the attitudes between the nations and their reaction to colonialism, would only be to consider an aspect of the tensions between the groups. Intermarriage and co-habitation also took place – though on a small scale. The attitudes of influential individuals, though, cast the inquiry on a very different level.

At the Cottesloe Consultation (December 1961), Joost de Blank, archbishop of Cape Town, kept himself one side, according to Beyers Naudé (1995:50) fostering his prejudices against the Afrikaans speaking delegates at the consultation. He later asked an apology for these prejudices. These prejudices would have developed over several generations and would have stemmed from the lack of contact between the churches and the English and Afrikaners, dating back to the previous century (Streak 1974).

The prejudices the English held for the Afrikaners also steamed in the World Council of Churches, though under the pretext of the Afrikaans churches' support of the discriminatory policies of the National Party and South African government in the period following the events at Sharpville and Langa. A very weak case could be made out that the English were using the turmoil of the African people to instigate international action against the Afrikaans churches.

Joost de Blank requested the World Council of Churches in an attacking article in the *New York Times* (Van der Watt 1987:104) to ban the NG Kerk from the World Council of Churches if the NG Kerk did not openly distance itself from Apartheid, and requested that the Council send a commission of inquiry to South Africa. Further tensions were

created through the pronouncements of Ambrose Reeves of Johannesburg and C.T. Wood.

c. Afrikaner Nationalism

One of the central questions that could be posed to a study on Ben Marais is: How did he avoid being swept along by the winds of Afrikaner Nationalism? There is no direct answer to this question, but from this study, the answer would be sought in the influences in his life, that is, his youth and student years, also in his personality and social orientation.

From the interview Viljoen (1986) conducted with Ben Marais, the conversation ventured to his formative years as a person and as an intellectual. The topic of nationalism was breached, which Ben Marais considered in relation to religion, and more specifically to his own faith.¹⁵⁸ He reasoned: nationalism versus faith. This he reduced to a matter of principles: Interpretations from reading Scripture; and he asked the question: What is the church's calling? Which he answered with a rhetorical question: To protect a people's identity? The relation between religion and nationalism cannot be denied. In the context of South Africa, the one can only be considered if the other is taken into account.

Afrikaner Nationalism is a subject that has been written on extensively. This thesis does not intend to bring new insights to the fore, rather, it wishes to use it as an orientating reference to the life and work of Ben Marais. It will therefore not be necessary to provide a critical analysis on the subject, but it is crucial to indicate trends and relations, differences and similarities between the various forms of nationalism as phenomena and as experienced within 20th century South Africa.

Afrikaner nationalism is considered under the convenient, but not at all conclusive, model of "rise and fall" – or development and disablement. Distinction must also be drawn between progressive historical sequencing and retrospective historical

¹⁵⁸ Ben Marais always maintained his being an Afrikaner, and detested it when people wanted to make an Englishman of him (Meiring 1979:85)!

perspectives. For the purposes of this study, considerations on the origin of Afrikaner nationalism are categorised into five schools of thought.

1. Socio-economic reasons: especially 1930s: similar to revolution – education power wealth

Afrikaner nationalism could be considered to be “a broad social and political response to the uneven development of capitalism in South Africa” (Hofmeyr & Pillay 1994:195). In line with this, the period when economic models (communism and capitalism and socialism) were being compared and determined which were the most suitable, there was a marked increase in urbanisation, a focus on unions (especially mine and rail workers), and access to education, amidst drought and extreme poverty.

2. Reaction against Anglicising policies of government administration

The Anglicising programme of Milner, where English was the language of preference (Marks & Trapido 1987:102), in reaction to which a surge in the Afrikaans language and literature, took place in its proponents pursuit of its acknowledgement.

3. A natural historical phenomena – a group of people with a shared history

Comparisons could be made to the Americas and to Australia, as well as to other comparative settlements of people in history, often from diverse backgrounds, who amalgamated in a common cause or goal.

4. Cultural religious arguments with ideological base

Afrikaners had an own language: Afrikaans, they had a common history (self perceived and to be argued) – the Great Trek, Slagter’s Nek, and a common religion (Calvinism or reformed – depending on perspective). They had a romantic notion of land and self-reliance.

Concerning the Afrikaner’s perceived common history and unity, Pont (1985:59) argues:

“... that the Afrikaner was born and grew up as a unique people (volk) within the framework and *atmosphere* of Calvinistic theology. This theology finds its life force in the fact that it is a biblical theology that wishes to communicate the Word of God without fraud and without additions.”¹⁵⁹

Pont continues to conclude that the primary unit within a nation is the family, which is also the “home-congregation” of the church, and thus the borders drawn up around the Afrikaner family, in the past, was a divine act, and served to facilitate the establishment of the Afrikaner nation.

5. An absolute desire for self determination and freedom

Associated with the striving for self determination is pride and sense of being. Furthermore, a sense of superiority and accomplishment is also present.

These can in turn be grouped under reactionary and progressive arguments, all focusing on especially the 1920s to 1930s when Afrikaner Nationalism was growing in stature. It is considered that all the arguments are valid, and that it is difficult to determine the most prominent influence. Such an exercise is circumstantial, as in this study, where the focus falls on reactionary arguments, especially against Anglicising policies and English government policies. From this perspective, the other arguments are incorporated. Thus, it can be indicated how Ben Marais, an Afrikaner, interacted with Afrikaner nationalism, while also keeping perspective of the current events in the country – concerning African nationalism, during two periods of transformation.

Instead of attempting a narrative of reconstruction, the following contributing factors are mentioned, as are orientated in the life of Ben Marais: depression and poverty, drought and plagues (Ben Marais experienced a locust plague lasting eight days – Viljoen 1986); politics and culture – the outbreak of World War II – influences blew in: on one hand internal views on colour crises (*Rassebakens*), and the division of views between open and conservative – resulting from the Du Plessis Case. On the other hand external views on race from German ideology (the hope that Germany would win the

¹⁵⁹ Onvervals en onvermeng. My translation.

war); furthermore the student leaders: Diedericks and Meyer who propagated race purity; the retaliation against Anglicising – the “Engelse gevaar” (shake off the English yoke – stems from Anglo Boer War and would be lifted in the formation of a Republic); religion – Scripture – especially Old Testament. Afrikaners identified many similarities between the Old Testament people of God and themselves. Esp. the older generations of Afrikaners.

The following rhetorical questions could be asked: Could “Afrikaner bewuswording”¹⁶⁰ (Viljoen Interview 1986) and the F.A.K. (Federasie Afrikaanse Kultuurvereniging) established in 1929, be compared to the Black Consciousness Movement prevalent during the 1960s and 1970s in South Africa? On rhetoric, Ben Marais refers to the terms race, nationality and identity as emotional concepts (Viljoen Interview 1986). Would these concepts be theologically circumscribed? On Afrikaner nationalism: What about the coloured Afrikaners? And what about their Afrikanerdom? Would another history of Afrikaner be foreseeable? Would a study of the role of Islam in Coloured nationalism not be important? On influences from Scotland and Ireland: Could a comparison be drawn between the Irish Catholics and the Boers in the Anglo Boer war? Is a comparison possible to when the French Catholics assisted keeping the English out of Table Bay when the English threatened the Cape Town harbour in the 18th century. What is the influence of Scottish evangelical piety, and not being strongly influenced by the enlightenment as a result of the Scottish Presbyterian ministers? What was the influence of the upcoming Afrikaner intellectuals who studied abroad and were thus affected and influenced. For example by Kuyper, or, those who went to study at Oxford and Cambridge (Ghandi was a contemporary of Jan Smuts at Cambridge).

In the Viljoen interview (1986), Ben Marais maintained that on the one hand there was Black frustration, and on the other White fear. He reasoned that the frustration and fear transformed into hatred for the other.

¹⁶⁰ The rise of Afrikaner conscience.

d. African Nationalism

P.B. van der Watt (1987:75), in his treatment of the race questions in the NG Kerk, considers the role the ANC, thus African Nationalism, and the urbanization of the Africans, played in stimulating the momentum of the NG Kerk's formulation of a substantial race policy.

In considering African Nationalism in relation to Afrikaner Nationalism, light is shed on both phenomena. Ben Marais, a child of his times (1940s) distinguished between tribalism and nationalism (Marais 1964b:99). In his consideration, African nationalism is seen as a continental phenomenon, and not only South African.¹⁶¹ An argument could be defended that the phenomena is much broader and should also encompass African-American nationalism. However, this – like the continental orientation – is too broad for the purpose of this study. Though, it is considered a worthy thought to consider the relations and identifications between the different African groups as comparable to the Afrikaners unification in their past, religion and language.

Ben Marais was isolated from Africans, principally because the Apartheid system he came to oppose shielded him. His exposure was limited to his servants and a few church and academic people. His principle influences came from his visits through Africa, and thus these visits influenced his thinking more than did the situation in South Africa.

The roots of the current tide of African nationalism could be sought in the Anglo Boer War (Hofmeyr & Pillay 1994:148, Ross Interview 27 November 2001). Hofmeyr and Pillay (1994:153) also indicate claims that a British victory would ensure justice for Africans was repeated continuously in sermons, articles in church newspapers and on political platforms. Little attention was paid to the prospects of Africans once the war was over in 1902.

¹⁶¹ See Marais in *Werda* 1 August 1961.

The Eastern Frontier wars belonged to a different transformational period. In this perspective on the war, the English required a reason to take over the Republic of the Orange Free State and the Republic of Transvaal. The Anglo Boer War could also be considered a media war, where home opinion (England) helped determine the outcome of the war. If the war were justified and evoked common sympathy, the antagonists would have a ready supply of willing men and bandages. The plight of the Afrikaner's black farm workers was used for the humanitarian justification of the English involvement beyond the borders of the colonies of Southern Africa, where there was gold and diamonds. The correct administration of these assets was also a consideration. The presence of English and other farmers in these Republics and their treatment need not be compared, nor in other parts of the world. What is important is that particular expectations were created amongst Black people in Southern Africa, which were not met either at the closure of the war, or at the forming of the Union of South Africa in 1910. They thus needed a unified black political organization to represent their political needs (Hofmeyr & Pillay 1994:148).

The organisation that came into existence in Bloemfontein in 1912 was first known as the South African Native National Congress, and later as the African National Congress. The first leaders were church leaders. It would be an interesting question to ask about the influence of missionary education. To which may be answered that there were both developments and tensions between mission, the church and the political awareness of Africans (Hofmeyr & Pillay 1994:184). The origins and early progression of African Nationalism could be concretised in one of the founder members of the South African Native National Council, John Dube.

Hofmeyr and Pillay (1994:184) indicate that Dube was detained during the Anglo-Boer War because he had expressed the view that Africans should rule. Dube, who was associated with the American Zulu Mission at Inanda (he was pastor until 1908), received his education at the mission. He believed that the way to "change the sorry state of black South Africans was through education, the adoption of Christian values, working through whites sympathetic with the black struggle and through Western-type political organizations" (Marks 1975:180). Hunt-Davies (1975:497) quotes Dube, from

his acceptance of his election to be president of the South African National Native Congress in 1912, indicating his close affinity to the American activist, Booker T. Washington: “I take for my motto ... *Festina lente*: Hasten slowly, and for my patron saint I select that great and edifying man, Booker Washington.”

Hofmeyr and Pillay (1994:184) point out that Dube was not the only African leader to have had an appreciation for Washington’s programme of spiritual and social upliftment of black people. They (Hofmeyr & Pillay 1994:184) mention that John Tengo Jabavu, Rev. P.J. Mzimba, Pixley ka Izaka Seme and Sol T. Plaatje also had reverence for Washington. It is interesting to note the similarities between the programmes of John Dube and Mahatma Ghandi, and to the plea by Ben Marais for peaceful resolutions to the crisis in South Africa. Like Ben Marais later, Dube was apt to raise his grievances, but unlike Ben Marais, he functioned in a broader context. Three main emphases are distinguished in Dube’s work (Hofmeyr & Pillay 1994:185), which indicates that the rising African Nationalism was not only concerned about political issues. The first was education; secondly he was a political leader – one of the protesters against the 1913 Native’s Lands Act (He accompanied a delegation to London in 1914 to protest to the British government); and thirdly he sought peaceful co-existence between black and white South Africans. Dube represented Natal on the Native Representative Council until his death, and was succeeded by Chief Albert Luthuli (Hofmeyr & Pillay 1994:186).

In his Address to the Annual Conference of the Natal Branch of the African National Congress – 23 November 1951, originally in Zulu, Albert Luthuli stated (Pillay 1993: 35):

“Although our greatest concerns are our domestic needs, the culling of our stock, the influx laws that prevent us from taking employment in towns, the expulsion of Africans from the farms and many similar things, as a leading national organization, we should be the scouts of the nation and point out the trends affecting us in the whole country.”

The speech by Luthuli gives an important insight into the socio-political concerns of Africans at the beginning of D.F. Malan’s administration. Luthuli pleads for co-operation between all people, black and white, and calls for unity among Africans. In

the speech, he encourages Africans to do something about their lot. Pillay (1993: 34) also indicates that Luthuli re-defines the challenges facing blacks in South Africa, in the face of the new legislation being introduced by the Malan government. This indicates an emphasis or focus change in African nationalism, which this study considers the onset of the second phase of African Nationalism.

An important perspective on African nationalism is that Afrikaners of the 1960s and 70s identified African nationalism and communism as being dangerous, thus the “Rooi Gevaar” – communism was working through the “Swart Gevaar” – African nationalism. In *Colour: Unsolved Problem of the West* (1952a) Ben Marais alludes to the confusion between Bantu nationalism¹⁶² and communism, a matter he considers in statement 33 of *Colour: Unsolved Problem of the West* (1952a).

In the Viljoen interview (1986) Ben Marais maintains that communism played a role in African nationalism. In the interview, interestingly, he refers to Albert Luthuli. Ben Marais, quite rightly, considered his being a black nationalist and a Christian, but I believe ignorantly – even though he claims to have known him – considered him a communist. While Ben Marais’ consideration was the source of funding of the ANC – compare to his correspondence with Dr Potter and Eugene Carson Blake – which was communist, Albert Luthuli had a different orientation to communism. While Ben Marais’ opinion was well possibly influenced by the South African media, which would have made such a correlation, Luthuli considers the economic alternatives differently (Pillay 1993).

Albert Luthuli considers the problems and economic solutions of African impoverishment in his speech at the 44th Annual Meeting of the ANC held in Bloemfontein from 16 to 18 December 1955. While the freedom charter of the ANC could be interpreted as advocating either an extreme Marxist position or a form of moderate socialism (Pillay 1993:82), Luthuli indicates his preference for a “mixed economy”, not communism, as he states (Pillay 1993:84):

¹⁶² African Nationalism.

“My own personal leanings are towards the modified socialistic state, patterned on the present-day Great Britain, a middle-of-the-road state between the extreme ultracapitalistic state as we see it in the United States, and the ultrasocialistic state as we see it in Communist Russia ... My advice to the conference would be to accept the charter with the qualification that it does not commit itself at present until further discussion on the principle of nationalisation, of means of production, as visualised in Section 3 of the charter....”

A most important consideration is Ben Marais’ observation (Viljoen 1986) that most black people came from the working class.

After considering the broader tenants of the broader different national groups, attention can now be focussed on a shared tenant: the shared political and religious scenario.

e. National Gods and Political Suppliants

At the World Mission Conference in Tambaram, 1938, John R. Mott gave the following warning (Brown 1992b:175) before calling for the establishment of justice among all people:

“National gods of any kind, gods of race or class, these are not large enough to save us.”

After the conference, at which the fact of war, race hatred and the greed of money were issues that were discussed, Ben Marais was asking whether the international community understood the complexity of the race issue in Southern Africa, whether they would not be more sympathetic towards the Afrikaners if they understood the situation – he believed that they were not properly informed (Brown 1992b:178). From the letter of E.C. Blake (1970) it is obvious that the international community had a particular understanding of the race issue in Southern Africa, and was by no means sympathetic towards it.

A further understanding of the relation between nationalism and religion is found in Shillito (1933), who greatly influenced the thoughts of Ben Marais on the subject. Shillito has a strong opinion on the relation between nationalism and religion and the nature of nationalism (Shillito 1933:2):

“It is not enough to discuss nationalism as a political theory – to many it is another

religion – to some the only religion.”

i. Understanding Apartheid

The history of Apartheid lies in the time before 1948. Ben Marais gives a brief summary of this history (1964b:10):

“During the 300 year history of South Africa a policy of some form of segregation has always been followed, by the Dutch – except during the first thirty years – as well as by the English. From time to time territorial boundaries were fixed. After the Union of South Africa was formed in 1910 this policy was once more pursued. In 1913 the Land Act was enacted and 10 million morgen of land set apart for Africans. In 1936 this was increased to 20 million morgen. What are called the ‘African homelands’ today have thus been part and parcel of the South African policy as it developed.”

Ben Marais indicates sensitivity towards the situation where he indicates in the next paragraph (1964b:10): “In the meantime, however, an opposite trend set in.” The use of the two contradictory conjunctive devices emphasises the vast cleft between a social control theory and its execution. He indicates that more and more Africans were drawn into the “so-called ‘white areas’ as agricultural workers, domestic servants and industrial workers”. Ben Marais then indicates that there were more black people outside their allocated areas than within, and that this disturbed “many white South Africans”. Fear for inundation in their own areas then set in. Ben Marais mentioned in the Viljoen interview (1996) that the two driving sentiments behind Apartheid were fear and hatred.

According to Eiselen (1967:1), the principles of the policies on race in South Africa were first formulated by General Hertzog as early as 1911.¹⁶³ This policy was then renamed under each prime minister, “the brain child” of that leader. Eiselen (1967:1) indicates that under the administration of Malan this policy was known as “Apartheid”, during the regime of Strydom “separate development”,¹⁶⁴ and Verwoerd called it “self determination”.¹⁶⁵ To continue Eiselen’s argument, formulated in 1967, the ensuing leaders renamed the policy, or advocated it under different terminology. In retrospect,

¹⁶³ The “Naturellen Grondwet” of 1913, which determined the principle of territorial segregation, was formulated by Hertzog in 1911. He left the Botha Cabinet in 1912. See Eiselen (1967:5).

¹⁶⁴ Andersoortige ontwikkeling.

¹⁶⁵ Selfbeskiking.

the policy determining that people were to be distinguished along arguments based on race is referred to as “Apartheid”, irrespective of the refined nuances and political-social rhetoric.

In Theory and Practice

Deliberations on the theory of Apartheid are based on considerations forthcoming from its proponents within the church, such as the influential book by G. Cronjé, published in 1947 (on the eve before the 1948 election) providing a justification of Apartheid.

The comprehensive 207 page book of Cronjé (1947), in which he was assisted by Wm Nicol and E.P. Groenewald, covers all aspects of Apartheid, considering it a calling¹⁶⁶ (Chapter 1- Wm Nicol), providing a Spiritual basis and justification¹⁶⁷ (Chapter 2 – E.P. Groenewald); principle arguments¹⁶⁸ (Chapter 3); argues for responsibility and guidance¹⁶⁹ – paternalistic (Chapter 4); and considerations on the reality and ideal.¹⁷⁰ The chapter of E.P. Groenewald on the scriptural justification is of primary interest to this study (considered in greater detail elsewhere in this thesis under the heading “Justification of Apartheid”), considering the fact that it was on the wrongful justification of Apartheid on Scripture that Ben Marais first raised objections to the political model. The other chapters provide an elaborate insight into how the churchmen were thinking about Apartheid, about other nations and about themselves as Afrikaners.

It is not deemed necessary to provide a detailed analysis, but rather to establish sufficiently some kernel thoughts on the policy of Apartheid, its implementation and its effects, that the concerns and protests of Ben Marais can be placed within context. What needs to be emphasised though, is that during the early days of the rise and glory of Apartheid, reasoning and contemplation on this political model, concentrated more on its justification, theory and advantages, while during the dismantling of the systems created by Apartheid (1980s-2000s), emphasis was placed more on Human Rights

¹⁶⁶ ‘n Grootse Roeping.

¹⁶⁷ Apartheid en voogdyskap in die lig van die Heilige Skrif.

¹⁶⁸ Die kern van die vraagstukke.

¹⁶⁹ Verantwoordelikheid en leiding.

¹⁷⁰ Werklikheid en ideaal.

violations, atrocities, distortion of human relations, disadvantages, reconciliation, nation building and affirmative action. These aspects are mentioned only, where this paragraph illustrates how a political model, Apartheid, was used by a self-claimed national group, Afrikaners, to promote its position within a political, religious and academic sphere. As is stated by H.B. Thom in the Foreword to the collection of papers on race relations (*Grense* 1961), where he calls on Afrikaners and English – for different reasons – to read the book in which problems of society are analysed and considered and accounts are given of positions held.

In his positive assertion that Apartheid is morally justifiable, F.J.M. Potgieter (1961:24)¹⁷¹ refers to Rhodie and Venter (1960:19-22) who claim that the *idea* of Apartheid is the source of the practical regulations regarding the policy of Apartheid, because the *idea* of Apartheid is the synthesis or totality from which the policy of Apartheid derives.

The *idea* Apartheid could be considered under the heading “race relations”, or “human relations”, or “forms of government of pluralities”, while the policy of Apartheid could be understood as an alternative to full integration, or synonym to total segregation, or an alternative to parallelism.¹⁷² In this study Apartheid is understood under “race relations”, since this best asserts Ben Marais’ thesis on Christian Brotherhood (1946).

The question that political theorists were contemplating, the question of race, was how to structure a political model which was theoretically justified and immaculate, and also practical and of benefit to the better of the country. The theorists, considerations of what was best, their ideological orientations and their fears and prejudices should not distort the argument here. The distortions are inherently human, and powered by emotion, conviction, aspirations and hatred. The various political models that were considered, along race relations, were: “Parallelism”. “Total Assimilation” and “Total Separation”. Ben Marais considers these models in *The Two Faces of Africa* (1964b).

¹⁷¹ In the symposium on race and other relations (*Grense* 1961).

¹⁷² See Hoernlé (1939:157).

The political model Parallelism, or more specifically, differentiation without territorial segregation (Potgieter 1961:24), accepted a multi racial society in which the participant race groups were co-ordinated in totality. In the words of the liberal Hoernlé (1939:160), as quoted by Potgieter (1961:24):

“It accepts the fact of race difference, elevated by articulate consciousness, and mutual appreciation, of race difference into a principle of mainly voluntary organisation (‘birds of a feather flock together’). Subjecting no racial group to legal or other discriminations, it credits each with the desire to preserve its own integrity, and hence to maintain, by mutual consent, all necessary distances between itself and other groups. Given such desire and consent, intergroup differences may be re-enforced by legislation. But, the main principle is that the members of each group should, proud of their group, marry only among themselves; have their own schools, hospitals, churches, clubs ... enjoying their own circles of social intercourse, whilst, at the same time, enjoying the same political rights and sharing a common citizenship.”

The regulation of society through race orientation in this model is quite evident, as is the concern over inter-marriage. The determination to ensure the continuance of the own race is not accounted for in the model advocating total assimilation, or – “the melting pot”. In maintaining pro-Apartheid deliberations on Apartheid, and their use of the arguments of alternative views,¹⁷³ the following deliberation by Potgieter illustrates the manipulation of fears and concerns and the reorganising of arguments of opponents to suit his own intentions. In this light, total assimilation is cast in a negative light (Potgieter 1961:25). The quotations from Hoernlé (1961) are in italics:

“Total assimilation firstly involves: *cultural assimilation, and, where a higher culture is in contact with one more primitive, the displacement, more or less complete, of the latter by the former.*

This inevitably gives rise to economic assimilation. On the question whether the Bantu has been integrated as yet, it is interesting to note what has been said. In the economies assimilation Hoernlé understands: *The admission of Natives to earn their living by the exercise of their trained skill and the use of their professional knowledge alongside of, and in competition with, Whites similarly trained.* Applied consequently, it would give rise to the following: *Natives ... earning salaries in banks and business-houses, which, themselves, might be run by mixed White-Native Boards of Directors.*

¹⁷³ See Hoernlé (1935:172) in which the renowned professor of Philosophy reacts critically against a publication, *Koers in die Krisis*, in which “a group of our ultra-Calvinist friends ... expound their conviction that Calvinism provides a complete philosophy of life which enables us to steer, not only a ‘course’, but the only true course’ in regard to all problems with which the world confronts us, including the problem of race relations here in South Africa.”

NATIONALISM: TWO PERIODS OF TRANSFORMATION

Total assimilation, with everything it implies, would result.

According to Hoernlé, simultaneous to this, political assimilation would be inevitable, which even includes the possibility of a black premier.

He argues logically from point to point: *And, lastly, with assimilation in all these spheres, there could not fail to be also racial assimilation, i.e. inter-marriage, and thereby race fusion.*”

Potgieter’s treatment (1961) on total assimilation is treated in full to illustrate how Ben Marais’ contemporaries in the NG Kerk were deliberating on political issues, emphasising their fears, and making caricatures of their opponents arguments. The deliberations of Potgieter formed part of a symposium on race relations (*Grense* 1961), and in the original presentation (to an audience of like-minded, white, middle class theologians and church ministers), references to economic integration, a black premier and inter-marriage, would have been received in jest. This observation is substantiated by the fact that no further elaboration is made on the crucial points, indicating how the human factor infiltrated the reasoning on the idealised thinking on Apartheid. At the same time, a basic understanding on what was understood under total assimilation is provided, showing also why it was possible to reject it as a possible alternative.

Such argumentation could possibly be one of the reasons why Ben Marais insisted on arguing from an orientation to basic principles, scriptural principles – as compared to the need to justify the political model (Apartheid) on Scripture, and not being caught up in societal concerns, though, as his letters to the secretaries of the World Council of Churches illustrate (1970, 1978[?]), he himself was not free of these considerations, on, for example, the threats of communism and Islam.

Potgieter (1961) is warming to his deliberations on Apartheid. He uses the words of Hoernlé to argue his point, in the same way I am using Potgieter to carry my argument. Potgieter deliberates (1961:25):

“The third possibility is *total separation*. He [Hoernlé] immediately distinguishes between ‘Separation’ and ‘Segregation’. The latter he types as *an instrument of domination*; segregation which retains the segregated in the same social and political structure with the dominant White group, *but subjects them to the denial of important rights and keeps them at a social distance implying inferiority*.

Regarding the policy of segregation minister Nel declared in a paper¹⁷⁴ read at Stellenbosch that Hoernlé and his liberal contemporaries rejected it ‘and correctly so, because if our South African policy on the Bantu (sic) were actually directed hereto, no moral grounds or justification could be found for it and I [Nel – Potgieter] would never be able to support it’”

It is essential to interrupt the argument at this point, and to draw particular attention to how the speaker (Potgieter), asserts himself directly after a reference to the minister – and in his words – who neutralised the liberal voice on the policy on a particularly sensitive aspect of the deliberations; that of domination by the White group and inferiority of other race groups, and “the denial of important rights” (Potgieter 1961:26). The deliberations by Potgieter continue (1961:26):

“By ‘separation’, on the other hand, Hoernlé continues, is meant literally a sundering or dissociation so complete as to destroy the very possibility of effective domination. He mentions a noteworthy thought in this regard: To entertain the thought of Separation in this sense implies willingness to consider whether muti-racial societies have not shown themselves, in our experience of them [1939] to be a tragic mistake. He declares in more detail: ‘Total Separation’ envisages an organization of the warring sections into genuinely self-contained, self-governing societies each in principle homogeneous within itself, which can then co-operate on a footing of mutual recognition of one another’s independence.”

Total separation and Apartheid are considered to have the same goals concerning the separate home lands (Potgieter 1961:26). Apartheid was considered to hold advantages for all people of different race groups, though the domination and submission mentality was also present, in the words of the then state president as quoted by Potgieter (1961:26):

“If it is in the ability of the Bantu (sic) and if the land that has been given to him for emancipation, or rather which already belongs to him, can develop to full independence, then it will develop in that manner ... There are those despised control mechanisms that the guardian currently applies to instruct them along that road, but which will lapse from stage to stage.”

¹⁷⁴ Delivered to *Die Calvinistiese Studentebond* (Calvinistic Student Board) the paper by the minister of Bantu Administration and Development – Dr M.D.C. de Wet Nel, titled: “The Moral Foundation of our Apartheid Policy” (“Die Morele Grondslag van ons Apartheidsbeleid”).

On a last point, in 1950 the Federal Council of the NG Kerke (Dutch Reformed Churches) made the following statement after a congress meeting in Bloemfontein (in Potgieter 1961:26):

“The policy of separate development is accepted as the healthy grounds on which both whites and Bantu (sic) can live happily without the interests of the one colliding with the interests of the other and without the one experiencing the development of the other a danger or threat to himself.

... In his own area the Bantu (sic) must be guided along natural means to develop into full nationhood, in accordance to his own national background, enriched with the Christian civilisation.

The Bantu (sic) will be taught that he cannot claim direct political rights in the white’s areas; as equally whites will not be able to claim political rights in the areas belonging to Bantus (sic).”

Thus the principle tenants of the theory of Apartheid, along with how it was reasoned. The remainder of the argument of Potgieter (1961) will not be referred to, save that he concludes with a reference to the Great Commission (Matthew 28:19-20), which emphasises the distorted lines between matters political, national and religious:

“Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you.”

Thus, Potgieter (1961:35) concluded on an emotional note, with a call on higher authority and scriptural justification. Such argumentation could not be easily disputed, save by persons like Ben Marais and those people who experienced the brunt end of the Apartheid policies; its implementation.

Several laws are associated with the Apartheid era. These laws were passed by the post 1948 parliament (National Party Government) – tough earlier laws along similar lines had previously been in existence, and were implemented to varying degrees of success, and were recanted, most in the dying days of Apartheid and in the early days of the New Republic (post 1994 – African National Party Government). Post 1948 considerations on Apartheid concentrate more on the laws passed under the policy of the Apartheid government than on the *idea* Apartheid.

The most important pre 1948 laws, with a racial bias, passed by parliament are: The “Naturellen Grondwet” – Native Land Act of 1913; Native Tax and development Act of 1925; Native Administration Act of 1927; and, the 1936 Native Land Act. The significance of these laws must be seen in conjunction to the removal of coloured voters of the Cape province (old Cape Colony) from the voter’s role.

A few of the more significant Apartheid laws, post 1948, are listed, and are placed in the chronological context of the reactions against their implementation. It is then also possible to see the disjointed relation between the different parties in South Africa; those contemplating the virtues of Apartheid (*Grense* 1961), and those that were affected negatively by the Apartheid laws. A fuller analysis and discussion are not made, since this would direct the attention away from the primary focus of this study. Rather, their inclusion here helps create a picture of the disjointed reality in South Africa during the years Ben Marais was actively engaged in church matters.

The Group Areas Act was enacted on June 13, 1950. It gave rise to the segregation of communities along lines of race (colour), and gave rise to large-scale forced and voluntary removals and relocation of people.

The Population Registration Act was enacted on July 7, 1950. This law required all people living in South Africa to register their race with the government.

The enactment of the Pass Laws took place during 1952. The laws required black people to carry pass books, which were used to regulate their travel and residence in the country.

The Separate Amenities Act was enacted during 1953. This law made provision for separate public facilities for whites and non-whites.

On June 26, 1955, the African National Congress and other opposition groups adopted the *Freedom Charter*, which calls for equal political rights for all races.

Between March 21 and April 5, 1960, uprisings took place in Sharpville and in Langa. Several unarmed protesters were killed. The government reacted by banning all opposition groups. Many of these started working underground.

Cottesloe, 7-14 December 1960. The Consultations held between the South African members of the World Council of Churches.

A significant political development needs to be mentioned within the confines of the Apartheid laws and the reactions against them. On May 31, 1961 South Africa became a Republic. The decision to break from the Commonwealth was prompted by the Asian and African Commonwealth member states denouncing the Union of South Africa's Apartheid policies. Two years later, in November 1963, South Africa was suspended from participating in assembly sessions of the United Nations. The South African government responded by recalling its ambassador to the United Nations and freezing its annual contribution to the organization.

On June 12 1964, Nelson Mandela was convicted to life imprisonment for sabotage and high treason.

On June 16, 1976, students in Soweto protested against the mandatory education in Afrikaans. During the suppression of the unrests, several hundred people lost their lives.

Transkei became the first homeland to be granted nominal independence on October 26, 1976. There were to be 10 homelands.

Possibly the person whose life and death most personifies the reaction against Apartheid, Steve Biko, died on September 12 1977, while being held in police custody.

On November 2, 1983, white voters approved a new constitution, which created new chambers in the legislature for Asians and Coloured people – but not for Black people.

NATIONALISM: TWO PERIODS OF TRANSFORMATION

A national state of emergency was announced on June 12 1986, following widespread strikes and riots in different centres across the country. Restrictions were imposed on the press and the security forces were granted tremendous powers.

On July 1, 1986, the pass book laws were scrapped, implying that Black people could move freely throughout the country.

On September 29, 1986, the United States Congress imposes strict sanctions against South Africa, overriding Ronald Reagan's veto.

On November 16, 1989, just before the summer holidays in South Africa, the president, F.W. de Klerk announced plans to scrap the Separate Amenities Act.

On February 2, 1990, F.W. de Klerk lifted restrictions on 33 opposition groups.

On February 11, 1990, Nelson Mandela was released from prison.

On October 18, 1990, the state of emergency was lifted in Natal, the last province where it was still in effect.

On January 9, 1991, at the start of the new school year, black students entered schools that had previously been reserved for white students.

On June 5, 1991, The Lands Acts of 1913 and 1936 and the Group Areas Acts of 1950 were repealed. The Population Registration Act of 1950 was repealed on June 18, 1991.

Economic Sanctions against South Africa were lifted on July 10, 1991 by George Bush, and the United Nations lifted most of the remaining sanctions on October 8, 1993.

Between April 26 and 29 1994, South Africa held its first free elections in which race played no role. Subsequently, Nelson Mandela was sworn in as president on May 10, 1994.

It has been attempted to give as brief as necessary overview on Apartheid, as it affected the second half of the 20th century in South Africa. The Anglo-Boer War, the Two Great Wars, and socio-economic problems in the country dominated the first half. Ben Marais is better known for his outspokenness against Apartheid, especially on its advocates' insistence on giving it a scriptural justification, and thus divine ordinance.

For purposes of presenting a more complete picture, two important developments in the 1960s are considered. These developments were initiated from within ecclesiastic circles, and Ben Marais was involved in the founding of one of them – the Christian Institute. Though he was not present at the other, Cottesloe, it is of vital importance to both the founding of the Christian Institute and the reaction against Apartheid from a Christian perspective.

Two Reactions Against Apartheid

The two selected reactions, themselves inter-related, against Apartheid have been selected for topical reasons only. There were more than two reactions, and spreading across the extent of the accumulated experiences. Thus, the press and literature could be mentioned, as could the heightened and intensified actions of the ANC and its military wing.¹⁷⁵ Furthermore, mention needs to be made of the reactions at Langa and Sharpville in the early 1960s as well as the Soweto uprising, which, probably drew most attention to the inequities prevalent in the country. It could be argued that the inclusion of only two reactions reflects on the limited scope of Ben Marais, as a loyal member of the NG Kerk, living in suburban Pretoria, and enjoying a comparatively prestigious post at the university of Pretoria. Though, despite these restrictions, Ben Marais was able to nurture an awareness, through his students, his publications, and other appearances, within his limited scope, that led to the NG Kerk rejecting Apartheid, and embracing

¹⁷⁵ See for example *Beyond the Barricades: Popular Resistance in South Africa in the 1980s. Photographs by Twenty South African Photographers* (Hill & Harris 1989). The book and photographs presents “a testimony of the communal struggle for freedom ... [it] presents the voice of the tyrannised through disturbing testimony ... of police oppression, vigilante violence, and legalised racial discrimination.”

rather an approach of acceptance and reconciliation.

1. The Cottesloe Consultations: 7-14 December 1960

The Cottesloe Consultation is most interesting and revealing as a reaction against Apartheid, because it drew diverse reactions. It could be considered as the event which led to the watershed distinction in the church towards, on the one hand, a clearer refinement of policies in support of Apartheid, and on the other, led the way to increasing objections against church policies from churchmen. Alternately, it influenced the NG Kerk's relations with other churches in and outside South Africa.¹⁷⁶

The Consultations were made up of delegates from the member churches in South Africa of the World Council of Churches. Representatives of the World Council of Churches also participated in the proceedings. The purpose of the consultations was "to seek under the guidance of the Holy Spirit to understand the complex problems of human relationships in this country, and to consult with one another on our common task and responsibility in the light of the Word of God" (Lombard 1981:274). The general theme of the consultations was the Christian attitudes towards race relations.

Attention is drawn to three reactions to the consultations in the form of statements. These statements are rendered in full due to their importance and relevance to this study. The statements of two reveal the delegates of the different churches' attitudes towards each other, the World Council of Churches, and towards the problems in the country and the official policies of the government. Internal witness is also given to the routes taken by the churches and their resultant isolation, self inflicted and imposed and to their increasing disunity from events in the country. That is, the statements by the delegation of the Ned. Herv. Kerk and the delegation of the NG Kerk of the Cape and Transvaal. In contrast this statement by Joost de Blank, Archbishop of Cape Town (Lombard 1981:280) testifies a sombreness and disappointment and reaffirms relations with the World Council of Churches and identifies strongly with the plight of many:

¹⁷⁶ See *Handelinge van die Algemene Sinode van die NG Kerk 1962* for the NG Kerk's reaction to the Cottesloe Consultations and on the breaking of relations with the international ecumenical community, as well as the relations with other church groups in South Africa.

“The representatives of the Church of the Province of South Africa wish to declare their gratitude to Almighty God for the privilege of sharing in these consultations. Under God, they would record their thanks to the World Council of Churches for their part in them, and in particular to its officers and its delegation who have served us so admirably and tirelessly. Then we desire to register our humble appreciation to all our fellow-members of the World Council of Churches in this country who have so generously and warmly associated with us in these conversations.

We are, of course, grateful to the English-speaking churches for their fellowship – a fellowship that is an extension of our co-operation within the Christian Council of South Africa. But in particular we are appreciative of the participation of the Dutch Reformed Churches and especially for the courtesy, understanding and patience of the delegates of the Dutch Reformed Churches of Transvaal and the Cape.

We want to emphasise this point with all the earnestness at our command because we are aware that there have been times when we have felt it right to speak strongly on the urgency of the situation in this country. In such statements we have called upon all Christian people to be true to the Faith that is in them, both in witness and conduct.

In our conviction that acquiescence in a policy of discriminatory segregation gravely jeopardises the future of the Christian Faith in South Africa, we believed – and still believe – that it was right to speak urgently, clearly and uncompromisingly. But in the light of what we have learnt here and the information now put at our disposal, we confess with regret that in the heat of the moment we have at times spoken heatedly and, through ignorance (for which ignorance we cannot be altogether held responsible), have cast doubt on the sincerity of those who did not accept the wisdom of such public action.

Nevertheless the delegates of the NGK¹⁷⁷ have met with us in the fullest fellowship and we have been deeply moved by this spirit of brotherly goodwill. Where, in the past, we have at any time unnecessarily wounded our brethren, we now ask their forgiveness in Christ.

During the Consultations we have been immensely encouraged by the virtually unanimous agreement on many matters affecting the work and worship of our churches as also on many matters concerning social justice; and we believe that in consequence a new era of consultation and possible co-operation in many fields opens up before us. We are delighted that the Consultations begun at Cottesloe and should be leading to the establishment of some permanent machinery for continuing contact and conversation among the churches.

In addition we would place on record our appreciation of certain other happenings of these days. We discovered for instance that those who worshipped together and studied the Bible together found it possible to speak the truth in love across the barriers that divided them; and as a result the widest divergences of conviction could be, and were, expressed without breaking our fellowship in Christ.

¹⁷⁷ NG Kerk.

Further, we proved that personal contact and personal exchange almost always led to mutual understanding, respect and friendship – and great as our differences may be, we no longer question the integrity of those who differ from us. It is indeed our hope that friendships made here will be fostered and deepened during the coming days....”

The constant mentioning of and allusions towards the differing English and Afrikaans churches is quite apparent. This could be seen in the context of the representative nationalisms – Afrikaner and English, and in the absolving of conflicts between the English and Afrikaners in South Africa through worshipping together. This is considered beside the social injustices and discriminatory policies that the Afrikaner churches supported officially.

Where Joost de Blank placed the emphasis on the fellowship between the participating churches, the statement by the delegation of the Ned. Herv. Kerk reconfirms its primary orientation towards the government, and thus denies the possible continuation of fellowship with the English churches (Lombard 1981:279):

“We as delegates of the Nederduitsch Hervormde Kerk are grateful for the opportunity we had to listen to, and partake in, the witness of the different churches.

We wish, however, to state quite clearly that it is our conviction that separate development is the only just solution of our racial problems. We therefore reject integration in any form as a solution of the problem. The agreement that has been reached contains such far-reaching declarations that we cannot subscribe to it. We can therefore not identify ourselves with it.

We further wish to place on record our gratefulness to the Government for all the positive steps it has taken to solve the problem, and to promote the welfare of the different groups.

The Nederduitsch Hervormde Kerk will in future as in the past accept its responsibility to witness to the government and people in accordance with the word of God.”

The orientation to Scripture is a striking feature of this statement. The statement clearly indicates a denial of the severity of the problems caused by the policies promoting the forced separation of people. In the following statement, the NG Kerk of the Cape and Transvaal indicate their enforcement of the policies of segregation (Lombard 1981:229-280):

NATIONALISM: TWO PERIODS OF TRANSFORMATION

“The delegations of the Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerke of the Cape and Transvaal wish to state that we have come to consult with other churches under the Word of God and with deep concern for the various and complicated problems of race relations in the country. We realise with deep Christian concern the needs of all the various population groups and that the Church has a word to speak to them.

We wish to confirm that, as stated in the preamble to Consultation Statement, a policy of differentiation can be defended from the Christian point of view, that it provides the only realistic solution to the problems of race relations and is therefore in the best interests of the various population groups. We do not consider the resolutions adopted by the Consultation as in principle incompatible with the above statement. In voting on Resolution 15 the delegations of the two churches recorded their views as follows:

The undersigned voted in favour of Point 15, provided it be clearly understood that participation in the government of this country refers in the case of White areas to the Bantu who are domiciled in the declared White areas in the sense that they have no other homeland.”

It would appear in reflection on the fellowship shared at the Consultations that the above statement was constructed independently of the delegates at the Consultation, or had been manipulated (Van der Watt 1987:111), through the stress placed on a particular point of grievance, which would have been resolved at the Consultations. There appears to be no consideration for the reasons that led to the Consultations being held in the first place.

On 21 March 1960, the South African police shot a number of protesters at Sharpsville. International protest was one reaction, another, the calling of a State of Emergency in the Union of South Africa, and finally, the Governor-General, adv. C.R. Swart, called a commission of enquiry into the events. Lückhoff (1978:1) sees the events at Sharpsville and Langa leading to the Cottesloe Consultations along with the visit of Robert Bilheimer¹⁷⁸ to the member churches in South Africa of the World Council of Churches.

The Consultation Statement, the rectory statement above refers to has three parts. Part I contains an overview of the proceedings of the Consultations and concludes with an appeal to the churches and to all Christians, “calling on them to consider every point where they may unite their ministry on behalf of human being in the spirit of equality”

¹⁷⁸ Bilheimer stayed over at Ben Marais on Sunday 24 April, 1960. They discussed various issues (Lückhoff 1978:25).

NATIONALISM: TWO PERIODS OF TRANSFORMATION

(Lombard 1981:275). Part II contains 17 points, of which point 15 was highlighted by the Statement of the NG Kerk delegates. Attention is drawn to point 17 (Lombard 1981:276):

“In so far as nationalism grows out of a desire for self realisation, Christians should understand and respect it. The danger of nationalism is, however, that it may seek to fulfil its aim at the expense of the interests of others and that it can make the nation an absolute value which takes the place of God. The role of the church must therefore be to help to direct national movements towards just and worthy ends.”

The two statements of the Afrikaner churches appear to contradict this last point, and to fall trap to the fear expressed in it.

Part III of the Statement of the Consultations, contains ten points of more pertinence to the problems experienced in the country, grounds for further conflicts unless resolved. The first nine points are: 1. Judicial commission on the Langa and Sharpville incidents; 2. Justice in trial; 3. Position of Asians in South Africa; 4. Freedom of worship; 5. Freedom to preach the Gospel; 6. Relationship of churches; 7. Mutual information; 8. Co-operation in future; and 9. Residential areas. Point 10 contains a request to examine the migrant labour system; thanks for the fellowship and prayer and consultation; a resolution to continue the fellowship; an acknowledgement of the feebleness of the divided witness; and a dedication to work in the ministry of reconciliation in Christ.

Ben Marais, who missed both the consultation and the following synod due to prior commitments in U.S.A., calls it “a moment of hope” (Viljoen 1986). The World Council of Churches had a honest desire to help. The failure of the Cottesloe Consultations meant also the end of ecumenical contact. It also gave rise to the founding of the Christian Institute in Johannesburg, in order that the dialogue entered at the consultation continue. Ben Marais was present at the founding of the Institute.

2. The Christian Institute (1963-1990)

While Ben Marais was a founding member of the Christian Institute, believing that it would serve as a platform for continuing the dialogues and discussions between the churches in South Africa, and be a means to retaining ecclesiastic contact with international ecumenical bodies (Viljoen Interview 1986), he resigned as a member after it became, as he called it, politicised, after Beyers Naudé, the president of the Institute, was associated with the leaking of private Afrikaner Broederbond¹⁷⁹ documents to the press (Viljoen Interview 1986).

This then, formed one of the bases of Ben Marais' two points of critique against the Christian Institute:

1. The Christian Institute became politicised when a connection was suggested in the *Sunday Times* (appearing from April 1963) between leaked papers on the Afrikaner Broederbond and Beyers Naudé and Albert Geysers. Such an act constituted treason, even in the eyes of Ben Marais (Viljoen Interview 1986).
2. The source of funding of the Christian Institute was disputable (Viljoen Interview 1986).

The second point, which Ben Marais mentioned as his first (Viljoen Interview 1986), shows consistency with his correspondence with the General Secretaries of the World Council of Churches (Blake and Potter), but with the difference that he was concerned in his letters with the destination of the funding (indicated by Naudé [1995:92] to be the ANC, PAC and SWAPO), the Christian Institute, and with the financial sources thereof. Other points of criticism against the Christian Institute included its association with the banned African National Council and thus with communists and Pan African Congress and Black Consciousness (Naudé 1995:75,86,92), being considered to be an instrument serving the cause of opposing the government and undermining its authority, as one view could see it, or, helping and promoting the cause of bringing justice to an unjust society, seen from another view.

¹⁷⁹ Afrikaner Brotherhood.

Ben Marais was far more optimistic about SPROCAS (Study Project on Christianity in an Apartheid Society, established early in 1966), the official mouthpiece of the Christian Institute (Naudé 1995:91), when he wrote in *Pro Veritate* (1972), that although he did not agree with everything, he wished that there was a way in which more South Africans could be encouraged to read SPROCAS.

Beyers Naudé (1995:92-93) had to answer the question, “Can a Christian support violence? And if so, under what circumstances?” after the World Council of Churches had launched its Programme to Combat Racism in 1970. Within his reasoning, Beyers Naudé (1995:92) contemplates on the reasons why the Boers took up their weapons against the British Empire. He also considers the fact that his father, a theological student, also took up arms, as well as three distinguished streams in the church’s history: firstly, pacifism; the second point of view stated that, if your country was involved in a legitimate war, then you have to make yourself available to take part; and the third view states, “It is an individual decision, from Christian to Christian, but where it is an individual decision, you may only revert to violence if all other avenues have been perused to find a peaceful solution and they have been found to be ineffective and unattainable” (Naudé 1995:93). Beyers Naudé (1995:93), indicates that he helped people into exile, and helped distribute literature of the African National Council, especially the Freedom Charter.

The significance of the Christian Institute is to be found especially in the influence it exerted over foreign opinion on South Africa (Naudé 1995:95). Furthermore, it helped in developing an awareness amongst African Christians that the white dominated Theology in South Africa, which predominantly supported Apartheid, was not the only, or the representative voice of the church in South Africa. This is substantiated by the role the Christian Institute played in promoting and initiating inter-racial and ecumenical Bible study groups throughout the country, and also reached out and entered strong relations with many AICs, where the Christian Institute helped establish a small Bible School, which led to the establishing of the African Independent Churches Association in June 1965 in Queenstown (Naudé 1995:83).

Brief attention is drawn to the reactions of the NG Kerk, through its embodiment in its General Synod (post 1962) against the two reactions against Apartheid treated above from the retrospective point of view after 1994, when the church had to give an account of its involvement in Apartheid (Algemene Sinode 1997).

Besides the elective points that are considered in the retrospective study, in which “the story of the NG Kerk’s journey with Apartheid”¹⁸⁰ is told (Algemene Sinode 1997), which I believe is to soften the church’s involvement in Apartheid – while not denying it,¹⁸¹ testimony is given on the church’s reactions against the Cottesloe Consultations and the Christian Institute, while also considering the church’s role in a new democracy (Algemene Sinode 1997:77-80).

ii. Policy, Piety and Religious Control

Tamaram (1938), had taught Ben Marais that the church should not allow itself to be dictated to. Hendrik Kraemer’s book, *The Christian Message in a Non-Christian World*, substantiated this fact, also that no political influence by the church should be allowed. The NG Mission Policy was one of the supporting pillars of Apartheid (Van der Watt 1987:79).¹⁸² It was with horror that Ben Marais realised that there was no foreign support for the policy, nor, was there any scriptural basis for it.

He returned home, to meet a strong anti English sentiment amongst the university students, many of whom were hoping that the Nazis would win the war. Furthermore, five years later, in 1944, he was to stand up during a synod meeting of the Transvaal Ned. Herv. or Geref. Kerk, and question the scriptural foundation of another policy.

¹⁸⁰ *Die verhaal van die Ned Geref Kerk se reis met Apartheid.*

¹⁸¹ This assertion is based on the presentation of the material through questions and answers (1997) – in the form of a didactic confession, and in the choice and formulation of the questions, and references, e.g. “Segregasie kom in Suid-Afrika van ver af. Dit was die beleid van al die regerings van Suid-Afrika tussen 1910 en 1948. Wat meer is, dit is onderskryf deur vooraanstaande swart leiers onder wie presidente van die African National Congress – hoewel met sekere voorbehoude” (Algemene Sinode 1997:4). This is also seen on the restriction to post 1960, and not 1940 -1960 during which period the church was actively promoting and substantiating the policy of Apartheid.

¹⁸² See esp. Van der Watt (1987:75-81) for the placement of the Mission Policy in the discussions leading up to the implementation of Apartheid. Specific emphasis is placed on the key issues of the Mission Policy. Attention can be drawn to the creation motif, the three selves approach, and the formulations on nationalism.

This policy was prepared in April 1942 by the Commission for Current Affairs, and concerned weapons being issued to black and coloured soldiers fighting in the war. The wording was changed but the principles retained.

The complexities and confusion about what the borders are between nationalism, church, culture and state were matters that Ben Marais had to work through and resolve for himself. It is far easier to unravel and reconstruct these sentiments today than it was during the 1940s.

8. EFFECT OF POLITICAL, CULTURAL AND NATIONALISTIC CLIMATES ON CHURCH AND THEOLOGY

Communism (Rooi Gevaar) was seen as a political and religious threat. Integration with Blacks (Swart Gevaar) was seen as a political threat, which was transposed to the religious arena. Islam was seen as a religious threat, mostly in other parts of Africa and in Europe. One of the driving forces was fear. Another driving force was survival. A third driving force was greed, for power and wealth. Church and Theology found themselves in service of political, nationalistic aspirations, willingly and unwillingly. The Afrikaners were hearing what they wanted to hear. They had rebuilt their farms after the Anglo Boer War, they had managed to send their children to institutions of higher education, their leaders were influential in country politics, they had matched the English on all fields, but black miners were taking their work. The church represented the people, and thus had to speak out and formulate a solution. The political, cultural and nationalistic climates thus had effects on Church and Theology, because they effected its members. These effects were not uniform, nor were they experienced uniformly. They affected the various race groups differently, as they affected the different classes differently and also individuals.

This was the immediate political world Ben Marais lived in.

9. CONCLUSION

In this chapter on nationalism over two periods of transformation in South Africa, a

NATIONALISM: TWO PERIODS OF TRANSFORMATION

thematic treatment of the relations between religion and ideology and between the different groups of people in South Africa was considered. The theme of Nationalism was considered against the background of transformation, where the specific concerns of the particular group of people needs to be taken into account as well as its relations and attitudes towards the other groups, whether it be a sentiment of fear, or a feeling of superiority.

Afrikaner Nationalism, distinguished from African Nationalism, and affected by Indian and English Nationalism, has been found to be far more complex an issue than is signified by its denotation. The periodisation of South African twentieth century history into periods cannot be done without ideological or sentimental prejudices. Within the concept “transformation”, therefore, allowance must be made for a state of decadence.

In the next chapter, the underlying principles that governed the ministry of Ben Marais is considered in conjunction with an appraisal of his influential presence.