THE USE OF MODERNISM IN AFRIKANER PROTESTANT CHURCH DESIGN IN CAPE TOWN'S NORTHERN SUBURBS

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CHAPTER ONE: **INTRODUCTION**

The growth of Cape Town's northern suburbs during the first few decades of the twentieth century is closely related to the socio-economic history of local Afrikaners who, during this time, left the farms to seek employment in Cape Town's industrial areas. Most of them settled in or near these industrial areas, causing the expansion of the northern suburbs. The first railway line in Cape Town, which was inaugurated in 1862, passed through Bellville on its way from Cape Town station to its terminal point in Eersterivier. The first official station at Bellville was only built in 1882, however, and a stop in Parow only followed in 1903The first Bellville town council was established as recently as 1922 (Bergh, 2009: 5-6). This is an indication of how sparsely populated this area was at the time.

The Dutch Reformed Church has traditionally played a central role in the cultural and spiritual life of Afrikaners, and consequently the establishment of Dutch Reformed churches in the northern suburbs stands in clear correlation to the growth of Afrikaner populations in these suburbs (see below). Because of the low population of the Parow and Bellville areas, Dutch Reformed Church members living there were initially part of the Cape Town congregation, and, from 1832 onward, part of the newly established Durbanville congregation. It is only in April 1900 when, in the Bellville area, numbers had increased considerably, that monthly services were held in a school building. By 1920 membership had grown so much that weekly services had to be held. In 1922 a church hall with 300 seats was inaugurated (Bergh, 2009: 7-8). Local services in Parow were only instituted in 1905, with the first church building, a Neo-Gothic structure, following in 1907. In 1917 a separate congregation was established in Parow (i.e. separate from the Durbanville mother congregation), with Bellville following suit in 1934. Goodwood congregation became independent in 1926, having separated from Parow (Van Lill, 1992: 6-9; Bergh, 2009: 8). In subsequent years, as numbers increased, numerous other congregations were established after separating from these three mother congregations, most of which built Modernist churches.

The first Dutch Reformed church built in the Goodwood-Parow-Bellville area was the old Parow church. This building no longer exists, but it was built in the Neo-Gothic style which had been current throughout the 19th century, and which was still, at the beginning of the 20th century, the accepted traditional style (see Le Roux, 2008: 21). The

Rondebosch Dutch Reformed church, for example, was built in this style during the last decade of the 19th century. (The southern suburbs, which include Rondebosch, had developed gradually over the previous three centuries, and by the early 20th century were well established, leaving relatively few prospects for working class Afrikaners to settle there).

At the beginning of the 20th century, with the emergence of a nationalistic consciousness in the wake of the Anglo-Boer War (1899-1902), there was a fervent search for a 'true' Afrikaans church architecture. This search was lead and directed by Gerhard Moerdijk (1890-1958) and Wynand Louw (1883-1967). They emphatically rejected the Gothic style for various reasons. Firstly, because it was designed around the Roman Catholic liturgy and was therefore unsuitable for Protestant worship, and secondly, because it is historically identified with the growth and expansion of the Catholic Church and therefore also with the persecution of Protestants, including that of the Huguenots who fled to the Cape to become ancestors of many Afrikaners (Le Roux, 2008: 22).

However, if this style was indeed so offensive to Huguenots because of its Catholic associations, it would possibly not have become so popular during the 19th and 20th centuries. These Neo-Gothic churches are, in fact, unmistakably Protestant in the austerity of their interiors which could not be mistaken for a Catholic Gothic church interior with its abundantly rich ornamentation and sacred imagery. Likewise, the exteriors of these Neo-Gothic churches are distinctly Protestant in their reserved use of ornamentation.

Nevertheless, Gothic churches were originally designed around the Catholic liturgy and consequently their layout does not serve the Protestant liturgy well. Here Moerdijk makes a very valid point, and one which would be taken up by subsequent architects as well as writers (see Chapter Seven below).

Moerdijk, in his published writings, upholds Classicism and the Renaissance as examples worthy of following (Le Roux, 2008: 22). The resulting new style which he and Louw pursued from the 1920s onwards, and which became enormously popular, is generally referred to as *sentraalbou* (due to its centralised floor plan) (see Le Roux, 2008: 25-28). Later writers on Afrikaner Protestant church design tend to stress the supposed Byzantine ancestry of this type of church (see below).

From 1939 onwards, a further new development in the form of Modernism started asserting itself. This was initiated by the design of the Bellville Dutch Reformed church (see Le Roux, 2008: 28-30). During the second half of the 20th century it became the dominant style. The Bellville DRC is particularly interesting in that it was not a new church built to replace an older one (as was the case in Parow, where an older Gothic building was replaced by a *sentraalbou* church, while the previous church was converted into a church hall – see Van Lill, 1992: 14). The Bellville DRC, with its epoch-making Modernist features (particularly the interior) was the first Dutch Reformed church built for the Bellville congregation, which had only become independent from the Durbanville mother church a few years before, in 1934. (Durbanville was at that time a small town some distance away from Bellville, which, up till 1934, was not considered populous enough to warrant a separate congregation of its own).

Apart from the original Parow DRC, which was Neo-Gothic in style, there are two examples of original *sentraalbou* churches – the present Parow DRC and the Goodwood DRC – in the northern suburbs. Further afield, the Strand DRC is a fine example of this style, designed by Wynand Louw himself. On the other hand, there are many examples of Modernist Dutch Reformed churches in the northern suburbs, including the very first Modernist Afrikaner Protestant church built in South Africa, the Bellville DRC. The preponderance of Modernist churches and the lack of Neo-Gothic ones reflects the relatively recent establishment of these areas. Maitland, the northern suburb closest to Cape Town, is older than the others, as is indicated by its Neo-Gothic Dutch Reformed church (1902).

The *kerkdorp* and the evolution of a true Afrikaner church architecture

A striking feature of Afrikaner culture of the Twentieth Century is the apparent contradiction between the conservative values, religious and otherwise, of Afrikaner communities and the often breathtakingly radical modernism which they employed (or allowed) in the design of the churches which they built (see figure 1 below). Even if these structures were not so radically innovative within an international architectural context, they were highly radical within their own architectural and cultural contexts In order to gain a better understanding of the evolution of these Modernist churches it is necessary to investigate the role which the Church has played in the life and history of the Afrikaner:

For the emerging Afrikaner nation, in whose history the Church has been described as the most powerful formative element and unifying factor, and who stood as pioneer on the threshold of an immeasurable and unknown landscape, the physical establishment of towns and buildings are seen as the primary expression of its culture. Due to the fact that the Church formed the centre of the Afrikaner's social and cultural life, his character or cultural identity is particularly recognisable in his church architecture, which would dominate new town landscapes, as he trekked into the unknown (Kesting, 1978: 535, my translation).

Figure 1.Totiusdal GK. Photograph by Frans Liebenberg.

Figure 2.Totiusdal GK church. Photograph by Frans Liebenberg.

During the 19th century, an enormous amount of new towns were founded throughout the length and breadth of South Africa on the principles of a *kerkdorp* (church town). The Afrikaans Protestant Churches (mostly the Dutch Reformed Church) took the initiative in the actual founding of these towns and/or secured the most prominent location for the church building in the layout of the town. This phenomenon is predominant in the most important phase of the establishment of towns in South Africa. It started with the *kerkplaas* (church farm) Roodezand in 1743, which later became the *kerkdorp* of Tulbagh. Somerset West (1817), Colesberg (1822), and Piketberg (1835) were subsequently founded as Dutch Reformed *kerkdorpe*, soon to be followed by Bredasdorp (1837), Wellington (1837), Riversdale (1838), and countless others. The last *kerkdorp* was created in 1916 (Kesting, 1978: 189, 208, 231). In this way Afrikaners put the stamp of their cultural identity on the towns which they founded, and through this, on virtually the entire South African landscapThus, the church building became one of the most visible and characteristic expressions of an emerging Afrikaner identity (see Kesting, 1978: 535).

At first glance it might seem as if this this was no longer true when, in the 20th century, Afrikaners started building Modernist churches which seemed stridently out of line with their conservative beliefs and life-style. And indeed, one reason for choosing Modernism seems to have been a straightforward practical one – it was considerably cheaper to build a Modernist church than a traditional neo-Gothic or neo-Byzantine one. This is particularly true of the *kappiekerk* style of church pioneered by the architect Johan de Ridder (1927-2013). Consisting mostly of a steep roof that sometimes extends all the way to the ground, with a minimum of wall structure, the considerable reduction in cost put this type of design well within the reach of even relatively poor communities. Churches inspired by this design were built all over South Africa in the ensuing decades.

The architect Anton Morkel (dates), who designed a number of modernist Dutch Reformed churches in the northern suburbs during the 1970s and 1980s, stated that cost was always a major concern for church councils – 'Don't give us steeples etc..., give us seats and space', they would tell him (Personal communication: 2012).

Nevertheless, it would be unwise to assume that a people who take their Church (and their church building) so seriously would be guided solely by economic considerations when it came to the design of their churches. The Dutch Reformed church of Welkom-Wes is a case in point. The proposed design of this Modernist church by Roelof Uitenbogaardt (1933-1998) in 1963, was considered an affront by the congregation, which

boycotted church services *en masse* to vent their disapproval (with attendance ranging from 15% for the main service to 5.8% for the evening service – the lowest anywhere in the Church circuit), and the beleaguered minister, anxious to remedy the situation, explained in his newsletter to the congregation that the architect had set about his design 'in solitude and prayer' (he was a member of the congregation), and that, together with the intercessional prayers of the congregation, the Lord had inspired his design (Peters and Kotze, 2013: 35,43).

There are a handful of key texts written by theologians, architects and ministers belonging to the Afrikaner Protestant Churches, which lay out very clear guidelines for the building of Afrikaner Protestant churches. While all of them state that the design must be economically sound, none of them make too big an issue out of the cost factor. In fact, the author of the hugely influential first publication stresses the fact that a church must be built to last for centuries, and consequently there is an obligation to future generations to build the church as well and as lasting as possible (Van Selms, 1954: 6-7). The central idea on which all their arguments are based is the assertion that the architectural space must be a true expression of the Protestant liturgy, and how this is to be achieved is discussed in exhaustive detail – from the layout of the liturgical space to the choice of flooring and the undesirability of having a window in the door which leads to the *konsistorie* (see below).

Given that there was an economic motivation for accepting Modernism in church design, these texts reveal that there is much more to this issue than just a simple economic one. It emerges that architectural Modernism is particularly well-suited to fulfilling the requirements of the Protestant liturgy. Firstly, 'the reformed churches emphasise the word *sola scriptura*, thus facilitating the hearing of the spoken word is a central requirement' (Peters and Kotze, 2013: 35). This emphasis on the spoken word, and consequently, on the practical issues of acoustics, is well catered for by the functionalist principles of Modernist architects like Louis Sullivan (1856-1924) and Charles-Édouard Jeanneret-Gris (Le Corbusier) (1887-1965). The architect who pioneered Modernist church design in Afrikaner Protestant Churches, J. Anthonie Smith (1910-1997), was pre-occupied with the problem of acoustics. The seating arrangement and the layout of the entire church were predicated on this central concern (Le Roux, 2008: 28-31). (During the 1940s and 1950s, when these churches were first built, public address systems were not in use in Afrikaner churches, making sound acoustics a very real practical concern).

Importantly, these concerns must also be seen within a historic context – Catholic churches and cathedrals did not particularly cater for such needs, and often the priest on the pulpit would be obscured (for some church-goers) by a column or other architectural feature, and many of the older Protestant churches in Europe were Catholic Churches which had been taken over after the Reformation. A strong undercurrent in the thinking of these architects and theologians who laid down the principles for Afrikaner Protestant church design is a marked determination to correct the perceived wrongs of Catholic and Byzantine church architecture. These 'wrongs' are not merely of a practical or ergonomic nature, but have decided moral and theological dimensions, and therefore, by implication, it was the Afrikaner Protestant architect's moral and religious duty to adhere to these new principles which were being laid down (see below).

Returning, for a moment, to Daan Kesting's statement that the church building became the most visible and characteristic expression of Afrikaner identity, it should be noted here that these 19th century churches which put their characteristic stamp on the surrounding landscape were, in terms of their own architecture, not specifically expressive of Afrikaner culture or character. Although the austerity of the interiors is typically Protestant, these interiors were not specifically designed for Protestant use (let alone Afrikaner use), and the exteriors, which gave the towns and surrounding landscapes their distinctive character, were still completely within the tradition of Catholic church architecture. Therefore, while the pre-eminent siting of the church in the town (usually on top of the hill, where it could be seen for many kilometres around) gave the *kerkdorp* its distinctive, quintessentially Afrikaans character, there is nothing about the architecture of the church itself which made it characteristically Afrikaans. This expression of Afrikaner identity was more a matter of town-planning than of actual architecture.

In fact, as we have seen, the pioneers of a 'true Afrikaans church style', Gerard Moerdijk and Wynand Louw, rejected the Gothic style in which most of these *kerkdorp* churches

Figure 3. Napier DRC. Photograph by Schalk le Roux.

Figure 4. Napier DRC church. Photograph by Schalk le Roux.

were built, for various reasons. They saw this style, not only as unsuitable to the local climate and conditions, but as downright offensive to Afrikaner Protestant sensibilities.

Napier was established as a *kerkdorp* at the same time as Bredasdorp (the latter in 1837 and the former in 1840). The existing Napier DRC is a *sentraalbou* church designed by Wynand Louw, and inaugurated in 1928. (This is one of Louw's landmark designs – see Le Roux, 2008: 27-28). It is an enormous church, standing several stories high – not including the much higher steeple – and it truly towers over this tiny rural town. Unlike the Bredasdorp DRC, which is Gothic in style, this church was designed to be specifically Afrikaans in character, complete with Cape Dutch gables, so that this *kerkdorp* comes closer to expressing a truly Afrikaans cultural identity (see figure 2).

Social, economic, political and cultural background

How does the use of Modernism fit into this search for an Afrikaner cultural identity in church design? In order to investigate this issue and the use of Modernism in Afrikaner Protestant church design in more general terms, it is necessary to consider the social and economic as well as the political and cultural background of this phenomenon.

The 'Poor White' Issue

The 1920s and 1930s were particularly trying times for Afrikaners. Many rural producers were forced to seek employment in the cities, where the majority of them were compelled to take jobs as manual labourers, mine workers, factory workers, and railway workers. As unskilled labourers, they often lived in conditions of extreme poverty, a situation which was exacerbated by the Great Depression of the early 1930s.[1]This situation lead to serious social problems which was a cause for great concern amongst Afrikaner theologians, ministers and other intellectuals. They sought to address these issues in

[1] Note that, while it is normally stated that this proletarianisation of rural Afrikaners began with the Anglo-Boer War (i.e. from 1902 onward), the 'poor white' problem was already discussed by the Dutch Reformed Church synod as early as 1886 and a church conference on the subject was held in 1893 (O'Meara, 1983: 81; Vosloo, 2011: 69-70).

various different ways, ranging from theological and cultural to economic and political (see O'Meara, 1983: 67-8; Vosloo, 2010: 287; Vosloo, 2011 (2): 69-70)).

What is particularly interesting about this time (the 1920s and 1930s) is the fact that the first Modernist church, the Bellville Dutch Reformed Church (inaugurated in1939), which was soon to be followed by several others, was built at the culmination of a decade during which Afrikaner culture, politics and religion (in general terms) actually became increasingly conservative in response to the socio-economic conditions referred to above (see Vosloo, 2010: 287). The popular image of the Afrikaner with his conservative values that was current during the latter half of the 20th century, derives largely from this time when a reactionary form of Calvinist theology became a dominant force in Afrikaner culture. It was based largely on the ideas of the Dutch theologian Abraham Kuyper (1837-1920), and these ideas were adapted to create a theological justification for apartheid. This apartheid theology, and Christian Nationalism in general, were to a considerable extent attempts to address the economic and political as well as the spiritual and social crises of the time (see below).

And yet there are indications that Modernism in church architecture (during this pioneering phase, at least) may have been part of, or at least ran parallel to, a general movement to empower the Afrikaner politically, economically and culturally. This extraordinary contradiction (or apparent contradiction) indicates that the relationship between an architectural manifestation and the cultural background which produced it can be complex and eccentric (see Van Graan, 2011). This relationship will be investigated in some detail.

STATEMENT OF RESEARCH PROBLEM (CRITICAL QUESTION)

Why did these conservative Afrikaner communities, living under the tutelage of an intensely anti-modernist Church, opt for modernism when it came to the design of their churches?

SUB QUESTIONS

- To what extent was the design of these churches influenced by the theology of the Dutch Reformed Churches, and to what extent, if any, is the use of modernism in these churches an expression of a specifically Protestant sensibility or worldview?

- How do these church designs relate to general trends in Afrikaner culture at this time?
- To what extent, if any, did politics play a role in this architectural development?
- What is the relationship between the prescriptive literature on the subject and the actual churches?

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The nature of this research is qualitative rather than quantitative. The architecture in question is laden with values, religious and otherwise, which give it its meaning within a social context. The extent to which these values may have promoted the use of modernism in these churches will be examined. (see Denzin & Lincoln, 2008: 14).

The study will be focused within the method of a multiple case study approach (the case study being a central feature of qualitative research).

Case study is an in-depth exploration from multiple perspectives of the complexity and uniqueness of a particular project, policy, institution, program or system in a "real life" context. It is research-based, inclusive of different methods and is evidence-led. The primary purpose is to generate in-depth understanding of a specific topic (as in a thesis), program, policy, institution or system to generate knowledge and/or inform policy development, professional practice and civil or community action (Simons, 2009: 21).

Three methods of case study research will be used: literature review (or document analysis), interviews and observation (of the actual artefacts).

Most of the information, factual as well as theoretical, will be obtained through a literature review. The main benefit of this is that it allows me to draw on a vast field of knowledge and theoretical insights from a wide range of disciplines – information which is relevant to the understanding of the issues at hand, and which cannot be obtained only from interviews and direct observation.

Another important reason for the extensive reliance on literature is the fact that most of the key players in the initial development of Afrikaner Protestant church design are deceased, with the result that there is relatively little available opportunity for first-hand interviews.

> [There] are many ways in which documents can be used in case study to portray and enrich the context and contribute to an analysis of issues. ... Written documents may be searched for clues to understanding the culture of organizations, the values underlying policies, and the beliefs and attitudes of the writer (Simons, 2009: 63; see also Silverman, 2006: 157).

It is these clues to understanding the culture, values, beliefs and attitudes of the writers, organizations, policies and individuals who helped to shape Afrikaner culture and identity during the period in question, which make literature survey a particularly valuable tool in this research.

Most of the people interviewed will be done so for their expert knowledge in a particular field. This includes architects who were actually involved in the designing of some of these churches, theologians, ministers, journalists and librarians. Others who are not experts, but who witnessed historically important events (such as church council meetings at which the design of these modernist churches was discussed and approved) and are therefore privy to vital information, will also be interviewed.

> [Qualitative] interviewing is particularly useful as a research method for accessing individuals' attitudes and values – things that cannot necessarily be observed or accommodated in a formal questionnaire. Open-ended and flexible questions are likely to get a more considered response than closed questions and therefore provide better access to interviewees' views, interpretation of events, understandings, experiences and opinions. ... [Qualitative interviewing] when done well is able to achieve a level of depth and complexity that is not available to other, particularly survey-based, approaches (Byrne, quoted in Silverman, 2006: 114; see also Simons, 2009: 43).

However, there is a tendency in qualitative research, with its emphasis on 'voice', to rely too much on personal accounts given in interviews, 'to the detriment of approaches which involve the researcher in direct observation of the phenomenon of interest. ... [This requires] the researcher to make an interpretive leap from these retrospective accounts to the experience they purport to represent – with all the problems associated with such a leap' (Kritzinger, quoted in Silverman, 2006: 117).

Although Kritzinger is discussing this issue in the context of gender studies, it applies with particular force to the study of architecture. A building is not simply a concrete manifestation of theoretical concepts which can be studied purely in the domain of ideas, whether communicated through personal interviews or written texts. Direct observation of the artifact(s) through site visits is therefore essential. In the present case, for example, these church buildings must be studied carefully through direct observation to determine

to what extent they conform to the principles of Modernism (as expounded by Le Corbusier and others) on the one hand, and to what extent they conform to the principles and guidelines laid down by the Afrikaner Protestant architects and theologians who wrote the guideline texts on this subject, on the other hand. Furthermore, the extent to which the buildings in question deviate from these various norms and principles is as interesting and significant for the purposes of this study as the extent to which they conform to them. And, by the same token, information communicated through personal interviews with experts from various disciplines must be checked against written texts as well as the actual artefacts, where possible. It is necessary to work across a number of academic disciplines in attempting to understand the underlying motives and contributing factors behind the development of this particular application of Modernist architecture. The study of texts from a range of disciplines is also important as an aid to viewing the artefact from many different (conceptual) vantage points.This approach is known as triangulation. 'Objective reality can never be captured. We know a thing only through its representations.' Therefore triangulation, as an alternative to validation, is used here to give rigour, complexity, richness and depth to the inquiry (Flick in Denzin & Lincoln, 2008: 7).

Of the many churches that have been studied, the following have been singled out for various reasons:

1. The Bellville Dutch Reformed Church has been chosen for historic reasons. This is the first example of the use of modernism in Afrikaner Protestant church design. The basic ideas which underlie this use of modernism are clearly manifested in this church, and the problems which arose with the application of these ideas in this particular format are also clearly present. These problems are worked out by this pioneering architect, Anthonie Smith, in his next two churches, the Port Elizabeth North DRC and the Ladismith DRC. The last two churches fall well beyond the chosen geographical area of study, and will therefore not be used as case studies. However, Schalk le Roux's article (2008), which will be referred to extensively below, convincingly demonstrates the logic behind this development with regard to these three churches, and there is little that can be added to his treatment of this issue.

2. The Strand North DRC. This church represents the culmination of Anthonie Smith's work in this field. Designed towards the end of his career, it brings together

all the issues and problems which he wrestled with during his long career in a synthesis which fully realises his intentions, as first set out in the Bellville DRC.

3. The Vasco DRC is of particular interest to this study because its centralised design goes directly against a very strongly held opinion shared by all the authors of guideline texts on how to design an Afrikaner Protestant church, and it does so with extraordinary success. This is a good example of a case study in which the validity of the relevant design theory can be tested against an actual artifact which directly opposes that theory.

4. In this respect the Parow DRC will be looked at as a classic example of a traditional *sentraalbou* church in the style propagated by Wynand Louw and Gerhard Moerdijk. *Sentraalbou* churches are also interesting and important because of the prominent role which churches built on a centralised plan played in the history of Protestant church design (see below).

5. The Kuilsrivier De Eike DRC will be discussed because of its dramatic and thorough-going application of Le Corbusier's modernist principle of 'plan as generator'.

6. The Welgemoed DRC will be featured as an excellent example of the final phase of Afrikaner Protestant church design (i.e. the 1970s and 1980s) in which the theatrical use of light to create an atmosphere of mystery plays a prominent role.

7. The Ysterplaat DRC is of special interest for its use of symbolism and art inside the church. Sacred art and symbolism were, at this time, highly contentious issues within the Protestant Church, and had been so since the Reformation itself. The account of the scribe (who has been involved with the church since its inception) of the congregation's initial reaction to the large cross, with its subtle hints of a crucifix, at the opening of the church in the late 1950s, is particularly valuable (see below).

8. The Oostersee DRC has likewise been chosen for its use of art and symbolism. This church (opened in 1972) is exceptional because of the stained glass window panels which occupy the entire wall space between the front door and the pulpit, on both sides, so that the marked austerity of a typical Protestant church interior is emphatically replaced by a rich display of brightly coloured abstract symbolic art.

This church is particularly valuable as an example of how the issue of abstraction in modernist art relates to Protestant attitudes to sacred art and symbolism.

SCOPE OF THE RESEARCH

Site visits have been confined to Afrikaner Protestant churches in Cape Town's northern suburbs, with a few examples from elsewhere in the Greater Cape Town area (for the purpose of elucidating specific issues).

The apparent contradiction between the conservative values of Afrikaner society during the first three decades of the 20th century and the anti-modernist theology of the 1930s, on the one hand, and the striking use of modernism in church architecture from 1939 onward on the other, forms the central issue that will be investigated in this thesis. In order to do this, it is necessary to first take a more detailed look at the theology in question, and this will be done in the following chapter.

CHAPTER TWO: **MODERNISM AND ANTI-MODERNISM**

An intriguing feature of Afrikaner culture in the twentieth century is the fact that these Protestant communities, widely known for their conservative values, their strict religious principles and their prevailing nostalgia for a rural past as farming communities, chose to build such radically Modernist churches – the very last place where one would expect to find Modernist manifestations in such a community.

The mystery deepens when the theological background to this development is investigated. A more moderate theological tradition in the Dutch Reformed Church was suppressed in the early 1930s, culminating in the notorious heresy case against Johan du Plessis (1868-1935), a professor of theology at the Stellenbosch Seminary, which was concluded in 1932. Shortly afterwards, a new theological journal, Die *Gereformeerde Vaandel*, made its appearance, with three of the four professors of the Stellenbosch Seminary as editors – Professors E.E. van Rooyen, D.G. Malan, and D. Lategan. This journal grew out of an earlier one – *Die Ou Paaie*, which was started in 1926 in reaction to Du Plessis's journal *Het Zoeklicht* (Vosloo, 2011: 3).

This journal was a mouth-piece for the neo-Calvinist confessionalism which became increasingly prominent after the conclusion of the Du Plessis case. A predominent feature of this movement was a strong anti-modernist attitude (Vosloo, 2011: 5-8). In the very first issue, Van Rooyen talks about a spiritual crisis in the wake of the Great War and the Depression:

> The Great War probably intensified it, but long long before this the modern lack of faith, increasing religious laxity and worldliness infiltrated the Protestant Churches of the world of our time and caused a debilitating depression of the inner spiritual life and a desertion of the gold standard of the Protestant Confessions. More than one Reformed Church came to the point where they made great sacrifices to the Moloch of confessional desertion (quoted in Vosloo, 2011: 4; my translation). [2]

Vosloo continues:

> Van Rooyen gives a specific historical interpretation of the reasons for confessional desertion (*'belydenisversaking'*) and refers in the process to the 'cold-hearted Rationalism which blew its freezing breath increasingly over the ecumenical and religious life of the whole of Europe.' For Van Rooyen Rationalism and the French Revolution are the main reasons for the fact that the 'childlike and wholehearted acceptance of the Holy Writ and the Protestant Confession, which is based on it, became increasingly darkened'. The term 'Modernism' functions in this context as a sort of umbrella term which brings together all the threats to a sound theology. He writes: 'We live in a time of over-confident modernism in the entire civilised world; a modernism which is set on diluting and combatting the righteous teaching ... But the Reformed Churches must resist the sweet music of that piously tinted modernism with courage and daring.' [3] We could say that modernism, in this respect, functions as an enemy construct (in opposition to 'righteousness' or 'Calvinism') (2011: 3-5; my translation).

Elsewhere Van Rooyen states that

> Modernism betrays this truth [the Trinity]; and where it gets the upper hand in the church it sounds the death-knell for that church. Because the modernist betrayal of the Trinity afflicts the very heart of such a church community. Be on your guard, dear

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[2] 'Die Groot Oorlog het dit seker ook verskerp, maar reeds lank tevore het die moderne ongeloof, toenemende godsdiensverslapping en wêreldsin die Protestantse kerke van die wêreld van ons tyd binnegedring en 'n verlammende depressie van die innerlike geloofslewe en afstapping van die goudstandaard van die Protestantse Belydenisse teweeggebring. Selfs meer as een Geref. Kerk het daartoe gekom om groot offers aan die Molog van belydenisversaking te bring.'

[3] 'Ons lewe in 'n tyd van hoogspanne en oormoedige modernisme in die hele beskaafde wêreld; 'n modernisme wat daarop uit is om die regsinnige leer te verwater en te bestry ... Maar die Geref. Kerke moet die soet gefluit van daardie vroomgetinte modernisme met moed en durf weerstaan.'

> reader, against the sweet but treacherous music of the Trinity-betrayal of modernism (quoted in Vosloo, 2010: 6-7; my translation).[4]
>
> And in the discussion of article 29 concerning the true church, he states the following with regard to church-falsification in Protestant ranks: 'It is the churches in which the hollow, unholy modernism has found a sure foothold and the upper hand. In those churches the falsification is even worse than in the Roman [Catholic] Church. The Word of God is simply criticised away; the supremely holy Person of Jesus is denied his godhood, while His death and the two sacraments are deprived of all true significance. Several Churches have already been deeply afflicted by this evil. May our Dutch Reformed Church be spared this' (2011: 7; my translation).[5]
>
> Similar ideas occur often. In the concluding remark of the discussion of Article 10 regarding the divinity of Christ Van Rooyen writes: 'We live in a time of increasing unbelief ... Especially the teaching of the true Divinity of Christ is attacked, on ecclesiastic terrain, in circles of atheistic philosophy and of the empty and boisterous modernism, sometimes through betrayal and other times through the cunning dilution thereof' (2011: 7; footnote to previous paragraph; my translation).[6] Further, in a piece on Modernism, Van Rooyen refers to 'the corrupting, detrimental work of Modernism' (2011: 7).[7]

Using the metaphor of a little boat amidst huge swells, Van Rooyen urges the faithful to cling to the *Confessio Belgica* (or *Nederlandse Geloofsbelydenis*) to weather these tempestuous times (2011: 7-8).

Along with rationalism and modernism, communism is seen as a profound threat: 'The Communism of today is rooted in a belligerent atheism' (quoted in Vosloo, 2011: footnote 22; my translation).[8] Furthermore:

> We live in an exceptionally debauched and dissolute age ... May the Lord God give much strength and courage to all office bearers in our Church and also other Churches to persist in fearlessly wielding the pruning shears of healthy moral

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[4] 'Die Modernisme in sy konsekwente vorm löen hierdie waarheid [die Drie-eenheid] op 'n plompe wyse; en waar dit die oorhand in die kerk kry word dit die dood in die pot vir so 'n kerk. Omdat die modernistiese löening van die Drie-eenheid so 'n kerkgemeenskap in sy hartaar aantas. Wees op u hoede, geagte leser, vir die soet maar verraderlike gefluit van die Drie-eenheidslöening van die modernisme.'

[5] 'Dit is die Kerke waarin die holle, heillose modernisme vaste voet en die oorhand gekry het. In daardie Kerke is die vervalsing nog erger as in die Roomse Kerk. Immers die Woord van God word eenvoudig weggekritiseer; aan die hoogheilige Persoon van Christus sy godheid ontsê, sy soendood weggedoesel, en die twee sakramente van alle ware betekenis ontdoen. Verskillende Kerke is reeds diep deur hierdie kwaad aangetas. Mag ons Ned. Geref. Kerk daarvoor bewaar bly.'

[6] 'Ons leef in 'n tyd van toenemende afval en ongeloof... Veral ook die leerstuk van die waaragtige Godheid van Christus word in die kringe van die ongelowige wysbegeerte en van die leë en luidrugtige modernisme op kerklike gebied aangeval, soms deur plompe loëning en dan weer deur listige verwatering daarvan.'

[7] 'die verderwende, afbrekende werk van die Modernisme'

[8] 'Die hedendaagse Kommunisme wortel ... in 'n strydlustige ateïsme of godloënary.'

> discipline and to cut all harmful and powersapping offshoots from the vineyard of our ecclesiastic life (2011: 8 footnote 24; my translation).[9]

These statements by Van Rooyen, and similar ones by his two fellow editors, Malan and Lategan, are representative not only of the viewpoint of this journal, but also more generally of a growing neo-Calvinist confessionalism which became established in the Stellenbosch Seminary and more widely in Reformed churches in South Africa after the Du Plessis case (Vosloo, 2010: 277).

> [In the 1930s (after the Du Plessis case)] the spirit ... of controlled intellectual openness to secular thought, and of accommodation of diverse theological interpretations, was lost in the course of time to a more doctrinaire, absolutist and anti-thetical spirit of introverted insularity and belligerent exclusivity (Hennie Rossouw, quoted in Vosloo, 2010: 277; my translation; see also Vosloo, 2010: 285).

> Rossouw points out that, during the same time (the 1930s), a new orientation and emphasis also came about in the political life of the Afrikaner with the emergence of a national consciousness. In the light of these shifts in church, theological and political terrain Rossouw concludes as follows: 'Thus, it seems to me that the pioneering spirit of transgressing boundaries and of inclusiveness, of reaching out and making contact with the unknown, of extending horisons and exploring new perspectives, fell by the wayside during the 1930s in more than one terrain of Afrikaner culture' (2010: 277; my translation).

> Along with the focus on the threat of humanism, liberalism, Modernism, etc. one also finds in *Die Gereformeerde Vaandel* references to the Roman (i.e. Catholic) threat, as well as the danger of ecumenicalism (2010: 285; my translation).

Vosloo also shows that this journal wholeheartedly and uncritically embraced the upcoming Afrikaner nationalism and furthermore provided religious justification for apartheid:

> In this respect the well-known paper delivered by Ds. J G Strydom (at a missionary conference in Bloemfontein) which was published in the October 1938 edition of *Die Gereformeerde Vaandel* under the title 'Segregation or Equalisation'. Here we read that: 'Furthermore, our Calvinist faith is concerned with this relationship of apartheid. There are people who falsely claim on Biblical grounds that there must not be apartheid. However, we believe, on grounds of God's Word, that it is His will that there should be separate nations an even though all saved souls are one in Christ, it is still God's will that they should, as nations on this earth, have their own sacred

[9] 'Ons lewe in 'n by uitstek losbandige en tugtelose tydsgewrig ... Mag die Here God aan alle ampsdraers in ons Kerk en ook ander Kerke veel krag en moed gee om steeds onbevreesd die snoeimes van gesonde tugoefening te hanteer en alle skadelike en kragopswelgende waterlote uit die wingerd van ons kerklike lewe uit te knip.'

> traditions with the right to observe them, and that mutual respect and love can only exist in this way, and where some or other race behaves in a domineering fashion, a great injustice is committed and friction caused ... There must be separate domestic areas for whites and non-whites. There must be legislation which forbids marriages between whites and non-whites. The race relation which is honoured here is that of apartheid' (2010: 286-7; my translation).

In conclusion, Vosloo remarks about this confessional neo-Calvinism:

> It must always be regarded in the light of socio-economic conditions during the 1930s – poverty, unemployment in the rural areas, compulsory urbanization and social decay. As Rossouw puts it: 'In such a time of material and moral survival struggle, of profound uncertainty and dislocation there was a need for fixity, for unshakable principles, for simple truths which gave a steadfast hold and stability' (2010: 287; my translation; compare O'Meara, 1983: 67-8)

This socio-economic background played a vital role in the formation of Afrikaner culture. In the words of Dan O'Meara:

> The years after 1870 witnessed profound and violent transformations in South Africa. Old patterns of life were shattered, and men and women were hurled into new, foreign, and threatening economic, social and political environments. The rapid development of industry and the large-scale proletarianisation of both black and white rural producers intensified these social disruptions in the 1920s and 1930s. Old certainties were destroyed, old world views and moralities undermined; men and women were forced to adapt their values and ideas to totally new social relationships, new patterns of life. Reflecting these processes, there developed a growing conflict within the various streams of South African Calvinism. The steady erosion of the rural communities and the exodus to the cities, the rise of working-class politics and the growth of apostolic churches amongst 'poor whites', all led to a gathering theological crisis. ... Of concern here are not the theological niceties and minutiae of interpretation, but the generally-ignored fact that these theological struggles posed in highly abstract and abstruse form the economic, social and political questions of the day. ... Briefly ... the conflict boiled down to a struggle between an evangelical tendency in the tradition of Andrew Murray, and a more narrowly 'reformed' theology drawing heavily on the Dutch theologian/politician, Abraham Kuypers (O'Meara, 1983: 67; see also Van Graan, 2011: 84).

In conclusion it is relevant to point out once again that, in the heresy trial of Professor Johan du Plessis, he was charged with and found guilty of, not heresy, but modernism (Kinghorn, 1997: 138). The nostalgia for the rural past, which was bathed in the light of a lost Paradise, together with the perception of the modern industrial city as a kind of hell (see below), must have sapped the will of the masses of beleagured urbanised Afrikaners to deal with their desperate plight. And, while the anti-modernism of these theologians was, to some extent, an attempt to address these social and economic issues, it ran a serious risk of steering the Afrikaner nation on a course of disaster by providing

theological justification for this dismal perception of the modern city and by amplifying the nostalgia for a paradisiacal rural past, thereby psychologically undermining its ability to cope with modernity. In the next chapter it will be shown that there were theologians and politicians who were aware of this danger, and who set about transforming a recipe for disaster into one for success.

CHAPTER THREE: **THE *TWEEDE TREK***

As Dan O'Meara shows in his book *Volkskapitalisme. Class,Capital and Ideology in the Development of Afrikaner Nationalism 1934-1948*, theology, economy and politics are by no means separate issues in the evolution of Afrikaner nationalism (see, for example, 1983: 67-77; 88; 159-162). A proper discussion of the highly complex interaction between these forces is well beyond the scope of this thesis. Nevertheless, it should be mentioned that in the light of this, the following is significant:

> The founding of *Die Gereformeerde Vaandel* was made possible by a large endowment from Pieter de Waal Neethling, a member of the Stellenbosch congregation, who placed 10,000 pounds at the disposal of the trustees (Van Rooyen, Malan and Lategan), with the purpose of 'publishing a journal to maintain the pure teaching of our church, and to educate our nation (volk) in the theological and religious domain.' The journal also aimed '(1) to maintain the confessional standpoint of our church ... (2) to build soundly on this secure foundation ... (3) to combat all erroneous teachings ("dwalinge")' (Vosloo, 2011: 3; my translation).
>
> In *Het Zoeklicht* of November 15th, 1932, even before the first edition of *Die Gereformeerde Vaandel*, Du Plessis reacted critically to Neethling's donation and expressed his opinion that this journal 'would propagate the purest fundamentalism.' Furthermore he quotes the declaration which the trustees of the journal had to endorse annually - a declaration of faith that the three Formularies of Oneness ('Formuliere van Enigheid') correspond with the Word of God, as well as the further rejection of, amongst other things, the Evolution theory and the view that Moses was not the author and writer of the Pentateuch (2011: 3-4; my translation).

Du Plessis refers to *Die Gereformeerde Vaandel* as 'the new Neethling journal' (2011: 4). Pieter de Waal Neethling (1857-1939), a wealthy bachelor who made much of his fortune from agricultural interests and a hotel in the Orange Free State, and his brother Charles Marais (Charlie) Neethling (1864-1949), were founder-members of *Nasionale Pers* (Muller, 1990: 91). This organization (also known as the Burger-Sanlam group) played a powerful role in the development of Afrikaner nationalism in both cultural and political

terms (Muller, 1990: 759-760). So powerful was this organisation that it could thwart the political and media ambitions of a prime minister – as General James Barry Munnik Herzog (1866-1942) (who was Neethling's brother-in-law) found out to his dismay (Muller, 1990: 409-431).

Pieter De Waal Neethling heavily funded the founding, not only of *Die Nasionale Pers*, but also of Santam. He also provided most of the initial capital for the establishment of the *Voortrekker Pers* which was to publish *Die Transvaler* – a nationalist newspaper for the Transvaal which, like *Die Volksblad* in the Orange Free State (a *Nasionale Pers* daily), was to be controlled with an iron rod from Cape Town by the very powerful William Angus (Willie) Hofmeyr (1869-1953), first chairman and one of the founders of *Die Nasionale Pers* and *Die Burg*er, as well as of Sanlam and Santam. (Unfortunately for Hofmeyr, he chose a young Professor of Sociology at Stellenbosch, Dr Hendrik Frensch Verwoerd (1901-1966), as editor, who unexpectedly 'refused to become the witting tool of Keerom Street [the address of Die Burger]', resulting eventually in Hofmeyr's resignation from the board of directors of *Voortrekker Pers* and the withdrawal of most of his capital (O'Meara, 1983: 105)). '...the Keerom Street mafia jealously guarded their political dominance of the Cape and their privileged access to the capital resources of Cape agriculture' (1983: 104).

Neethling, at the request of Albert Herzog (1899-1982) (whose maternal uncle he was), further set up a generous trust fund for the *Nasionale Raad van Trustees*, a mobilisational organisation which, as part of the Christian-nationalist programme to take control of the trade unions, aimed at weaning workers away from ideologies of class (O'Meara,1983: 78, 106; Muller, 1990: 91). He also had interests in the *Pro Ecclesia* press in Stellenbosch, which published key texts such as *Die Gereformeerde Va*andel and *Koers in die Krisis* (Muller, 1990: 91; University of Pretoria Literature List).

The *Tweede Trek*

The *Eeufees* (centenary), or *Tweede T*rek (Second Trek) of 1938, organised by the Afrikaner Broederbond, was an enormous success, and was decisive in finally establishing the extraordinary cultural and political influence of this organisation (see O'Meara, 1983: 76-7; Wilkins, Strydom, 1978: 97-107). A major reason for the

organisation of this centenary was to prepare the Afrikaner nation for the forthcoming *Ekonomiese Volkskongres*:

> Meanwhile, plans were being devised how best to create the right climate for such a *volkskongres*, and to make the *volk* receptive to its ideas and proposals. The right time to *inspan* the energy of the *volk* arrived with the celebration of the centenary of the Great Trek in 1938. The celebrations would have to be of such a kind that they would grip the entire *volk* and shake them into a realisation of the great destitution in which a large section [of the *volk*] lived (Bezuidenhout, 1968: 64 quoted in O'Meara, 1983: 108).

Daniel François Malan (1874-1959), in a pivotal speech delivered at the site of the Battle of Blood River on the 16th of December, 1938 (i.e. exactly one hundred years after the event) to mark the culmination of this Centennial Trek, referred to a different kind of *Tweede Trek*, stating that

> the Afrikaner People are today on a trek to a new frontier, which is the city, the new Blood River, where fellow Afrikaners perish daily on a new battle field – the labour market. '...The struggle with weapons has passed. ...Your Blood River is not here. Your Blood River lies in the city' (quoted in Dunbar Moodie, 1975: 199).[10]

This is a very significant speech, in light of which we should consider the following opening address at the *Ekonomiese Volkskongres* in October 1939 by L.J. ('Wikus') du Plessis (1897-1968) in which he coined the term *volkskapitalisme* ('people's capitalism'):

> [In the past] we also accepted that the masses who were unable quickly and easily to adapt to capitalism would sink into poor whiteism. Sympathetically we belittled them and distanced ourselves from them, at best philantropically offering them 'alms' or poor relief from the state. And meanwhile this process of adjustment was destroying our volk by denationalising its economic leaders and proletarianising its producing masses. But, in the awakening of consciousness, the volk has perceived this too, and the new national economic movement *sets for itself the goal of reversing this process; no longer to tolerate the destruction of the Afrikaner volk in an attempt to adapt to a foreign capitalist system, but to mobilise the volk to capture this foreign system and adapt it to our national character* (O'Meara, 1983: 111; emphasis added).

The previous year, during the *Tweede Trek* of 1938, Dr H.F. Verwoerd

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[10] I am deeply indebted to Prof Robert Vosloo for several reasons here. Firstly, for introducing me to the anti-modernist theology which forms such an important part of the argument, and secondly, for suggesting (after only a few moments reflection, following our discussion of the problem of modernist architecture vs anti-modernist theology) that I look at DF Malan's ideas, and particularly, his *Tweede Trek* speech. This exceptionally insightful advice led me directly to the main argument of the thesis.

> reminded the volk that the 300,000 'poor whites' were the descendants of the Voortrekkers, whose message to the living was '*Afrikanerise the cities and assume your rightful place in commerce and industry*' (O'Meara, 1983: 108; emphasis added).

Thus capitalism, which is perceived as a foreign and threatening thing (responsible for the destruction of the lives of numerous poor Afrikaners), must be transformed into *volkskapitalisme* – a benign thing which, having been adapted to the national character of the Afrikaner, is beneficial to all Afrikaners, irrespective of their class.

This transformation of a perceived evil into something benign by adapting it to the national character has an exact equivalent in Afrikaans Protestant church design – the supreme evil (Modernism) is conquered and transformed in purely Protestant terms. Modernist principles ('form follows function', 'plan as generator')[11] are translated into Protestant terms so that what appears to be a Modernist church is in fact a pure expression, in architectural terms, of the Protestant liturgy, rigidly applied from the plan to the exterior.

Before elaborating on this, it is worth noting that Verwoerd's exhortation to 'Afrikanerise the cities' could be applied equally well to urban architecture.

Furthermore, capitalism was 'adapted to our national character' by translating it into Christian (Calvinist) terms based on Biblical example (see O'Meara, 1983: 159-162). It is worth quoting O'Meara here in some detail:

> This conception of Afrikaner workers was firmly rooted in Christian-national Calvinism. The first premise held that labour distinguishes man from beast. Labour is both a command of and the worship of God. Human labour is performed in the 'unshakeable belief' that God also labours: 'Be Man! This is his Divine Calling, fulfilled as co-workers of God, at one with God as the Son is one with His Father. All human labour thus lies in the concern of God. All labour is to be performed in imitation of God' (Die Calvinistiese Beskouing van die Arbeid, *Koers in die Krisis* October 1946). Within this universal obligation to worship God through labour, the divine taskmaster "calls" each human being to a spcific task, establishing a hierarchy of 'calling' within the divinely-ordained organic unity of the volk. ... Moreover, 'Labour places us in a moral/ethical relationship with our fellow-workers, and with all those who labour under us. They are one with us in communal labour. For this labour we shall be judged by God' (*Koers in die Krisis* October 1946).

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[11] The pioneering Modernist architects Louis Sullivan and Le Corbusier formulated these two concepts respectively. (See Sullivan, 1918: 46-48; Le Corbusier, 1927: 45-51).

> The duty of workers thus established, both 'capitalism' and communism were roundly condemned for emphasising only the product of labour. Both are anti-Christian in removing 'the spiritual and moral from labour as such, and thus brought enslavement'. The resulting heretical division of the volk into antagonistic classes leads to conflict between those who should work jointly in Divine service (*Inspan* January 1949). (O'Meara, 1983: 159).
>
> Workers were thus not to be envious of capital. It too was divinely-bestowed and intended for creative, communal service. For the 'Christian-capitalist' the ownership of capital meant 'the oppurtunity to do much good and help many people' : 'Christ loved the wealthy youth who was a capitalist. The Master had no objection to his capital, but to the purposeless, almost fruitless way he used it. Christ would have him use his capital to help the poor. Service was the great stipulation the Master laid down for capital.' With the capitalist providing service to the *volk*, (in return for a 'reasonable consideration'), the relationship between worker and capitalist was not antagonistic, but harmonious: 'How different would the world be if capital and labour everywhere became allies? If each helped and served the other: if the capitalist strove to provide as many as possible of the good things in life for the worker; and if the worker strove to give the capitalist the best and most abundant labour' (Die Christen-Kapitalis, *Inspan* Februarie 1949)' (1983: 161).

This vision of an ideal society – a modern urban utopia – brought about through the agency of the Calvinist faith, found a striking counterpart in modernist Afrikaner Protestant church design: just like the economy, architectural modernism was transformed in Christian (Protestant) terms (see below). The economy and church architecture were both subjected to the same cultural striving to transform key aspects of Afrikaner life (in the modern city, particularly) in accordance with their Calvinist faith. Clearly, as O'Meara shows throughout his book, there were powerful economic forces at work in the evolution of this intellectual system.

In the poem *'In die Hoëveld'*[12] Toon van den Heever (1894-1956) expresses the plight of the rural Afrikaners who had to leave the countryside to find work on the mines in

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[12] In die Hoëveld, waar dit oop is en die hemel wyd daarbo,
Waar kuddes waaigras huppel oor die veld,
Waar 'n mens nog vry kan asemhaal en aan 'n God kan glo,
Staan my huisie, wat ek moes verlaat vir geld.
As ek in die gange van die myn hier sit en droom
Van die winde op die Hoëveld, ruim en vry,
Dan hoor ek die geklinkel van my spore, saal en toom,
Sawens as ek bees of skaap toe ry.

Op die Hoëveld, waar dit wyd is, waar jy baie ver kan sien,
(Die ylblou bring dan 'n knop in jou keel)

Johannesburg. (I will not attempt to translate this poem, but the following literal and very unpoetic translation of parts thereof is necessary to make a few relevant points.)

'In the Highveld where it is open, and where the sky is wide above... Where one can still breathe freely *and believe in a God*, Stands my little house *which I had to leave for money*. When I sit here and dream in the corridors of the mine...' (emphasis added).

Note how faith in God is strongly identified with an idyllic rural existence, which is contrasted with the evils of the big city. (The latter tested the faith and traditional culture of Afrikaners to the limit.) In this respect the juxtaposition of the confinement in the claustrophobic spaces of a Johannesburg mine with the wide open spaces of the Highveld is particularly effective. Van den Heever uses the word *hemel* for 'sky' which, like the word 'heaven' has a double meaning of 'sky' and 'Heaven' (in the religious sense). This prepares the reader for the rhyming phrase '*waar mens nog in 'n God kan glo*' ('where one can still believe in a God'), since it can mean that, in the countryside, God's Heaven is still predominant or accessible.

The wide expanse of heaven above (in the Highveld) is contrasted with the confining depths of the mine (in the city) so that this juxtaposition of above and below, together with that of open and confined, imbues the depths of the mine with an infernal character. By implication, the big city is an earthly hell for the protagonist of this poem, who, trapped by economic circumstances in the mine (where he also feels physically trapped), is dying of tuberculosis while he reminisces nostalgically about his rural childhood (at the end of the poem).

Furthermore, the term *Hoëveld* (Highveld) literally means 'high field', which, being associated with the heavens above and contrasted to the infernal depths of a mine, attains something of a heavenlike idyllic character – almost like the Elysian Fields. Nature (the veld) is situated in the category of the 'high', while urban industry, the opposite of unadulterated nature, falls into that of the 'low', the infernal.

Staan my huisie nog en wag vir my, wag al 'n jaar of tien,
Waar die bokkies op die leigrafstene speel.
Maar as die tering kwaai word en ek hoor die laaste fluit,
Dan sweef ek na die Hoëveld op die wind
En soek dan in die maanlig al die plekkies uit
Waar ek klei-osse gemaak het as 'n kind.
(Van Niekerk, 2009: 119-120).

The logic of this opposition gives a specific meaning of the last four lines of the poem: 'But when the tuberculosis becomes severe and I hear the last whistle, Then I glide to the Highveld on the wind And seek out, in the moonlight, all the little places Where I used to make clay oxen as a child'. There is a suggestion here of the dying man's soul leaving his body and flying through the air to return to the paradise of his childhood (compare Van Niekerk, 2009: 42; 46).

The tragic circumstances related in the poem must have been the experience of many Afrikaners in real life, and the consistent identification, in this poem, of the countryside (and the rural past) with God and all that is good in Afrikaner life, together with the image of the big city as a hostile, hellish environment, powerfully evokes the central dilemma which Afrikaners were faced with during these times – the dilemma which motivated Malan and others to come up with the *Tweede Trek* concept in order to conquer this urban environment and transform it in Calvinist terms, so that the benign spiritual values of the countryside could be instilled in the city (see above).

> A proof that there is still vitality in our church, is the way in which and the tempo at which a church, which half a century ago was still almost exclusively rural, has become a city church, and so has proceeded to execute its God-given calling under completely new circumstances. Although the casualties have been innumerable and the loss of precious things great, the Lord has been merciful to us in one of the most serious crises of our existence. The history of the urbanisation of an essentially rural people is, in spite of the somber pages, a story of the mercy and caring love of God (Heyns, 1960: 463, my translation).

In this article, '*Die Gesin in die Stad*' (the family in the city), published in *Die Kerkbode* of 5th October, 1960, Ds H.A. Heyns follows the above introduction with a discussion of the contrasts between rural and urban conditions, and the severe problems which the latter caused the rural Afrikaner and his family.[13] He echoes the basic sentiment of Van den Heever's poem, explaining why it is easy to believe in a God in the countryside, and why it becomes difficult to do so in the city.[14] By the same token the family was a close-knit unit

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[13] This article should be read in conjunction with the Rev JR Albertyn's 1942 booklet *Die Boerekerk word Stadskerk* (*The Boer Church becomes a City Church*), on which it is clearly based (see below). The gist of Albertyn's argument is that the rural church must become a city church, or the Afrikaner will fall by the wayside. By the time Heyns wrote his article (in 1960) this tranformation from farm church to city church had already been accomplished, as his opening paragraph indicates.

[14] Heyns here also echoes the *Kerk en Stad* (*Church and City*) report of 1947 by the Federated Dutch Reformed Churches of South Africa, in which Rev Albertyn also played a major role (see Vosloo, 2013:25).

in the countryside, but the nature of city life causes the disintegration of this unit, and of the daily family religious meetings and concomitant spiritual values which used to bind it together.

These themes are by no means new in the literature of Afrikaner intellectuals who concerned themselves so intensely with the plight of the urbanised Afrikaner in the preceding decades. But what makes the quoted paragraph interesting here is the way in which the successful transformation of a completely rural church into a city church has been brought into relation with the somber history of urbanisation. The opening line of the article, 'A proof that there is still *vitality* in our church, *is the way in which and the tempo at which a rural church has become a city church*' (emphasis added), seems to breathe a spirit which is akin to that of modernism, with its positive emphasis on the rate of change from old (rural) to new (urban). This attitude, which is diametrically opposed to the familiar sentiments which follow (i.e. about the evils of the city and the blessings of the countryside), juxtaposes a somewhat modernist attitude with an essentially anti-modernist attitude (anti-modernist in the sense of being resistant to the relentless advance of modernity).

This apparently ambivalent attitude expresses the basic duality of Malan's *tweede trek* concept. The rural church has become a city church, and is now executing its God-given calling under entirely new circumstances. But the important point here is that the God-given calling has essentially not changed since the old farming days, i.e. has not been modernised. Even though this is not explicitly stated, every Afrikaner reading the article would know it. Thus, the church had to do two things in order to transform itself into a city church: firstly, it had to adapt to the new urban environment (and this is eloquently expressed by its Modernist architecture), and secondly, it had to adhere steadfastly to the old ways[15] of the rural church, so that the mercy of God could save the Afrikaners who were caught up in one of the most severe crises of their history.

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[15] Not for nothing was the precursor of the theological journal *Die Gereformeerde Vaandel* called *Die Ou Paaie* ('The Old Ways') (see above).

The main themes of this thesis are therefore brought together in this introductory paragraph. It is the ability of the church to play this apparently contradictory role which seems to have played a major role in rescuing the Afrikaners from a dire fate in the alien and hostile environment of the modern city.

Christian-nationalism

Volkskapitalisme and Malan's notion of the *Tweede Trek* should be seen against the backdrop of Christian-nationalism, of which they form a part. Christian-nationalism was based on the conviction that the unique character, the sovereignity and the destiny of the Afrikaner nation was ordained by God. This was part of a more general belief that all nations were thus ordained:

> ...culture was a divine product which, together with race, history, fatherland and politics, distinguished the various nations from each other. As a divinely created entity, each volk was a separate social sphere (*kring*), each with a God-willed structure, purpose, calling and destiny (O'Meara, 1983: 69).

In terms of this belief service to the nation was a service to God, and any attempt to change or interfere with this unique and sovereign character of the nation (through racial or cultural integration of any sort) was a violation of God's will (O'Meara, 1983: 70).

This intellectual system was based on theological principles derived largely from the ideas of the Dutch theologian and politician Abraham Kuyper (1837-1920) and, even though the Afrikaner theologians, like D F Malan and Abraham Stoker, who were involved in the detailed working out of Christian-nationalism, were intensely concerned with social and economic issues (such as the mass urbanization of rural Afrikaners and plight of the poor whites), they ultimately saw the solution to all these material problems in theological terms – the fate of the nation lay in God's hands, and, quite logically, the will of God had to be implemented by restructuring almost every aspect of Afrikaner society (religious, cultural, economic, educational, political) according to Christian (Calvinist) principles (see O'Meara,1983: 67-77).

However, this does not mean that more secular political and economic agendas did not play a major role. What it does mean is that these could be, and were, readily incorporated into a system which had as its basic premise the assimilation of political and

economic thought into a comprehensive theological system (compare O'Meara, 1983: 71; see below).

Anti-modernism

It was almost inevitable that christian-nationalism, which strove to empower the Afrikaner politically and economically in the modern world (and more specifically in the modern city), would adopt an anti-modernist stance, since modernism did in fact pose a fundamental threat to any such system based on religious belief. The breathtaking advance of science and technology during the last quarter of the 19th century and the first decades of the 20th century, inevitably challenged the traditional hold that religion had on people (see Hughes, 1991: 15).

Concomitant with all of this, and more importantly, the central modernist striving to question, challenge and overthrow existing and traditional beliefs and customs, including religious ones, was a serious cause for alarm to these theologians (see Vosloo, 2011: 5). Since the Enlightenment, modern scientific enquiry had steadily eroded the bases of religious belief by providing convincing scientific evidence in various fields (ranging from biology, geology, archaeology, palaeontology, astronomy and physics to the scientific study of the original biblical texts and related sacred texts), which conflicted with the Biblical account of Creation, and with Biblical cosmology in general (see Hampson, 1968: 23-31, 73-96, 218-250).

This mode of scientific enquiry had a counterpart in the arts, where the modernist or *avant garde* artist saw himself or herself as fighting in the vanguard of culture to overthrow the establishment.This modernist view of the artist or intellectual as revolutionary derives ultimately from the time of the French Revolution, when the term avant garde was borrowed from the military and applied for the first time to the arts (Honour, 1981: 217). The nineteenth century Romantics developed the concept in full, thereby creating the notion of *avant garde* artists as a *Davidsbündler* (to borrow a term from the composer Robert Schumann (1810-1856)) fighting heroically against the overwhelming hordes of bourgeois 'philistines', as well as that of the artist as non-conformist, rebel and outsider who challenges, defies, revolts against and overthrows the norms, values and beliefs of

his society (see Hampson, 1968: 201-203; Honour, 1968: 69-87; 1981: 217-244, 245-275).

But it is not just the modernist threat to religious belief as such which was of concern here – there were also serious social implications: the Christian-nationalist solution to all the socio-economic, moral and spiritual problems facing the newly urbanised Afrikaners was based on Christian faith. If this faith was lost, it was more than just the individual souls of the faithless which were at stake. Without this Calvinist faith to support them through these hard times (as it had during the Great Trek), the Afrikaner nation might succumb to all the evils of the modern city (alcoholism, prostitution, crime etc.) and perish, or so it was feared. And considering the dire situation of thousands of impoverished urban Afrikaners, there was real cause for such a concern.

Thus the loss of religious belief could, at this time, have had very serious consequences (on a socio-economic level) for the Afrikaner people, and the impassioned fulminations against modernism by these theologians therefore had a very real socio-economic foundation – quite apart from the political and capitalist agendas of the *Nationale Pers* group of the south or the Broederbond in the north (see below). What the theologians and other concerned intellectuals saw was a society which was under threat of disintegrating at every level, from spiritual, moral and cultural to social and economic, under the pressure of urbanisation during these hard and troubled times.

In short, basic to Christian-nationalism was the conviction that the Afrikaner *volk*, like any other, had a unique character and historic role ordained by God. Modernism posed a fundamental threat to this comforting belief that the future of the volk was in securely in God's hands – a belief which must have sustained many Afrikaners through the troubled and uncertain times of the 1930s and 1940s. Hence the intense anti-modernism of the theologians during this time.[16] The threat of modernism had huge social as well as religious implications for the Afrikaner.

Political and Economic Ambitions

[16] However, as will be shown below, this attitude was already being modified by some theologians like DF Malan and JR Albertyn during this time.

Nevertheless, as beneficial as Christian-nationalism may have been for the Afrikaner nation during this time, it undeniably also favoured the political and economic ambitions of an intellectual elite who knew that Afrikaans-speaking whites outnumbered their English-speaking counterparts, and that if they could create a cultural and political identity for the former which would determine how they voted, they would secure a majority of votes (Hofmeyr, 1987).

However, the fact that newly urbanised and impoverished working-class Afrikaners were intermarrying with people of other language groups, religious persuasions and races (as was normal in modern industrial society), was a serious threat to this plan of seizing political and economic power because it was steadily eating away at their majority vote, and at their concept of an organically united Afrikaner volk (see O'Meara, 1983: 73). Kuyperian theology, with its emphasis on the divinely-ordained unique character and historic role of each nation, therefore suited the political and economic agendas of this elite extremely well. Racial segregation, according to this theology, was the implementation of God's will – a fundamental part of His plan for the cultural, spiritual, political and economic future of the Afrikaner nation.

Dan O'Meara's Marxist appraisal of Christian Nationalism gives a good idea of how crucially important social and economic conditions were to the formulation of its central concepts, even if these were fundamentally theological in nature:

> The moral principles, symbolic structures, concepts, terms of reference, and system of validations through which Christian-nationalism was elaborated, were neither dreamed up nor evoked through mysticism. As men concerned to explain a changing world, these ideologists drew on and further elaborated their existing structure of ideas – a broadly Calvinist *Weltanschauung*. Whatever the contorted discussions of *soewereiniteit in eie kring, kultuur, volk*, nation etc., these were the concepts through which the ideology posed such problems as, *inter alia*, the developing crisis in agriculture, the proletarianisation of small farmers, the acute poverty of 'poor whites', the continuing imperialist domination of the economy and economic discrimination against Afrikaans-speakers. A reading of the key journals, books, pamphlets,and newspapers of the time reveals a desperate concern with the real issues of material life, not mere spiritual delvings. It reveals both an attempt to understand the issues and bewildering changes of the time, and a determination to translate understanding into concrete action, concrete policies (O'Meara, 1983: 68).

It should be reiterated here that, even though these men were deeply concerned with economic, social and political issues, they ultimately saw the solution to these material problems in theological terms – the fate of the nation lay in God's hands, and the will of

God had to be implemented by restructuring every aspect of Afrikaner society, including the economic and political, according to Christian principles.

The Broederbond declared that:

> The Afrikaner Broederbond is born out of the deep conviction that the Afrikaner nation has been planted in this country by the Hand of God, destined to survive as a separate nation with its own calling (O'Meara, 1983: 71).

Christian National Education

In 1902 a commission on Christian National Education was formed in the Transvaal to counteract the kind of education which was being introduced by the new British colonial administration after the Anglo-Boer War. Of great concern to Transvaal Afrikaners was the fact that the science which was now being taught in their schools was perceived to be in contradiction of the Bible and therefore, Christianity. Thus, for example, the concept of the earth as a sphere which revolved around the sun was a contradiction of the Biblical view that the world was flat. But the theory of evolution posed the most serious threat, being a direct contradiction of the Biblical account of creation. One of the main aims of Christian National Education was *to have science taught in conformity with the Bible*. Here the anti-modernism (or resistence to modernity) which was subsequently to play such an important role in the development of Afrikaner culture makes an early appearance. Another important aim was to have an education system based on their seventeenth century religious views *which excluded all Enlightenment ideas about human rights (equality, freedom, etc.) – because these were not 'Christian'*. Over 300 schools were soon established which taught Christian National education. However, all these schools closed in 1907 after state grants were withdrawn (Kinghorn, 1997: 137).

Figure 5. Cover design of the December 1938 commemmorative issue of Die Huisgenoot, showing Pierneef's painting. Reproduced by kind permission of the publisher, Media 24.

Pierneef and the Centenary Edition

The Groot Trek centenary edition of *Die Huisgenoot*, December, 1938, has a painting by Jacobus Hendrik Pierneef (1886-1957) on the cover (figure 3)[17]. Here we have the supreme icon of Afrikaner culture – the *Groot Trek* – painted in a modernist style to commemorate the centenary of this historic event. The underlying message of this image is therefore arguably the same as that of D.F. Malan's *Tweede Trek* speech: the flat,

[17] Muller, 1990: 530.

geometricised modernist forms and colours of the painting (derived from Cubism) represent the modernism and modernity – the world of the modern city – which Afrikaners had been forced to confront, and which, in the words of their leaders, they were determined to conquer and transform according to their own character (see Du Plessis's '*volkskapitalisme*' speech, Malan's '*Tweede Trek*' speech, Verwoerd's 'afrikanerise the cities' speech etc. above).

The Voortrekkers, their oxen, the horse and even the ox-wagons are depicted in a fairly realistic (or naturalistic) style – uncharacteristic of Pierneef's Modernist style and seeming rather old-fashioned – while the formidable mountain peaks in the background are rendered in a pure Modernist style of flat, geometric Cubist-derived planes. This unusually tall mountain which they are crossing would represent the Drakensberg, as Muller suggests (1990: 530), but being a mountain treated in purely Modernist terms, it is perhaps not too far-fetched to argue that this 'Drakensberg' which they are conquering has the same dual significance as the *Tweede Trek* centenary which this cover painting celebrates. As DF Malan stated in his speech, the other *Tweede Trek* was that of the present-day Afrikaners from the countryside back to the cities, where a new Battle of Blood River awaited them (see above). In terms of this speech (delivered at the climax of this *Tweede Trek* centenary), this Drakensberg Mountain would also represent the mountain of modernism (and modernity) which the Afrikaner now had to conquer in order to succeed in the modern industrial cities. As editor of *Die Burger* at this time, Malan's leading position in the *Nasionale Pers*, which published this magazine, makes it quite feasible that Pierneef's modernist mountain (a 'second Drakensberg') here operates as a counterpart of the 'Second Blood River' of Malan's speech. (This edition of *Die Huisgenoot* was published at the same time that Malan's speech was made, in December 1938, so that the painting and the speech would have been mutually supportive in their symbolism).

As already stated, a *Tweede Groot Trek* (Second Great Trek) was organised in 1938 to commemorate the centenary of the Great Trek of 1838. This trek started in the Cape, and went from town to town, including as many towns as possible along the way as it progressed along the historic route to its final destination in the Transvaal. At every town Afrikaner politicians made speeches to the people. (It was here that Verwoerd made his 'Afrikanerise the cities' speech). While the *Tweede Trek* of Malan's speech referred to the Afrikaner's trek to the modern cities and not to this centenary celebration, the identification

of the one event with the other by giving them the same name was no accident: this conflation of contemporary socio-economic events with historic events from the Voortrekker past forms part of a cultural pattern which is fundamental to Afrikaner culture of this era (see below). By organising an actual *Tweede Trek* in which modern Afrikaners physically re-enact the events of the historic age, and by, at the same time, delivering speeches in which Afrikaners are exhorted to regard their migration from the farms to the cities as a *Tweede Trek* (the purpose of which is to 'Afrikanerise the cities'), past and present are powerfully united, and the ordinary Afrikaner is given the (much needed) assurance that he or she can enter the city (and with it, the world of modernity and modernism) without leaving behind the cherished values of the rural past.

One of the main purposes of the *Tweede Trek* of 1938 was to prepare the Afrikaner people for the *Ekonomiese Volkskongres* which was to be held the following year (see above). It is at the opening of this congress that Du Plessis made his speech in which he coined the term '*volkskapitalisme*' – a speech in which he exhorted Afrikaners to conquer capitalism and adapt it to their own national character. Significantly, he regarded it as an alien force which was destroying the Afrikaner nation – an enemy construct, therefore, like modernism. Here again we see this cultural pattern in which a modern and threatening world is to be conquered and transformed in terms of traditional Afrikaner (Christian) values (see above).

The fact that the Pierneef painting appeared on the cover of *Die Huisgenoot*, a *Nasionale Pers* publication, is highly significant. The *Nasionale Pers* (or Burger-Sanlam group) played a formidable role in the rise of the Afrikaner to political and economic power, and its political influence was extraordinary. Not only could they frustrate and undermine the media ambitions as well as the political ambitions of a powerful and illustrious prime minister like General JBM Herzog (see Muller, 1990: 409-431), but they could also play a decisive role in helping the National Party to completely destroy the *Ossewa Brandwag*, which had become a serious political threat to them in the 1940s (see Muller, 1990: 609-625).

Therefore, when *Die Huisgenoot* puts a modernist painting of the *Groot Trek* on the front cover of its 1938 centenary issue, it means that this use of modernism is fully endorsed by this powerful organisation.

Equally significant is the fact that Cubism was the basis of Pierneef's style. Cubism, of all the modernist styles, is the one which exemplifies modernity, and the so-called 'Machine Age' in particular (Hughes, 1991: 9-40). It played an important role in the development of modernist architecture, via Piet Mondrian's Cubist-based abstractions (Hughes, 1991: 200-207), as well as in the development of Futurism (which openly celebrated the Machine Age), the art of Francis Picabia and Marcel Duchamp (who were obsessed with the impact of the machine on human relationships), Dada (which violently denounced the Machine Age), De Stijl (with its close ties to Bauhaus architecture and its machine aesthetic) and Russian Constructivism (which also celebrated the Machine Age, but with a socialist agenda) (see Hughes, 1991: 40-56; 57-97; 192-200).

Thus, Pierneef was employing the visual language of modernity, of the modern industrial city, when he developed his own version of Cubism. By applying the flat, geometric planes of Cubism to his beloved South African landscape, Pierneef created what might justifiably be called 'Afrikaner Modernism' or even *volksmodernisme* – the cultural counterpart of *volkskapitalisme*.

These Cubist depictions of the South African landscape became iconic of Afrikaner culture, and with good reason: Modernism, the language of the modern industrial city, is applied to the familiar rural environment, thereby creating a cultural bridge between these two opposite and conflicting worlds. In a strikingly similar way Anthonie Smith applied Modernist architecture to the heart of the Afrikaner's beloved old rural environment – the church building (see below), and the Modernist churches which developed from this bold enterprise became equally iconic of Afrikaner culture.

Another prominent Afrikaner painter who developed his own brand of *volksmodernisme* was Johannes Anthonie Smith (1886-1954). This artist (who, like Pierneef, was influenced by Cubism) is a very interesting figure: as a fourteen year old school boy he became a Cape Rebel, joining the forces of Commandant Wynand Malan to fight the British in the Anglo-Boer War. He was a Transvaal correspondent for *Die Burger*, later becoming art critic and art editor for Die Burger (from 1925 to 1941). He published several books on the history of the Afrikaner, and eventually became assistant commander general of the *Ossewa Brandwag*. And yet this *Ossewa Brandwag* general, who had fought in the boer war as a fourteen-year old Cape rebel, and who went by the nickname of 'Sambok',

painted in a modernist style.[18] Again we see here this extraordinary blend of the 'old ways' and modernity. This figure is particularly interesting in the present discussion because he was also the father of the architect J. Anthonie Smith, who single-handedly pioneered the use of modernism in Afrikaner Protestant church design (see below).

J. A. Smith's connections with *Die Burger* and *Nasionale Pers* are possibly significant in relation to the remarkable correspondence between DF Malan's *Tweede Trek* concept and his son J Anthonie Smith's pioneering Modernist churches. Another son of his became a prominent artist who painted under the name of Le Roux Smith Le Roux (1914-1963) – also in a Modernist style.

Modernist architecture as value-free

Modernist architecture, being devoid of any stylistic or figural elements and consequently being *value-free*,[19] provided a unique opportunity to divest modernism (in the broader cultural sense) of its threatening (i.e. liberal and radical) connotations and to transform it

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[18] JA Smith (senior) published many articles in the *Ossewa Brandwag's* official journal, *Die Brandwag*. His grandson, Hannes Smith, states that his political career and political views were determined overwhelmingly by his very strong anti-British feelings, which were founded on his wartime experiences as a fourteen year old boy (see above). According to Smith he read through every one of his grandfather's OB (*Ossewa Brandwag*) publications and could not find a single instance of racism directed at any group, whether Black, Coloured or Jewish (Smith, 2014). This statement is supported by the fact that, in 1940, JA Smith (senior), who was then the Cape leader of the OB, had a furious fallout with the rest of the *Ossewa brandwag* leadership when he found out that a secret OB message had been sent to the Nazis behind his back (see Van der Schyff, 1991: 246). Furthermore, when secret *Stormjaer* (SJ) cells were being established all over the country during World War Two, they came up against the 'determined opposition of the Cape leader [of the OB], Mr JA Smith' (Van Rensburg, 1956: 185). The then leader of the OB, Hans van Rensburg, who greatly approved of the *Stormjaers* (paramilitary 'stormtroopers' loosely affiliated with the OB), compared them to the Nazi SA (*Sturmabteilung*) (Van Rensburg, 1956: 184-186). Smith once went down to Port Elizabeth to read John Vorster the riot act for his extremist activities within the OB. Vorster (the future prime minister of South Africa) was imprisoned for these activities (Smith, 2014). Lastly, when the Broederbond unleashed its shameful smear-campaign against Gen JBM Herzog (which eventually destroyed him), Smith, as acting Commandant-General of the OB emphatically refused to employ that organisation's formidable nation-wide network of communications to facilitate this smear-campaign, despite urgent pressure to do so (Van Rensburg, 1956: 162-163; see also on page 64).

[19] See Hughes, 1991: 99.

comprehensively into a modern urban cultural phenomenon which is permeated by and fully based on Afrikaner Protestant values (*die ou paaie* – the old ways). Thus the *boerekerk* or *plaaskerk* (farm church) could be fully transformed into a *stadskerk* (city church). These strikingly modernist churches could thereby become powerful symbols of the whole Afrikaner cultural movement which had the *Tweede Trek* (from the farm to the city) as its central theme or agenda.

The sheer austerity and geometry of Modernist architecture, apart from being value-free, also lends itself exceptionally well to the expression of the Protestant mindset (austerity, sobriety, inwardness, and the concomitant aversion to material splendour, to luxury, opulence, display, and above all, to painted and sculpted effigies of divine personages – i.e. to what are perceived as Catholic aberrations). Thus every nut and bolt, every structural detail, becomes suffused with a sense of Protestant spirituality (see below). This unexpected common ground between modernism (in architecture) and Afrikaner Protestant culture, particularly the common aversion to ornamentation and painterly or sculptural decoration, enabled Afrikaner Protestant architects to achieve such a comprehensive transformation of modernism into Afrikaner Protestant architecture. In the best of these churches it is possible to understand and appreciate every modernist aspect or detail purely in terms of Protestant spirituality (see below). Had Afrikaners been Catholics this transformation could not have been achieved with the same complete success (compare Hughes, 1991: 202).

The use of imagery and sacred symbols in these churches is particularly interesting. They are radically simplified and geometrically abstracted (see examples and discussion on p 135 ff below). Like Pierneef's art (and even more so), this is true *volksmodernisme* – Afrikaner Protestant modernism. As in the architecture, modernism is transformed into Christian (Protestant) modernism, thereby fulfilling the purpose of the *Tweede Groot Trek.*

Thus the great enemy (modernism in the broader cultural sense) is transformed into a friend. The rural Afrikaner, bewildered by the evils of the fast-growing modern cities, could now enter one of these churches and feel completely at home, since his or her old, time-honoured rustic spiritual values pervade and determine this entire modernist urban space. Furthermore, since the most sacred and important space in his or her world is now articulated in modernist terms, he or she is better equipped psychologically and spiritually to deal with the modern urban environment – to 'afrikanerise' it (in Verwoerd's terms – see above), to impose his or her own Calvinist values on it and thereby make it their own.

Note also, in the texts which laid down and discussed basic principles and guidelines for developing a true Afrikaner Protestant church architecture (henceforth referred to as the 'guideline texts'), the consistent aversion to the value-laden church architecture of the past (see below). Only Modernism could provide the solution to the problem of finding a true Afrikaner Protestant style which, like Modernism itself, makes a complete break with the past, and in this case with a past full of perceived ecclesiastical abuses and aberrations which are embedded in the architecture itself (see below).

In the guideline texts the term 'Modernism' is conspicuously absent, and this in spite of the fact that it is universally held forth as the only suitable style in which to build Afrikaner Protestant churches. It is referred to obliquely as 'the contemporary style' and its use by Afrikaner church architects is justified *through Biblical examples* (see p 99 below). Thus, Professor Adrianus van Selms, who wrote the first of these guideline texts (which is closely followed by the subsequent publications), presents the fundamental principles of Modernist architecture ('form follows function', 'plan as generator') as fundamental principles for designing Afrikaner Protestant churches – without once mentioning the Modernist origins of these principles (1954: 8, 24). Only two decades later, in the last of these guideline texts, does Hannes Koorts acknowledge the authors of these concepts, Louis Sullivan and Le Corbusier respectively, and briefly discuss their concepts (1974: 2, 6-7; however, see below).

The pioneering churches of J Anthonie Smith

Van Selms also refers to the new Modernist churches being built at the time by the three Afrikaner Protestant churches (i.e. in the 1950s) in the following terms: 'After a period of following European architectural trends, this century has seen the growth of an indigenous Afrikaans style in church architecture' (1954: 6). While this development would include the Neo-Byzantine style which preceded the Modernist style, he is entirely negative in his assessment of the former for several reasons, one of which is precisely that it is neither indigenous nor contemporary, and therefore wholely inappropriate to Afrikaner Protestant church design (1954: 23). Consequently, the 'indigenous Afrikaans church style' he refers to is Modernism (see 1954: 27; see also Du Toit et al, 1966: 38).

Figure 6. Bellville DRC.

Even though these writers, as well as most of the architects (in their actual church designs), follow the fundamental Modernist principles ('form follows function', 'plan as generator')[20] to the letter (see p 99 below), the Modernist architects who developed these principles are given little credit by these authors (with the notable exception of Hannes Koorts, who, while correctly quoting Le Corbusier's *Towards a New Architecture* as the source of the 'plan as generator' principle, nevertheless refrains from using the term 'Modernism' at all with respect to Le Corbusier – see 1974: 6-7).[21]

[20] See Sullivan, 1918: 46-48; Le Corbusier, 1927: 45-51.

[21] Unlike Koorts, who correctly attributes the 'form follows function' principle to Louis Sullivan, Du Toit et al attribute it more vaguely to Frank Lloyd Wright and Le Corbusier (1966: 6).

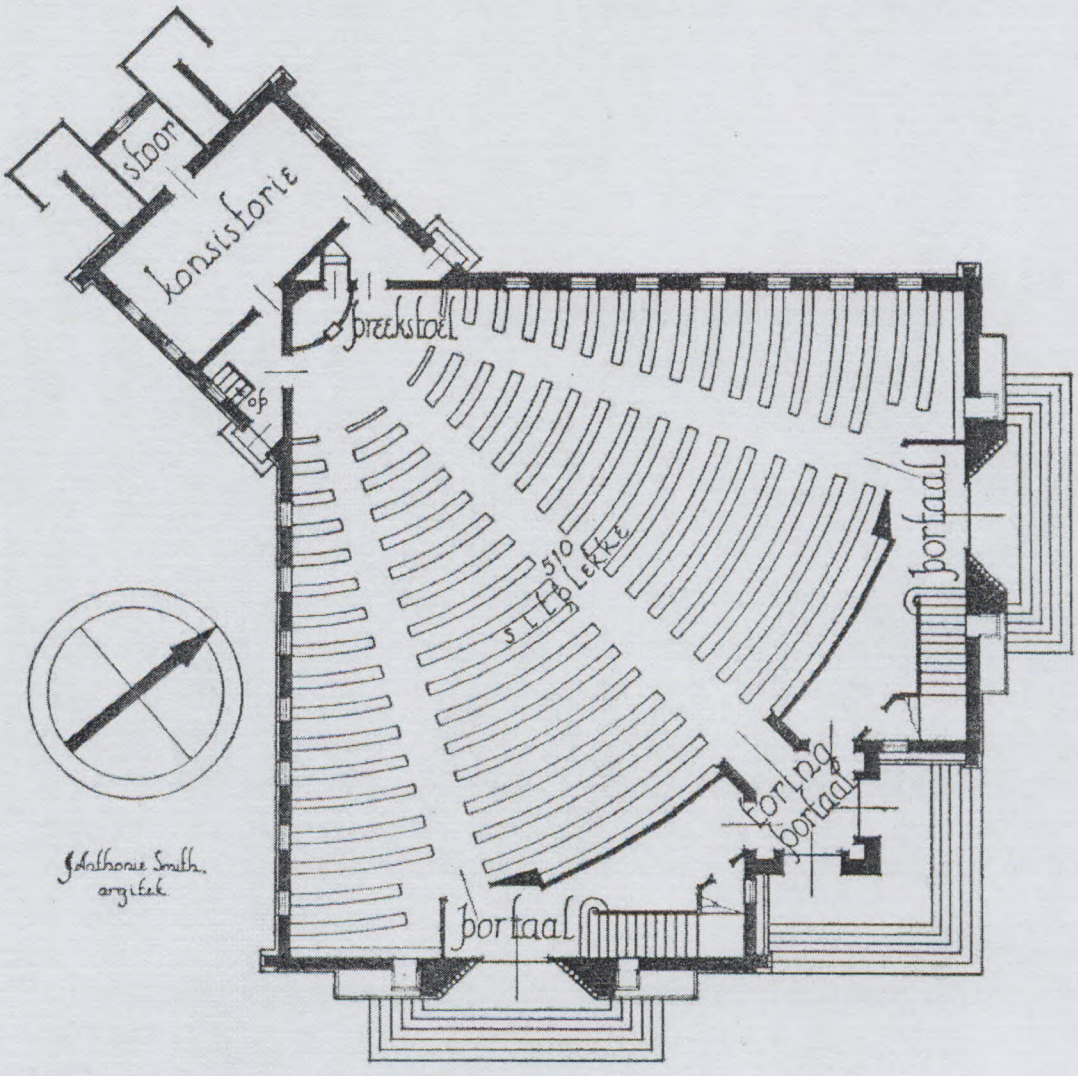

Figure 7. Plan of the Bellville DRC. Reproduced by kind permission of Hannes Smith and provided by Schalk le Roux.

Modernist principles are presented in a transformed state: the Protestant liturgy is the function of the building,[22] and this must be expressed in the interior as well as the exterior, moving outwards logically from the liturgical space (see p 99ff below). J. Anthonie Smith's pioneering first three modernist churches are like an essay in these Modernist principles.

[22] Du Toit et al attribute this important application of Sullivan's 'form follows function' principle to the art historian Cornelius Gurlitt (1966: 6). However, Protestant theorists on church design already presented this liturgical brand of functionalism several centuries before Sullivan came up with his 'form follows function' principle (see below).

Figure 8. Interior of the Bellville DRC, showing the layout of the liturgical centre.

In the Bellville Dutch Reformed Church of 1939 the plan and interior are designed purely in terms of the Protestant liturgy, with the seating arranged in a fan shape to optimize the hearing of the spoken Word which radiates outward from the pulpit in the corner of the square (according to the principles of acoustics) as well as affording every member of the congregation an untrammeled view of the minister in optimum proximity to the pulpit. This arrangement results in a pure modernist space (a functional cube, complete with flat ceiling, with a curved wall behind the seats, conforming to the seating layout and separating the foyer from the main area – see figure 5), while the exterior still has some nominally traditional elements (see Le Roux, 2008: 29-30).

Figure 9. Port Elizabeth North DRC. Photograph by Schalk le Roux.

In the Port Elizabeth-North DRC (designed in 1941, but only completed in 1946 due to lack of funds), the next logical step is taken by expressing the cubic space of the interior

(as seen in the Bellville church) in the exterior of the church, so that the exterior becomes a pure modernist cube, with a tower which is an extended cube.[23] All traditional elements have been discarded and replaced by rectangular modernist features (doorways, windows etc), and this building is only recognizable as a church by virtue of its tower (see Le Roux, 2008: 29-30).

Figure 10. Ladismith DRC. Photograph by Schalk le Roux.

The third stage in this logical progression is achieved in the well-known Ladismith DRC of 1942, in which the fan-shaped auditorium, present since the Bellville church, and determined by the Protestant liturgy, is expressed in the exterior by curved walls. (In the previous two churches the fan shape of the auditorium resulted in awkward spaces between the curve of the back seats and gallery and the two corner walls which meet each other at right angles – see Le Roux, 2008: 30-31). Thus the Modernist principles of

[23] According to Hannes Smith his father already wanted to do this in the Bellville DRC, but there was too much opposition to this idea from the church council. He therefore introduced the nominally traditional elements (gables and 'Gothic' entrances) to placate them (2014) (see photograph above).

'form follows function' and 'plan as generator' have been rigorously adhered to, finding their most complete expression in this Ladismith church.

The function which determines every architectural form and space, from which every detail, both interior and exterior, is generated, is the Protestant liturgy. In other words, the Protestant liturgy determines the basic plan from which all else is generated. Thus, in the course of a few years, this architect succeeded in transforming modernism into Afrikaner Protestant modernism.

Figure 11. Interior of the Ladismith DRC showing the distinctive fan-shaped auditorium. Photograph by Schalk le Roux.

This extraordinary uniformity between Modernist functionalism and the aims of Protestant architecture can perhaps be explained, to some extent, by the fact that Protestant architects and architectural theorists (in Europe) since the 16th century (i.e. soon after the Reformation itself) have taken a fundamentally functionalist approach in the design of the church interior: the Protestant liturgy is the function according to which the architectural form and space must be designed. Therefore functionalism in Modernist architecture has a precursor in the functionalist theories and practice of European Protestant church

architecture since the 16th century.[24] The functionalism of Anthonie Smith, Johan de Ridder and other Afrikaner Protestant architects stems from both these sources (see below), and the similarity of purpose between the former and the latter would explain the remarkable confluence of Modernist principles and Protestant architectural requirements in these Afrikaner churches.

The avoidance of the term 'Modernism' is perhaps due to the fact that Afrikaner theologians had fulminated against modernism so vehemently during the 1930s and beyond, and that the profoundly anti-modernist sentiment which they expressed was still a deep-rooted feature of Afrikaner culture throughout the period in which these texts were written (the 1950s, 60s and 70s).

Symbolically, then, in these Modernist church buildings, it is not the Church which is modernised but Modernism which is christianised ('calvinised'). The Church is perpetuated with the same old traditional Protestant values which formed the cultural and spiritual centre of the rural past, and these values are staunchly protected by the theologians against all threats of change – i.e. against modernism itself. Modernism is christianised so that it no longer poses a threat to the old Church and to the Afrikaner nation – just as capitalism is christianised for the same reason (to prevent it from further destroying the Afrikaner nation). *Volkskapitalisme* and Christianised Modernism (or Afrikaner Protestant modernism) are analogous cultural phenomena which constitute two aspects of the same cultural program. Like capitalism, Modernism is 'adapted to the character of the nation' by making it conform to Calvinist principles (see above).

In fact, the Church had become more conservative and reactionary than it was in the days of the rural past (see Vosloo, 2011: 3-9), and, significantly, the *Gereformeerde Kerk* (the 'Doppers'), the most rigidly conservative of the three Churches, and one which played a major role in the development of Christian-nationalist ideology (see O'Meara, 1983: 69), was generally responsible for building the most radical Modernist churches (i.e. after the

[24] In 1587 Rudolf Hospinian, a Swiss theologian and follower of the Reformer Ulrich Zwingli, published *De Templis*, a treatise on the early development of Protestant church architecture, in which he argued for the functional treatment of the congregation's liturgical requirements. In 1600 Jacques Perret published theoretical designs of three Huguenot temples in which functionalism is also stressed. A publication in 1649 by Joseph Furtenbach den Jüngeren gives guidelines for church design at a very low cost and with a high degree of utility (Kesting, 1978: 9-11; see also p 64 below).

initial, pioneering phase represented by the designs of Anthonie Smith – all of which were Dutch Reformed churches) (see photograph of De Ridder's Totiusdal GK above]).

Thus the concept of the *tweede trek*, which must be seen in conjunction with Christian Nationalism and Christian Nationalist education, was formulated to deal with the socio-economic crisis discussed in the previous chapter (and, by extension, to facilitate the economic and political empowerment of the Afrikaner nation). It deftly turned the situation around, making the old and the new allies instead of enemies by conflating the past (the historic Great Trek) with the present (the urbanisation 'trek'). This device is echoed in the development of modernist Afrikaner Protestant church design, which can be seen as a powerful and highly effective symbol of the *tweede trek*, whether this was intentional or not. The next chapter deals with the problem of the actual relationship between the church architecture and this *tweede trek* cultural movement.

CHAPTER FOUR: **FROM *BOEREKERK* TO *STADSKERK***

While it is apparent that these modernist churches conform to the same cultural pattern as Christian-nationalism (in its characteristic determination to christianise key aspects of life in the modern city), it is by no means clear whether the architects' drive to transform modernism in Christian terms was a conscious part of this general program to afrikanerise the city (as expounded in speeches made by Malan, Verwoerd and Du Plessis) or not.

There are several things that suggest that the affirmative is a possibility (see below), but none of these are conclusive, and in the absence of any explicit statements to that effect by the relevant parties, we must also consider another possibility – that this phenomenon was a predominantly unconscious expression of the general need to confront and overcome the threat of modernity/modernism (a need which, judging by the relevant literature of the time, was uppermost in the minds of Afrikaner intellectuals at this time of poverty, mass urbanisation and the concomitant social and spiritual evils).

Even if, as is quite possible, the power-brokers and ideologues of the south (the *Nasionale Pers*/Sanlam group) had an active hand in instigating or facilitating this movement in church design, this would not by itself explain the ground-swell of popular

support which modernist church design received in the wake of De Ridder's epoch-making Parys church. It is perhaps more probable that, if anything, this group (which included J. Anthonie Smith's father as art editor of *Die Burger*) merely provided the official sanction which enabled Smith to go ahead with his ground-breaking new designs, and which would have protected him from the possible wrath of the nearby Stellenbosch theologians, who at this very time were railing against modernism in the most vehement terms (see below).

The absence of attacks on or criticism of this modernist church architecture by these theologians is a mysterious fact which could well be explained by such an intervention (*Die Gereformeerde Vaandel*, in which most of these anti-modernist attacks occurred, was bankrolled by a powerful member of this southern group, Pieter de Waal Neethling, who also had interests in the *Pro Ecclesia Pers*, which published it – see above).

Above all, however, it is significant that D.F.Malan, who made the *Tweede Trek* speech, was a central figure in this southern group of power-brokers – he was the first editor of *Die Burger*, from which position he exercised tremendous ideological influence over the minds of Cape Afrikaners, and he eventually became the first Nationalist prime minister.

D. F. Malan, himself a theologian, would not have been blind to the fact that Modernism (in church design) could be used as a powerful architectural counterpart to his *Tweede Trek* speech delivered on the 16th of December 1938 at the site of the Battle of Blood River at the climax of the Great Trek centennial celebrations.[25] In this crucially important speech Malan told Afrikaners that they were engaged in a second trek – to a new frontier, the city, where a new Blood River awaited them, where they had to battle for the survival and future of the Afrikaner nation. But the time for armed struggle, he told them, was over: the new battle was to be waged in economic and political terms.

This speech very neatly clothed the economic struggles of the newly urbanised Afrikaner in traditional Voortrekker terms, so that the central message – to conquer the modern city and transform it in terms of the character (and traditional Christian values) of the Afrikaner – is powerfully conveyed. (The emotional and intellectual impact of the speech must have

[25] The fact that the first Sanlam building in Cape Town (1931) was a Modernist structure suggests that Malan and his colleagues were keenly aware of the powerful symbolism which architectural Modernism could convey in this context (see below).

been greatly augmented by the uniquely opportune temporal and spatial context within which it was delivered:

> [Malan] began by reminding his fellow Afrikaners that here, at Blood River, and on this particluar day, they stood at a crucial intersection of sacred time and holy space – Dunbar Moodie, 1975: 198).

Anthonie Smith's first modernist church, the Bellville Dutch Reformed Church, was opened in 1939, the year after the Centennial celebrations and Malan's speech (which was only one of many such speeches which were made by leading politicians like Verwoerd, Malan, Du Plessis etc. all along the route followed by the centennial ox-wagons – see above; see also O'Meara, 1978: 108). Therefore, while Smith was designing this church, Malan and his fellow politicians were designing their *Tweede Trek* speeches and making preparations for the other *Tweede Trek* (the Centennial).

Furthermore, the painting done by Pierneef for the cover of *Die Huisgenoot* of December 1938 (the Great Trek centenary issue) does exactly what Smith's church does: it combines traditional stylistic elements with pure modernism – note also the strikingly modern font used on the words *Die Groot Trek Gedenkuitgawe*, which conveys a clear message all on its own. The title *Die Groot Trek* in a modern font sums up the aspirations of Christian-nationalism – the modern, the city, infused with the spirit of traditional Voortrekker values.

This cover design for the issue commemorating the centennial of the Great Trek would almost certainly not have left anything to chance. The editorial staff (*Die Huisgenoot*, like *Die Burger*, belonged to the *Nasionale Pers* group) would have planned a cover design of such pivotal importance down to the last detail, which implies that it would have been done in conformity with Malan's *Tweede Trek* concept.

The year in which the Belville Dutch Reformed Church was opened (1939) was also the year of the *Ekonomiese Volkskongres* (an event for which the Afrikaner nation was carefully primed by the *Groot Trek* Centenary of the previous year, with its pervasive speeches about the plight of the 'poor whites' etc. – see above). The *Ekonomiese Volkskongres* spelt out the need to seize the 'foreign imperialist' capitalist economy (an enemy construct, like 'modernism' – see above) and transform it in Christian (Calvinist) terms – thereby adapting it to the national character of the Afrikaner (see above).

This conquest of the capitalist economy, to create a *volkskapitalisme* (which effectively means *Christenkapitalisme* – see above) was central to the programme of Christian-nationalism, and the Afrikaners' rise to power is to a considerable extent due to this economic movement. As O'Meara points out, Afrikaans-speaking people were seriously divided along class lines, with the working class behaving very much as a modern urban proletariat does (joining labour unions, taking part in strikes, joining the Communist Party, etc.). This was a fundamental threat to the political ambitions of both the Broederbond and the southern Burger-Sanlam group, and, realising that they need each other, they co-operated for the first time with the *Ekonomiese Volkskongres*. A vital aspect of the Afrikaner economic movement was the take-over of powerful trade unions. The Afrikaans worker was persuaded, by means of a massive cultural programme launched by the Broederbond, to seek his identity along ethnic and cultural lines instead of class lines. Thus the crucially important political support of the white Afrikaans-speaking working class (which initially showed scant interest) was gained (O'Meara,1983: 71-77, 78-81, 106-115).

The central theme of the Great Trek Centennial speeches, which stated that the second Great Trek was to the modern cities (where the new battle of Blood River awaited), was put into action with this economic movement. This conquest of the modern city has a striking parallel in Anthonie Smith's modernist churches, which likewise 'conquer' modernity/modernism and transform it in Calvinist terms. If this was sheer co-incidence, then it is a remarkable co-incidence indeed, and a highly significant one.[26] Since the Calvinist faith was the intellectual and spiritual centre of this movement, the use of Modernism in church design had a powerful symbolic value, whether it was consciously intended as such or not.

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[26] Hannes Smith (the architect's son), stated that he does not think that there was any direct involvement by the Burger-Sanlam group or any other political group. He was not born yet at the time, but nothing that he can remember of his father's statements, actions and personality indicates that this might have been the case. As far as he knows, his father's motivation for using Modernism was purely a Christian one. He also said that his father had a very strong personality and was not amenable to being prescribed to on architectural matters by non-architects (quoting an instance where he defied such opposition to push ahead with a modernist school design – that of Paarl Gymnasium). His father's character also combined a very conservative nature with an incredibly modern inclination. He, for example, designed all their home furniture in a very modern style, and always drove the latest Citroen cars, which were decades ahead of their time, resembling the cars we see on the road today (2014).

But even if Smith had no direct contact with DF Malan and his group on this matter, current developments in the Dutch Reformed Church's attitude to the city and urbanisation would not have escaped the attention of this devout church member (although here, again, these developments, in their publicised form, come slightly later than his first Modernist church):

> During the Second World War, Rev JR Albertyn, the then general secretary of the Poor Relief Committee ('*Armesorgkommissie*') of the Dutch Reformed Church in the then Transvaal, wrote a booklet entitled *Die Boerekerk word Stadskerk* (The Boer Church becomes a City Church). This revealing brochure, published in 1942, ends with the following words: 'God's Word starts with a garden – Paradise – but ends with a city – the new Jerusalem.[27] In the Old Testament one finds mainly the depiction of the agricultural era of the world, but in the New Testament it is the era of the city. This will also be the direction for our church. In the beginning the rural perspective was dominant in religion, but the centre of gravity has now shifted to the urban aspect. May the church have the necessary vision and faith to settle successfully in this new environment.' What is striking about this quotation – and the booklet as a whole – is the sense of the historical (and even theological) progression from rural to city life. Although the booklet is clear on the pitfalls associated with urban reality, the author is nevertheless religiously candid about the fact that the church should adapt to this new reality. This booklet should be seen against the backdrop of the rapid urbanisation of the Afrikaner community in the first half of the 20th century. ... (Vosloo, 2013: 19-20).

What DF Malan did with Afrikaner history in his *Tweede Trek* speech, the Rev Johannes Rudolf Albertyn (1878-1967) does here with the Bible, thereby creating an argument which must have been every bit as persuasive, considering the central role which religion played in Afrikaner life.

Malan was not only a journalist and a politician, but also, and in the first place, a theologian, and Robert Vosloo shows the gradual evolution of his *Tweede Trek* concept within the context of a series of conferences on the 'poor white problem' held by the Dutch Reformed Church:

> [At the Cradock conference of 1916] the call was 'Back to the Land,' and city life was viewed as a graveyard for the Afrikaner soul. Dr DF Malan, who was also one of the speakers at the Cradock conference, afterwards [in 1917] wrote a series of articles for the Afrikaans newspaper *Die Burger* (of which he was the editor), and these articles were later published in a booklet, titled *De Achteruitgang van Ons Volk: De*

[27] See discussion of an Afrikaner Modernist depiction of the New jerusalem – as a modern city (in Oostersee Dutch Reformed Church) on p 119.

Oorzaken Daarvan en de Redmiddelen (The Degeneration of Our Volk: The Reasons and the Solutions). In a chapter, with a heading *Terug naar het Land* (Back to the Land), Malan refers to the trek to the cities as a new or second Great Trek, and further comments: 'But sadly, this trek is not from confinement to open space. It is the move from a condition of freedom and abundance to a condition of poverty and want. It is the trek from Canaan back to Egypt. It is the journey of the happy and prosperous landowner to the land of misery.' [28]

Malan was also a speaker at the conference dealing with the poor whites that was held in Bloemfontein in 1923, and here, his contribution already reflects something of a shift in the approach to the reality of urbanisation. ... Again he biblically referred to the journey of the Israelites to Egypt, which he described as something 'apparently evil, but it ensured their survival as a nation. We also see the trek to the cities as a vice (*euwel*), but something good might be born out of it.' ...

Malan's views that the Afrikaner volk should face the challenges of urbanisation head-on became influential and over time the view became stronger – also in church circles – that one should adapt to this new reality. ...

The centre of gravity was clearly shifting. Rev. JR Albertyn's call in his booklet *Die Boerekerk word Stadskerk* that the church should deal with this reality captures the new situation well: 'Our nation *(volk*) was born and bred on the wide open plains. All that is dear in our cultural heritage, all that is typical of the Afrikaner nation, is inseparably bound to the land, the soil, rural life. Here the Afrikaans flame burns brightest and warmest ... It is therefore with deepest sadness that we observe how life on the farm (*die boerelewe*) is moving into the background as it is replaced with a new life style. Yet our church, with its deeply rooted Calvinistic worldview, has always proven its close links with the soul of the nation (*met die volksiel*) and knows how to serve its needs. And this gives us hope: the rural church (*boerekerk*) must and will become a city church (*stadskerk*).' This quotation reflects something of the nostalgic longing for rural life, but this nostalgia is interwoven with a kind of practical realism that acknowledges the need to deal with the inevitable, and even to make a virtue out of a vice (Vosloo, 2013: 22-23).

Albertyn's *Boerekerk word Stadskerk* was published in 1942 – the same year that Smith's Ladismith DRC was opened (in which he brought his use of Modernism to full fruition) and three years after his pioneering Belville DRC was opened – and one could say that Smith achieved, in architectural terms, what Albertyn advocated in ecclesiastic terms. In his hands, the farm church becomes a city church through the medium of architectural Modernism. In this context Modernism operates as a powerful symbol of the city church

[28] Note here and below Malan's propensity for comparing contemporary events in Afrikanerdom with both Voortrekker history and Biblical events. Albertyn also uses Biblical example. Within the context of Afrikaner culture at the time such comparisons would have had a powerful impact.

(and the specific historic challenges that faced it) while the traditional Neo-Gothic and Neo-Byzantine (*sentraalbou*) churches of the 19th and early 20th centuries represent the rural church. Like Albertyn's booklet, Smith's churches can therefore be seen as a counterpart of Malan's *Tweede Trek* concept, at least as far as the social and spiritual dimensions of the latter are concerned.[29]

Even though Smith's father was on the editorial staff of *Die Burger* (which had Malan as editor) at the time in question, this does not necessarily mean that there was any direct communication or dealings between Malan and Smith (or even indirectly via the latter's father).[30] It is more likely that Malan's views, as expressed in his publications, had some impact (either directly or indirectly) on Smith's own ideas, but even here it is impossible to be sure, for lack of concrete evidence. The alternative possibility must therefore be considered – that Smith developed his ideas independently, responding to the same social and religious issues (which pre-occupied many Afrikaner intellectuals at the time) and, subconsciously perhaps, expressed his solution in purely architectural terms (see below).

But, one way or the other, Smith's churches, Albertyn's booklet, and Malan's concept can be viewed as homologous and mutually clarifying cultural phenomena, inspired by the same historic reality, and manifesting themselves at the same juncture in Afrikaner history. (Malan's *Tweede Trek* speech was delivered on the 16th December, 1938; Smith's Bellville DRC was opened in December, 1939; Albertyn's booklet was published in 1942).

In 1944 a commission of inquiry into white urbanisation was appointed by the Federated Dutch Reformed Churches of South Africa. The report of this commission was published in 1947 under the title: *Kerk en Stad (Church and City)*.

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[29] It would be unfair (and logically inconsistent) to include the political aspect of Malan's *Tweede Trek* concept (which eventually overshadowed his mission-derived concerns) in this comparison: 'Malan viewed racial segregation as an important way of ensuring the (financial) survival of white Afrikaners in the cities' (Vosloo, 2013: 23). In Malan's final *Tweede Trek* speech of 16th December, 1938 he clearly indicates that 'in that new Blood River, black and white meet together in much closer contact and a much more binding struggle [in the labour market]' (quoted in Dunbar Moodie, 1975: 199).

[30] Hannes Smith (the architect's son) says that his father and grandfather both had very strong opinions on political matters, and that these were quite different from each other (2014).

> The report clearly romanticises rural life and demonises city life yet the goal does not seem to be to motivate a movement back to the countryside, but rather to make members aware of the fact that they should join city congregations, and that they need cultural support structures to maintain their balance in the city. In addition, the report also mentions some characteristics of the Dutch Reformed Church that the church member in the city should remember and from which he or she can draw strength. These include the church's Calvinistic view of life, its conservative nature, its high values and strict discipline,... its slow pace in accepting change (which has advantages and disadvantages), and its suspicion of what is viewed as foreign. ... *It is interesting to note how the report uses the church's Calvinistic worldview as a way to deal with the changing situation*. The report grounds the essence of Calvinism in the belief in he sovereignty and rule of God. Therefore, according to the report, the Afrikaner believes in the presence of God's hand in the current changes, even if he or she does not understand them: 'Thus he recognizes the divine providence in the current trek towards the cities, and believes that he also has a calling in the city, for *volk* and church' (Vosloo, 2013: 25-26, emphasis added).

This publication was followed by a *Volkskongres* (National Congress) on '*Die stadwaartse trek van die Afrikanernasie*' ('The Afrikaner nation's trek to the city') held in July, 1947. Rev Albertyn gave the opening address:

> The path of the nation ('volk') has reached a mountain top, from where new horisons unfold, but also where gaping gorges pose dangers ... The whole nature of the landscape has changed; where the road was relatively straight and flat in the past, it now leads through twists and turns. Or – to adapt the image a bit – the route in the past resembled a quiet, private road, used by the same kind of people, with ample time and opportunity for the meeting and conversation of kindred spirits. But now suddenly the way has become a wide, public highway, where people race back and forth at a feverish pace, and where the traveler has to find his way with toil and trouble through the masses. With longing and yearning he might think back to the quiet old farm road, but what I want to emphasise is that he will never travel that road again. That has past. *And the sooner he adapts to the new circumstances, the better, otherwise he will be pushed aside* (quoted in Vosloo, 2013: 27-28, emphasis added).

Vosloo comments that:

> Albertyn's pragmatic approach boils down to the idea that the times are changing and the Afrikaner must change with the times. In terms of the metaphor used in the above quotation: the Afrikaner must adapt to the movement from the quiet and private farm road to the city's bustling public highways (2013: 28).

This metaphor also brings to mind the theological journal *Die Ou Paaie* ('The Old Ways') from which developed *Die Gereformeerde Vaandel* out of which Vosloo quoted many anti-modernist statements (see on page 22). The metaphor is already in the architectural (or building) domain, and from there it can easily be extended to encompass what Anthonie

Smith did to the church building – transforming it architecturally from a *plaaskerk* to a *stadskerk* (from a farm church to a city church). And what better way to help people to adapt to the new urban reality.

After this congress the church's new attitude to the issue of urbanisation was widely disseminated:

> There can be no doubt that the *Church and the City* report and the *Volkskongres* of 1947 represent pivotal episodes in South African (church) history.[31] They received extensive media coverage, including in Christian media such as *Die Kerkbode*. Pastors in congregations reported and preached on the report and the conference (Vosloo, 2013: 29).

It is after this, during the 1950s, that Modernism became widely accepted as the true style in which to build an Afrikaner Protestant church, with Johan de Ridder's Parys *Gereformeerde kerk* (1955) setting a major trend. It is also the time during which the first and seminal book on church design (*Protestantse Kerkbou*, 1954) was published by Professor Adrianus Van Selms, to be followed, over the next two decades, by the others.

Finally, as Vosloo points out, the report uses the church's Calvinist worldview as a way of dealing with the changing situation. The conservative nature and strict discipline of the church (the 'old ways') is the anchor which provides security and salvation in this difficult proces of adaptation to the urban environment. And the Modernist church building, with its functionalist design strictly determined by the Protestant liturgy, is the ideal architectural counterpart of this marriage of the old and the new (i.e. of the rural and the urban). Thus, both through Smith's pioneering church designs as well as through the ideas of Malan and Albertyn, the farm church, after 1947, finally became a city church, and this development is emphatically expressed in the church architecture of the ensuing decades.

While there is no conclusive evidence of a direct relationship between Anthonie Smith's modernist church designs and DF Malan's *tweede trek* programme, the Dutch Reformed Church itself provided the common ground which historically and conceptually linked the former to the latter, as Robert Vosloo's article (2013) demonstrates. It is now necessary to see whether this relationship between the *tweede trek* and church architecture is also

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[31] By this time Anthonie Smith's use of Modernism had already reached full fruition – in the Ladismith Dutch Reformed Church (1942) and the Port Elizabeth West Dutch Reformed Church (1946).

manifested in that most iconic of Afrikaner structures, and one which historically was intimately related to the *Tweede Trek* (i.e. the 1938 Great Trek Centenary) – the Voortrekker Monument.

CHAPTER FIVE: **MODERNISM AND THE VOORTREKKER MONUMENT**

The Voortrekker monument is remarkable for it sheer lack of traditional and referential elements (in the actual architecture). The architect, Gerhard Moerdijk, explained (in an article published in *Die Vaderland* on 10th December, 1936) that:

> the issue of what the monument should look like was a difficult one as there was no architectural heritage to associate with the Voortrekkers. Rather, he proposed, one should find one's reference from the Bible, as the Voortrekkers would have done. Like Abraham had led his people to a promised land, the Voortrekkers had conquered savages and an equally savage nature to bring white civilisation to to the dark interior of southern Africa and, like Abraham did, an altar should be built to honour the sacrifices made by the Voortrekkers. ... Civilisation in building, he stated, meant order and geometry. Was it then inappropriate, he asked, that civilisation brought order to chaos? Therefore, he said, the design was guided by its geometry; it copied nothing, and contained *not a single European style motif*. Said Moerdijk: 'The design is one of *squares, cubes, circles and planes* – all in harmony with our tabular landscape' (Steenkamp, 2009: 153, emphasis added).

Alta Steenkamp shows that the design was derived from the *Volkerschlachtdenkmal* in Leipzig, Germany. A comparison of the two monuments, apart from revealing the debt that the Voortrekker monument owes to this german edifice, also reveals a marked difference – the exterior of the latter is prominently decorated with realistic sculpture, while that of the former is pure abstract geometry.[32]

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[32] In this respect the Voortrekker Monument is somewhat closer in its general effect to the *Befreiungshalle*, above Kelheim on the Danube, designed by Leo von Klenze and built between 1842 and 1863 to commemmorate the German *Freiheitskrieg* (War of Liberation). Although the latter is built on a circular ground plan, it has a similar sense of geometric austerity and the same squat, monumental massiveness, presiding, as it does, over the surrounding countryside from its position on high ground – just like the Voortrekker Monument.

Moerdijk, in his written explanation, makes no reference to Modernism with regard to his use of abstract geometry, however, and he might have arrived at this design via Neo-classicism. Nevertheless, this monument, which virtually overnight became the iconic architectural structure of Afrikanerdom, is perfectly in accord with the concept of the Second Great Trek or *Tweede Trek* which, as Malan adroitly pointed out in his famous speech, is not from the centres of civilisation to the wilderness as before, but the other way round – from the countryside to the cities (see Dunbar Moodie, 1975: 199).

Figure 12. Interior of the Voortrekker Monument, showing the Hall of Heroes. Photograph by Frans Liebenberg.

Even though, as Moerdijk points out, the monument consists entirely of geometric forms, the exterior is made of heavily rusticated stonework, giving it a more traditional feeling (in spite of the fact that it lacks any recognisable stylistic elements which can identify it with the past).

However, as one progresses from the exterior to the interior (the Hall of Heroes) and finally to the inner sanctum (the cenotaph), the rough textures are replaced by smooth ones, and complex geometric patterns, supplemented by a richly grained stone cladding

as well as by the formal richness of complex relief sculpture, make way ultimately for pure geometric austerity and simplicity. There seems to be a symbolic program behind this progression which is manifested with logical consistency in every detail.

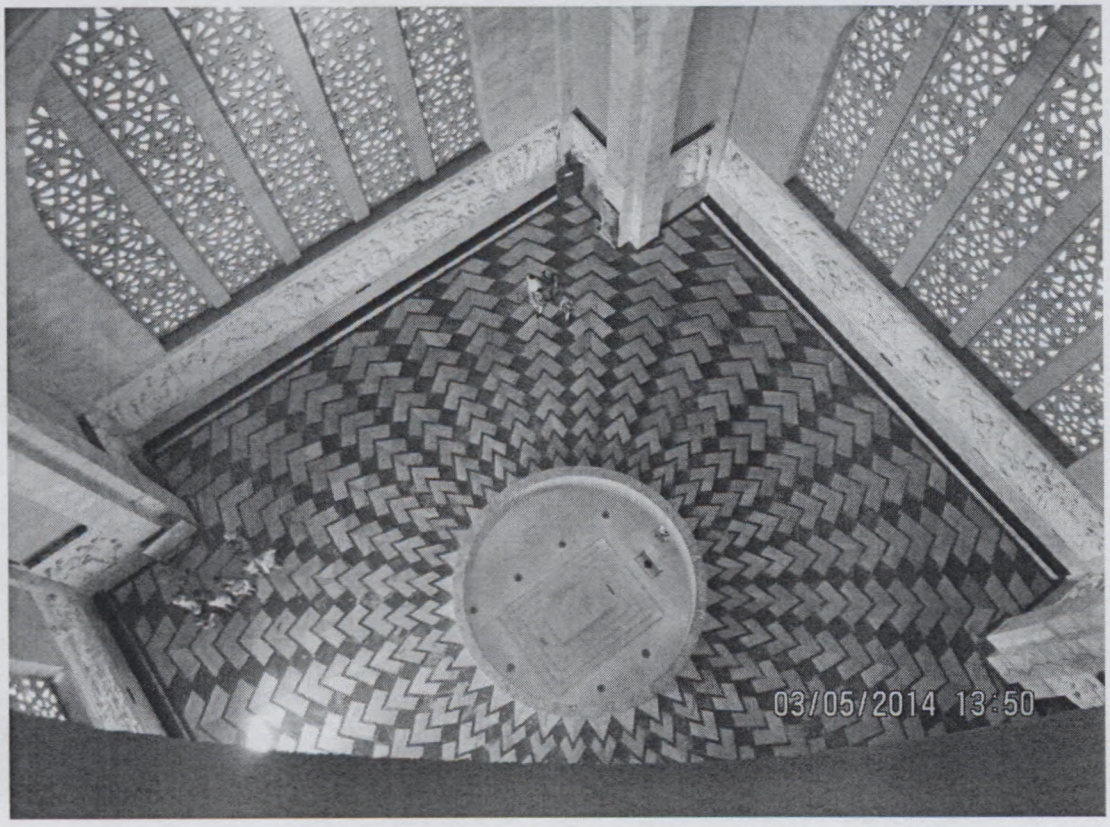

Figure 13. Interior of the Voortrekker Monument, looking down on the Hall of Heroes with the cenotaph clearly visible through the central opening in the floor of the latter. Photograph by Frans Liebenberg.

In the Hall of Heroes the stonework on the walls and ceiling has a smooth surface, but the fairly pronounced and organically irregular grain of the stone itself lends a certain richness to the whole, counteracting the geometric severity of the space. The complex interlacing of diagonals in the stone lattice-work of the giant windows creates a myriad of triangles and hexagrams which further enriches the effect (without straying from the geometric scheme of the whole).

Figure 14. Interior of the Voorttrekker Monument showing the lower hall with the cenotaph. The Hall of heroes is visible above through the circular opening in the ceiling. Photograph by Frans Liebenberg.

Finally, relief sculpture in white marble, portraying the history of the Voortrekkers, stretches in a continuous band right round the hall, below the windows (and at eye level). This completes the effect of moderate textural richness on the inside of the outer walls. (There are no other sculptural reliefs or any other artwork in this space, so that the lively bustle of realistic sculptural form is contained within this neatly defined horisontal band of white marble situated in the lowest part of the walls, where it complements the overall effect of geometric space and pattern without disrupting it).

In the centre of the Hall of Heroes there is a large circular opening in the floor through which the cenotaph can be seen in the space below. The stone floor of the Hall of Heroes is decorated by a radiating geometric pattern which has the circular opening as its centre. This pattern echoes the triangles of the lattice windows, but the motifs are much bigger and bolder, so that the effect is not as rich or busy, but boldly geometric instead.

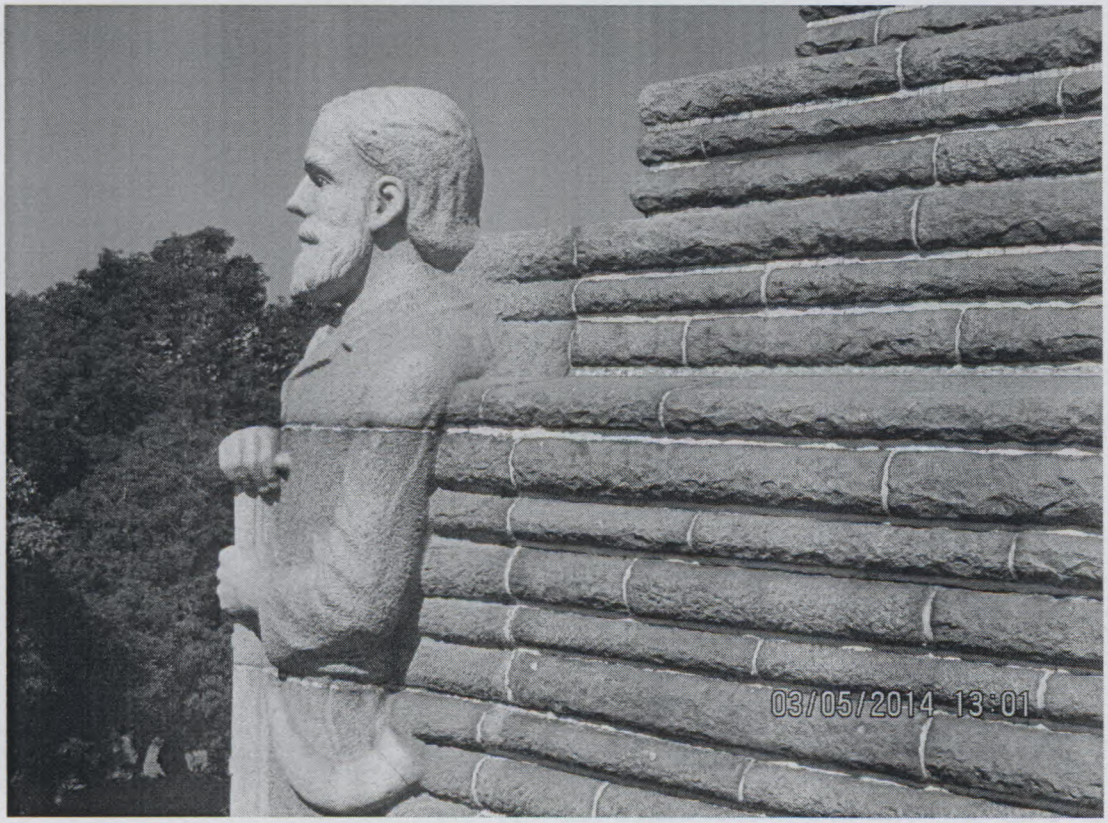

Figure 15. Exterior of the Voortrekker Monument showing a detail of one of the corner sculptures. Photograph by Frans Liebenberg.

In the hall below containing the cenotaph, the stone cladding on the wide, flat arches and their supporting square columns, is an austere grey (as opposed to the warm browns and ochres of the stone cladding in the Hall of Heroes), and it has a grain of straight, more or less parallel streaks of lighter and darker grey. This pattern of straight, parallel lines is used horisontally on the columns and surrounding walls, and vertically on the very flat arches, creating a very quiet and solemn effect. The stone floor, in contrast to the one above it, is of plain stone without any pattern and virtually no grain, which adds to this effect.

And right in the centre, underneath the circular opening, is the cenotaph – a pure geometric sold (a rectangular cube) of highly polished marble with a very subdued grain, situated on a stepped plinth which has the same character of pure, smooth, machine-tooled precision and utter geometric simplicity. Only the words *ons vir jou Suid-Afrika*, chiseled in plain, unadorned Roman capitals into the top surface (where a ray of sunlight hits it at exactly twelve o'clock on the 16th of December every year) identifies it as a

cenotaph – and thereby prevents it from being mistaken for a Minimalist sculpture done in the 1960s or 1970s by Donald Judd (1928-1994).[33]

Figure 16. Exterior of the Voortrekker Monument showing corner sculptures. Photograph by Frans Liebenberg.

According to Moerdijk the geometric order of the building symbolised the order of Christian civilisation which was imposed by the Voortrekkers on the 'chaos' of 'savage Africa' (see above). The above progression from rough to smooth fits in with this

[33] Minimalism was one of the final movements of Modernism. This artist, who exemplified the movement, was well known for having his totally austere sculptures of pure abstract geometry machine-tooled in factories by expert technicians, from engineering drawings supplied by the artist.

symbolism: the Afrikaans word for 'civilisation' is *beskawing*, which literally means the process of making a rough object smooth (the English word 'rude' has the same connotation – as does its Afrikaans equivalent, *onbeskof*, which is an archaic form of *onbeskaaf*, which literally means 'uncivilised').

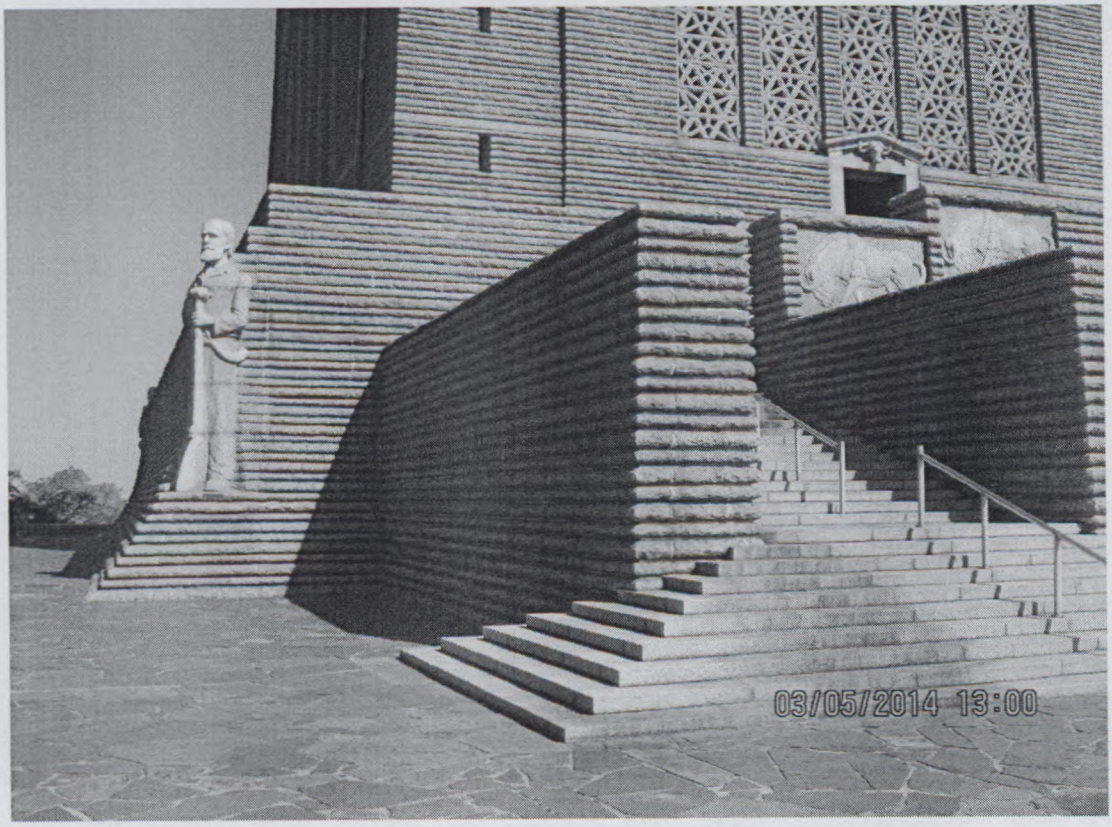

Figure 17. Exterior of the Voortrekker Monument showing entrance and corner sculptures. Note the heavy rustication of the exterior. Photograph by Frans Liebenberg.

As we have seen, this progression from rough to smooth starts with the heavily rusticated exterior of the monument. This progression is complimented by an analogous progression (stated in reverse here) from sheer abstract geometric form (the cenotaph), to flat geometric pattern (on the floor of the Hall of Heroes), to flat but illusionistic painted imagery (in the cenotaph Hall below, against the outer walls), to the bass relief sculpture on the inside of the exterior walls, and finally culminating in sculpture, attached to the four corners of the monument (on the outside) which is a combination of high relief and free-standing sculpture in the round.

Furthermore, the cenotaph can be said to occupy the most sacred space in Afrikanerdom. The cenotaph was designed in such a way that a beam of sunlight strikes it at exactly twelve o'clock on the 16th of December every year (i.e. on the day of the Covenant) to commemorate the most sacred event in Afrikaner history – the Covenant with God before the Battle of Blood River. Thus, when the sun strikes the cenotaph there occurs a conjunction of sacred time and sacred space.[34]

It follows that this 'inner sanctum' of the Voortrekker Monument may be compared to the interior of an Afrikaner Protestant church. The character of the cenotaph is, in fact, typical of the interior of these Protestant churches – particularly the modernist ones. It is as if sacrality in both monument and church is identified with this quality of blank, geometric austerity and unadorned simplicity.

In the light of this it becomes significant that the sculptural reliefs and paintings inside the monument are exclusively on the inside of the *exterior* walls – i.e. as far removed as possible from the cenotaph in the centre, below, and that the most fully three-dimensional (and therefore also the most realistic and tangible) sculptures are attached to the four corners on the outside – at the greatest possible physical remove from the smooth, flat and totally abstract geometry of the cenotaph. In Afrikaner Protestant churches, at this time, all sculpted and painted images ('*beelde*') were absolutely forbidden, and it makes sense to suppose that this Protestant horror of *beeldediens* (idolatry) compelled the designers (of the Voortrekker Monument) to restrict all artistic imagery to the perimeter.

Furthermore, the austerely abstract geometric cube of the cenotaph is as far removed as possible – in artistic terms – from the realism and rich organic forms of the sculptural reliefs, and this opposition of realism and geometric abstraction consequently becomes an opposition of secular and sacred modes of expression.

As one moves from the sculptures and sculptural reliefs (on the outside and inside of the outer walls) to the cenotaph, one follows a gradual progression from secular to sacred space – a progression which is clearly and logically demarcated by all the elements

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[34] However, as Protestants, Afrikaners would not regard any space, whether in this monument or in a church, as sacred – in the stricter sense of the word.

described above (from rough to smooth, rich to austere, complex to monolithically simple, realistic to geometrically abstract).

The position (and abstract geometry) of the cenotaph may further be compared to the geometric cube which constitutes the interior of the Bellville DRC, designed by J. Anthonie Smith. This church, opened in 1939 (the year after the Groot Trek Centenary, when the foundation stone of the Voortrekker Monument was laid), has a modestly sized Voortrekker monument of its own (a realistic sculptural piece), which is placed at the furthest possible remove from the interior of the church itself – on the perimeter of the church grounds, right in the corner where Hugenote Street intersects with De Lange Street.

Thus, in both church and monument, the sacred space is treated in an austerely geometric way, and the realistic imagery (dealing in both cases with Voortrekker history) is kept as far away as possible from this sacred space. This physical distancing of all representational imagery from the sacred space (which itself is purified of all such imagery as well as of any architectural ornamentation) expresses the underlying dynamic which, perhaps more than anything else, determined the development of Modernist Afrikaner Protestant church design.

About the issue of Voortrekker imagery in relation to the church, Van Selms has the following to say (in a general discussion of the use of symbols within the church):

> Naturally, symbols which bear no relationship with the Holy Script and the Christian service are totally unacceptable. Therefore, for example, it is not advisable to use the ox-wagon as a symbol in our churches. Every thing must stay in its own place, and as such will command our respect. The ox-wagon belongs in a national monument, not in a church. The Voortrekkers themselves would not have approved of such a mixture of religion and nationalism. ... [In] the Church we learn that ...our salvation comes from the blood of Christ alone, and everything must point to that. Just like our preaching and our song, our symbolism must be Scriptural (1954: 88-89, my translation).

Thus Voortrekker monuments (or imagery) cannot invade the church building, but the Church (or religion) can occupy the very centre of a Voortrekker monument (just as it reputedly occupied the centre of Voortrekker life and history), and even in such a monument, the images relating Voortrekker history are pushed out to the perimeter of the building. This instance gives a clear indication of the central role which the Protestant faith

played in Afrikaner culture at this time, and serves as an eloquent architectural expression thereof.

Furthermore, the sheer abstract geometry of the cenotaph would also have had considerable symbolic value in terms of the *Tweede Trek* speech made by D. F. Malan at the site of the Battle of Blood River on the 16th of December 1938, at the culmination of the Great Trek Centenary (and similar speeches made by Verwoerd, Du Plessis and others during the Centenary, which was also known as the *Tweede Trek*). (The foundation stone of the Voortrekker Monument was laid by three female descendants of the three main Voortrekker leaders on this same day).

The obvious physical resemblance of the cenotaph to Modernist architecture (the form of the former is identical to those of the latter) would have given powerful subliminal support to the call (made in these speeches) for a *Tweede Trek* from the rural areas back to the city – a trek in which a 'Second Battle of Blood River' would be won by conquering the modern industrial city (in economic terms). By using pure modernist architectural forms in the cenotaph, the heavenly light which falls on it every year on the 16th of December (the anniversary of the Battle of Blood River) ingeniously fuses together the historic Battle of Blood River and the new Battle of Blood River (waged in the arena of modernity).

The above-mentioned subliminal message of the Voortrekker Monument interior would also have had the effect of preparing the ground for the popular acceptance of Modernist church architecture – Modernism being virtually sanctified by the cenotaph, the most 'sacred' object in Afrikanerdom, which is struck by light from heaven on the most sacred day, the day of the Covenant.

As stated above, the abstract geometry of the monument symbolises the order of white Christian civilisation which was imposed on the 'chaos of savage Africa'. It is specifically the geometric order of buildings which represented civilisation for Moerdijk. Thus, as he explained, pure geometry became his only guideline – *stripped of all European stylistic elements or references* (Steenkamp, 2009: 153).

An architecture of pure geometry stripped of all (European) stylistic elements (as he described it prior to its construction) is, for all intents and purposes, a definition of Modernism (which did, in fact, make a complete break with its European past by removing all stylistic elements, thereby reducing the forms to pure geometry – see above). And

since it is the geometric order of *buildings*, specifically, which represented civilisation for Moerdijk in this context, architectural Modernism (or something which closely resembles it) is, by implication, given a supremely positive symbolic value here. (This is not to suggest that the Voortrekker Monument is a Modernist building, but only that Moerdijk's statements describe it in terms which are precisely those which can be used to define Modernism, so that a conceptual link or analogy is forged between the architecture of the monument and Modernism).

These official statements by Moerdijk concerning the symbolism of the monument are significant in that they give further support to the argument that Modernism was to play a vitally important symbolic role in the Christian-nationalist program: here, as in the church buildings, Modernism (or something analogous to it) is made to represent or embody the highest spiritual aspirations of the Afrikaner. Note, however, that Moerdijk, like the architects and theologians who wrote the guideline texts on church architecture, does not refer directly to Modernism – even though he gives a very exacting definition of it.

Furthermore, since geometric order represents white Christian civilisation (vs. the 'chaos of savage Africa'), it follows that geometric order in its purest architectural manifestation should be reserved for the cenotaph, which represents the highest and most sacred feature of this civilisation – the covenant between God and the Afrikaners (as expressed in the heavenly light which falls on the cenotaph at noon on the day of the Covenant). This powerful identification of pure abstract geometric form with the sacred makes the cenotaph highly significant in the discussion of the use of such form (and space) in Modernist Afrikaner Protestant churches, both in terms of architecture and fine art (stained glass windows, baptismal fonts, etc.).

The *Eeufees* (centenary) was also, at the time, called *Die Tweede Trek* (the Second Great Trek), so that it was quite deliberately identified with the other *Tweede Trek* (as it was called in DF Malan's speech) – that of the modern Afrikaner from the countryside to the city. It follows that the Second Great Trek (the *Eeufees*) was not only a celebratory re-enactment of the historic Great Trek, but also an emotionally powerful metaphor for this other Second Great Trek. As many rousing speeches made along the route indicate, one of the main purposes of the Centenary *Tweede Trek* was to inspire the Afrikaner nation to actively engage in this other *Tweede Trek*. (In more concrete terms, one of the main purposes of the centenary or *Tweede Trek* was to prepare the nation for the *Ekonomiese Volkskongres* – see above).

This carefully orchestrated conflation of the past (with its traditional Calvinist values) and the present (with its pressing need for economic empowerment through the 'conquest' of the modern city and modernity in general) by using the past (the Great Trek) as a metaphor for the present, proved to be a highly effective political strategy, and one which was to imbue Afrikaner culture with a distinctive character – that of a culture which, instead of embracing modernity, conquered and transformed it to conform to the old traditional Voortrekker Calvinist values (or what was perceived to be such values). It is this character which, by and large, pervades the architecture of Afrikaner Protestant church buildings, as will be shown.

In order to secure the Calvinist faith which was fundamental to Christian-nationalism, and which was perceived to be profoundly threatened by modernity/modernism (see above), it was of crucial importance that modernity/modernism should be christianised. The modernist church buildings are a powerful symbol of this process (see above).

'The overwhelming emotional message of the Eeufees was unity (*volkseenheid*) in the face of party political divisions' (O'Meara, 1983: 76). However, while *volkseenheid* was of most immediate importance (being a political prerequisite for the establishment of the Christian-nationalist programme), the concept of the Second Trek – which succinctly expressed the long-term political, economic and cultural aspirations of Christian-nationalism – was the most important theme for the future of the Afrikaner nation.

The timing of the erection of the Voortrekker Monument, to coincide with the *Tweede Trek* centenary and the ensuing economic movement, further supports the suggestion above that its formal properties consciously support the call for a *Tweede Trek* to the cities . Work on the monument commenced in 1937. The foundation stone was laid at the culmination of the centenary celebrations on the 16th December 1938, the anniversary of the Battle of Blood River, at a highly emotional event during which over a hundred thousand Afrikaners gathered on *Monument Koppie* outside Pretoria. The monument itself, however, was only completed a decade later, and was opened by D. F. Malan on the 16th December 1949.

This was to be a monument which did not only look backward to honour the past, but also resolutely forward, to arm the nation psychologically for the 'Second Blood River', which was to be fought (along economic lines, but with a Calvinist agenda) in the modern industrialised cities. It was therefore important that the monument did not simply dwell on

the past or revel in past glories, but presented the past in such a way that it could be used as a metaphor for the present and the future – for the battle to be fought in the modern industrial city. The abstract geometry of the monument makes this possible through its affinity to modernism: it is not a modernist structure, but the resemblance (particularly of the cenotaph) is strong enough to create an ambivalent effect which successfully conflates the heroic past with the industrial present (and future) – just as D.F. Malan's Blood River speech (along with other speeches at this time) does.

The Bellville Dutch Reformed Church Voortrekker Monument

Returning now to Anthonie Smith's Bellville DRC, it is significant that this church, with its revolutionary modernist interior and token traditional elements on the exterior, has a sculptural monument to the Great Trek (as noted above), rendered in traditional realism, erected in a corner of the church grounds, where Hugenote and De Lange Streets meet.

This little monument, which depicts a Voortrekker wagon wheel and torch, was erected in 1938 to commemorate the centenary of the Great Trek (i.e. a year before the church itself was opened). Here again, as in the Pierneef painting, we have this curious combination of traditional and modernist elements – the traditional sculpture of Voortrekker elements, with the modernist church (instead of the Cubist mountains) in the background. This cultural phenomenon is further echoed by the distance (physical as well as stylistic and theological) between the geometrically abstract cenotaph in the centre of the (Pretoria) Voortrekker Monument and the realistic sculptural reliefs and paintings on the perimeter (see above).

It should be noted (again) that this monument, far from being incorporated into the architecture of the church, is positioned at the furthest possible physical remove from the church building itself, and this accords with Van Selms's statement that political/historical themes and symbols have no place whatsoever *inside* an Afrikaans Protestant church (see above). The same is true of a monument to the Voortrekker leader Sarel Cilliers erected outside the Kroonstad Dutch Reformed Church.[35] David Goldblatt shows a

[35] Sarel Cillier is shown taking the vow before the battle of Blood River. Later on in life, Cillier became an elder in the Kroonstad parish. This monument, which, in the style of the Bellville DRC monument, features a traditional *realistic* sculpture of a Voortrekker hero, was unveiled on 16th December, 1950 (Goldblatt, 1998: 229).

photograph with the monument in the foreground, dramatically juxtaposed to the church in the background (1998: 133). But what this dramatic use of perspective unintentionally emphasises (and, in fact, slightly exaggerates), is the considerable physical distance between the church and the monument.

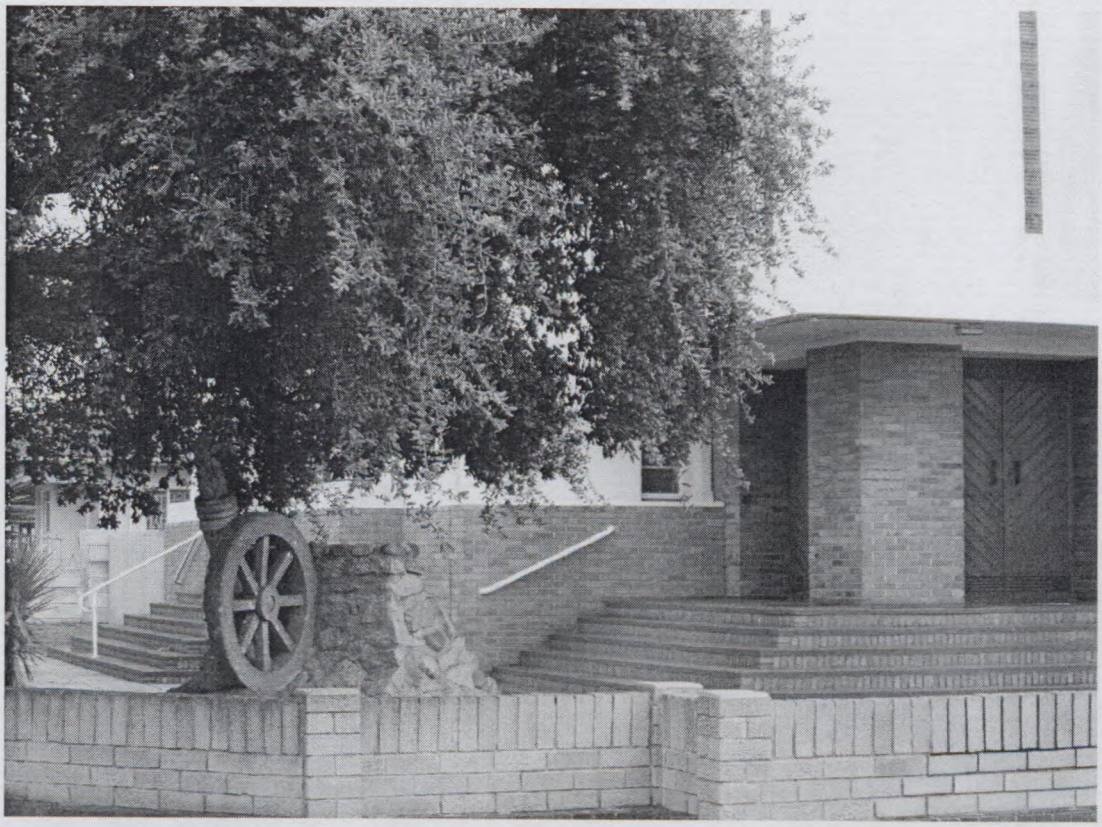

Figure 18. The Bellville DRC Voortrekker monument (1938) with the church in the background.

These political monuments stand in sharp contrast to traditional Catholic monuments and sacred art – *inside* churches and cathedrals – which inextricably weld together ecclesiastic and political themes, as exemplified by Michelangelo Buonarroti's ill-fated tomb for Pope Julius II and by the frescoes on the side walls of the Sistine Chapel by Pietro Perugino, Sandro Botticelli and others respectively. Michelangelo's tomb for Julius II, had it been built, would have stood about fifty feet tall, over thirty feet long and more than twenty feet wide, occupying some 800 square feet of ground. Old St Peter's cathedral was not big enough to accommodate it, and apparently part of Julius's motivation for planning the new St Peter's was to have a church big enough to house his tomb (although the matter remains doubtful). Had it been built, this tomb would have

been, to an inordinate degree, a grandiose memorial to the secular might and glory of a ruler who was hailed in his own time as a second Julius Caesar (see Levey, 1975: 107-116). In Perugino's fresco of *Christ handing the Keys of Heaven to St Peter* (in the Sistine Chapel), the Pope's claim to being the representative of Christ on earth is backed up by the secular power and authority of Imperial Rome (see Mori in Bussagli ed, 1999: 390-391).

The Sanlam Building, 1932

The Sanlam building in Cape Town, designed by Louw and Louw (of which Wynand Louw, who played a pioneering role in Afrikaner Protestant church design, was a partner) completed in 1932 (i.e. only three years after the Wall Street Crash, and at the beginning of the decade which ended with the *Tweede Trek* and the laying of the foundation stone of the Voortrekker Monument), was a tall Modernist building. With this building, which housed the offices of *the first Afrikaner financial institution*, D.F. Malan and his Burger-Sanlam group already seem to be making the point that the Afrikaner must embrace modernity (or modernism) to conquer the modern city-based economy. Coming so soon after the publication of Le Corbusier's *Towards a New Architecture* (1923, with the first English translation appearing only in 1927), this building is very significant, showing, as it does, the determination of Malan and his colleagues to facilitate the successful integration of the Afrikaner into the modern urban economic environment (see Van Graan, 2012: 83).

This message becomes all the more clear when seen in the context of local architectural history: only one year earlier Sir Herbert Baker's Standard Bank building in Adderley Street, Cape Town, was completed – in a fully traditional Edwardian Baroque style which looked resolutely backwards (see Van Graan, 2012: 83). Herbert Baker was addressing a predominantly English-speaking white South African audience who were in complete control of the financial sector of the South African economy, and had been so for a long time. Consequently, the stress was on the expression of the durability and reliability of long-standing traditions and institutions, for which traditional Classical and Baroque architectural styles were ideally suited. Modernism, which makes, as well as advocates, a complete break with the past,[36] was therefore well-suited to the purpose of the Burger-Sanlam group (see Van Graan, 2012: 83).

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[36] The term 'modernism' is used here specifically in the sense of what Hilde Heynen calls *transitory modernism,* which effects such a radical rupture with the past, as opposed to what she calls *programmatic*

The Voortrekker Monument, the foundation stone of which was laid at the climax of the Great Trek centenary celebrations, on the same day that Malan delivered his famous *Tweede Trek* speech at the site of the battle of Blood River, underscores the *tweede trek* agenda in its use of pure modernist architectural forms in its most sacred artifact, the cenotaph, on which heavenly light falls every year on the 16th of December – the anniversary of the Battle of Blood River – so that the historic Battle of Blood River and the new Battle of Blood River (waged in the arena of modernity) are powerfully fused together. Statements made by the architect, Gerhard Moerdijk, are likewise in conformity with this *tweede trek* programme.

The Afrikaner Broederbond, who organised the *Tweede Trek* (i.e. the 1938 Great Trek Centenary), subsequently became enormously powerful, and this was due, in no small measure, to the massive success of this cultural event (Wilkins & Strydom, 1978: 97-107). This secret organisation, which DF Malan was a member of, played a predominant role, not only in the cultural life of Afrikaners (as it initially set out to do) but also, and most importantly, in Afrikaner politics. It also had a huge impact on the theology of the three Afrikaner Protestant churches, and this issue must now be investigated.

CHAPTER SIX: **THE CHURCH AND THE BROEDERBOND**

The next chapter deals with the texts which were published by Afrikaner Protestant architects and theologians as guidelines to the designing and building of churches. These texts are compared to some of the actual churches which were built.

The first publication, *Protestantse Kerkbou* by Professor Adrianus van Selms, appeared in 1954 – more than a decade after the first modernist churches were built. Professor Van Selms is an interesting figure. This Pretoria theologian, an internationally renowned expert on Semitic languages, was one of two figures who lead the way in a clerical revolt against apartheid from within the three Afrikaner Churches (Labuschagne, 2011: 10). This revolt

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modernism, in which 'the underlying concept of a rational introduction of ways of improving living conditions can often be found despite the lack of architectural avant-garde form' (Van Graan, 2012: 48).

took place on a theological plane, and its implications for the Nationalist Government and the Broederbond were dire indeed (see below). Van Selms and Professor Albert Geyser, a fellow theologian and the true leader of this revolt, strongly and repeatedly condemned apartheid on theological grounds (Venter, 1999: 1050, 1052-3). Van Selms launched a searing attack on the Broederbond in the early 1960s in the form of a pamphlet entitled *Church and Secret Organisation*, with reference to the Freemasons and the Broederbond. In it he, amongst other things, accused the Broederbond of employing communist tactics of infiltration (i.e. into the councils and higher bodies of the three Afrikaner Protestant Churches). He also stated that 'I declare openly that I regard the continuance of membership of the Broederbond by somebody who calls himself a Christian as a lack of moral judgement' (Wilkins and Strydom, 1978: 313-14).

In 1961 Van Selms assisted Geyser in the heresy trial of the latter (an affair which can be seen as a 1960s counterpart of the notorious Johan du Plessis heresy trial of the late 1920s). The extraordinary career of Prof Geyser is indicative of the intellectual climate amongst Afrikaner theologians and ministers at the time and therefore needs to be looked at in some detail. The texts dealt with in the next chapter should be seen against this wider theological background.

Albert Geyser's grandfather and great grandfather founded the *Nederduitse Hervormde Kerk*, the second largest of the three main Dutch Reformed Churches. Not only was he born into a deeply religious family, but 'he was an ardent Nationalist and conformed in every possible way with the Afrikaner stereotype from which he had emerged ...' (Wilkins, Strydom, 1978: 297).

A brilliant student, he was appointed as professor of theology at the University of Pretoria in 1946 at the age of 28, and proceeded to establish his reputation as a New Testament expert (Van Aarde, 1992:1).

In 1954 (the year in which Prof. Van Selms's book was published), the Moderator of the *Hervormde Kerk* was challenged at a World Council of Churches meeting to provide Biblical justification for apartheid. Humiliated by his inability to do so, he returned to South Africa and duly appointed a commission to find justification in the Bible for this policy. The commission consisted of two members: Dr Egges Mulder, an Old Testament expert, and Professor Geyser, the New Testament expert.

> Professor Geyser recalls entering his task with absolutely no doubt that he could fulfil it to the Church's satisfaction. It was not, however, a lasting conviction. The more he searched, the more his doubts grew until at last, after exhaustive research, he came to the personally shattering conclusion that there was no scriptural justification for apartheid. Dr Mulder was confronting a similar torment. After independently scouring the Old Testament, he came to the same conclusion.
>
> With trepidation the two theologians faced their Church, and read their reports. There was pandemonium. The synod erupted into incensed argument .... [Both reports] were quickly plucked from view and have never been seen since (1978: 297-98).

Geyser was supported in his findings by Van Selms and several young ministers, but his Old Testament colleague, Dr Mulder, deserted him. Mulder was a member of the Broederbond, and he clearly caved in under pressure from this organisation (Labuschagne, 2011: 10). It is interesting to note here that, prior to this event, Geyser himself had twice been invited to join the Broederbond. 'However, he refused on both occasions, heeding the advice of his father, *himself a Broeder*, that: "If you put store by the freedom of your conscience, beware what organisations you join" (Wilkins and Strydom, 1978: 297 emphasis added).

This devastating revelation concerning the scriptural justification of apartheid set Prof Geyser on a career of mounting conflict with the Church and, more particularly, with the Broederbond. He became increasingly convinced that apartheid is evil, and used every available opportunity to criticise and condemn it, in defiance of a new Church ruling which was passed specifically to suppress his revolt (1978: 298-99). This attack on apartheid inevitably meant an attack on the Church itself, since the latter had provided the theological justification for apartheid (see chapter three).

The horror of Sharpeville in 1960, when police opened fire on black marchers led by Robert Sobukwe of the Pan Africanist Congress, killing 69 of them and wounding hundreds more, deepened his resolve, leading him to conceive and edit a highly controversial book, *Vertraagde Aksie* ('Delayed Action'), in which he, together with Van Selms and nine other Afrikaans theologians and ministers strongly condemned racial discrimination and apartheid (Wilkins and Strydom,1978: 298-99; Labuschagne, 2011: 12).

> The final straw came when, writing in the journal *Inspan*, he openly crossed swords with the Broederbond. ...[Professor Geyser wrote that] 'One gathers that the Broederbond is the darkroom assistant of the ruling party and even dominates the baasskap people. Everyone in this country who honestly desires unity must shun this

> malignant growth. It percolates into every fibre of our national unity. Its morals are the morals of the dark and murky night. The destruction and elimination of the secret organisation, root and branch, is one of the first conditions for unity in South Africa' (Wilkins and Strydom,1978: 300-301).

In a move to completely discredit Professor Geyser, he was charged with heresy on October 5th 1961. Assisted by his outstanding colleague and friend, Professor Van Selms, this professor, described in the Press as one of the most brilliant theologians in South Africa at the time, proceeded, in an amazing courtroom battle, to run circles around the opposition with his highly informed scriptural arguments, 'which he conducted in Afrikaans, English, Greek, German, French and Latin, quoting authoritative commentaries and theologians to support his case' (1978: 301-2).

Furthermore, Professor Geyser produced an affidavit which proved that three of his colleagues at Pretoria University, who had been called in as expert witnesses against him, were in collusion with the three students who ostensibly laid the charges against him. Ironically, one of these colleagues was Professor Egges Mulder, who, 'since dropping the no-justification-for-apartheid bombshell with Professor Geyser at the *Hervormde Kerk* synod years before, had been pulled back into line and forgiven his earlier indiscretion.' Another, Professor S P Engelbrecht, was a member of the synodal commission before which Professor Geyser was appearing. During the trial, Professor Engelbrecht admitted that the 13-page indictment, which had supposedly been drawn up independently by the three students, had, in fact, been typed in the Pretoria offices of the *Hervormde Kerk* on the church's typewriter. At the time, the general commission of the church, which was sitting in judgement on Professor Geyser, had been meeting at the same building (1978: 302-3).

All three of these theology professors were members of the Broederbond, whose dirty tactics also targeted members of Professor Geyser's family (see 1978: 303-4). Geyser was found guilty of heresy and defrocked. Out of the 15 members of the commission which convicted him, only two voted against the decision. These two were the only members of the commission who were not members of the Broederbond. Geyser afterwards accused the Broederbond of playing a leading role in the whole affair (which had, in fact, been plotted at a Broederbond meeting at the home of yet another colleague, Professor F J van Zyl) (1978: 301, 305-6).

> Running parallel with the unfolding of the Geyser story was an increasing disquiet about the Broederbond in the broad family of the Dutch Reformed Churches. There was growing concern among Afrikaans theologians about the interference of the Broederbond in Church affairs. ... [A prominent minister told the *Sunday Times* that] 'membership of the Church is wholly incompatible with membership of the Broederbond ... The Church is called upon to testify on the righteousness of the State; it must even be free to criticise the Government. But if the Church is controlled, as is the Government, by the Broederbond, it is in no position to discharge this duty. This is, in fact, what is happening. The gravest danger facing the Church today is that it may be prevented from being a universal testimony to a universal God, through involvement in local Nationalist or party political aims. The Broederbond's claim to Christian nationalism is sacrilegious: Christ and nationalism are not compatible.'
>
> The clerical revolt grew and found avenues of expression in books like *Delayed Action* and in a remarkable ecumenical journal *Pro Veritate*, edited by the prominent *Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk dominee*, Beyers Naude (1978: 309-10).

This journal was started on the initiative of Geyser and a fellow theologian, Dr Ben Engelbrecht (Geyser and Van Selms were both on its editorial committee) and, at Geyser's suggestion, Naude was invited to become its editor (Labuschagne, 2011: 13). Furthermore, the Christian Institute (*Christelike Instituut*), which soon achieved international recognition and respect under the directorship of Beyers Naude, and was eventually banned, along with its director (Naude) and its mouth-piece, *Pro Veritate*, in the massive and highly controversial security swoop of October 19th 1977, was the brainchild of Albert Geyser who, as chairman of the board, proposed that Naude be invited to become its director (Labuschagne, 2011: 14,15; Wilkins and Strydom, 1978: 321, 323-4; see also Venter, 1999: 1057).

The Broederbond, deeply concerned by the profound threat posed by this clerical revolt,

> launched a campaign to stamp out independent thinking in Afrikaans and nationalist controlled bodies ... The Executive Council issued a special three-page memorandum to members to counter growing moves against the organisation and against the morality of apartheid. These views, which it identified with communism and liberalism, were 'one of the most dangerous attacks' on Afrikanerdom. 'Even within our own circles,' it warned, 'it is sometimes argued with a great measure of fanaticism that our policy of apartheid is not Biblical. The Executive Council solemny calls on our Church leaders to combat this liberalistic attack on our Christian spiritual convictions and on the Christian-National philosophy on which our national struggle on the cultural, social, economic and educational front is founded, and to expose it firmly and clearly ...' This directive galvanised into action Broeders in Church councils, Rings, moderatures and the editorial boards of Dutch Reformed Church publications. A 'spontaneous' campaign suddenly erupted on a national scale against *Pro Veritate* (1978: 310).

In spite of the concerted underground campaign which the Broederbond waged inside church organs, there was mounting dissent amongst churchmen, who redoubled their efforts to have the organisation investigated by the Church. It is at this point that Professor Van Selms launched his punishing attack on the Broederbond (see above).

> The anti-Broederbond sentiment moved through the *Hervormde Kerk*, was taken up in the *Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk* and eventually was mirrored in the ranks of the smallest [and most conservative] of the Dutch Reformed Churches, the *Gereformeerde Kerk* (1978: 310-14).

> The Broederbond, realising that its blockbuster methods of trying to cope with the revolt in the Church were failing, decided on a more subtle approach. In October that year it sent out a circular to its members containing the following advice: 'If the Broederbond is discussed in church council meetings, do not attempt to stop the discussion. Allow (it) to run its full course then propose that the matter be referred to the synod for action.' The Broederbond was well aware that, in this way, it could contain the attacks. Justifiably, it was confident that it had the synods sufficiently under control to prevent any investigation of its affairs.

> Slowly the indomitable purpose of the organisation was bringing the clerical crisis under control. Slowly it was enfolding the revolt in its smothering embrace. One by one, it was extinguishing the fires of criticism and attack. The onslaught was dwindling, losing direction and power. But, on another level, the organisation was involved in a feverish witch-hunt. Each step in its campaign against the churches, and in other areas, had been mysteriously reported in the *Sunday Times*. Week after week the newspaper reported sensational disclosures about the organisation, bathing it in the harsh glare of publicity it always energetically seeks to avoid. The whole affair plunged the organisation into panic. Names of members were being revealed holus-bolus, causing tremendous embarassment (1978: 315-16).

Colonel Hendrik van den Bergh, head of the Security Police, was instructed by the Broederbond to personally lead the investigation. Eventually, after seven months during which the Broederbond had been driven to complete distraction by the ongoing disclosures in the *Sunday Times*, which even the most drastic and extraordinary security measures could not check (1978: 316-18), Colonel Van den Bergh interrogated the dissident theologian Dr Beyers Naude. It turned out that Beyers Naude, who was a member of the Broederbond, had been in possession of the documents which were published in the *Sunday Times*. He had shown these documents to a fellow theologian who was not a Broederbonder. This colleague was none other than Professor Albert Geyser (1978: 318-19).

In a statement to the Press, Professor Geyser said:

> Reverend Naude visited me about seven months ago in some distress. He felt himself bound by his word to the Broederbond, while at the same time he had a severe battle of conscience over the menace that organisation had for the Christian Church in South Africa. He gave me a number of the Broederbond documents so that I could form my own judgement on the problem (quoted in Wilkins, Strydom, 1978: 320).

> Professor Geyser said that portions of the documents plainly indicated the use of the Church for the political goals of the Broederbond. He saw in the documents the type of quasi-Biblical argument which he had come to know in the hearing of the heresy charge against him. 'For this reason, I decided that the only way to frustrate these views would be to make them public.' (1978: 320).

At the time when Naude came to Geyser for advice, he also had intensive consultations with Van Selms (who had recently published his attack on the Broederbond) on the same issue. It is on the advice of these two colleagues that he decided to quit the Broederbond in April of that year, 1963 (Labuschagne, 2011: 14).

The new threat to 'Afrikanerdom'

Professor Geyser and Doctor Mulder effectively destroyed the theological and philosophical basis of apartheid by discovering that there is no justification anywhere in the Bible for this racial policy. It is important to note that the threat posed to apartheid and Christian-Nationalism by Geyser, Naude and numerous other theologians and ministers, was not that of modernism. Nor were they attacking the system from a liberal vantage point – far from it. It was their deeply serious and conservative Afrikaner Protestant faith which compelled them to reject a false theology which had no Biblical foundation, and must therefore, in Protestant terms, be regarded as an abomination.

This posed the most profound threat to the Broederbond because it came from within the ranks of conservative God-fearing Afrikanerdom (as we have seen, Prof Geyser's grandfather and great grandfather were the founders of the *Nederduitse Hervormde Kerk*) and even from within the ranks of the Broederbond itself (Dr Beyers Naude was not only a member of the Broederbond – he was in fact a senior member, a branch chairman.

> Worse still was the fact that Naude was a revered man in the Broederbond's history. The Dominee Naude that had provided the vital spiritual dimension to the organisation's founding in 1918, was the father of Beyers. It was thus a 'family affair' and Dr Naude's stinging rejection was all the more keenly felt by the organisation as a result (1978: 322)).

But worst of all, this attack came from a quarter which had always provided such powerful support for apartheid – which had, in fact, provided the philosophical basis of the system.

Added to this is the fact that the essence of the Protestant faith is a reformation of Christianity by returning to the Biblical text and thereby eradicating any ecclesiastical practices and beliefs which are not directly supported by Biblical text or example. (As will be shown below, the guideline texts on how to design an Afrikaner Protestant church uniformly apply this principle to church architecture). It is therefore the essence of the Protestant faith itself which was now threatening to destroy apartheid. Theologians and ministers like Geyser, Van Selms and Naude were simply being true Protestants when they attacked apartheid (after it was revealed to them that it had no scriptural foundation).

Any well-informed Afrikaans Protestant theologian or minister, regardless of how conservative he was or how loyal he was to his leaders, was now in a position where he had to choose between his Protestant faith and his loyalty to his political leaders. Inevitably, those whose faith was most sincere and free from the self-delusion of expediency, those who had the courage to defend their Bible-based Christian faith against political interests and political onslaughts, turned against the Broederbond. Thus the true spiritual leaders of the Afrikaner churches were estranged from the political leadership of the Afrikaner. As is clear from his statement above, Professor Geyser handed copies of the secret Broederbond documents to the *Sunday Times* – not out of a desire for revenge or out of any liberal or radical political convictions, but because his Christian conscience compelled him to protect the Church against this sinister organisation.

In a secret document, *Die Christen-Afrikaner – Sy Toets en Krag*, the Broederbond explained the nature and tactics of 'the enemy' to its members:

> The intention [of the opponents and enemies of the Afrikaner] is to make as many churches as possible declare themselves against apartheid to make the Christian Afrikaner doubt doubt the honesty and scriptural basis and Christ-obedience of his own church. And if the Afrikaner should begin to feel that his church is presenting him with a false moral standard, by approving of independent development or separate freedom for the nation – while this is actually un-Christian and immoral – then to remain as a separate nation with separate freedom would be like Ichabod with his struggle and strife. If the Christian Afrikaner had to believe that his striving for a separate freedom for himself, as distinct from that of the non-white, was immoral, the politicians could just as well drop apartheid; they would not be able to maintain it (quoted in Wilkins, Strydom, 1978: 296).

Although this document adresses the threat of external 'opponents and enemies', the Broederbond was well aware of the far more serious threat posed by an onslaught from within (see p 82 above): since, for the Afrikaner, the word of Afrikaner theologians and ministers traditionally held more weight even than that of his political leaders, he could well be persuaded by these churchmen that apartheid is un-Christian and immoral, in spite of the fact that, by and large, he could be made to reject, out of hand, the same theological arguments as 'liberal' or 'communist-inspired' when voiced by external opponents of apartheid. And if both Old and New Testament authorities (Professors Mulder and Geyser) stated that they could not find a single bit of evidence in the Bible to justify apartheid, then the Broederbond's position was desperate indeed.

The brutal revenge which the Broederbond exacted on both Professor Geyser and Dr Beyers Naude – a concerted campaign of intimidation and abuse which included death threats and total ostracisation (see 1978: 322-24), is indicative of the dire threat which true churchmen now posed to them. The Broederbond's comprehensive infiltration of the Church at all levels (see 1978: 297-324) resulted in its successful suppression of true Protestant values within that body, which now became its timid lackey instead of its spiritual advisor – a situation which was to have terrible consequences for the whole country in the decades ahead.

The complete ostracisation of Geyser and Naude from Afrikaner society was more cruel than one might think. These men were not born rebels or radicals who, like Bob Dylan, John Lennon or Mick Jagger (operating at the same time, the 1960s), relished the controversial role that they were playing (secure in the knowledge that every 'shocking', 'anti-social' act or statement will be applauded by hordes of adoring fans who subscribed to the same nineteenth century Romantic legacy of the artist as rebel/non-conformist/outsider). On the contrary, they were conservative men, conformists to the core and very much insiders, who were deeply attached to the Afrikaner people, so that their expulsion from that society through the agency of the Broederbond was a terrible ordeal for them and their families (see1978: 322).

A favourite device employed by the Bond to isolate their enemies was the smear-campaign. They had used this with devastating effect against General J B M Herzog in the 1930s (see below) and they now used it against Geyser and Naudé, who were publicly accused of being communists, planning sabotage and revolution; of being ruthless, sanctimonious, deceitful and cowardly; of pretending to be Christians while in fact wanting

to destroy Christianity; of organising a bloodbath to have white women and children murdered; and of preaching heresy and being enemies of the Afrikaner Churches. These accusations appeared in a series of articles written by the Broederbond theologian Professor Adriaan Pont (who had played such an unsavoury role in the heresy trial of his colleague, Albert Geyser) and published in the monthly journal of the *Hervormde Kerk*. Geyser and Naude took Pont to court and won their case: he was made to pay the largest penalty for slander in South African legal history up to that time, as well as all legal costs, which came to a total of R170,000 – a fortune in those days (Labuschagne, 2011: 16-17; see also Venter, 1999: 1067).

Immediately after the trial, in a true Christian gesture, Geyser and Naudé told Pont that they would waive the penalty if he would apologise for the slander. He refused absolutely, confident in the fact that the Broederbond as well as the Church were fully behind him on this and would bail him out, which they duly did (see Labuschagne, 2011: 17; Venter, 1999: 1067). Years before Casper Labuschagne overheard this theologian saying to a group of theology students at Pretoria University: *'Albert Geyser moet nou ophou met sy sentimentele stront!'* (with regard to the fate of the blacks under the apartheid system) (2011: 13).

The following examples are indicative of just how effective these smear-campaigns were: Beyers Naude's own mother and one sister refused to ever see this *'volksverraaier'* again, and later on, when he arrived at his mother's funeral, he was told that he was not welcome there. At a church meeting, Geyser was accused by his own brother (who was also a minister in the *NHK*) of being 'a devil in the guise of an angel of light' (Labuschagne, 2011: 15).

Naude at least had some compensation in the fact that he had become an internationally known and respected figure, with people from all over the world seeking his counsel and opinions about South African affairs (Wilkins and Strydom, 1978: 323). And his banning further enhanced this international reputation (Labuschagne, 2011: 2).

With Geyser matters were different. The ordeal of intimidation, abuse and alienation was too much for his wife Celia, whose 'health was ravaged completely, forcing her to live a life in and out of medical institutions' (Wilkins and Strydom, 1978: 323). Apart from the death threats that he received by telephone and by letter, he also narrowly survived an assassination attempt and his one son later committed suicide (Labuschagne, 2011:

15,16). A decade after the sensational events related above he was completely forgotten (see Wilkins and Strydom, 1978: 323).

This remarkable man was the central figure in one of the most significant developments in Afrikaner history – one which caused an unprecedented crisis in the Broederbond as well as the Afrikaner Churches. He knew that, since the entire apartheid edifice was supported by a theological foundation, and, given the god-fearing nature of the Afrikaner nation as well as the extremely close relationship between the Nationalist government, the Broederbond and the Afrikaner Churches, that it was possible to destroy this edifice by exposing, from the inside, the false and unscriptural nature of the apartheid theology.

That this was a very real possibility is confirmed by the fact that the Broederbond itself admitted, in a secret document, that if the Afrikaner came to believe that the church had presented him with a false moral standard and that apartheid was actually un-Christian and immoral, then *'the politicians could just as well drop apartheid; they would not be able to maintain it'* (see above; emphasis added). In another secret document the Broederbond stated that this view (that apartheid is not Biblical), when coming from within the ranks of the Afrikaner, was '*one of the most dangerous attacks on Afrikanerdom'* (see above, emphasis added).

Geyser pursued this aim with enormous courage and moral integrity.

After the Rivonia trials of 1964, in which Nelson Mandela and the other leaders of the black resistence were imprisoned, it was thought that the *swart gevaar* had been dealt with, but that a new threat, that of the *rooi gevaar*, now had to be confronted (Labuschagne, 2011: 17). At his *Anti-kommunistiese Volkskongres* of the Afrikaner churches, educational institutions and cultural societies (1966), Professor Adriaan Pont, who had assumed the role of 'communist-hunter', delivered a tirade against the Christian Institute and against Geyser and Naudé in particular (in the context of this 'communist threat'). It is at this point that they decided to take him to court (see above) (2011: 16-17). This incident shows once again what an enormous threat Geyser, Naudé and the Christian Institute (as well as their fellow dissidents) were to the Broederbond and the government.

Geyser died an outcast in 1985, still unforgiven. The *Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk* officially apologised to Beyers Naude in 1994 and fully reinstated him in honour.

Incredibly, when Labuschagne gave his lecture in 2011, the *Nederduitse Hervormde Kerk* were still steadfastly refusing to pardon Albert Geyser, in spite of Labuschagne's efforts on his behalf (Labuschagne, 2011: 18). Ironically, his last request was to have his funeral service in the *Nederduitse Hervormde Kerk*. This might seem a strange request, considering the shocking treatment he received from this church (he had not been a member since the heresy trial two decades before) – until one remembers that the *Nederduitse Hervormde Kerk* had been founded by his grandfather and great grandfather.

The published attacks by Geyser and Van Selms on the Broederbond are to some extent reminiscent of General J B M Herzog's Smithfield address of November 7th 1935, in which he launched a blistering attack on the Broederbond, lambasting them for promoting racial hatred and racial domination, and revealing, for the first time, the secret workings of this organisation (see Wilkins and Strydom, 1978: 53-72). Van Selms's account of how the Broederbond controlled church bodies (see 1978: 313-14) has a striking parallel in General Herzog's account of how they controlled (or attempted to control) voting and other actions by MP's in parliament at this early stage (see 1978: 67). Geyser's exposure of the Broederbond in the *Sunday Times* likewise brings to mind General Herzog's exposure, in this address, of major political figures of the day (such as D F Malan, leader of the Nationalist Party, and all his lieutenants) as members of the Bond (1978: 63-4). The revenge which the Broederbond exacted on General Herzog was every bit as vicious and devastating as the revenge they took on Geyser and Naude (see 1978: 72-74).

Note that the Broederbond, by Herzog's well-informed account, were already playing such a sinister political role at this early date, the 1930s, when Afrikaner theologians at Stellenbosch and Potchefstroom were expressing their anti-modernist views (see pp 1-5 above).

There might seem to be far too much detail above on the Broederbond's acts of revenge, but since the intellectual climate described above is a theological one, and since the Broederbond eventually controlled the theological outlook of the Afrikaner Churches during this time (the 1960s) it is important to look at the moral stature of this controlling body. The nature of the revenge they took on General Herzog, Professor Geyser and Dr Naude (which, in the case of the two theologians, reached abjectly criminal levels), shows how profoundly hostile this organisation was to the principles of Christ. Every new member of the Bond, at his installation, heard the following:

> He who betrays the Bond will be destroyed by the Bond; the Bond never forgives and never forgets; her revenge is swift and certain; no traitor ever escapes his deserved punishment (Labuschagne, 2011: 14).[37]

That these words were no idle threat is richly demonstrated by the accounts above.

André van Graan, applying Michel Foucault's concept of panopticism, has shown that the apartheid government used modernism (i.e. Le Corbusier's modernist urban planning schemes) to enforce its despotic rule in the townships (2004: 5-12, 55). The argument he presents is compelling, and this raises the question of whether the same (or something similar) does not apply to the church architecture – considering that the Church occupied such a central position in Afrikaner culture and that the Broederbond controlled the Church.

It could possibly be argued, along the lines of Robert Hughes, that these buildings use modernism to express a fascist aesthetic which would be in accord with the tyrannical Broederbond ethics revealed above (Hughes,1991: 99-108; see also Goldblatt: 1998: 18, 233).

However, unlike Van Graan's argument, that of Hughes relies heavily on the aesthetic perceptions of the viewer/reader, and, while this type of argument might perhaps apply to some examples of Afrikaner churches, the aesthetic expression of a despotic spirit is not, in my opinion, typical or characteristic of the genre (as it more clearly is of the Italian Fascist and North American government buildings which Hughes uses to illustrate his point – see Hughes, 1991: 100-108).[38]

Besides which, this is not a point which can be presented with sufficient academic rigour, relying, as it does, on the viewer/reader's aesthetic judgement. Furthermore, it would be grossly unfair to lay such a damning charge at the door of the architects in question without any tangible evidence. Neither the texts nor the church buildings discussed in the

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[37] 'Wie die Bond verraai sal deur die Bond vernietig word; die Bond vergewe nooit en vergeet nooit nie; haar wraak is snel en seker; geen verraaier ontsnap ooit sy verdiende straf nie.'

[38] Hughes also discusses the use of Neo-Classicism by Nazi Germany, Communist Russia and Fascist Italy (i.e. Hitler, Stalin and Mussolini) in the same context, and shows that the type of Modernism employed in government buildings in the United States of America after 1950 was strongly related to the 'neo-classicism with a cookie-cutter' of Mussolini's Third Rome (Hughes, 1991: 99-108).

next chapter (i.e. the case studies of specific churches) present any such tangible evidence.

The relationship between the Broederbond and the Church was a complex one, and it is important to bear in mind the history of the clerical revolt against apartheid and against the Broederbond, its chief guardian, when considering the texts which laid down the principles of Afrikaner Protestant church design, since these texts were written during the time of this history, and particularly because one of the leading figures in this clerical revolt, Professor Adrianus van Selms, was also the theologian who wrote the seminal first publication on Afrikaner Protestant church design – a text which is followed closely by all the subsequent authors dealt with below. This first text appeared at the time when the revolt was conceived, and the last appeared when the Broederbond had already crushed it comprehensively and established a firm control over all three the Dutch Reformed Churches, including, most importantly, the theology of these churches.

CHAPTER SEVEN: **CHURCH DESIGN IN THEORY AND PRACTICE**

After the Protestant Reformation church services were initially held in barns or private dwellings, and subsequently in occupied Roman Catholic cathedrals which were 'purified of images, decorations and works of art, and could therefore be adapted to the austerity of the Protestant church service patterns' (Kesting, 1978: 4, my translation).

However, already during the 16th century, and starting soon after the Reformation, a large number of Protestant churches were built in Europe and the British isles. This dynamic church-building activity soon lead to theoretical investigations of Protestant architecture. In 1587 Rudolf Hospinian, a Zürich theologian and follower of Ulrich Zwingli, published *De Templis*. In this treatise on the early development of Protestant church architecture, the author pleads for a return to the old simplicity of the original Church of the apostles. He is also deeply concerned with the issue of creating a devotional atmosphere in the church, as well as with the functional treatment of the congregation's liturgical requirements. In 1600 Jacques Perret published hypothetical designs of three Huguenot temples of various sizes in which there is a manifest striving to achieve an uninterrupted view of the pulpit (by the whole congregation). In 1649 Joseph Furtenbach den Jüngeren of Augsburg

published *Kirchengebäw, In Was Form und Gestalt auffzubawen* in which clear guidelines in church design at a very low cost and with a high degree of utility are proposed (Kesting, 1978: 9-11).

Thus the central themes of the Afrikaner Protestant literature on the subject – the need to return to the simplicity of the original Christian Church, the need for a devotional atmosphere, and the functional treatment of the requirements of the Protestant liturgy (which, importantly, includes an untrammelled view of the pulpit) – had already been clearly established in the 16th century.

During the subsequent centuries a number of similar works appeared in Europe. From the 1930s onward the subject of church design became highly topical in European Protestant communities, as is witnessed by the marked increase in the number of publications and conferences, and the establishment of institutes, foundations and study commissions on the subject, which, after the Second World War, showed a global rise in momentum (Kesting, 1978: 11).

In spite of this, and in spite of an exceptionally active program of church-building in South Africa, the subject of Afrikaner Protestant church design, for almost three centuries since the establishment of the Dutch Reformed Church at the Cape, received scant attention in publications (1978: 11).

Van Selms published his book in the same year that the report of the synod of the Reformed Church of the Netherlands ('*Nederlandse Hervormde Kerk*') – *Beginselen van Kerkbou* – appeared (i.e. 1954). The new guidelines given by Van Selms, in combination with this Dutch publication, served as a clear stimulus for further and more active deliberation on the subject of Afrikaans Protestant church design (1978: 13). (Both Du Toit et al and Koorts, in their respective books, refer to this and other Dutch publications on the subject).

However, by this time the development of Modernist Afrikaner Protestant church design was already well on its way, and the application of the above-mentioned themes or principles to actual church designs was manifest from the outset. In fact, as we have seen, the first three Modernist churches designed by Anthonie Smith (during the late 1930s and early 1940s) take these principles to their logical conclusion (except, perhaps, for the one concerned with creating a devotional atmosphere). Unfortunately, it is not

known whether Smith was directly influenced by any overseas literature on the subject, even though there was a lively debate regarding it going on in Europe at the time.[39]

Nevertheless, whether or not Smith was influenced by contemporary overseas thinking, the fact remains that the basic principles for Protestant church design had already been established three and a half centuries before, and it is these well-established and time-honoured principles which were treated with a rigorous and unflinching logic by Smith and other architects (here and elsewhere in the world). Perhaps the most important and certainly the most dramatic innovation in these church designs was the extension of these principles – which were almost exclusively concerned with the church interior – to the exterior of the church by using Le Corbusier's Modernist principle of 'plan as generator'.

Before returning to Van Selms's *Protestantse Kerkbou*, a few observations need to be made about some subsequent texts (which appeared in the 1960s and early 1970s) in the context of the theological background given above (Van Selms's book was published in 1954 – i.e. before the clerical revolt occurred, and in the same year that Geyser was commissioned by the *Nederduitse Hervormde Kerk* to find scriptural justification for apartheid).

Sinvolle Kerkbou

The book *Sinvolle Kerkbou* (1966) by H D A du Toit et al emphasises the fact that, in the Protestant Church, all believers are equal in the eyes of God, and that consequently there must be no architectural separation between the clergy and the congregation – in contrast to the Roman Catholic and Greek Orthodox churches where an *enforced segregation* (he actually uses the word *apartheid*) between the clergy and the laity is applied throughout' (1966: 60, emphasis added).[40]

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[39] According to Hannes Smith, his father kept in touch with the latest developments, but he does not know if there was any such literary influence from overseas. His father never mentioned anything to that effect to him (2014).

[40] 'in teenstelling met die Rooms-Katolieke en Grieks-Ortodokse kerke waar 'n *gedwonge apartheid* tussen kerklike amptenare en leke konsekwent deurgevoer word' (emphasis added).

Van Selms had already raised this issue in his book, as did *Architectus*, but neither of them used such a politically loaded term (Van Selms,1954: 42; *Architectus* (Koorts),1960: 317-319, 365-366, 395-396, 460).

In *Gereformeerde Kerkbou* (1974), J M J Koorts repeats and elaborates on this argument. He prepares the reader for this point with a lengthy and detailed account of how, since the latter days of the Early Christian Church, through Romanesque and Byzantine, and culminating in Gothic, Christian church architecture has reflected the growing tendency of the clergy to 'raise itself above' the laity, performing masses and other sacred rites from which the latter were increasingly excluded. This tendency is expressed architecturally in features such as the *cancellus* or grill which physically separated the liturgical space from the nave where the laity congregated, as well as in the proliferation of private chapels in the apse or along the transepts. He also argues that the whole design of the Byzantine church, with its centralised plan and central dome, was motivated by this phenomenon. And the first thing that the Reformers did when they took over some of these Christian churches, was to throw out the *cancellus* – the supreme symbol of this practice which was so highly offensive to Protestants – so that the clergy and the laity could once again worship as a single unit as Christ intended, and as last occurred in the early days of the Early Christian Church. Thus, the removal of any architectural vestiges of this practice is fundamental to Protestant church design, being a logical extension of the Reformation itself (Koorts,1974: 23, 25-28, 32-35, 39-41, 50-53, 66).

Furthermore, it is argued by all authors from Van Selms onwards that form must follow function, and that, since the function of the church building is the performance of the Protestant liturgy, the whole building must be an architectural expression thereof, with the plan of the liturgical space as generator of the entire structure (see below). The church interior must express the Protestant insistence on the equality of all Church members before the eyes of Christ (by making the liturgical space and the communal space a single unit), and this egalitarian belief would then, in terms of the above modernist principles, pervade the whole building, from interior to exterior.

Sinvolle Kerkbou was the official report of the commission on church architecture of the Northern and Southern Transvaal synods of the *Nederduits Gereformeerde Kerk*. Althought the report was completed and the book published in 1966, the commission was established in 1963 – the same year that Dr Beyers Naude, the outspoken editor of *Pro Veritate* who was widely known for his anti-apartheid views, was elected moderator of the

Southern Transvaal synod of the *N G Kerk* by a considerable majority (209 votes, whereas the Broederbond favourite, Reverend H J C Snijders, polled only 167 votes). In a further blow to the Broederbond (who were otherwise scoring major triumphs at this synod meeting), Dr F E O'Brien Geldenhuys, who, as part of the clerical revolt, had quit the Broederbond shortly before, was elected moderator of the Northern Transvaal synod (Wilkins and Strydom,1978: 313).

By the time the book was published Beyers Naude was no longer moderator. (In the aftermath of the sensational leaks to the *Sunday Times* he was, through the agency of the Broederbond, debarred from serving in any office in the Church – even as an elder (see 1978: 323)). In the mean time the Broederbond had managed to effectively take control of the Church and silence dissenting voices.

However, when strong religious convictions are suppressed they do not just go away, and the passage from this book quoted above represents precisely the kind of way in which such suppressed convictions might re-surface – in an ambiguous context, exploiting the relatively safe domain of architecture.

Whatever the case be, this 'no apartheid' point, particularly when it forms the centre-piece of their whole argument on Afrikaner Protestant church architecture, is extraordinary when considering that apartheid was fundamental to the theology of the Dutch Reformed Churches. To argue that there must be no vestiges of segregation inside the church, when the Church officially enshrined apartheid as God's own will, is interesting, to say the least. And when the authors actually use the term 'apartheid' to describe this clerical practice in the report of a commission which (in its initial stages, at least) was ultimately presided over by Dr Beyers Naude and a fellow 'liberal' moderator, it becomes even more interesting. When seen in the context of the clerical revolt against apartheid which had recently come to a head, this statement is surely significant.

Another interesting feature of this report is the cover design of the published book (reproduced below by kind permission of the publisher). It shows a thoroughly modernist church depicted in the style of the American pop artist Roy Lichtenstein – complete with bold black outlines, flat colour and enlarged benday dots, as used in comic strips. Pop art, although part of Modernism, was radical within the Late Modernist context: it was already paving the way for Post-Modernism with its provocative use of popular culture and 'realistic' imagery (Post-Modernism in fine art only really rose to prominence in the 1980s).

This cover design was therefore on the cutting edge of Modernism. (At the time many sophisticated people who prided themselves on their Modernist taste in fine art, being ardent admirers of Picasso, Klee, Matisse, Dali etc., still found Roy Lichtenstein, in particular, hard to digest).

Furthermore, Lichtenstein himself first started applying his comic-strip style to iconic images of famous buildings in 1964, i.e. only two years before the cover design of *Sinvolle Kerkbou* appeared, and it is therefore unlikely that the designer of this cover, Rev P A Pienaar (who also wrote the chapter on art and symbolism inside the church building), even knew of their existence. (see Waldman, 1971: plates 99-100).

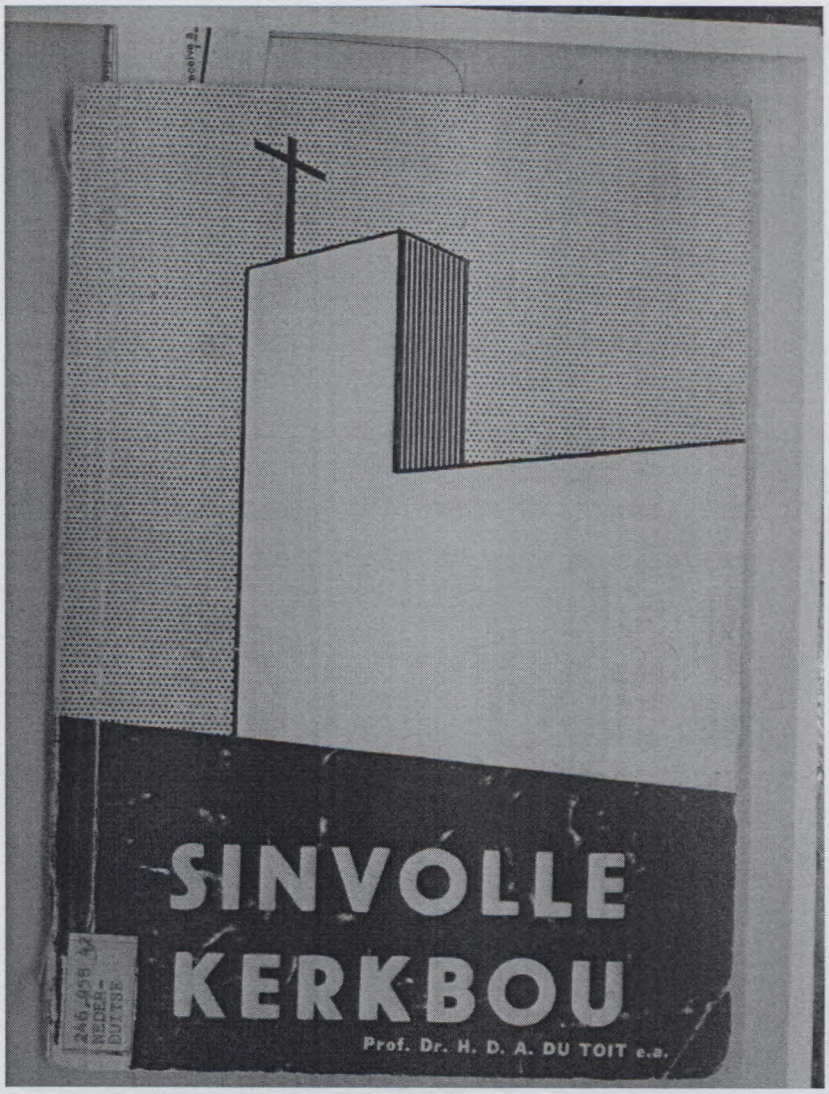

Figure 19. Cover design of *Sinvolle Kerkbou*'. Reproduced by kind permission of the publisher.

But what is most remarkable about this cover design is the radical geometric simplicity and austerity of this image of a Modernist Afrikaner Protestant church – a geometric austerity, stripped of all embellishments, which is perfectly suited to both Protestant and Modernist aims. Equally remarkable is how well Lichtenstein's Modernist style of painting is suited to both these aims.

A decade later, when Koorts's book was published, the clerical revolt was long forgotten (see Wilkins & Strydom,1978: 323), and it is not surprising that this author, when questioned on the matter, gave the assurance that there were no political implications in his argument for the removal of all architectural divisions between the clergy and the congregation (Koorts, 2012a).

Beginsels van Protestantse Kerkbou

Returning now to Professor Van Selms: a remarkable feature of his book, followed by every author discussed here, is the deployment of Biblical example to justify the use of Modernism in Afrikaner Protestant church design (see below). In true Protestant fashion, it is argued that, since there are no indications in the Bible of how a church should look (i.e. there is no 'scriptural' architectural style to satisfy the needs of the Protestant faith), and since all existing architectural traditions in the Christian Church are based on either pre-Christian or pagan traditions, that there is practically no such thing as a Christian architecture, '*if architecture is to be understood as the finding of a new style*' (Van Selms, 1954: 22, my translation, emphasis added). It is worth quoting this argument in some detail:

> If the essence of the Reformation was the return to the Holy Scripture, then it goes without saying that, when considering our new church, we should first ask: What does the Bible say in this regard? It is singularly disappointing that the answer should be: there are no direct indications, either in the Old or in the New Testament ....
>
> Certainly, tabernacle and temple are described at such length that it is possible, with the help of a small dose of fantasy, to construct models of both ... But these Biblical sanctuaries are no churches. A church is the gathering place of a Christian congregation, but the congregation of the Old Covenant did not gather in the tabernacle or the temple building. The people gathered in the atriums, thus in the

> open air and not in the actual building. Only the acting priests entered it, in order to burn incense or sprinkle the sacrificial blood, but not to preach. ...
>
> Furthermore it is desirable for us to avoid any association with the service at the temple and the tabernacle. Because the New Testament, particularly the letter to the Hebrews, has taught us that this service is a foreshadowing of the holy work of Christ. When the Lord cried out on the cross that everything is accomplished, and the curtain in front of the temple was rent asunder, this brought about an end to the significance of the temple. Therefore our church service may not, in contradiction of Christ, heark back to the Old Testament service (1954: 9-11; my translation).
>
> We read nothing in the New Testament of a church building erected and fitted out for the Christian service. Therefore there is also no such thing as a 'scriptural church style' (1954: 13; my translation).

Van Selms then proceeds to review the history of Christian architecture, finding reasons why each and every style of the past is unsuitable as a basis for Protestant church architecture (1954: 14-24; all the subsequent authors follow this precedent, which Koorts elaborates on at considerable length, adding important new material which is highly relevant to the argument – see Architectus (Koorts), 1960: 316-320, 364-366, 395-397; Du Toit et al, 1966: 9-26 ; Koorts, 1974: 17-53). He (Van Selms) sums up as follows:

> From this historical digression we may gather the following. In the first place we see that relatively little value can be attached to the Christian architectural traditions: because the different types are rooted in pre-Christian and extra-Christian prototypes. The synagogue of the Jews, the judicial building and the mausoleum of the heathens provided the early Christian builders with inspiration for their church architecture. With its church architecture the Christian community is rooted in the legacy of the Jewish or pagan ancestry. In fact, there is no Christian architecture, *if architecture is to be understood as the discovery of a new style*; there is only the a development of earlier motifs by Christian architects with an eye to the needs of the Christian service. A typifying example of this statement has already been briefly indicated by us: the Gothic pointed arch. It has often been regarded as the stylistic feature *par excellence* of the Christian church. ... And yet the pointed arch is of a non-Christian origin: we got it from the Muslims, and they imported it from their Persian-Indian border area (1954: 22; my translation, emphasis added).
>
> However, this does not mean that we can learn nothing from the struggles of the past generations. On the contrary. From its dependence on extra-Christian stylistic elements we can learn that the Christian community's cultural life is directly related to the level of civilization which is found in its environment. The Christian church building *must not seem to be archaic or foreign. Just as Christian preaching uses the language of the people, and not the language of another nation or the language of a thousand years before, so Christian architecture must also conform to the indications which the own environment offer. It is contrary to the ideals of the Byzantine*

> *architects themselves to establish an imitation of Byzantine domed architecture in South Africa in the twentieth century (1954:* 22-23; my translation, emphasis added).
>
> After a period of following European architectural trends this century [the 20th century] has seen the growth of our own Afrikaans church-building style. *It has been adapted to the Afrikaans nature and character*. Original and happy solutions have been found to all sorts of problems in connection with it (1954: 6; my translation, emphasis added).

As has been mentioned before, it is interesting that Modernism is not mentioned by name here. Nor is it really featured by any of the other authors (see p 46). Koorts (*Architectus*) refers to it as 'the contemporary style' (1960: 286, see also 284-5), while Du Toit et al simply state that one cannot heark back to the styles of the past, and that a 'new style' must be found (1966: 5, see also 6-7). Also significant is the fact that it is characterised as 'our own Afrikaans church-building style'[41] (as we shall see Van Selms has good reason for making such a claim). Furthermore, the use of a contemporary style as well as the 'plan as generator' principle ('being of one's own time and place, designing from the interior to the exterior...')[42] are justified by Biblical and Early Christian example (1954: 24; see also Du Toit et al, 1966: 5,6). Du Toit et al refer to the latter principle ('designing from the interior to the exterior') as 'one of the most important theological principles [in church design]' (1966: 6) That Van Selms is indeed referring to a Modernist church style is further confirmed by the illustrations in his book (see 1954: 27).

Form follows function

Le Corbusier's principle of 'plan as generator' (1927: 45-51) and the related Modernist principle of 'form follows function' (Sullivan, 1918: 46-48) are fundamental to the thinking of these Afrikaans Protestant architects and architectural theorists. In the earliest publication on the subject, *Beginsels van Protestantse Kerkbou* (1954), Prof. A van Selms has the following to say:

> The biggest objection to most of our churches is that too little thought has been given to *the purpose and use thereof*. The congregation did not raise the large sums of money concerned in order to create a pictoresque centre for their parish, but to get a

[41] ''n eie Afrikaanse kerkboustyl'

[42] 'die samehang met eie plaas en tyd, die bou van binne uit...'

> place of worship. This means that *the true church must be built from the inside outwards*. This cannot be emphasised too much. The most important thing about a house of worship is not how it appears from the outside, but how it works on the people who have gathered inside to worship God (1954: 8; my translation, emphasis added).

Here Le Corbusier's 'plan as generator' principle, has been adapted to serve the needs of the Protestant faith.

In 1966 the same idea is expressed in *Sinvolle Kerkbou*, the published report of the combined Synodal Commission of the North- and South Transvaal Dutch Reformed Church on church architecture (Du Toit et al, 1966: 6). Hannes Koorts, in his 1974 book *Gereformeerde Kerkbou* again restates this idea (1974: 6-7).

Returning to Van Selms, the principle of functionalism (which has already been raised in the paragraph quoted above) is given a specifically Protestant character:

> The church building of a congregation is not a monument in the first place, but a building which is used. We may justifiably say that *the house of worship is a utility building*.[43] We normally reserve that ugly term "utility building" for structures which serve a material purpose, such as warehouses, offices and so forth, but for a moment we want to use it with regard to the church. The congregation builds its church in order to use it. The congregation's motivation to build a church *is not an aesthetic desire*, but stems from a need for a place for its gatherings.
>
> This principle: the house of worship is a utility building – need not influence the beauty of the building in a negative way. That the opposite is true is proved by, for example, the warehouses along the old Amsterdam canals or the station building of Helsinki. *Functionality is a condition of rather than a hindrance to architectural beauty* (1954: 25, my translation, emphasis added).[44]

Note the matter-of-fact tone of the first paragraph – a tone which typifies the Afrikaner Protestant attitude to such matters (as expressed in these texts – see p 108 below: the eucharist table). This emphasis on the functional nature of a church must be understood in contradistinction to the Catholic belief in the immanent sacrality of the church space (as a *Domus Dei*) as well as the Catholic legacy of Counter-Reformation (i.e. Baroque) style of rich and abundant (and therefore 'irrational', non-functional) ornamentation (see below).

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[43] 'die bedehuis is 'n gebruiksgebou'

[44] 'Doelmatigheid is eerder 'n voorwaarde as 'n beletsel van argitektoniese skoonheid'

The italicised part of the second paragraph expresses an architectural aesthetic credo – one which, at face value, is indistinguishable from the functionalist aesthetic of Modernism, but which is motivated almost entirely (it would seem) by a Protestant world view (as the rest of the excerpt, as well as others, above and below, indicate).

The following extract, which advocates a functionalism of almost mathematical precision, is significant, once again, in contradistinction to the pervasive mysticism and emotionalism of the Catholic Church:

> If we can agree that the design of a church is determined by the purpose which the congregation has in mind, then we have suddenly discovered a whole series of guiding principles. All vagueness has then been excluded, and in clear outlines a whole bunch of requirements appear before our eyes. Eventually we will discover that there are so many determining factors that *solutions can almost be found in a mathematical way.*
>
> Because the purpose of the congregation is to gather in this space for the celebration of the public service in the future. The essence of this is beautifully described in the Catechism. ... The place where this duty is fulfilled must be suited to it. And herewith we have found the first principle of Protestant church architecture: the liturgy of the Church. Both the building commission and the architect should constantly be aware of the fact that what they are doing *is actually none other than fulfilling the material requirements of the liturgy*. They should regularly ask themselves: what is going to happen here? They should not for a moment forget that the church building is there for the sake of the church service, and not the other way around (1954: 24-25; my translation, emphasis added).

This is the central theme of these Protestant architects and architectural theorists – that the function of the church building is to express the requirements of the Protestant liturgy, and the entire church must be designed to fulfil this function, from the liturgical space outwards, so that even the exterior is a logical expression of this function (see also Architectus, 1960: 523-524; Du toit et al, 1966: 6; Koorts, 1974: 6-7). The following excerpts (from Van Selms) elaborate further on this latter aspect:

> Before the architect starts designing the walls and roof, he must first make a representation of the liturgical centre with its most important features: pulpit, eucharist table and baptismal font. This is the most important part of the whole work. ... *The entire church must be developed from the design of the liturgical centre*. Otherwise it is a failure, and our country is full of evidence that too little thought is given to the centre and its purpose. At the first meeting between architect and building commission nothing but the liturgical centre ought to be discussed (1954: 48-50; my translation, emphasis added).

Note the repeated emphasis on the theme of 'plan (liturgical centre) as generator'. The author clearly feels very strongly about this issue – it is a matter of faith, of conviction, and not just a theoretical standpoint.

> A striking feature of this oldest type of church [the Syrian church] is the fact that it is closed off from the outside world. Presumably there was nothing in the exterior which identified the building as a Christian church. This distinguishes it from the synagogues of the time, which often had a richly ornamented façade.in the absence of external decoration we may find a trace of the material poverty of the congregations of that time, but another motive was also in operation: *the aversion to external opulence, and the consciousness that the interior space of the church is more important than its exterior* (1954: 16, my translation, emphasis added).[45]

The italicised part expresses a classic Protestant attitude to aesthetic matters (one which has strong moral and religious overtones), and one which shows why Modernist architecture, with its austere, geometric surfaces and spaces, was so remarkably well suited to the needs of these Afrikaner Protestant architects: the aversion to external opulence (i.e. the aversion to ostentatious ornamentation) is as fundamental to Modernist architecture as it is to the Protestant faith. Adolf Loos, one of the pioneers of Modernist architecture argued in his most famous publication, *Ornament and Crime*, that ornament in the modern world is the expression of a criminal or degenerate mindset, and that *'the evolution of culture is synonymous with the removal of ornament from utilitarian objects'* (1908: 20, see also p 136 below). Loos's austere, geometrically pure early Modernist architecture, stems directly from this intense aversion to ornamentation. By stripping his buildings of all ornamentation he arrived at these characteristic forms of Modernism.

Although Loos's reasons for rejecting and condemning ornament are very different from the Protestant ones, there is nevertheless a remarkable parallel here. Whereas Loos associates ornament with crime, these Protestant writers, as exemplified by Van Selms, associate ornament (in a church) with what amounts to a theological crime – the violation of sacred law, and more particularly, of the divine injunction against the use of graven images in the religious service. (As will be shown below, ornamentation is strongly associated with idolatry by these authors). In both Loos and these Protestants, the development towards Modernism is driven by a powerful aversion to this 'crime'. And in

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[45] *'... die afkeer van uiterlike praal, en die bewussyn dat die kerkgebou se binneruimte belangriker is as sy buitekant.'*

both cases the removal of ornament from utilitarian objects as well as utlitarian spaces is seen as a mark of high moral accomplishment.

> From the old Syrian churches we may learn ... that the most important aspect of the church is the interior. Certainly, the entrance may draw one's attention more than was the case in the old Christian sanctuaries, and invite one in, but then the idea that one must be enticed to enter should be the prevailing feature of the exterior. *We cannot repeat enough that a church is not there to be seen from the outside, but to be entered* (1954: 23, my translation, emphasis added).

Here Van Selms repeats the theme of the Syrian churches to justify the Protestant emphasis on inwardness (as opposed to outward display), an attitude which applies to the Protestant individual as much as to his church building. Here again, the 'plan as generator' theme is given a thoroughly theological treatment.

An important feature of these texts is that they define Afrikaner Protestant church architecture in almost entirely negative terms: this architecture is what Catholic (and, to a lesser degree, Greek Orthodox) church architecture is not (or, rather, what Catholic architecture is, this architecture is not – see below). And, indeed, the actual churches themselves can be seen as physical denials of Catholic church architecture. More even than the Protestant liturgy, perhaps, it is this dogged determination to move as far away as possible from Catholic architectural practices and principles that seem to have guided the development of Afrikaner Protestant church architecture (particularly in its modernist phase – see below).

In fact, it is quite possible that, had Modernism not existed, these architects (if they possessed the necessary ingenuity, determination and boldness) might have developed a form of architecture very similar to, if not the same as, Modernism – by simply taking the principle of removing all Catholic elements from church architecture to its logical conclusion.[46]

Thus, by stripping church architecture of all sacred art and ornamentation (both of which typified Catholic church architecture), one is ultimately left with the blank walls, the pure geometric forms and spaces, and the austere, plain surfaces of Modernist architecture.

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[46] However, as we have seen, this process had already been started long before by Protestant architects and theorists.

Secondly, by removing all traces of mysticism or immanent sacrality (i.e. architectural design which caters for and expresses mystic beliefs and practices) and replacing it with an almost obsessive focus on functionalism, the central Modernist principle of 'form follows function' is achieved and taken to its logical conclusion.

Thirdly, the Protestant insistence on negating external opulence (and even external beauty – 'a church is not made to be seen from the outside') and the concomitant emphasis on the primacy of the inner space, leads quite logically (in conjuction with the stress on functionalism) to the Modernist principle of 'plan as generator' (see above).

The pulpit

Every feature of the church building is discussed in detail by these theorists, from the most important to the most (apparently) insignificant. Thus, in his treatment of the pulpit (to which he devotes an entire chapter), Van Selms states that it is not a stage, and explains why it should be designed for only one person (1954: 32-33). He further gives reasons (theological ones) why the pulpit must not be 'too high', and why it must be enclosed ('geen oop traliewerk ... nie'), and have a little door which can be locked (1954: 33-34).

Die following passage is significant:

> In recent years there has been a tendency to decorate the pulpit with the most beautiful marble and other types of stone. This always reminds one of the disciples of our Lord, who said to Him on his last visit to the temple at Jerusalem: "Master, behold these stones and these buildings!" the pulpit must remain a piece of furniture. Not for nothing is it called a chair.[47] Who would dress a chair with stone? Therefore we prefer a pulpit which is made of wood, or at least is clad in wood.
>
> One may certainly use beautiful wood for the pulpit, as long as the grain is not too disturbing.[48] A strong alternation of light and dark is often regarded as the main

[47] The Afrikaans word for 'pulpit' is 'preekstoel' (literally 'preaching-chair').

[48] 'Mens mag gerus mooi hout vir die preekstoel gebruik, as dit maar nie *te onrustige vlamme vertoon nie.*' There is perhaps a hint of something infernal in the italicised part (which, literally translated, means 'displaying flames which are too restless'. Emphasis added).

> feature of beautiful wood, but naturally this is out of place in a pulpit. The most beautiful wood in this regard *is that which is least distracting. Therefore the forms of the carpentry must also remain simple*. From the sixteenth to the eighteenth century carpenters often delighted in decorating the pulpit with the most fantastical woodcarving. The result is worth looking at – before and after the sermon; but *during the sermon one's gaze should not be on the wood, but on the living person above. The build-up of lines must therefore be so that one's gaze glides automatically along them to find rest a*bove ... (1954: 34, my translation, emphasis added).

Note here the reasoning for the avoidance of rich ornamentation (wood-carving) on the pulpit (as can be found, for example, on the well-known Baroque-style pulpit of the *Groote Kerk* in Adderley Street, Cape Town). This theological motivation for simplicity and austerity of design is of considerable importance (see below).

After discussing the pulpit cloth and the steps that lead to the pulpit (about which he digresses at some length about the reason why there should be only one set of steps, and not two, one on either side) as well as the sound board, he comes to a question of 'the utmost importance' – the positioning of the pulpit. After stating that the vast majority of Afrikaans Protestant churches have the pulpit in the main axis of the church, in a central position against the back wall, he argues for an off-centre placing. His main argument, which states that neither the pulpit nor a fixed Eucharist table must be on the centre of the main axis, is purely theological:

> The Protestant service has two focal points: the sermon and the sacrament, and we should not put the one above the other. ... The two are equal in worth, and stand in a perpetual relationship to each other. Neither may dominate the other (1954: 35, my translation).

To this he adds a second, purely aesthetic reason for the off-centre placing of the pulpit:

> By not placing the pulpit in the middle we are freed from the soulless symmetry which predominates in most of our churches. Once the pulpit is placed on the central axis, the whole space is inevitably divided into two equal and symmetrical parts. The vitality disappears, and the impression of the whole becomes dull and lifeless (1954: 38-39, my translation).

Furthermore, he gives careful consideration to the practical ergonomics of these arrangements (with regard to baptism, confirmation, wedding ceremonies etc.), but even here the overriding concern is the proper functioning of the Protestant liturgy. The following passage demonstrates how ergonomics and theology are often inextricably welded together:

> This objection to a fixed eucharist table in the liturgical centre, in front of a central pulpit, applies with the greatest force when, in connection with the ceremony, people have to kneel: at the confirmation of ministers and at the blessing of the marriage. If the fixed eucharrist table is in front of the pulpit, then the kneeling persons will find themselves in front of the table. They kneel in front of the table, and that might create the impression that they are kneeling before the place where the sacrament is served. This will look far too much like the Catholic adoration of the sacrament (1954: 39).

As one might expect, Van Selms has much to say about the liturgical space. The following is indicative of his treatment thereof.

> We have no secret transactions from which the ordinary member of the congregation is excluded. In the Eastern Orthodox Churches the most important part of the Eucharist liturgy occurs behind the cancellus, the wooden partition which is decorated with paintings of saints. Only the clergy may witness the blessing of the elements of the Eucharist; the congregation are denied this privilege. Such a separation between clergy and laity we do not acknowledge. Our liturgical transaction take place in public, and we deem it desirable that every member of the congregation should see it. ... Everyone that is present may and must witness it. This applies to the baptism as well as to the eucharist, and it is therefore mandatory that the eucharist table and the baptismal font are put in a place where all the church-goers can see them from their seats (1954: 42, my translation).

> The eucharist table must remain a table and a piece of furniture. Therefore it must be made of wood, preferrably of a type which derives from one's own country and environment. One must be careful not to make it too heavy, and particularly that no stone is used to adorn it. It must also remain a table always: a horizontal surface on legs. One must be able to see between the legs. When the space between the legs is closed up, *the eucharist table degenerates into an altar, and that we want to avoid at all cost. It cannot be emphasised too much, that the lines of the eacharist table must be extremely austere. Every arabesque, and even every conspicuous 'flame' in the wood grain itself, must be avoided. Noble simplicity is the key* (1954: 44-45, my translation, emphasis added).

Note how the injunction about the need for extreme austerity in the design of the table follows logically (in Van Selms's thinking) on the need to avoid the danger of the table 'degenerating' into an altar (there is no new paragraph to indicate the introduction of a new idea). He is clearly referring to altars of the Catholic Church, which typically are of a highly ornate Baroque or Rococo design (Baroque was essentially, in its initial stage, the style of the Catholic Counterreformation, which quite deliberately countered the austerity of the Protestant church and liturgy with an almost indulgently rich appeal to the senses and the emotions). This pronounced emphasis on the need for austerity, even extreme austerity, as a riposte to the exuberantly ornate style of a traditional Catholic altar and, for

that matter, the entire interior of a traditional Catholic church, is of considerable importance to the discussion of modernism in Afrikaans Protestant church design (see following chapter).

Note also the invocation of Winckelmann's famous Neo-classical dictum ('noble simplicity...') in this regard. Neo-classicism reacted with puritanical fervour to the over-indulgent ornateness of the Rococo style, which was a logical extension of the Baroque (in Bavarian and Austrian churches and palaces, in particular, it is impossible to tell where Baroque ends and Rococo begins). Van Selms's use of Winckelmann's phrase in this context conjures up visions of the radical Neo-classical designs of C.-N. Ledoux and É.-L. Boullée (some of which, like Ledoux's spherical design for a house, of c. 1790, and Boullée's spherical design for a monument to Isaac Newton, seems to belong to the twenty-first century). These two architects took Winckelmann's concept to its logical conclusion, thereby creating designs which were the ultimate in geometric simplicity and austerity, with a sense of elemental grandeur.

In spite of the underlying differences in the motives of these Neo-classical architects and those of the Afrikaans Protestant church architects (working in a modernist style), they seem to have shared a determination to rid their architecture of all traces of (Baroque or Rococo) ornamental excess and spatial opulence, and the results are, in a certain sense, similar – in both cases the dramatic simplification of form and space, as well as the austerity of the surfaces, achieves an overall effect which is in sharp contrast to that of Baroque and Rococo (or, for that matter, Gothic) architecture. Note that Ledoux's and Boullée's radical designs were made roughly forty years after Rococo was officially declared dead in 1750, and were very much part of the Neo-classical reaction to Rococo – which, like the Afrikaner Protestant reaction to Baroque, Rococo, Gothic, and other ornate styles, had strong moral overtones, since Baroque and Rococo represented to them the corrupt, overrefined and highly artificial (and therefore false) lifestyle and morality of the aristocracy (see Honour, 1968: 17-21).

Van Selms expresses the same highly significant attitude in the following excerpt, which makes a very clear link between the characteristic Afrikaner Protestant aversion to ornamentation (inside the church) and the Protestant dread of idolatry:

> A difficult issue in our time is the organ façade. The beautiful baroque casings of earlier centuries often constitute the liveliest section of the entire church space; but they no longer fit into our society. The curls and arabesques, the king David with his

> harp, the archangels with their trumpets, all the beauty and opulence which the city fathers of the eighteenth century lavished on the organ façades, form an alienating element in the churches, *where all other sculptures have been forbidden as seduction to idolatry*.[49] Maybe it was tolerated on the organ because, during the sermon, the congregation has its back turned to it, and only the minister can see it – he is supposed to be proof to David and the angels (1954: 66, my translation, emphasis added).

> The eucharist table is used: *it is not a monument, but a utility object*,[50]a piece of furniture. By pronouncing this we do not detract in the least from the sanctity of what occurs at the eucharist table. On the contrary*: it is not the object which sanctifies the act, but precisely the act which imbues the object with a certain derivative sanctity*. Seen in this light the indication "utility object" is, in fact, a confirmation of the respect with which one must regard the eucharist table (1954: 45, my translation, emphasis added).

Here again we see the remarkable conflation of functionalism and sacrality in Afrikaner Protestant thought. The last italicised sentence very succinctly expresses the difference between the Catholic and the Protestant concepts of sacrality. The latter is, to a considerable extent, negatively defined in opposition to the former. Note the emphatic tone with which Van Selms concludes that the term 'utility object' is actually a confirmation of the respect (or veneration) with which the Eucharist table should be regarded.[51]

In light of the above, this elevation of utility (and functionalism) to an almost sacred level would seem to stem from a Protestant horror of the fundamental Catholic concept of immanent sacrality with regard to sacred objects, effigies and architectural spaces. In their determination to rid Christianity of these 'idolatrous' concepts and practices, Protestants would naturally tend to place extraordinary emphasis on the fact that the objects and spaces in question are merely functional or utilitarian – that there is no intrinsic sacrality in such objects and spaces.

This emphatic denial of immanent sacrality is, in fact, fundamental to the Protestant faith (and particularly to the Calvinist branch thereof), and seems to have impacted profoundly

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[49] 'Die krulle en lofwerk, die koning Dawid met sy harp, die aartsengele met hul basuine, al die prag en praal wat die stadsbesture in die agtiende eeu aan die orrelfront ten koste gelê het, vorm 'n bevreemdende element in die kerke, *waar al ander beelde as verleiding tot afgodery geweer is*' (emphasis added).

[50] *'gebruiksvoorwerp'*

[51] 'So gesien is die aanduiding "gebruiksvoorwerp" juis eerder 'n bevestiging van die eerbied waarmee 'n mens die nagmaaltafel moet bejeën.'

on the whole Protestant worldview and lifestyle – a practical, down-to-earth, matter-of-fact approach to life which entails a marked aversion for the 'sensuous indulgence' and unfettered emotionalism as well as the mysticism of Catholic Counterreformation (i.e. Baroque) culture (as well as the legacy of this culture, which extends into the modern age).

In this approach to sacred objects (as seen in Van Selms's writing above) functionalism assumes symbolic overtones – it becomes a signifier of the 'true' Christian faith, stripped of all its pagan accretions. Hence the confidence with which Van Selms can proclaim that the term 'utility object' is a confirmation of the veneration with which the Eucharist table should be treated, rather than something which detracts from the sacredness of what occurs at this table. To a Catholic, such a statement (that the Eucharist table is merely a utility object) would be tantamount to sacrilege, but to a Protestant it is the Catholic adoration of the sacred object (altar in this case) which is sacrilegious, and this emphasis on mere utility, by contrast, is eloquent of the true faith.

Here again one is reminded of Loos's elevation of the plain utilitarian object, stripped of all ornamentation, to the highest level of civilisation (see p 102 above).

It follows that the almost obsessive concern with functionalism, which is pervasive in the work of Van Selms (as well as those of subsequent writers on this subject), stems to a considerable degree from this deeply held Protestant attitude towards any notion of immanent sacrality or mysticism. It is therefore not surprising that the Modernist emphasis on functionalism ('form follows function') should have tremendous appeal for these Protestant architects and theorists – not as functionalism per se, but as something which they can exploit and adapt to create a truly Protestant architecture.

As we have seen, the Afrikaner Protestant's functionalist attitude towards sacred objects and spaces is readily incorporated into the functionalist philosophy of Modernist architecture (or rather, the other way round), so that the architectural functionalism of Modernist Afrikaner Protestant church design likewise assumes symbolic overtones, signifying the Protestant character of the 'true' Christian faith. (This will be demonstrated in some detail below).

This focus on a liturgy-based functionalism is taken through to the most (apparently) insignificant detail in Van Selms's work. Thus, the door to the *konsistorie* is treated in

some detail, including a discussion about its shape, its positioning in the wall behind the pulpit, and whether or not it should have a window (he passionately denounces the latter option) (1954: 40-41).

The problem with *sentraalbou*

Schalk le Roux shows that, in the search for a true Afrikaner Protestant church style, there were three stages: the traditional Neo-Gothic style was replaced by the so-called *sentraalbou* or Neo-Byzantine style, in a bid to break free from the Catholic as well as the British associations of the former; this in turn was then followed by the Modernist style (2008: 21-22; 25-34).

With regard to the *sentraalbou* style, Van Selms raises the following important point (which is repeated by all subsequent authors dealt with here):

> This type of building is particularly inappropriate for the Christian service. The centre of the space should, in fact, be the place where the sermon and the dispensing of the sacraments occur. But that would mean that half of the space would remain unused, since it is not really possible to listen to a speaker who has his back turned to us, and the dispensing of the sacraments does not occur in the correct manner if a large portion of the congregation are prevented by the figure of the minister from seeing the baptism or the breaking of the bread.
>
> In such a *sentraalbou* church we then normally see that the liturgical centre is moved to one of the walls. But this causes a peculiar distortion in the whole architectural scheme. While the structure of the building points to the centre, the arrangement of the church furniture will be directed at one of the side walls. In other words, there is a contradiction between the main lines of the architecture and the actual use of the space. The appearance of such a church is somewhat confusing (1954: 20-21, my translation ; see also *Architectus*, 1960: 523-524; Du Toit et al, 1966: 77-80; Koorts, 1974: 71-72).

It is difficult to argue with this point. Nevertheless, when asked whether he agreed with the above criticism raised by Van Selms and the rest, the Reverend Arrie van Eck of the Parow Dutch Reformed Church (a typical *sentraalbou* church) said that he has never, in practice, been aware of such a conflict. He added that the centralised design of the Parow church and the resulting seating arrangement meant that every member of the congregation was close enough to the pulpit to establish easy eye-contact so that an intimate relationship, a sense of community, between the preacher and the congregation resulted (2011).

Figure 20. Vasco DRC.

And indeed, when entering this church, one is struck by the warmth of the octagonal interior. This is particularly true when standing on the pulpit and looking at the seats where the congregation would be sitting. The arrangement of the seats, while admittedly being in conflict with the centralised design, creates a remarkable sensen of organic unity in the seated congregation

The Vasco Dutch Reformed Church

The Vasco Dutch Reformed Church (1960) is a modernist design based on a central ground plan. There is no sense of conflict between the central focal point of the architecture and the liturgical focal point (which is on the pulpit, against one of the walls of the octagonal groundplan). Instead, there is a sense of a harmonious dialogue between these two focal points. This is achieved through several means. Firstly, a steeply rising triangle, with its apex at the centre of the ceiling and its base on the wall behind the pulpit,

links the two focal points in a logical and unforced way, leading the eye from the one to the other.

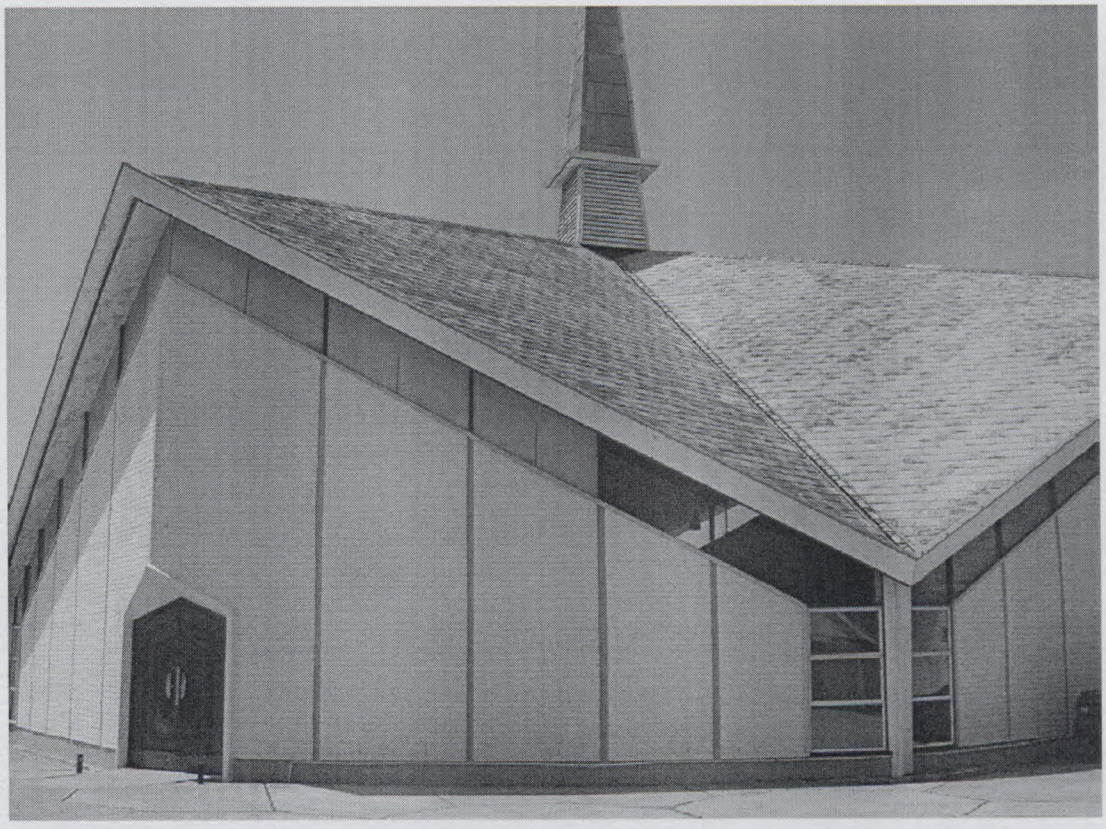

Figure 21. Exterior of the Vasco DRC.

This steep angle, pointing heavenward, is repeated by similar triangles which make up the eight facets of the ceiling/roof. Johan de Ridder talks about the triangle as being 'spiritual' (like the Gothic arch it points towards heaven – see below). Neville Louw, the architect of the Vasco church, makes the most of this heavenward-aspiring character of the triangle by having a continuous line of glazing which separates the roof from the walls and which, with its resulting zig-zag pattern, emphasizes the motif of the triangle with a dramatic effect (figures 19-21). (The church is like a double tent church on a Greek Cross plan which has been truncated to form an octagon. The roof and the centralised spire in which it culminates are supported, not by the walls, but entirely by a steel framework which brings the roof almost right down to the ground at the four points where the bases of the triangles meet – see figures 18-21).

Figure 22. Interior of the Vasco DRC showing the organ at the back (i.e. opposite the pulpit) and the fan-shaped seating arrangement.

On the wall behind the pulpit, the floor is roughly one meter below ground level, and from there it rises gently to the opposite walls, where it is on ground level. A line indicating the ground level is taken right round the interior. Furthermore, the actual ground level can be seen through the windows which reach all the way to the ground in a zigzag pattern. These devices counteract the slope of the floor to stabilize the design. Thus an effective auditorium with its focal point on the one side wall is created without disturbing the equilibrium of the centralised structure.

Louw has clearly given Van Selms's point careful consideration, and through all the above devices has very successfully overcome any sense of conflict between the centralised focal point of the architecture and the liturgical focal point.

Anthonie Smith's search for an architecture which fully served and expressed the requirements of the Protestant liturgy lead ultimately to the fan-shaped auditorium, with the Word of God radiating outwards from the pulpit and reaching everybody equally. This

design completely satisfies the need, expressed by Van Selms and the others, to have the architectural focal point coincide with the liturgical focal point.

However, a problem with this feature, which is so central to Afrikaans Protestant church design, is perhaps that it puts too much focus on the minister and unintentionally elevates him above the congregation. If he was a rock star or a famous actor and therefore the object of some form of worship or adulation, then this scheme would be perfect. But it runs directly against the stated aim of these churches, as expressed by Van Selms and all subsequent authors, i.e. to remove all traces of the elevation of the clergy above the laity, as found in the Catholic and Greek Orthodox Churches (see above).

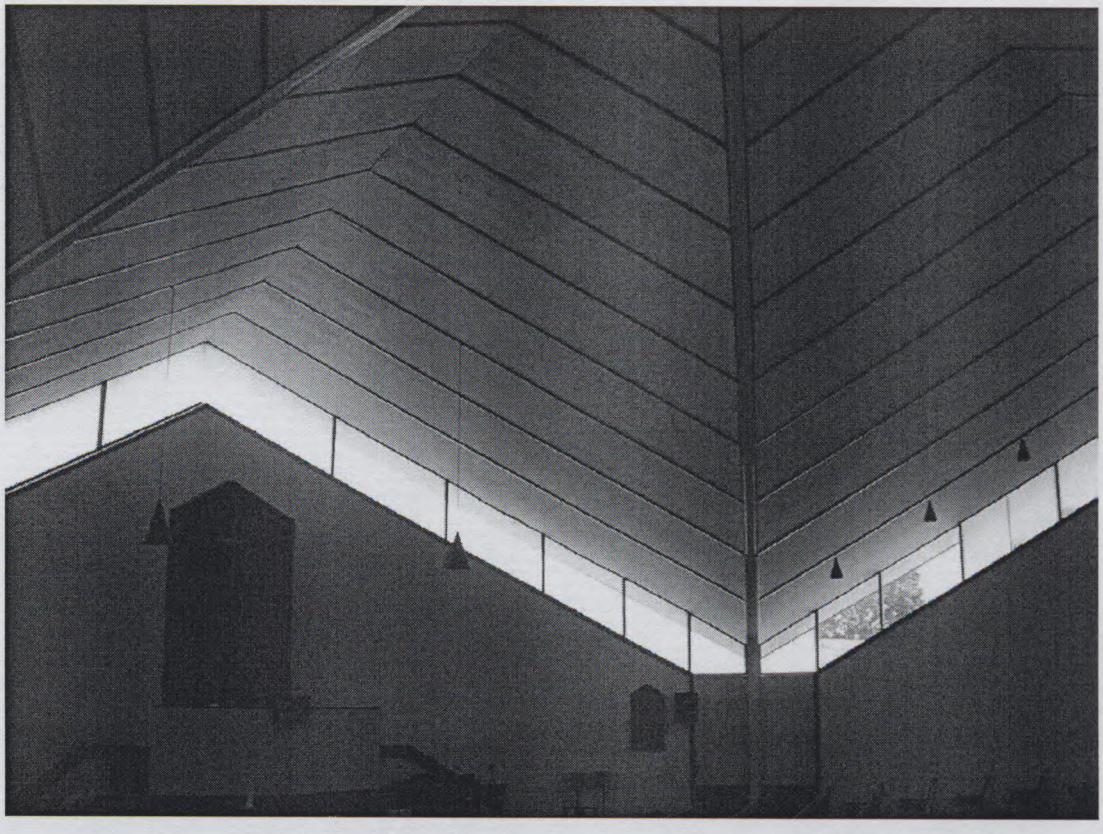

Figure 23. Interior of the Vasco DRC showing the pulpit and the distinctive zig-zag window and ceiling pattern.

The Word of God is the central feature of Protestant liturgy, but the man speaking these words is, according to Protestant beliefs, on exactly the same moral and spiritual level as everybody else in the church. While it is undoubtably important that everybody in the church must have more or less equal access to this spoken Word, i.e. they must be able to both see and hear the minister clearly, it is of great theological importance that the

theatrical layout of the church interior does not encourage a renewed segregation between the clergy and the congregation. The architecture should actively counteract this tendency.[52]

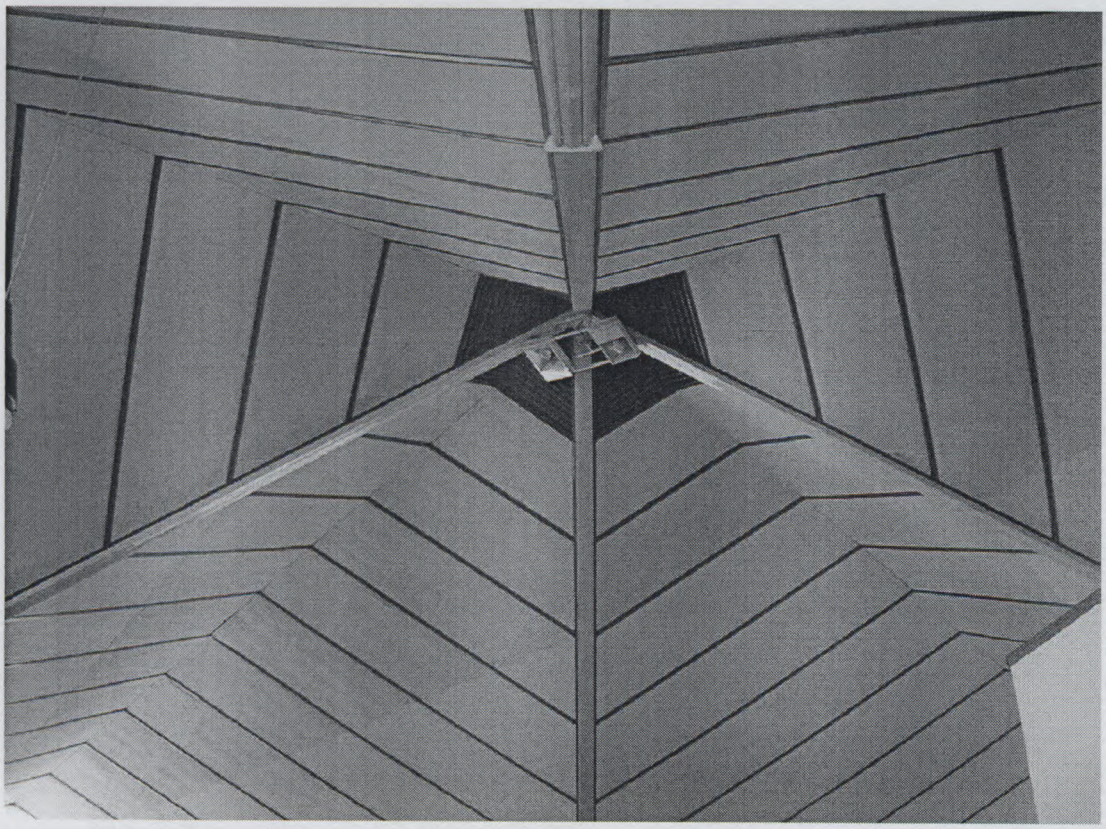

Figure 24. Ceiling of the Vasco DRC showing the centralised architectural focal point.

(Today some Dutch Reformed churches have removed the pulpit, while in others it is no longer used by the minister, who, instead, stands in the liturgical space in front of the pulpit or walks down the aisles while preaching).

Thus the architecture of these churches runs counter to the Protestant quest for equality in this regard, an equality which Hannes Koorts, in particular, advocated so fervently (see above). The Vasco DRC, however, finds a solution to this problem. There are two focal

[52] Rev Arrie van Eck of the Parow Dutch Reformed Church says that Afrikaans people have a strong tendency to put the minister on a pedestal (figuratively speaking), and that it is very important to him to break down this barrier of inequality between clergy and 'laity' (2011).

points – the one directed towards the pulpit, and the other towards the congregation (since the central focus of the building is above the congregation). The main focus, however, is the heavenward-aspiring centre of the ceiling where the points of the triangles meet (an emphasis which is carried through externally by the central spire which rises directly above this focal point – see photographs). In other words, God is the central focus, and the congregation are gathered directly below this benign centre, with the pulpit, logically linked by means of a triangle, to the one side. This is a particularly happy solution to the problems of Protestant church design, in spite of the above attacks on such centralised designs.

Johan de Ridder's spiritual triangle and the problem with angularity

With his epoch-making Parys *Gereformeerde Kerk* of 1955, Johan de Ridder pioneered the 'tent' church design, which became iconic of Afrikaner church design, and, indeed, of Afrikaner culture (figure 23). This church, and others by him, like the Totiusdal *Gereformeerde Kerk*, which has an even more radical design (see figures)

Figure 25. Parys GK. Photograph by Frans Liebenberg.

caused a sensation and were featured in local as well as overseas publications (in England, the Netherlands, France and the United States of America). He argued that 'the triangle is essentially religious with a very vertical and spiritual character' (quoted in Goldblatt, 1998: 233; see also De Ridder, 1993: 2). Like the pointed arch of Gothic architecture, it expresses (in Christian terms) a heavenward spiritual aspiration, and the powerful legacy of the pointed arch and the spire (of which it could be said to be the Modernist counterpart) imbue it with considerable symbolic force.

Therefore, De Ridder's introduction of a symbolic, spiritual architectural form and space is of crucial importance in the evolution of Afrikaans Protestant church design, particularly since it is an abstract symbolism – which solves the problem of *beeldediens* (idolatry) in a way which is ideally suited to the Protestant faith. The whole church becomes an abstract, architectural symbol based on the significance of the Protestant liturgy, a symbol which, in its austere abstract geometry, is a perfect Protestant riposte to the ornate, realistically sculpted and painted sacred images in a traditional Catholic church.

De Ridder takes this symbolism further. Of the 'tent' design, which in his *Gereformeerde Kerk Pretoria-Suid* (Lyttelton) becomes much more explicit (see Le Roux, 2008: 34), he says the following: 'It is the symbolism of the tent as symbol of a church trekking through the desert of this transient dispensation *en route* to Eternity' (quoted in Le Roux, 2008: 33, my translation; see also De Ridder, 1993: 2).

This reference to the Tabernacle of the Israelites when they were wandering throught the desert would have had a dual significance for Afrikaners at the time, due to their belief that God had chosen them, like the Israelites, for a specific purpose in this land, and due to the fact that during the era of the Great Trek, the only architecture that they had (which therefore is the only 'true' Afrikaner architecture) was that of the tent.

Furthermore, this symbolism becomes more powerful within the well-established context of D F Malan's *Tweede Trek* speech in which the struggles of contemporary Afrikaners were identified with those of their Voortrekker ancestors. As shown above, the symbolism of the *Tweede Trek* was fundamental to Christian Nationalism and to the use of Modernism in Afrikaner Protestant church design.

The 'tent' church (or *kappiekerk*) design was enormously successful (see Koorts, 1974: 61). It rapidly became iconic of the modern Afrikaner church building.

And yet the 'tent' design is given short shrift by both Koorts and Du Toit et al. Koorts, under the *nom de plume* of *Architectus*, fired the first shot, and his criticism was taken up by Du Toit et al. Both Du Toit et al and Koorts accuse De Ridder of appropriating his epoch-making design from the First Unitarian Church in Madison, Wisconsin, USA, by Frank Lloyd Wright, which was completed shortly before the Parys church (Du Toit et al,1966: 36, 41; Koorts, 1974: 59, 60-61. Koorts shows an illustration of Wright's church on p. 59 of his book). However, Du Toit et al retracted their statement in an erratum which appears on p.36 of their book, and Koorts carefully avoids naming either De Ridder or his Parys church, while making it very clear who and what he is referring to.

The various criticisms levelled at the 'tent' design, first by Architectus, who is followed by Du Toit et al, are finally summed up and further elaborated on in Koorts's 1974 publication:

> Althought this type of church was initially regarded with scepticism, it was, within a few years, praised as being representative of a genuine South African Protestant church architectural style. However, it is not South African, since such an enormous peaked roof stirs associations of European countries with a heavy snowfall in winter. Neither is it church-like, since there is nothing about the 'tent' church which imbues it with a church-like spirit. Seen from the outside it is a conglomeration of diagonal lines and surfaces: ... everything is slanting! These diagonals form shrill contrasts with each other and the result is a restless turmoil. This is not identifiable with the Christian ideals of dignity, repose and equilibrium. It is also supposed that the tent-like appearance is reminiscent of the tabernacle, but those who say so do not know what the tabernacle looked like. ...
>
> Inside the church one searches in vain for a devotional atmosphere. The white, solid ceiling stretches from the very low walls right up to the peak of the roof up above. Due to the fact that the slanting ceiling surfaces start so low, the vertical element is weakened, and therewith also the embodiment, in the structures, of the upward movement of prayers. (All that can possibly rise is the stale air which is trapped motionless above. This explains why these churches are so hot in summer, causing people on the gallery and the pulpit, in particular, to suffer.) ... The feeling is one of being incarcerated: there is no release – a little bird would batter himself mercilessly against the ceiling in an attempt to escape (Koorts, 1974: 61-62; see also Architectus, 1960: 285-286; Du Toit et al, 1966: 47-49).

It must be conceded that they have a point: these angular interior spaces could sometimes be too dynamic and restless to serve the purpose that they were designed for. Koorts's statement that the interior of a church should express the Christian ideals of dignity, repose and equilibrium is a very important point.

Having rejected De Ridder's triangular spiritual space, they turn to the rectangle and the cubic space as their ideal for the church interior. This certainly gives them the quality of stasis and serenity that they seek. Koorts gives several examples of newly built churches which conform to this ideal, and which he discusses in detail with photographic illustrations (1974: 115-140; see also Architectus, 1960: 524; Du Toit et al, 1966: 84-86; Koorts, 1974: 73-74).

However, as these examples clearly show, a cubic space is simply too mundane, too secular and common to create a truly spiritual effect. We spend our lives living, working and playing inside and outside cubic spaces. Whether you are going to the bathroom, the theatre, the office, school or bedroom, you pass from one cube to another, and the entire city landscape is comprised of cubes. The worshipper who enters the church seeking some spiritual relief from this endlessly cubic environment with all its troubles and evils needs to be welcomed by an architectural space which is fundamentally different from the cube.

A sense of mystery: the Welgemoed Dutch Reformed Church

Van Selms is well aware of the problem of mundanity:

> In the church service the Christian congregation meets the Almighty: the soul comes into contact with the infinite. Accordingly there should be space around and above us. One should not get the feeling that you are locked up between walls. And since the Eternal cannot be embodied by the transient, the rationalism of the architecture may never degenerate into lifeless austerity. The mystery must be maintained through architectural design and the deployment of light and shadow. A church must have something mysterious; it is not merely a hall for gatherings.[53]

In his survey of the history of Christian architecture, Van Selms makes the following point, which is repeated and elaborated on by the subsequent authors, who, like Van Selms, apply the principle to contemporary church architecture:

> In later developments the nave, which is enclosed by two rows of columns, is raised higher than the aisles. A wall with windows [the clerestory] is built on these columns. The advantages of this feature are manifold. The contrast between the high central

[53] 'En aangesien die Ewige nie deur die tydelike deurgrond kan word nie, sal die rasionele van die bou ook nooit tot dooie nugterheid afgeplat mag word nie. Deur bou-orde en ligval moet die misterie gehandhaaf bly. 'n Kerk moet iets geheimsinnigs hê; dit is iets anders as 'n vergadersaal.'

space and the lower aisles is reinforced by the light falling in from above, and this involuntarily directs the eye upward. The twilight in which the aisles on either side of the columns are cast imbues the building with a sense of mystery and simultaneously creates the impression of an almost limitless space (1954: 17-18, my translation; see also 1954: 55-56, 68-72; Architectus, 1960: 317, 396; Du Toit et al, 1966: 47-50; Koorts, 1974: 20-22, 29, 38, 39, 86-89, 122).

Figure 26. Interior of the Welgemoed DRC looking up the tower behind the pulpit, which casts a concealed 'heavenly' light on the pulpit. This is the only source of natural light within the auditorium.

The Welgemoed Dutch Reformed Church in Bellville, inaugurated in 1976, is a case in point (see photograph above). When the plans were submitted to the council in 1972, they were accompanied by a statement – *Ontwerp en Simboliek* (Design and Symbolism) – in which the architect, Nic Meyer explains as follows:

> In this church ... there has been a serious attempt to regain the ... atmosphere of the Christian Church of old. Particular attention has been given to space and light. Central to Protestant worship is the Word of God. To give the most concentrated emphasis to The Word the greatest space and light are over the pulpit, the focal point of the proclamation of The Word. The light source of the entire inner space of the church is limied to one massive ... window above the liturgical centre, where the pulpit is ... central and dominant .... The light falling dramatically from above is

> symbolic of heavenly light descending on the congregation ... The eyes are drawn upwards to the source of the light and then down again to the liturgical centre where it falls ... The dialogic nature of Protestant worship is thus meaningfully and practically demonstrated. The dimmed light over the congregation *heightens the sense of unfathomability and boundlessness* already created by the high walls and raised roof ... the seats are arranged fan-shaped and aisles restraicted to a minimum ... promoting an intimate relationship between churchgoer and minister as proclaimer of The Word. ... (quoted in Goldblatt, 1998: 246 emphasis added).

The effect of the 'heavenly' light which pours into the darkened interior of the Welgemoed church through the skylight (the only natural source of light, since there are no windows in the walls) is unquestionably successful in terms of the architect's stated aims. But it must be said that this is more of a theatrical effect rather than a truly architectural one. Nevertheless, this approach to creating a sense of mystery and boundlessness became a marked trend in the 1970s and 1980s, leading David Goldblatt to postulate that it was expressive of a 'laager mentality' which marked the final phase of Afrikaner political power (see 1998: 20, 27-28).

That this problem of creating the effects of mystery, boundlessness and the unfathomable could have been solved in more purely architectural terms within the constraints of Modernism and economic considerations is admirably demonstrated by the following two local examples.

The Strand North Dutch Reformed Church

This church, completed in 1962, represents the final stage in Anthonie Smith's career. Using the familiar fan-shaped auditorium as a basis, he devises a variant on the tent church design which resolves the problems raised above by Koorts and others regarding this type of structure: instead of having a wall coming straight down from the apex of the *kappie* to oppose the thin end of the wedge at the pulpit, thereby creating a sharp angle, he turns the roof, which comes down all the way to the ground on both sides, into a pyramid with a triangular base, with the side which faces the pulpit slanting down more steeply than the other two (instead of a perpendicular wall). The apex of the resulting

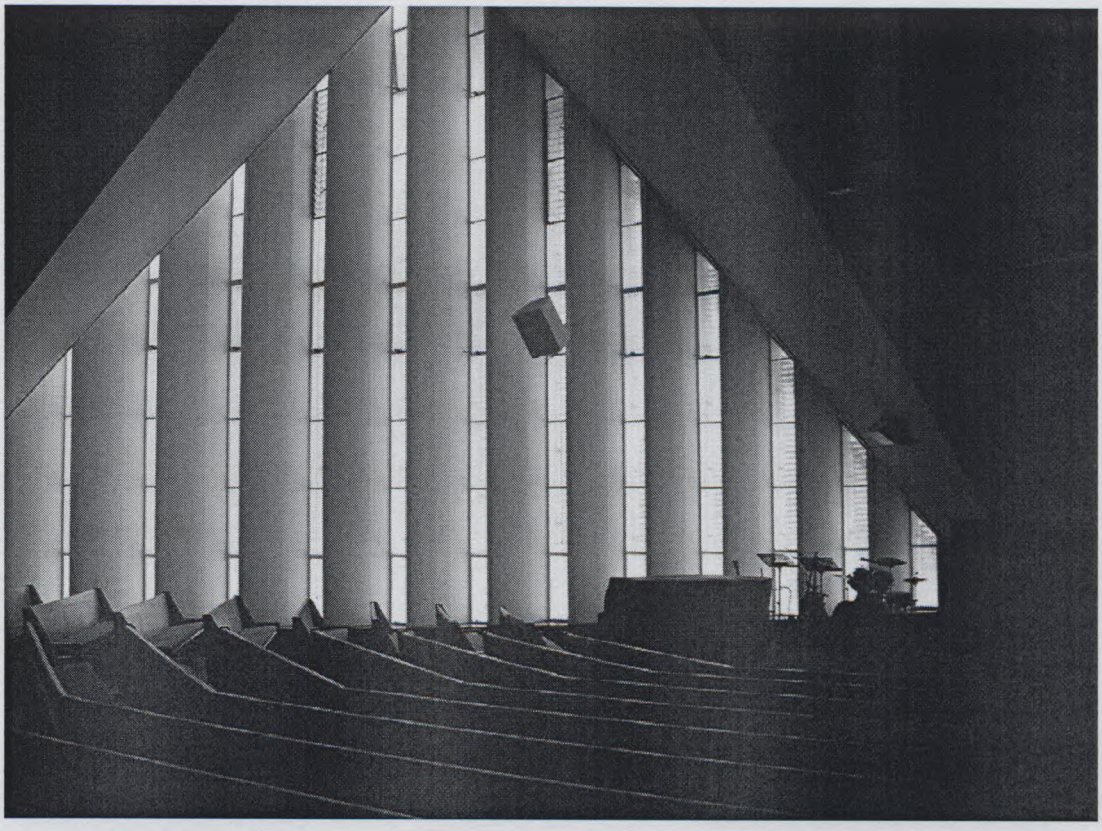

Figure 27. Interior of the Strand-Noord DRC showing its pyramidal design, the fan-shaped layout of the seating and the effect of mystery created by the light through the windows.

pyramid, which is above the congregation, does not have the aggressive angularity of the apex of a 'tent' church, and forms a pleasing counterpoint with the other focal point, the liturgical centre and pulpit. (This pyramid is attached to a short rectangular cubic space which holds the organ gallery and the entrance hall, so that the plan resembles an arrow head – see photographs).

The pyramid (i.e. the interior space) imparts a sense of heavenward aspiration as well as one of serene spirituality which is brilliantly exploited by Anthonie Smith (although it is difficult to judge such a spatial effect purely from photographs). Johan de Ridder's spiritual triangle comes fully into its own here.

The tilting of the pyramid towards the back (opposite the pulpit) does not detract from the sense of spiritual equilibrium: it creates a dynamic balance between the two focal points, the pulpit and the congregation (over which the apex of the pyramid resides), so that what Koorts calls *horisontale gerigtheid* ('horisontal directedness') is expressed spatially. This is

backed up by the rectangular, directional extension of the church space behind the congregation (the shaft of the arrow).

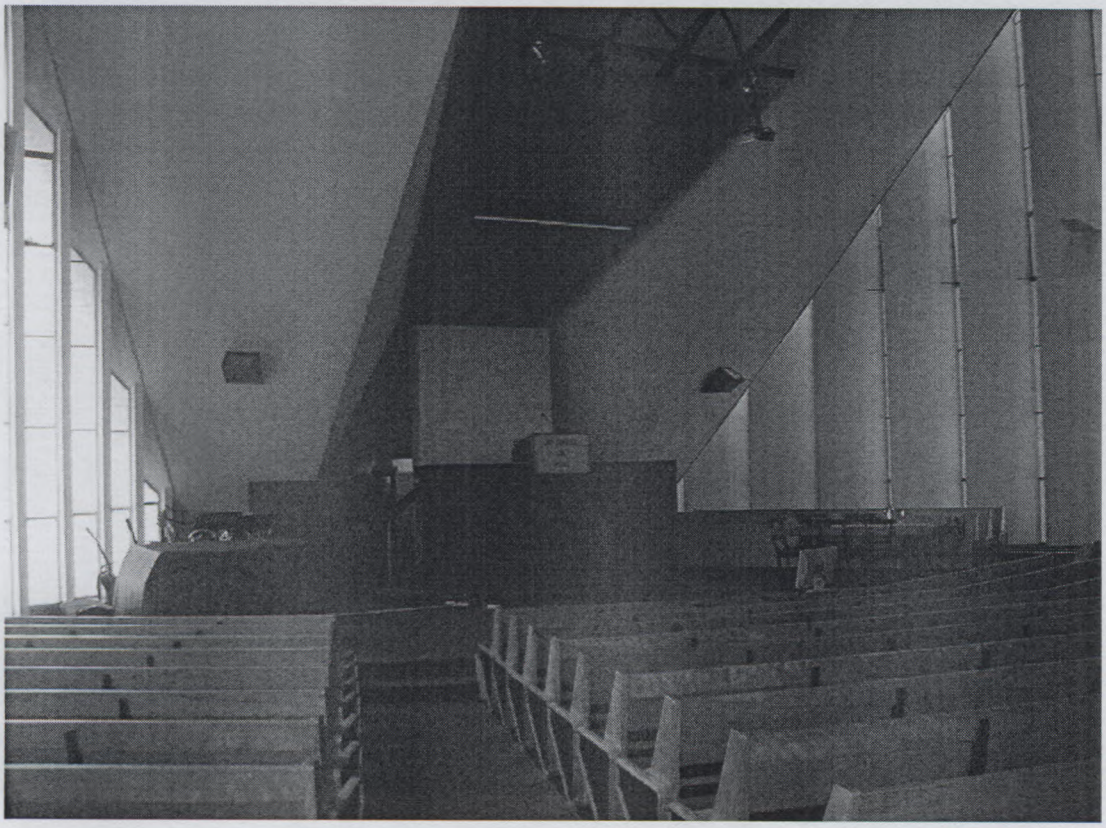

Figure 28. Interior of the Strand-Noord DRC showing the pulpit and the seating arrangement which radiates outward from the pulpit, as do the walls and the ceiling, in emulation of the Word of God which emanates from the pulpit.

'Horizontal directedness' is a major theme that runs throughout Koorts's work, in particular. This concept was introduced by Van Selms:

> If the liturgy is a determining factor of Protestant church design, then it is necessary to describe the Protestant church service briefly. It has the character of a dialogue between God and the congregation from God comes the Law, the Scripture, the sermon, the sacraments and the blessing; the congregation answers this with the Confession of Faith, prayer, song and the "Yes" to the questions. What the congregation does is an answer to what God has done. ... The liturgy therefore has a dramatic character; it consists of the action of God and the human reaction thereupon (1954: 26, my translation; see also 28, 61-63).

Koorts (as Architectus, and then under his own name) developes the architectural implications of this idea extensively, so that it becomes one of the most fundamental features of his whole argument:

An aspect which has been referred to before, is that of horisontal directedness, which is the geometric expression of the Word-answer structure of the church service. Here we are concerned with two poles, with the liturgical centre at the one end and the congregational space at the other of the axis. Due to the fact that these sections are directed towards each other to make an active Word-answer function possible, a tension between opposite poles results. The direction of this tension must therefore necessarily coincide with the main geometric axis of the church space. This concept is known as the horisontal directedness of the church space (1974: 70, my translation; see also Architectus, 1960: 285, 316-17, 319, 364, 395, 523-24).

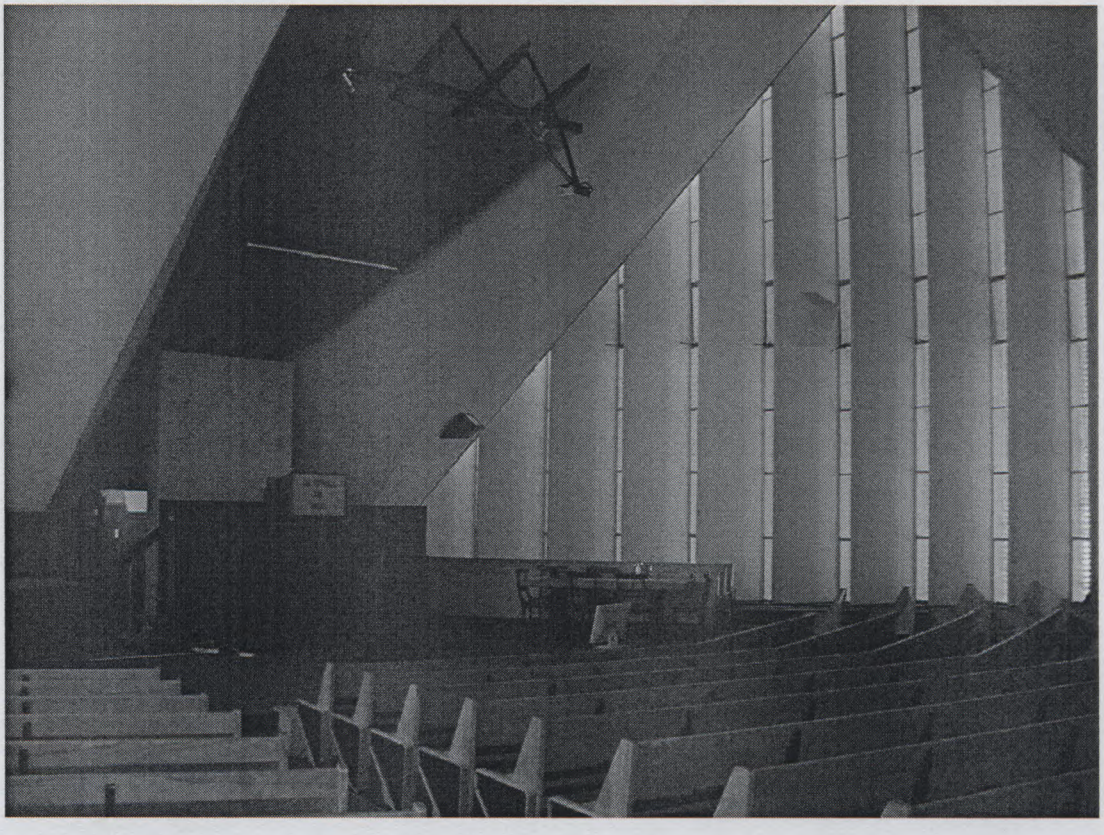

Figure 29. Interior of the Strand-Noord DRC showing the pyramidal design of the space as well as how the space radiates outwards from the pulpit. Note also the unusually low (ground-level) placing of the pulpit (see appendix).

This concept is the basis of his criticism of *sentraalbou,* which he also derives from Van Selms (see above):

> We now have a set-up in which the initial geometric pattern is directed to the centre, but which is filled with furniture which, for the most part, is directed horisontally. This immediately creates a whole series of clashing lines: directional lines which point at the geometric centre and lines which indicate the disposition of the pews towards the pulpit (1974: 72, my translation; see also 1974: 58).

It is also the basic motivation behind his choice of the rectangular ground plan as the ideal for a Protestant church:

> The rectangular groundplan was used by the early Christians in their basilicas. Just as in their case, the rectangle serves all the purposes of the Protestant exceedingly well. ...Of great importance is the feature which the layout of a Protestant church should share with that of the Early Christian basilica, i.e. the coincidence of the main axis of the plan with the orientation between the liturgical centre and the congregational space. This simple architectural concept is the most important factor which draws the attention of the congregation to the focal point of the interior space and invokes it to worship. This horisontal directedness further enriched the conceptual world of the Early Christian congregation by virtue of the fact that the pathway from the narthex to the liturgical centre, together with the impression of a foreward movement which is created by the architectural order, became symbolic of the passage through life and the striving of the Christian on earth (1974: 73-74, my translation).

Regarding the mundanity of the rectangular ground plan, he says the following:

> The fear that the rectangle will tend towards monotony is completely without foundation, and is caused by the phenomenon that we have become totally accustomed to the complicated church configurations of the last couple of decades. Those who object to the rectangular groundplan should remember that the design of the tabernacle and temple was also based on the rectangle. Interesting design techniques such as division in surfaces and the juxtaposition of spaces can turn a rectangle into an interesting architectonic creation [54] (1974: 73-74, my translation).

Koorts's argument that the main axis of the plan should co-incide with the directional axis between the liturgical centre and the congregation's space is a very sound one. It follows logically from the premise that the form should follow the function, the latter being the performance of the Protestant liturgy. However, there is no reason why the horizontal directedness should be confined to a strictly linear format. This inevitably restricts the architect to the rectangular plan. A fan-shaped plan can serve this purpose equally well, and allows the architect to avoid the banality of a rectangular room.

Anthonie Smith uses a fan-shaped plan for the auditorium in his Strand-Noord DRC. However, he subtly emphasises the horizontal directedness of the liturgy by extending the fan shape with a short rectangle (which contains the front part of the church). He has

[54] 'Interessante ontwerptegnieke soos verdeling in vlakke en naasmekaarskikking van ruimtes kan van 'n reghoekvorm 'n interessante argitektoniese skepping maak.'

clearly given this issue careful consideration, and comes up with a solution which combines directedness with a pyramidal space which is far more inspiring than a mere cube. A regular pyramid with equal sides and equal angles would be too static, however, and he avoids this problem by making the side opposite the liturgical centre steeper, so that the pyramid 'leans' in the direction of the rectangular space, thereby subtly, but very effectively, underlining the horizontal directedness of the overall space.

With this interior Smith not only satisfies all the requirements of the Protestant liturgy, but he does so while creating an architectural space which is truly otherworldly or spiritual in its effect – a space which achieves a remarkable sense of mystery and boundlessness (compare Le Roux, 2008: 31).

The 'shuttered' effect of the windows, which illuminate the interior with indirect, reflected light, along with their strong vertical emphasis (which is further supported by the large triangles which collectively frame them in imitation of the pyramid), enhance this sense of boundlessness considerably (see photograph). De Ridder's symbolic, spiritual triangle has been exploited to telling effect here.

Koorts makes a good point when he states that the dullness of a cube can be overcome through skillful use of proportions etc., but, no matter how beautiful a space one can design in this way, it will tend to have a predominantly secular beauty or appeal due to the ubiquitous nature of this type of space. Achieving a sense of mystery requires, almost by definition, that *otherness* is a basic feature of the space used. A comparison of Smith's interior with those used as exemplars by Koorts shows how thoroughly Smith understood this point. The quest by Afrikaner Protestant architects for an ideal space which expresses the requirements of the Protestant liturgy comes to full fruition in interiors like this one. It is perhaps fitting that the man who single-handedly pioneered this quest should also be a leading figure amongst those who brought it to final maturity.

Whether he was influenced in this by Transvaal architects like Johan de Ridder is uncertain (see Le Roux, 2008: 31), but he certainly addressed and mastered the problems (i.e. lack of mystery and spirituality) of the *rasionele vierkant* (rational square) of his Bellville DRC of 1939. The latter's interior has a flat white ceiling, which makes it a pure cube, except for the curved wall behind the congregation (see also Le Roux, 2008: 29). This is not conducive to a sense of mystery or boundlessness. In fact, it has the exact

opposite effect – that of a perfectly contained and rational space (see Van Selms, 1954: 68-72).

On the subject of otherness, it is interesting to note that Du Toit et al argue that this is an essential quality of the exterior of the church in relation to the surrounding architecture (1966: 54). However, they do not consider this quality when discussing the sense of mystery and boundlessness (1966: 46-47).

Modernist abstraction and the Protestant faith

It should be mentioned, however, that what these authors call *'n geweide atmosfeer* (a devotional atmosphere) is a highly subjective matter. There do seem to be certain common denominators, within a broadly Christian tradition, which most readers can recognise or identify with. But, since functionalism (and its concomitant, rationalism) play such a fundamental role in these emphatically Protestant conceptions of sacrality, one has to accept that the rational square, rectangle and cube can, for those who share this specific Protestant worldview, be a pure, spiritual form conducive to communion with the divine.

Seen in this regard, Koorts's exemplars become more accessible: the sense of perfect stasis created by the rectangles express, in an appropriately austere, Protestant fashion, the Christian ideals of dignity, repose and balance which, according to him, must be reflected in the architecture (see Koorts, 1974: 61).

Du Toit et al show an example which is particularly telling in this regard (see figure). The entire interior is composed of horisontals and verticals, creating multiple rectangles which, through a well-considered use of proportion and balance, transform the basic rectangular space into one which very effectively expresses the sense of serene accomplishment which the authors find so desirable in such a space.

Such an interior brings to mind the paintings of Piet Mondrian. This painter, who was one of the pioneers of abstract art, firmly believed that he could express the divine through the careful composition of pure, abstract rectangles. Like Kasimir Malevich, Frantisek Kupka and Wassily Kandinsky – his fellow pioneers of Modernist abstract painting – he based his idea of expressing religious spirituality through abstract form on the Theosophic ideas of Rudolf Steiner, Madame Blavatsky and Annie Besant. Like them, Mondrian believed that the age of materialism was about to be replaced by a new age of pure spirituality, and that

this spirituality could only be expressed by shedding the visual appearances of the material world (i.e. representational imagery) (Hughes, 1991: 202).

Furthermore, Mondrian had a strict Dutch Reformed upbringing. His father, a fervent devotee of the Dutch Reformed Church, was the principal of a Dutch Reformed school. Also, 'his father was part of the Protestant orthodox circle that formed around the conservative Calvinist politician Abraham Kuyper...' (Jaffé, 2014:1, emphasis added). (This is the same Abraham Kuyper whose theology formed the basis of Afrikaner Christian-nationalism as well as of the theology of the three Dutch Reformed churches in South Africa). It is tempting, therefore, to speculate about the extent to which this background might have influenced Mondrian's art (in a way, perhaps, which is analogous to the way in which the Protestant faith influenced the preference for pure, austere, geometric form in the design of Modernist churches, as discussed above). However, Malevich, Kupka and Kandinsky grew up far away from the Dutch Reformed Church, and the austere geometry of Malevich and Kupka's abstractions must presumably have a different explanation.

Nevertheless, it is interesting to note that Steiner's theosophic theories were strongly influenced by the Protestant nature mystic Jakob Böhme (1575-1624) (Monges, 1966: 5). Also interesting, perhaps, is the fact that Russian religious thought in the nineteenth century was heavily influenced by Western European mysticism – and the towering figure in this regard was, once again, Jakob Böhme (David, 1962: 43).

The background to this influence is important:

> In both [Germany and England] (though not in France and Italy) the Enlightenment had been to some degree an extension of Protestantism. And when, towards the end of the eighteenth century, the young felt that Reason had failed to provide answers to questions which seemed to them more urgent than ever, it was to Protestant writers – albeit unorthodox ones like Jakob Böhme – that they turned. Hence, perhaps, the transference to nature of Protestant attitudes to God ...., and the new importance given especially in Protestant countries to landscape painting as the expression of the individual's response and relationship to the rest of Creation (Honour, 1981: 72).

Philosophy at the highest level played a role:

> [Immanuel] Kant said that he had to 'abolish knowledge to make room for faith'. ... Kant's delimitation of the bounds of human understanding opened the door to speculation about what lay beyond and, albeit unwittingly, to the revival of mysticism – especially the Protestant nature-mysticism of Jakob Böhme, which exerted such a

> strong influence on the German Romantics and on Blake. It might be said that 'dare to feel', have the courage of your own intuition, was the motto of the Romantics. That the development of these ideas coincided with the growing conviction that the work of art – poem, painting or musical composition – could and should arouse emotions and explore beliefs which went beyond the understanding was of crucial importance for the Romantic fusion, and sometimes confusion, of art and religion (Honour, 1981: 281-282).

Robert Rosenblum, in his landmark study *Modern Painting and the Northern Romantic Tradition: Friedrich to Rothko* (1975), shows how this development lead ultimately to the abstract paintings of Piet Mondrian, Barnett Newman, Mark Rothko and others. Of cardinal importance in this process were the ideas of Friedrich Schleiermacher, a contemporary of Caspar David Friedrich and, like him, a devout Protestant:

> Schleiermacher's theological search for divinity outside the trappings of the Church lies at the core of many a Romantic artist's dilemma: how to express experiences of the spiritual, of the transcendental, without having recourse to such traditional themes as the Adoration, the Crucifixion, the Resurrection, the Ascension, whose vitality, in the Age of Enlightenment, was constantly being sapped (Rosenblum, 1975: 15).

In his discussion of the work of the Abstract Expressionist Barnett Newman, Rosenblum states (and this is particularly important for the present thesis):

> In the *Stations of the Cross* series, Christian narrative replaces Jewish symbolism. Here the ultimates pertain to death and resurrection, evoked by the primal duality of black and white, and of taut linear forces that, like paths of feeling, quiver and strain against a field of raw canvas, translating the sequence of Christ's martyrdom into irreducible, abstract metaphors, and totally transforming the corporeal Passion into a spiritual one.
>
> That Newman himself was Jewish may in part account for his desire and capacity to present such religious themes in abstract terms; for the Jewish tradition of proscribing graven images would have supported, unlike Catholic traditions of religious art, the possibility of Newman's creating totally incorporeal images of the Lord, of Adam or Eve, of Abraham or Christ. The sense of divinity in boundless voids, where figures, objects, and finally matter itself are excluded, belongs to a Romantic tradition primarily sustained by non-Catholic artists – Protestants, Jews, or by members of such modern spiritualist sects as Theosophy – for the iconoclastic attitudes of these religions were conducive to the presentation of transcendental experience through immaterial images, whether the impalpable infinities of horizon, sea, or sky or their abstract equivalents in the immeasurable voids of Mondrian or Newman (1975: 212-13).

Robert Hughes discusses Mondrian in a similar vein:

> Precisely because he adhered to this new religion [i.e. Theosophy], his beliefs did not come with a package of appropriate images, as they would have done if he were a Buddhist or a Catholic. He had to invent his own images, and he did not live in an age of iconography (Hughes,1991: 202).

Thus Mondrian's strict Protestant upbringing (in the Dutch Reformed Church) would, in this respect, have been reinforced by his newly acquired Theosophic beliefs, so that his religious background was exceptionally well suited to the promotion of abstraction.

In view of the above, the following extract from a letter dated 3rd January, 1958 (almost two decades before Rosenblum's book was published), which Anthonie Smith received from his brother, the artist Le Roux Smith le Roux, is highly significant:

> Now I must tell you that through the years I have become more and more engrossed by abstract art, and I have always wondered why it is not used more and more *in those churches where the faith as such disapproves of images of heavenly or earthly figures*. Furthermore I have felt, for a long time, that stained glass is an ideal medium for serious abstract design. ...[55] (letter reproduced on pp. 4-5 of Hannes Smith's communication to Schalk le Roux, 14th June, 2007, my translation, emphasis added).

Le Roux Smith le Roux then goes on to mention that he gave a lecture on the BBC on this topic several years before. (According to Hannes Smith, in the same communication, he was director of the Tate Gallery for some time). Hannes Smith (the son of Anthonie Smith) further mentions that his father started using colour and stained glass in his churches round about this time. (see below) .

The expression of spirituality through totally abstract geometric forms and spaces, as manifested in these Afrikaner Protestant churches, should therefore be seen against this wider cultural background in which the iconoclastic attitudes of Protestantism, Judaism and Theosophy were conducive to the development of pure abstraction as a means of expressing the divine. Essential to this background is the fact that Protestantism, starting with Protestant writers like Jakob Böhme and Friedrich Schleiermacher, and Protestant painters like Caspar David Friedrich, Philip Otto Runge and Joseph Mallord William

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[55] 'Nou moet ek jou sê dat ek deur die jare meer en meer verdiep geraak het in abstrakte kuns en altyd gewonder het waarom dit nie meer en meer gebruik word in die kerke waar die geloof as sulks opsien teen afbeeldings van hemelse of aardse figure. Maar boonop voel ek al baie lank dat kleurglas 'n ideale medium is vir ernstige abstrakte ontwerp.'

Turner, played an important, if not fundamental role in the evolution of abstract art, some of which (particularly that of the Dutch movement De Stijl) is very closely related to Modernist architecture (see Honour, 1981: 72-73, 76-77, 81-82; Rosenblum, 1975: 41; Hughes,1991: 200-202).

> No view of Mondrian is more misleading than the idea that he was a detached formalist, working towards a purely aesthetic harmony. Mondrian was a devout man who wanted to make icons ... (Hughes, 1991: 202).

And yet this mistaken view prevailed in art history for the greater part of the twentieth century. This fact is a clear indication of how remarkably different our conceptions and experience of spirituality can be. What might appear to be a coldly calculated composition of rectangles and flat primary colours for many people, could, in fact, be a spiritual revelation for others, and likewise, what might seem to be a cold, rational rectangular space for many, could be suffused with an atmosphere of spirituality for others.

Hannes Koorts argues that architecture, like the other arts, can express theology – that a building can, through purely abstract means, evoke feelings and ideas in us which belong to the domain of the spiritual. He quotes to this effect from *Beginselen van Kerkbou*, the report of the General Synod of the *Nederlandse Hervormde Kerk* (i.e. in the Netherlands), which came out in 1954 (the same year as Van Selms's book), and which was consulted by all these guideline text authors (Koorts, 1974: 9-10).

Koorts further argues that harmony is the essence of Creation, and that this pristine state of paradisiacal harmony was corrupted by 'discords' which came later. Here he refers to the Fall of Man and its celestial antecedent, the rebellion of Lucifer, which marred the perfect harmony of the Creation. The word '*wanklanke*' does not have the double meaning which the word 'discord' has. It simply means discord in the musical sense. This fact enables Koorts to use the term metaphorically to refer to the other form of discord while still retaining its musical meaning, thereby forging a link between between the two forms of discord which succinctly expresses the crux of his idea: harmony in music (and therefore also in the other arts) directly expresses the divine harmony of nature (i.e. the Creation) in its pristine condition (before the Fall). We can still perceive glimpses of this harmony in nature today, but not in its pure, uncorrupted form (Koorts, 2012b).

Thus, the architect who knows how to express this harmony through the abstract means of space and volume, can reveal to the church-goer the pristine harmony of the

paradisiacal state to which the Christian longs to return after death, while at the same time this harmony expresses the presence of the Divine.

In terms of this unpublished aesthetic theory of Koorts, the abstract geometric forms and spaces of a modernist Afrikaner Protestant church, when designed with the appropriate aesthetic sensibility, can, like the sacred music of Bach or Mozart, express a harmony which is a manifestation of God, and of His love, so that Afrikaans Protestant Modernism becomes one of the most important expressions of the Afrikaners' striving (and program) to transform and adapt major aspects of the modern urban world in Christian (Protestant) terms.

In light of the above discussion regarding the devotional atmosphere (which, since the 16th century, has been stressed by Protestant theorists as an essential feature of Protestant church design – see Kesting, 1978: 9-11), it is necessary to return to the Vasco Dutch Reformed Church and review it in these terms.

More effectively than a rectangular groundplan, a centralised plan can achieve this aim. Apart from the fact that a circle, octagon or other centralised groundplan creates a space which stands in marked contrast to the mundanity of the rectangular spaces which predominate in our daily lives, and that this sense of otherness is more conducive to a devotional atmosphere, the central focus of such a design evokes a sense of serenity, of dignified repose and equilibrium, which, according to Koorts himself is highly desirable in a Protestant church – as expressive of the triumph of Christ as an accomplished fact (see above). The horisontal directedness of Koorts's ideal rectangular space (following Van Selms, Du Toit et al) presents a problem in that it tends to create an effect which is too dynamic to express this sense of spiritual accomplishment. The criticism which Koorts levels at the *kappiekerk* (tent church) can here, to a lesser extent, be applied to the rectangular church. Just as the sharp triangles of the latter are too dynamic and restless, so the drama of horisontal directedness, with its theatrical scheme, militates against this essential quality of serenity.

Nevertheless, this does not mean that rectangular groundplans will necessarily give rise to a space which is too restless. What it does mean is that the above problem confronts the architect with an additional challenge. Anthonie Smith deals with this problem exceptionally well in the Strand Noord DRC (see above). In spite of all the dynamic elements he uses (fan-shaped auditorium, 'leaning' pyramid, triangular walls and spaces

which are akin to those of the tent church), he manages to create an extraordinary sense of balance between all these elements which powerfully evokes an atmosphere of serenity and spirituality.

The *sentraalbou* church, which starts off with a perfectly centered, serene space, tends to lose that serenity once the furnishings, with their horisontal directedness towards the pulpit (against one wall), are introduced. The resulting conflict between two diverse focal points can easily destroy this repose. But here again it is up to the architect to deal with this problem, and find a creative solution.

Neville Louw does just that in the Vasco DRC. He turns this difficult problem to his advantage by creating a sophisticated and highly effective accord between the two contrasting focal points (see above), thereby achieving a remarkable sense of serenity and the concomitant devotional atmosphere – in spite of the dynamic nature of the large triangles which define the roof and the interior space (see photographs above; note the sweeping zig-zag line of the glazing which separates the roof from the walls). In fact, as is the case in the Strand North church, the successful balance achieved between contrasting elements lends a vitality to this devotional atmosphere which enhances rather than detracts from the sense of repose, and which makes it the opposite of a dull, static sense of equilibrium achieved purely through uniformity and symmetry. A uniquely Protestant spirituality comes alive in these two spaces.

Daan Kesting shows that the centralised plan played a major role in the history and development of Protestant church design. Some of the very first Protestant church buildings in Europe were designed and executed on a centralised plan.[56] The first church building in Cape Town (that of the first Afrikaans-Protestant congregation in South Africa, as Kesting puts it), was planned and erected as an *octagonal* centrally planned church.[57]

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[56] The Protestant Paradise church in Lyon was built in 1564 on a circular plan, and this was followed, in 1566, by the first two Protestant church buildings to be erected in the Netherlands, the round church of the Walloon Calvinist congregation on the Wapper in Antwerp, and the octagonal church in Ghent. The first new Protestant church building in Scotland, the St Columba's parish church in Burntisland (1592), has a centralised square plan. The first new Protestant church building in what is now the Netherlands, the Reformed Church at Willemstad (1597-1598), also has a central (octagonal) plan. An enormous amount of further Protestant church buildings designed on the principle of the centralised plan, may be noted throughout the history of Protestant church design (Kesting, 1978: 52-54; see also 1978: 7-12).

[57] Likewise, early examples of Dutch Reformed church buildings built on a central plan may be found in Dutch settlements elsewhere in the world, such as the *octagonal* church building which was erected in 1700

Furthermore, the first thorough study of Protestant church design, by Leonhard Sturm (1712), includes, in his discussion of nine potential church groundplans, that of a circular plan (Kesting, 1978: 54, 12).

A sense of history can play an important role in architecture, particularly sacred architecture (as well as in buildings designed for social or political purposes). The use of classical stylistic elements and motifs in Western architecture since the Renaissance is eloquent of this. The skilful use of such elements can add a conceptual depth and richness to a building which Modernism, with its determination to create a dramatic rupture with the past, generally cannot provide.

This chapter has shown that there is a considerable conformity between the texts and the actual artifacts in respect of the principles of Afrikaner Protestant church design. However, the case of the Vasco DRC, as well as that of the Strand-North DRC, show that exceptions to the rule can fulfil the requirements of the Protestant liturgy as well, if not better. The latter, in particular, demonstrates that the theoretical concept of horisontal directedness, based on the Word-answer format of the Protestant liturgy, does not necessarily work that well in practice (in its proposed form), since the sense of mystery and the concomitant devotional atmosphere, which have been a sought-after qualities in Protestant church design since the 16th century and which feature strongly in all these guideline texts, is generally sacrificed by the mundanity of the prescribed rectangular plan format.

It has also emerged that functionalism has played a key role in Protestant church design since its inception in the 16th century, and that modernism was therefore well-suited to the requirements of Afrikaner Protestant church design. Furthermore, as Robert Rosenblum as shown, the iconoclastic attitude of the Protestant faith has played a vital role in the evolution of abstraction in modernist art. The austerity which was (at this time, and since the Reformation) a central aspect of Protestant attitudes to art and architecture, and which modernism caters for so well, is clearly manifested in both texts and artifacts. The fact that this interesting and unexpected relationship between modernism and Protestantism extends to the domain of fine art makes it necessary, in the following chapter, to

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at Nieu Utrecht, America, and the *octagonal* church in Batavia, which is reminiscent of the Lutheran church in Amsterdam, erected in 1732 (Kesting, 1978: 54).

investigate the role of modernist abstraction (with regard to the above-mentioned iconoclastic attitude) in these Afrikaner Protestant churches.

CHAPTER EIGHT: **SYMBOLISM AND ART INSIDE THE CHURCH**

As has already been indicated, this topic is of considerable importance to this thesis. The guidelines established by Van Selms are once again followed by subsequent authors, although here there is more variation than usual. This is mostly due to the fact that, during the two decades which span the publication of these texts, a small but significant shift away from traditional Protestant attitudes towards the use of art and symbols inside the church occurred within the Afrikaner Protestant Churches.[58]

Van Selm's introduction to this subject expresses a classic Protestant attitude:

> Our architects rightly approach the issue of ornamentation in the church interior *with austere reserve. It belongs to the essence of Protestantism that it is averse to outward display and exuberance. Baroque art has no place in a Protestant church…*
>
> One must be very careful with the application of adornment in a church. Once, when a minister had to show a highly placed visitor through his church, the conclusion of the latter was: 'There is not much adornment in your church.' The minister answered: 'The adornment of this church is invisible: it consists of broken and vanquished hearts.' Such an answer maintains a treasured legacy of the Reformation. *Ten times rather a bare wall than the multitude of paintings, sculptures and artificial flowers which deface many Roman Catholic churches.*
>
> *The true beauty of a building is not an added ornament, but the harmony of lines, surfaces and colours*. But then it has to be living lines, surfaces and colours, so to speak. *Austerity is something other than poverty*, reserve is something other than lack of imagination. Asceticism is not the same as lack of ability, nor is simplicity the same as stupidity. The black coat and the white wall are not the only Christian life forms (1954: 84-85, my translation, emphasis added).

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[58] Koorts, the last of these authors to publish (in 1974), states the following (with regard to the symbols of the fish and the Dove): 'Not so long ago ornamental motifs such as these would have encountered fierce resistance from the three Afrikaans sister churches, *since they were identified with idolatry*. Today, however, they are accepted more freely' (1974: 103, my translation, emphasis added; see also pp 100-101 for his comment on changing attitudes to the use of the cross as symbol).

The italicised parts, in particular, clearly express a Protestant aesthetic. Note how, in spite of the fact that he is dealing with contemporary church architecture (and emphasises the fact that church architecture must be of its own time – see above), Van Selms goes back three centuries to single out Baroque art as the supreme example of what is completely unacceptable in a Protestant church. This is not a logical inconsistency on his part, however. As has been mentioned before, Baroque art is the art of the Catholic Counter-Reformation, and as such its aesthetic principles run directly counter to those of the Reformation itself (see above).

From this it follows logically that a bare wall would be vastly preferable (in church aesthetic terms) to the artistic opulence of a typical Catholic church interior. Next Van Selms gives a definition of architectural beauty which could well have come out of the pen of a pioneering Modernist architect like Louis Sullivan: 'The true beauty of a building is not an added ornament, but the harmony of lines, surfaces and colours...'[59] If one strips architecture of all its ornamentation, one is left with pure geometric form – as found in Modernism.[60]

Adolf Loos's strong aversion to architectural ornament lead quite logically to the geometric purity of his pioneering Modernist architecture. While his antipathy to ornament stems from a very different source to that of the Afrikaner Protestant theorists discussed here, the following extract from his most famous publication, *Ornament and Crime* (1908), is interesting because his achievement of Modernist form, based on this aversion to ornament, has a striking parallel in the process referred to above:

> The urge to ornament one's face and everything within reach is the start of plastic art. It is the baby talk of painting. All art is erotic.

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[59] Sullivan's dictum that 'form follows function' was fundamental to Modernism (see Sullivan, 1918: 46-48). With regard to the present discussion, and also to the aesthetic theory of Hannes Koorts (see p above), the following extract is particularly relevant: 'The gist of it is ... behind every form we see there is a vital something or other which we do not see, yet which makes itself visible to us in that very form. In other words, in a state of nature the form exists *because* of the function, and this something behind the form is neither more nor less than a manifestation of what you call the infinite creative spirit, and what I call God' (1947: 46).

[60] Adolf Loos 'brought back with him to Vienna from his three-year stay in the United States (1893-6) a remark of Louis Sullivan's: "It could only benefit us if for a time we were to abandon ornament and concentrate entirely on the erection of buildings that were finely shaped and charming in their sobriety"' (Introduction to Adolf Loos's *Ornament and Crime* (1908: 19).

> The first ornament that was born, the cross, was erotic in origin. The first work of art, the first artistic act which the first artist, in order to rid himself of his surplus energy, smeared on the wall. A horizontal dash: the prone woman. A vertical dash: the man penetrating her. The man who created it felt the same urge as Beethoven, he was in the same heaven in which Beethoven created the *Ninth Symphony*.
>
> But the man of our day who, in response to an inner urge, smears the walls with erotic symbols is a criminal or a degenerate. It goes without saying that this impulse most frequently assails people with such symptoms of degeneracy in the lavatory. A country's culture can be assessed by the extent to which its lavatory walls are smeared. In the child this is a natural phenomenon: his first artistic expression is to scribble erotic symbols on the walls. But what is natural to the Papuan and the child is a symptom of degeneracy in the modern adult. I have made the following discovery and I pass it on to the world: *The evolution of culture is synonymous with the removal of ornament from utilitarian objects* (1908: 19-20).[61]

Van Selms then proceeds to present austerity, reserve, asceticism and simplicity as positive aesthetic attributes, and even though these qualities could describe a considerable portion of Modernist buildings, the aesthetic attitude which he thereby expresses is purely a Protestant one.

Having stated his basic approach, he then concedes that a certain amount of ornamentation is 'unavoidable'. But, it must be sensible.

> Meaningless stripes or curls are *uit die bose*.[62] The ornament must be related to the purpose of the building: the propagation of the holy Scripture through preaching and sacrament. Therefore it must be eloquent, and its testimony must be Christian in nature. One must thus carefully guard against the application of pagan classical ornamentation. A meander border is pagan: the Christian journey follows no winding roads. A pearl motif derives from the egg, a pagan fertility symbol, which claims its value from biological factors outside of ethics. For those who understand the symbolism, it curses the sermon (1954: 85-86, my translation, emphasis added).

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[61] Further on in the same paragraph Loos states the following (which is relevant to the discussion of an Afrikaner Protestant depiction of the New jerusalem as a Modernist city – see below): 'Every age had its style, is our age alone to be refused a style? By style people meant ornament. Then I said: Weep not! See, therein lies the greatness of our age, that it is incapable of producing a new ornament. We have outgrown ornament; we have fought our way through to freedom from ornament see, the time is nigh, fulfilment awaits us. *Soon the streets of the city will glisten like white walls. Like Zion, the holy city, the capital of heaven. Then fulfilment will be come'* (1908: 20, emphasis added).

[62] This idiomatic expression literally means 'something evil' or 'from the domain of evil', but in common usage it does not necessarily have such a specific significance, meaning more simply something which is totally unacceptable. Instead of 'curls', *krulle* could perhaps be translated better as 'arabesques' – the arabesque being a fundamental ornamental device of Baroque art and architecture.

Here he elaborates further on the above aesthetic position. Such ornament as is necessary must be *functional*, so that his Protestant version of the Modernist 'form follows function' dictum is logically extended to cover this topic. His *caveat* against pagan classical ornamentation is significant in relation to the statement made above that virtually all architectural ornamentation and stylistic elements traditionally used in Afrikaner Protestant churches derived from classical sources and other sources (such as Gothic) which were strongly identified with the Catholic Church,[63] so that the quest for a true Afrikaner Protestant church architecture entailed stripping the architecture of any such figural elements – which leads almost inevitably to Modernism, which does exactly that (see p above). Thus Afrikaner Protestant church architecture is purified of all pagan, Catholic and other undesirable elements to produce the pristine geometric forms and spaces of Modernism.

Du Toit et al as well as Koorts advocate the use of Early Christian symbols, such as the Christ monogram, the fish, the Lamb, the Dove, etc. (Du Toit et al, 1966: 88; Koorts,1974: 101-103). This is consistent with their general Protestant approach of returning to the simplicity and purity of the original Christian Church.

Van Selms, however, rejects most of these symbols, and his reason for doing so is perfectly sound. He argues that 'unfortunately, in our times and in our country, most of these symbols are no longer useful because their meaning is unknown to the vast majority.' An example of this is the Christ monogram, which people read as an X and a p, instead of the Greek Ch and r (the first letters of Christ's name). The same applies to the symbol of the fish. The Greek word for 'fish' (*ichthos*) consists of the first letters of 'Jesus Christ, Son of God, Saviour' [in Greek],

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[63] Likewise, *sentraalbou* was referred to as 'neo-Byzantine' by most of these authors, even though the inspiration for this style came from Renaissance Italy (as explicitly stated by the originators of this style – see above), and the figural elements are generally those of Renaissance classicism. The only thing which most of these *sentraalbou* churches have in common with Byzantine churches is the central groundplan (which is also a major feature of Renaissance Italian church design), and it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that some of these writers used the label 'neo-Byzantine' in order to discredit this style by associating it with the perceived abuses of the Eastern Orthodox Church. Thus, the search for a true Afrikaner church architecture would also entail the abolition of any stylistic or design features (such as the circular or octagonal groundplan) which could be associated with the Eastern Orthodox Church.

> but even amongst academics this is little known. This type of "learned" symbolism is out of place in a congregation in which there is usually only one man who can read Greek, namely the minister. Christianity does not operate with secret languages; it wants to preach and be understood, and the symbolism must aid the comprehensibility and not obstruct it (1954: 86-87, my translation).

Here again Van Selms consistently applies the logic of his functionalist approach, which is squarely based on his Protestant beliefs. His insistence on symbols being functional within a contemporary as well as a local context gives his argument a distinctly Modernist flavour.[64]

Van Selms comes to the conclusion that the cross is still the best symbol, and that there is not the slightest reason to regard it as a Roman Catholic sign. He states that the cross is central to the Christian message, and that it is the property of the whole of Christianity.

> While Luther made no objections to the cross and similar representations, the Reformation, in its later stages, often went further than was necessary and desirable. Thereby we have surrendered the simplest and most beautiful sign of Christianity to the Roman Church, allowing it to become a denominational instead of a universal indication. It is high time that we lay claim again to our legacy (1954: 87-88, my translation).

The cross is a highly controversial issue in the Afrikaans Protestant churches (or was, at the time when these books were written), and it is not surprising to find that there is considerable divergence of opinion on this issue. Du Toit et al are negatively disposed towards its use as symbol (see below), while Koorts concurs with Van Selms (1974: 100-101).

But on one point all the authors are unanimous. Van Selms gives the clearest account thereof. After stressing that, in advocating the use of the cross, he is talking of the cross as symbol, not as image or depiction, he states that:

> There is an important difference between symbol and depiction. The symbol is an indication of a spiritual reality; the depiction captures the sensuous reality. We would like to see the cross in our churches as a symbol of Christ's redeeming suffering, but

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[64] The fact that the slogan *il faut être de son temps* ('to be of one's own time') derives ultimately from the Romantics of the early 19th century does not alter this, since it is fundamental to beliefs of the Modernists, who inherited it from the Realists, who, in turn inherited it from the Romantics (see Nochlin, 1971: 235, 243-247; Honour, 1981: 319, 364).

> we would not like to allow a depiction of the crucified Christ, the so-called crucifix, in our churches. *The depiction unavoidably leads to forms of idolatry* (1954: 88, my translation, emphasis added).

Du Toit et al take a historical approach. For them the history of the cross as crucifix militates against its present use in Protestant churches. Firstly they point out (and emphasise) the fact that the cross was not used in the early Christian Church (1966: 88).

> Later on the idea of the suffering and death of Christ became increasingly prominent, and with this the rising popularity of the cross and, particularly, the crucifix in the Roman Catholic Church. *It goes without saying that the person of Christ may not be depicted inside the church. With that the cross loses its original meaning as sign of joy and victory. From here on we get an increasingly sensuous approach to the church service, a driving away of the purely symbolical and an open worship of images (idolatry)* (1966: 89, my translation, emphasis added).

Referring to the fact that strong appeals had recently been made in Protestant circles for the re-introduction of the cross as symbol, and that, at the time of publication of their report, many Dutch Reformed churches already featured wood, metal, and concrete crosses, they state that:

> The question arises whether every worshipper, of every level of civilisation, and from every religio-cultural background, will be able to grasp the distinction between the cross as symbol and the cross as depiction[65] (which, in the latter case leads readily back to idolatry) (1966: 89, my translation).[66]

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[65] '... die kruis as simbool en as afbeelding.' The word *afbeelding* (depiction), when used in this context, has specific connotations which do not come across in translation. Derived from the word *beeld* which means both image and sculpture, it strongly evokes the spectre of idolatry (when used in this context), whereas 'depiction' merely brings to mind pictures (i.e. paintings or drawings), which are not so readily associated with the objects of idol-worship. Even in Van Selms's more moderate account this pejorative connotation comes across clearly: 'Die *afbeelding* lei onvermydelik tot vorme van *beeldediens*' ('The *depiction* unavoidably leads to forms of *idolatry*').

[66] The possibly racist overtones of this statement would seem to contradict the 'no apartheid inside the church' statement (i.e. between clergy and laity) made in the same publication (see above). It should be remembered, however,that this book had a team of contributing authors whose political beliefs might have been widely divergent. The chapter *Liturgie en Kerkbou*, from which the 'no apartheid' statement was quoted, was written by Prof HDA du Toit, while the statement above was quoted from the chapter *Simboliek en Kuns in die Kerkgebou* which was written by Rev PA Pienaar, who also designed the strikingly Modernist cover (in the style of Roy Liechtenstein – see above). By the time it was published, in 1966, the Broederbond was well on its way to establishing a firm control over the three Afrikaner Protestant churches, and the clerical revolt of the early 1960s had been successfully crushed (see above).

This opinion is important since it forms part of the official report on church design by the Dutch Reformed Church, the largest of the three Afrikaner Protestant churches. The concluding paragraph on the problem of the cross as symbol is as follows: 'The monopoly which the Roman Catholic Church had over the cross symbol for centuries has brought about the fact that, in our particular historic situation, the cross is still, for too many people, a symbol of Roman Catholicism rather than one of the redeeming work of Jesus. Therefore it would be wise only to apply this motif *very abstractly and extremely sparingly*. In this way it will carry the meaning more of decoration than of symbolism' (1966: 89, my translation, emphasis added).

The italicised part once again shows the Afrikaner Protestant tendency towards abstraction, as motivated by a determination to move as far away as possible from the 'blasphemous' sensuousness of Catholic sacred imagery, particularly the crucifix. This is further supported by the italicised part of the second paragraph above: *'From here on we get an increasingly sensuous approach to the church service, a driving away of the purely symbolical and an open worship of images (idolatry)'*. The symbolical and the spiritual reality which it refers to are seen as abstract qualities which stand in marked opposition to the sensuous, worldly reality (supposedly) referred to by Catholic sacred art – particularly that of the Counter-Reformation (i.e. Baroque). (See also Van Selms's views, as quoted above).

This ties up with Robert Rosenblum's argument that the iconoclastic attitude of religions like Protestantism, Judaism and Theosophy was a powerful driving force behind the development of abstract art in the 20th century, as seen in leading abstract artists like Piet Mondrian, Wassily Kandinsky, Igor Malevich, Francisek Kupka, Barnett Newman and Mark Rothko (see above).

The following excerpts from Du Toit et al throw further light on this issue.

'The propagation of the Word must not be tripped up by aestheticism – the Word and Sacrament must always remain central. The service is based on two self-sufficient agents: Word and Sacrament. To try and add to it is unnecessary, even dangerous, and always tends to contradict the Biblical principle of the spiritual character of the service. "From the great principle, *that the sensualisation of the service is forbidden, it follows that all things*

which work on the senses must be limited to a minimum" (W. Geesink:*Gereformeerde Ethiek* Part 1 p. 287).[67] ... The Lord Jesus instituted only two "visible" symbols, namely Baptism and the Eucharist.

'... The human tendency towards spectacle can easily degenerate into idolatry. The Heidelberg Cathechism, question and answer 98 states it clearly: "But should we not allow the images in church as books of the laity? No; because we must not be wiser than God, who wants to teach his Christians, not by means of dumb images, but by the living declaration of His Word."

'A church can be without artworks and yet rich in symbolism.

[67] 'Uit het groote beginsel, dat verzinlijking van den eredienst verboden is, volgt dus, dat al wat op de zinnen werkt, tot een minimum moet beperkt'.

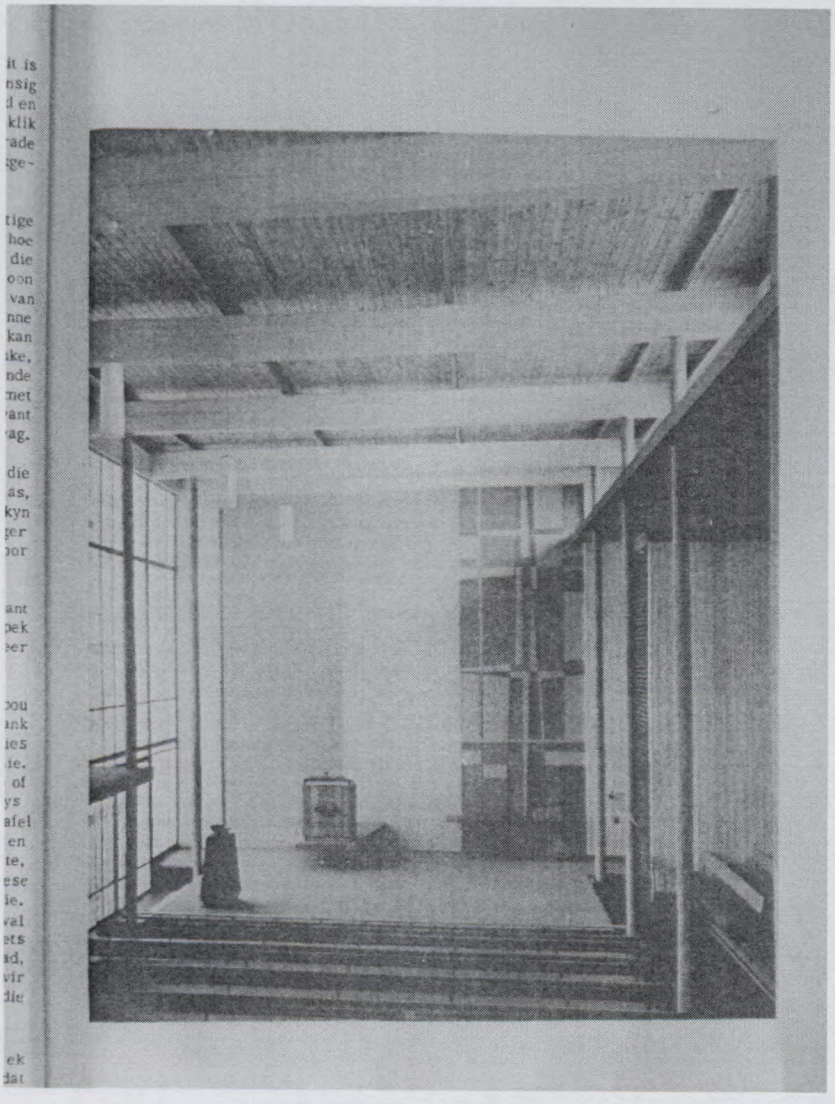

Figure 30. Interior of the Eikenhof DRC (Du Toit et al, 1966: 45). Reproduced by kind permission of the publisher.

'While it is not necessary to ignore art and symbolism totally, care must be taken that the exaggerated application thereof does not draw the eye and the thoughts of the church-goer away from God's Word and the eternal spiritual truths' (1966: 90, my translation, emphasis added).

All these excerpts express the belief that art, which works on the senses, poses the danger of luring the church-goer away from the domain of true spirituality, which is an abstract thing, and back to the world of the senses, which is fundamentally opposed to it. The italicised part, quoted from Geesink, shows clearly why the geometric austerity of

Modernist architecture would appeal so much to the Protestant church architect or theorist (see above).

Du Toit et al show a photograph of a church interior (Eikenhof DRC) as a good example of a well-designed liturgical space (1966: 45, see photograph above). On the wall, behind and to the right of the pulpit, there is a mural which represents the cross in a highly abstracted form (such as was proposed by these authors – see above). Extending the full height of the wall, it reduces the cross to an abstract composition of rectangles, somewhat similar to what may be found in a Mondrian painting. These rectangles harmonise very effectively with the rest of the interior, a rectangular space which consists entirely of horisontal and vertical elements which create a network of rectangles of various dimensions and proportions. (This includes the ceiling, which is flat with horisontal beams which cross over each other). Thus the cross motif is taken up by the architecture itself, with structural elements creating cross patterns all over the space, from ceiling to walls to windows.

This very abstract and ingenious use of the cross motif transforms the entire space in symbolic terms and imbues the rectangular church space (favoured by Van Selms, Du Toit et al as well as Koorts) with a truly Protestant sense of spirituality – the most functional architectural elements and structural details are made to express, in highly abstracted form, the symbolism of the cross. This uniquely Protestant use of symbolism and abstraction, together with the skilful composition of static verticals and horisontals, achieve the very difficult architectural feat of transforming the mundane rectangular space we know so well in our daily experience into one which is suffused with a serene devotional atmosphere, a space which can persuade us that it belongs to a remote, abstract world of eternal spiritual truths (see above).

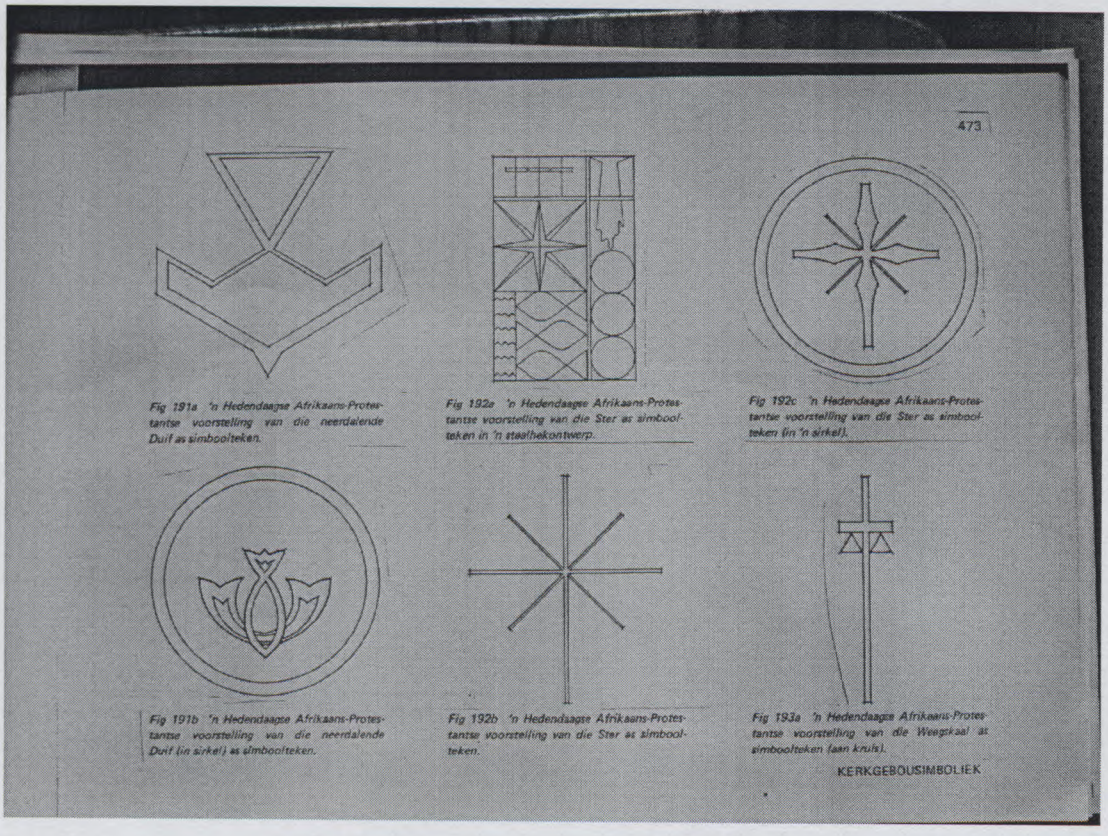

Figure 31. Examples of geometrically abstracted symbolic art from the interiors of Afrikaner Protestant churches (Kesting, 1978: 473).

One would think that Du Toit et al would hold this interior up as a prime example of how symbolism and art, and particularly, the symbol of the cross should be applied ('...very abstractly and sparingly. In this way it will carry the meaning more of decoration than of symbolism.'). But after merely stating that it is a 'striking liturgical space with regard to the size, the placing of the baptismal font and the eucharist table, and the simplicity of the pulpit', they remark that 'opinion may be divided over the position of the pulpit [which is off-centre] and the strong pattern behind the eucharist table' (1966: 45, my translation, emphasis added). It is not clear whether this reference to the abstracted cross motif indicates that the authors failed to recognize it for what it is, or whether the cross, even in such highly abstract form, still offends them, causing them to pass it off as a 'strong pattern' which they implicitly disapprove of for attracting too much attention to itself.

Daan Kesting reproduces this same artwork as an example of the use of the cross as symbol in Afrikaans Protestant churches (1978: 469, fig. 184c). Significantly, all the examples of various symbols which he shows are highly abstract, some to the extent that

it is almost impossible to make out what they refer to (Illustrations above and below: Kesting, 1978: 473-476). Invariably, it is a specifically geometric form of abstraction which is employed. A representation of the sower reduces the human figure to a pattern of rectangles and triangles, clearly derived from Cubism.

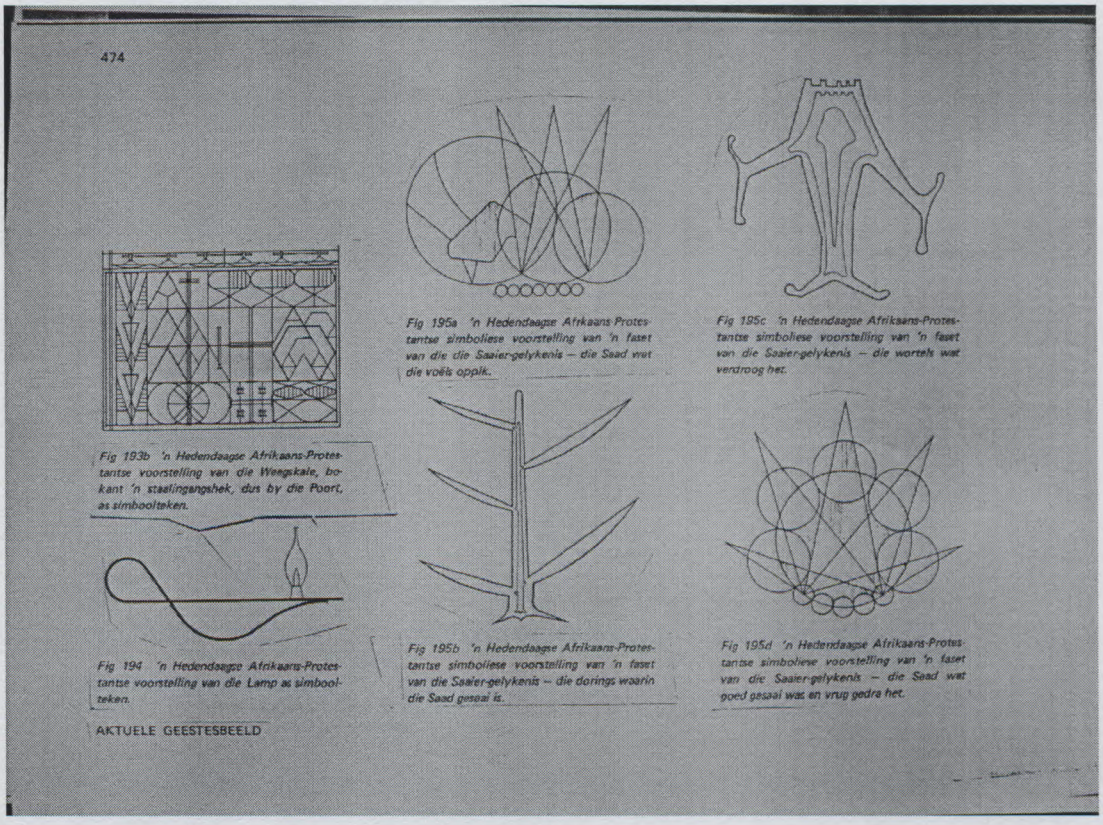

Figure 32. Examples of geometrically abstracted symbolic art from the interiors of Afrikaner Protestant churches (Kesting, 1978: 474).

The Dove is likewise reduced to pure abstract geometry (Kesting, 1978: 469-478, see illustrations). Koorts likewise shows twelve examples of acceptable symbols, all of which are highly abstract, consisting of 'strictly geometric' configurations (to use his own description) (1974: 102, 101).

The interior of the Eikenhof DRC is a very good example of how this powerful Protestant aversion to the sensuousness of Catholic art and the perceived idolatry which it leads to, can lead quite logically to the abstract geometric forms of Modernist art and architecture (i.e. the Cubist tradition in Modernist art, particularly as developed by Piet Mondrian and

the other artists of De Stijl [68]). The same applies to the many examples of geometrically abstracted symbols shown by Kesting (see illustrations).[69]

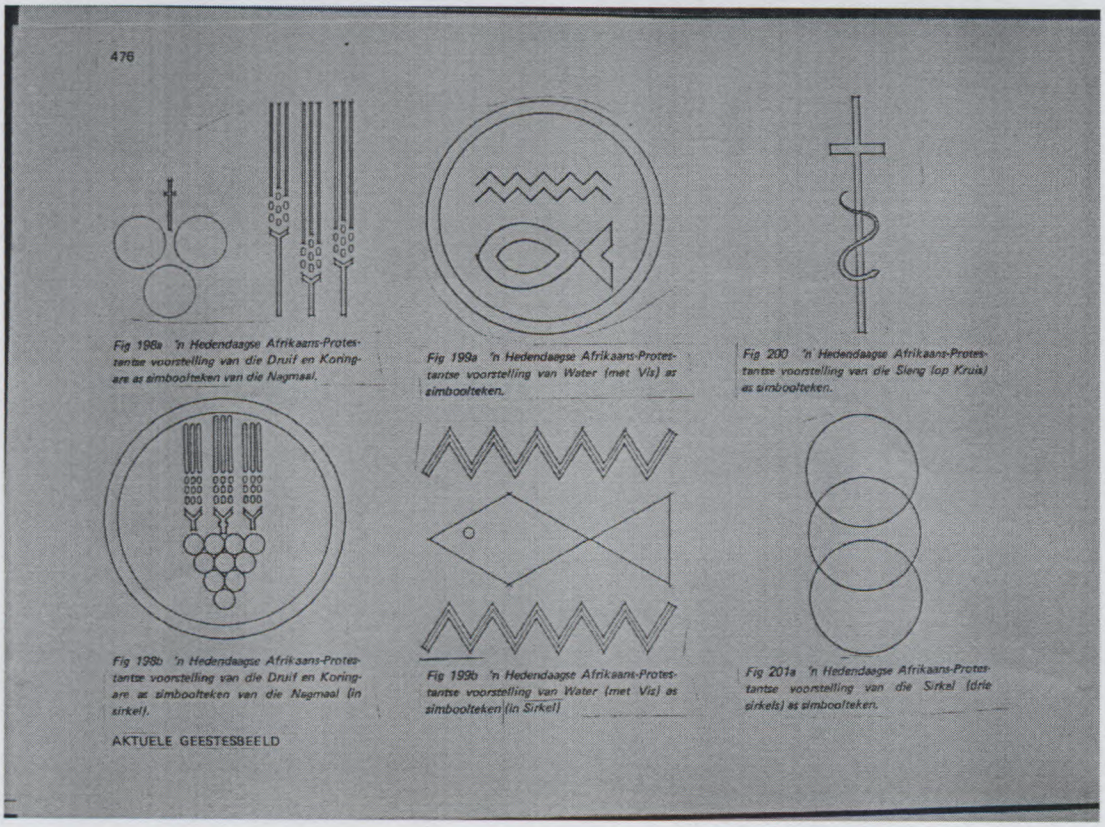

Figure 33. Examples of geometrically abstracted symbolic art from the interiors of Afrikaner Protestant churches (Kesting, 1978: 476).

All these authors consistently warn against an excessive or extravagant use of symbolic ornamentation, which, by implication, would create an effect similar to that of Baroque (and therefore Catholic) church interiors: '[Symbolic ornamentation] may not draw

[68] As has been mentioned before, Cubism, via De Stijl, had a significant impact on the use of pure geometric form in Modernist architecture (see above).

[69] The following remark by Koorts gives further support to this statement: 'Today we can exploit the rich legacy of Early Christian ornamental motifs. *As Protestants* we will probably limit our choice to *more schematic representations*, as, for example, the anchor and the fish, rather than making use of *pictorial representations* of Biblical scenes. In addition, we will be more *frugal* in our application of these motifs.' (1974: 100, my translation, emphasis added).

attention to itself. Simplicity remains the watch-word. It must not be sensational, dramatic or extravagant. ... It must also not be confusing in its multiplicity'[70] (Du Toit et al, 1966: 90, my translation; see also Van Selms, 1954: 84-85; Koorts, 1974: 103). Koorts's final words to his chapter on this subject are: 'Protestant austerity must be born in mind at all times' (1974: 103, my translation).

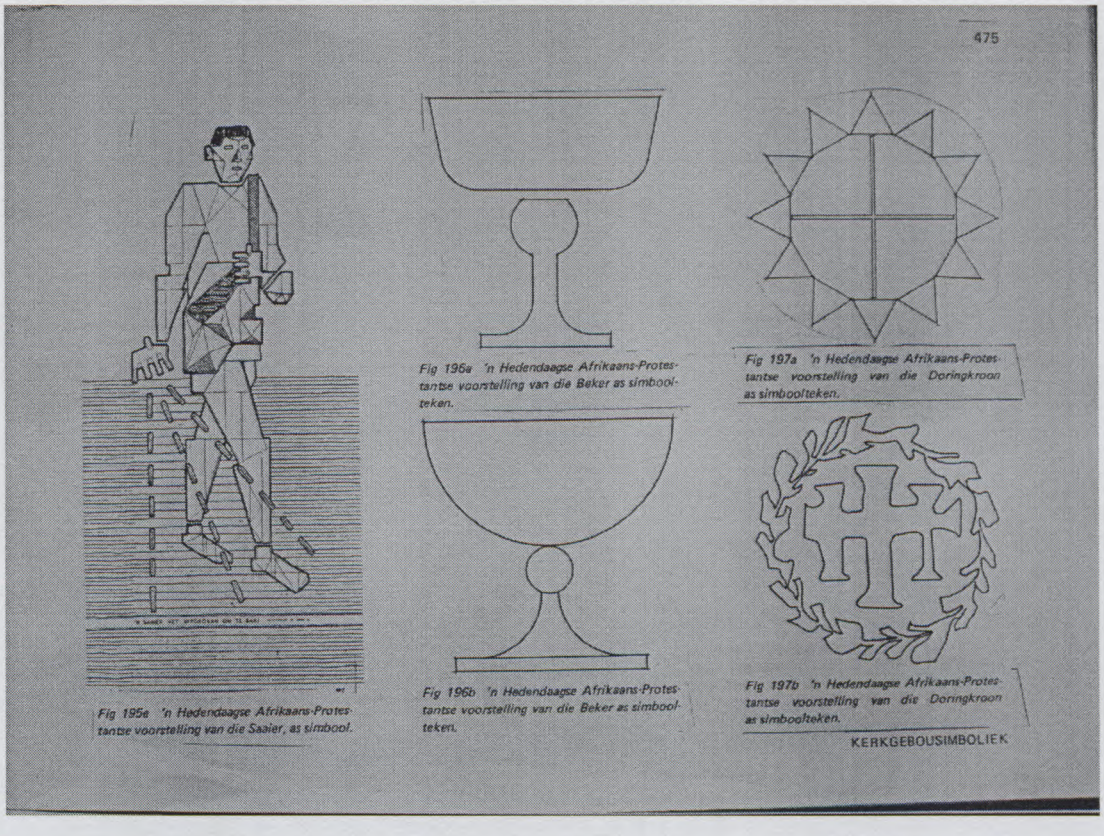

Figure 34. Examples of geometrically abstracted symbolic art from the interiors of Afrikaner Protestant churches (Kesting, 1978: 475).

Here again the Protestant motivation for tending towards the austere geometric purity of Modernist architecture is apparent.

It follows from this that the more conservative or fundamentalist the Protestant attitudes of the church is, the stronger this tendency towards Modernist austerity might be. As David Goldblatt points out, the *Gereformeerde Kerk*, the smallest and most conservative

[70] All these terms ('sensational', 'dramatic', 'extravagant', 'multiplicity') describe the characteristic features of a typical Catholic Baroque church interior, while 'confusing' describes a typical Protestant reaction to such an interior.

of the three Afrikaans Protestant churches, was also responsible for the most radical Modernist designs in their churches (i.e. after the ground-breaking designs of Anthonie Smith in the 1940s) (Goldblatt,1998: 233; see also Hughes, 1991: 99).

The architect of some of the most radical of these churches, Johan de Ridder, stated in an interview with Goldblatt that these designs stemmed directly from his religious convictions as member of the *Gereformeerde Kerk* : 'The Dopper Church took the lead because of the strength of its doctrine. I could approach the design of the [Totiusdal *Gereformeerde Kerk*] church as the community did, trying to incorporate our beliefs in it. It was not a style. The church was a visual symbol of aspects of our faith, while simultaneously *retaining the basic idea of the Reformation that all external symbols should be avoided. I couldn't accept a complicated architecture. I wanted simple wall surfaces, big roof surfaces, a plain, striking building with height and unity between interior and exterior*... The triangle is essentially religious with a very vertical and spiritual character. Preaching of the Word is not confined to four walls. It must go out through big windows at the top and front of the church, which is like a megaphone with the preacher at its apex' (Goldblatt, 1998: 233, emphasis added).[71]

Ysterplaat Dutch Reformed Church

This modernist church, designed by Glennie, Egan and Sikkel and opened in 1959, has a rectangular plan. The design of the liturgical centre – simple, functional, austere and composed, with daylight coming from the side through a narrow strip of windows hidden from the congregation (to produce a sense of mystery) – is a very good example of the ideal proposed by all of the above guideline authors (all of whom published their ideas on this matter after this church was built, with the exception of Van Selms). This is immediately apparent when comparing a photograph of this church interior with those

[71] In a detailed survey conducted by Daan Kesting to guage the opinion of ministers of the three Afrikaans Protestant churches on the desirability of a whole range of symbols for use in the church, it was found that ministers of the Dutch Reformed Church were consistently the most positive about the various symbols proposed, while those of the *Gereformeerde Kerk* (the 'Doppers') were consistently the most negative in their reaction, often strongly so. Interestingly, it was also found that, when divided according to age group rather than denomination, the ministers of the youngest age group (below 30 years) almost invariably gave the strongest negative response, while the older age groups generally became more moderate in their responses as their age increased (see Kesting, 1978: 451-466).

published by Koorts, using examples built almost two decades later. Together with the ground plan, the design of the interior makes this a model Afrikaner Protestant church.

Figure 35. Interior of the Ysterplaat DRC showing the size and prominent placing of the cross behind the pulpit. Due to subtle manipulations of the form it is possible, from this distance (i.e. from the seats of the congregation), to imagine the crucified figure of Christ hanging from this cross.

But it is the use of symbolic adornment which makes this church particularly interesting. The first minister at this church, Ds Johan Heyns, played a leading role in the introduction of the cross and other symbols inside Afrikaner Protestant churches.[72]

[72] Like Van Selms, Johan Heyns was a theologian with a prolific output of publications. Ysterplaat was his first congregation, after which he was at the Rondebosch DRC. He then pursued an academic career, first at the Stellenbosch seminary and then at the University of Pretoria, where he became head of the department of Dogmatics and Ethics. He also became Moderator of the Dutch Reformed Church, and under his leadership this Church finally renounced apartheid. He was assassinated at his home in 1994. (University of Pretoria, 2014).

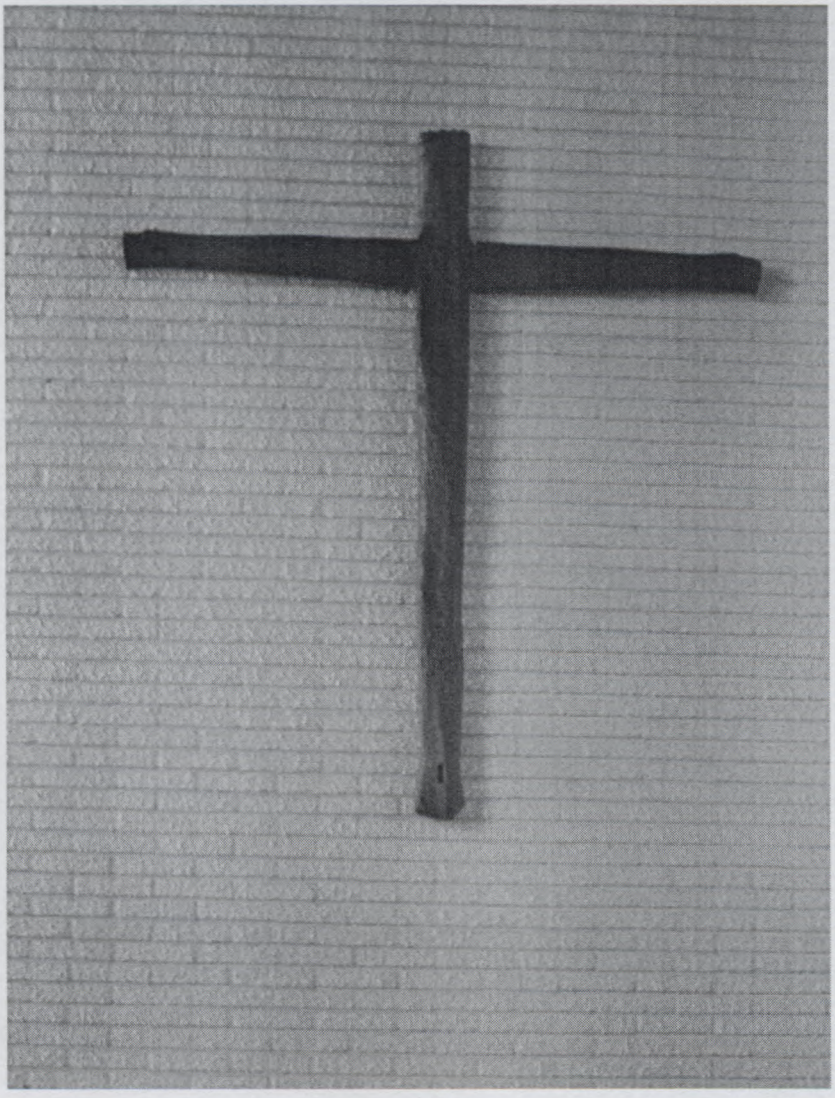

Figure 36. Close-up view of the cross inside the Ysterplaat DRC showing the subtlest of abstract hints of anthropomorphic form, which was nevertheless wholly unacceptable to the theorists. Members of the initial congregation were very disturbed by this cross.

The austere liturgical space is dominated by a fairly large wooden cross on the wall behind and to the left of the pulpit. According to Marie van Rhyn, the church scribe, who has been attached to this church since its inception, many members of the congregation were very upset by this cross when the church was first opened (2014). This is a typical Protestant reaction, and the attitude behind it can be gauged from the excerpts on this subject quoted above.

Figure 37. Wood-carving of the parable of the Sower, on the pulpit of the Ysterplaat DRC.

However, a closer look at this cross reveals the fact that it is not quite just a plain wooden cross. The top of the upright bar has a series of protruding points, almost like knuckles on a clenched fist, which suggest the crown of thorns in a very abstract way. Likewise, the lower edge of the cross bar tapers upward from the centre in both directions, subtly and, once again, very abstractly suggesting the sagging arms of the crucified Christ. Furthermore, the lowest section of the upright bar is carved in such a way as to create the slightest of hints of a form which could suggest the twist of Christ's lower leg as it passes over the other one so that the feet could be fixed to the cross with a single nail (see photographs).

Nowhere is the Protestant need for abstraction in fine art more clearly evident than in a case like this, where Christ Himself is the subject of such abstraction. But in spite of this extreme abstraction, the creator of this cross (and more so the minister and church council who approved it) is sailing very close to the wind, as is evident from the following extract from Hannes Koorts's very moderate and progressive treatment of the cross issue:

'Furthermore, there must be no representation, *no matter how vague*, of a Christ figure on the cross. The Protestant tradition knows no place for such images' (1974: 101, my translation, emphasis added).

On the pulpit there is a woodcarving of the Sower, while the baptismal font, made of irregularly shaped stone, to appear like natural rock, has a fish carved into the front of the rock in a simplified, abstract manner (using outlines only), with a geometric pattern of undulating lines representing the water. The way in which these schematic figures are carved on the rough stone suggests the 'primitivism' of palaeolithic cave art.

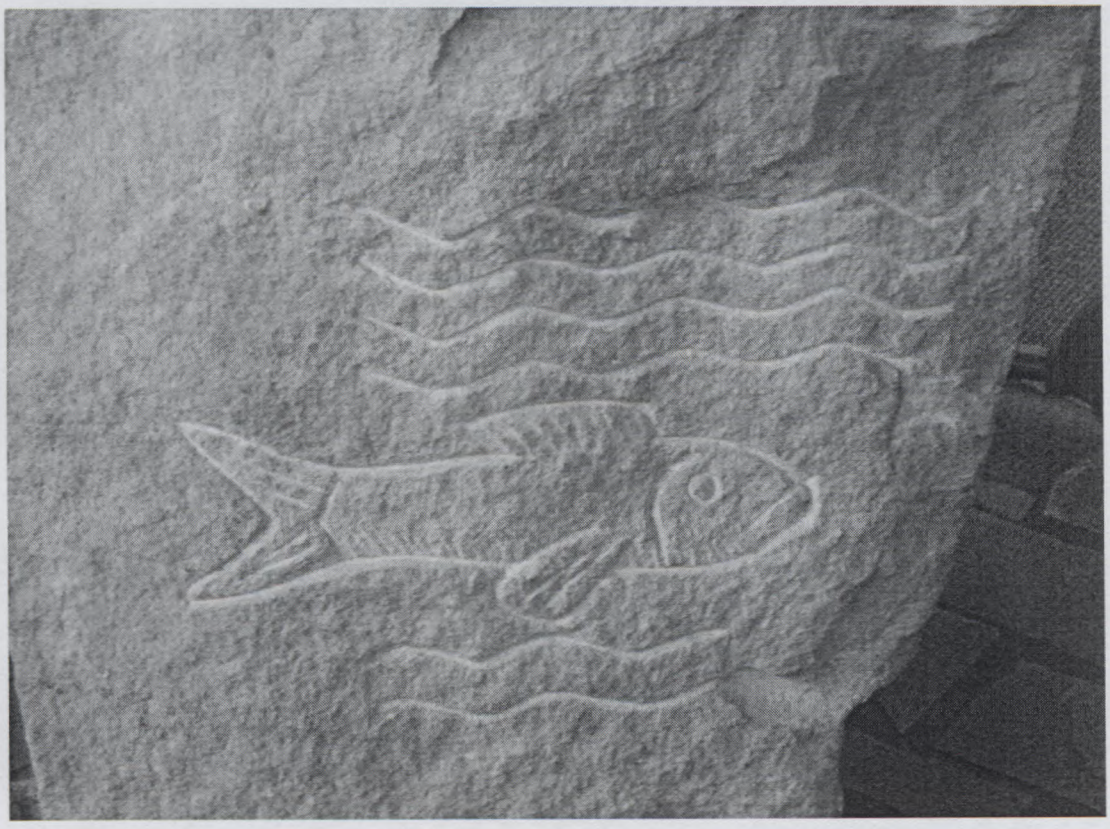

Figure 38. Symbolic stone carving of a fish and water, on the baptismal font of the Ysterplaat DRC.

In the stairwell that leads to the organ gallery at the back of the church there is a wood carving of the Good Shepherd, which is done in the same abstract Modernist style as the Sower on the pulpit. This style is that of the 'primitivist' current of Modernist abstraction rather than the Cubist-orientated geometric form of Modernist abstraction generally

favoured by Afrikaner Protestant churches. It derives from the work of Gauguin and Van Gogh via Fauvism and Expressionism (as well as Picasso's early 'African' phase of Cubism), and it is generally less abstract than the geometric type, retaining a closer relationship with organic form and sensuous experience – which makes it less suitable for use in symbolic art in an Afrikaner Protestant church of this era.

Figure 39. Symbolic wood-carving of the Good Shepherd in the stairwell of the Ysterplaat DRC.

The hints of organic form on the cross in the Ysterplaat church demonstrate most clearly why this is the case (see above). It seems that Ds Heyns and his artist were trying to move too far away from the Protestant tradition, and the consternation of his congregation

is quite understandable. In recent times, however, the Dutch Reformed Church has abandoned its former Protestant stance on these matters, and it is possible to walk into some of these churches and see paintings of the Crucifixion as well as other scenes from the life of Christ.

Figure 40. A recent naturalistic depiction of the Crucifixion which hangs inside the Monte Vista DRC. Reproduced by kind permission of the artist, Ria Strydom.

And what is more, these scenes are depicted in a highly naturalistic style,[73] which is stridently out of place in these Modernist church interiors, for the reasons given above (see photograph). Both style and subject matter of such paintings represent that which stands at the opposite pole from the Protestant vantage point which determined the

[73] In fine art literature the term 'naturalism' is generally used rather than 'realism' because the latter, in history of art and in art criticism, refers to the Realist movement of the mid-nineteenth century (as exemplified in the paintings of Gustave Courbet (1819-1877), Honoré Daumier (1808-1879 and others), which had a specific intellectual programme behind it, with radical social, political as well as pictorial components (or to later movements or works of art which follow this Realist tradition) (see Murray & Murray, 1987: 347).

character and form of Modernist Afrikaner Protestant architecture of the era in question – and which defines this Protestant vantage point negatively. It is significant that, once the ban on representing Christ in art was lifted, the need for abstraction was no longer felt.[74] (The painting above is part of a series depicting the life of Christ which hangs inside the Monte Vista DRC, on the front wall of the organ gallery which is on the right hand side of the pulpit).

Returning to Ysterplaat, the organic primitivist forms of the Sower [75] and the Good Shepherd [76] are, as stated before, somewhat out of sync with the geometric austerity of

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[74] These naturalistic paintings also belong to the Post Modernist era, which likewise 'lifted the ban' on naturalistic or representational art which, generally speaking, had been in effect since the advent of Modernism. (Those who violated this sacred cow of Modernism were routinely condemned to obscurity as hopelessly *retardataire* – only to be rediscovered, in some cases, by Post Modernists as bold fore-runners of this recent direction in Western art. Highly naturalistic art, such as that of the late Victorian painters, which perpetuated the Pre-Raphaelite tradition of the Romantic era, was considered beneath contempt by a majority of artists and academics during the Modernist era, but has since been re-assessed by Post Modernist standards and valued far more highly). Nevertheless, the need to abstract, for purely religious reasons, within the Afrikaner Protestant church context was a much stronger motivating factor than overseas secular artistic trends, while this ban was still in effect within the Church, as is clear from the literature discussed above.

[75] According to Kesting's survey (see above) the Sower received relatively positive support from most of his respondents (as a symbol for use in Afrikaans Protestant churches (Yes 47%, No 32%, Uncertain 16%, with a 95% response from Afrikaans Protestant ministers). The Dutch Reformed Church gave a positive response (Yes 61%, No 18%) while the *Gereformeerde Kerk* was the most negative in its response (Yes 20%, No 63%), with the *Nederduitsch Hervormde Kerk* slightly less negative (Yes 25%, No 56%). (1978: 457-458).

[76] The Good Shepherd likewise got a 95% reaction from ministers, but the response was strongly divided (Yes 39%, No 39%, Uncertain 17%). Once again the Dutch Reformed Church was the most positive (Yes 52% No 25%), while a strongly negative reaction came from the other two sister churches, with the *Gereformeerde Kerk* the most negative in its response (Yes 16% No 67%). The reason for this negative reaction would seem to be the fact that the Good Shepherd refers to Christ – even though this is a very indirect reference, via the medium of parable – while the Sower, being more remote from the person of Christ, is regarded as more acceptable. In other words, the symbol, in conceptual terms, is *not abstract enough*. This supposition is supported by the fact that the Dove, which represents the Holy Ghost, gets an equally negative response from the *Gereformeerde Kerk* (Yes 16%, No 68%) and the *Nederduitsch Hervormde Kerk* (Yes 22%, No 53%) while the Dutch Reformed Church is positive (Yes 63%, No 19%). By the same token the Lamb of God (which represents Christ Himself) elicited an overall negative reaction, with the *Gereformeerde Kerk* yet again indicating the strongest negative response (Yes 10%, No 76%) while the Dutch Reformed Church was divided on this issue (Yes 35%, No 38%, Uncertain 21%). Furthermore, the Crown of Thorns received an overall negative response, with the strongest negative reaction coming from the *Gereformeerde Kerk* (Yes 5%, No 77%) (Kesting, 1978: 457, 454, 456-57, 460) Thus, the more closely related these symbols are to the person of Christ (or the Holy Ghost), the more negative the reaction from

the architecture, and particularly, that of the liturgical space, as is the organic stone shape of the baptismal font. These forms have a dynamism and expressive power which run contrary to the expressed aim (i.e. in the guideline texts) of achieving an atmosphere of dignified repose and austerity.

The thorn bush on the right hand side of the Sower panel (which represents the seeds which fall on thorny ground) is powerfully carved, and brings to mind the Crown of Thorns – which is not amongst the symbols approved by any of the above authors, presumably because it is too close to the person of Christ, and particularly, His Crucifixion, which is the quintessential Roman Catholic artistic image (as seen from a Protestant vantage point), and therefore wholly unacceptable to these Protestant authors (see footnote 76).

Along with the vitality of the primitivist style, the bold relief carving of these decorations emphasis a sense of organic life which is in opposition to the flat, geometric symbolic art favoured by these authors. It is the sense of utter remoteness from sensuous reality in these abstract configurations which makes them so suitable to this Protestant context, and which makes the Ysterplaat art much less suitable.

But once the ban on the representation of the divine has been lifted, the need for such severe abstraction – i.e. the need to keep sensuous reality at such an extreme remove – disappears, and the Ysterplaat carvings can therefore perhaps also be seen as too far ahead of their time, just as the very slight hint of a figure on the cross was too far ahead of its time.

And this in spite of the fact that, in contemporary Modernist terms, the Ysterplaat carvings could have been seen as dismally retrograde – hearking right back to the 19th century Post-Impressionism of Vincent van Gogh (1853-1890) and Paul Gauguin (1848-19034) (and particularly to the woodcarvings of the latter), and therefore lagging far behind the cutting edge of the contemporary *avant-garde*.[77]

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conservative Afrikaans Protestant quarters, and the more remote they are from Christ, (i.e. the more *abstract* they are in relation to the Holy Trinity) the more positive the response. This observation is borne out by Kesting's detailed survey of a wide range of possible symbols (see Kesting, 1978: 447-480).

[77] Ironically, Minimalist sculpture, which would be at the spearhead of the *avant garde* in the middle of the next decade (the 1960s), with its extreme abstraction and geometric austerity, would have satisfied the spiritual and theological requirements of these Protestant liturgical spaces exceptionally well (i.e. in formal or stylistic rather than conceptual terms), and, for the same reason, be equally at home in the inner sanctum

Bellville-East Dutch Reformed Church

In this church Anthonie Smith reverted to the rectangular plan, possibly under the influence of the report of the Dutch Reformed Church Synod of Northern and Southern Transvaal on church design (*Sinvolle Kerkbou*) (Le Roux, 2008: 31). The stained glass windows in this church are significant for two reasons. Firstly, these works reduce symbolic motifs (in this case a star) to simple, flat geometric shapes which are very close to pure abstraction. And secondly, the medium of stained glass is particularly well suited to the symbolic requirements of the Protestant Church due to its non-material character. One could almost say that light itself, which is transformed into different colours as it passes through a stained glass window, is the medium employed by the artist, and the resulting ethereal nature of the luminous image is ideally suited to the expression of 'heavenly' or spiritual artistic content. By contrast, sculpture is, of all the visual arts, the least suited to this purpose (in terms of the Protestant attitude to sacred art).[78]

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of the Voortrekker Monument (see p above). *Untitled* (1965) by Donald Judd (1928-1994) (in the Locksley-Shea Gallery, Minneapolis) – a sequence of identical rectangular cubes of highly finished metal placed at mathematically precise identical intervals one above the other – is a classic example of Minimalism. This is a completely abstract (or non-figurative) art based on pure proportion, stripped of any suggestion of representation or sensuous expression, and therefore as remote from sensuous experience as is humanly possible (Hartt, 1977: 485). Note that Hannes Koorts advocates the use of pure proportion (in relation to the same quadrangular cubic masses and spaces as those used by Judd, although in an architectural rather than sculptural context) to express a sense of spirituality (see Koorts, 1974: 81-92).

[78] The Romantics of the early 19th century, who played a fundamental role in the development of abstract art as a vehicle for religious expression or revelation – a development which was strongly influenced by a Protestant worldview (see above) – valued painting, and even more so, music, over sculpture for similar reasons. Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel (1770-1831), following Karl Wilhelm Friedrich von Schlegel (1772-1829) and Johan Joachim Winckelmann (1717-1768), 'saw Antique sculpture as the embodiment of the classical, Greek ideal. And, he argued, sculpture could never express the Romantic ideal, *which is essentially concerned with the inner life withdrawn into itself from the external world.* ... Only the arts of painting and music were, he said, "adequate to express the life of the soul". [In the same vein, Théophile Gautier (1811-1872) wrote that] "Of all the arts, sculpture is certainly that which lends itself least to the Romantic idea. It seems to have received its definitive form from Antiquity. *Developed under an anthropomorphic religion where deified beauty could be eternalised in marble and set up on altars,* it attained a perfection which would never be surpassed"' (Honour, 1981: 127-128, emphasis added). The italicised parts show a clear opposition of what is essentially a Protestant view of spirituality ('the inner life withdrawn into itself from the external world'), which is identified with painting and music, with what is generally perceived by Protestants to be a Catholic view of spirituality ('deified beauty eternalised in marble and set up on altars')

Le Roux Smith le Roux's statement, in a letter to his brother Anthonie Smith, that stained glass is an ideal medium for serious abstract art (in the context of the use of abstraction within the Protestant Church), is particularly relevant here (see above).

Figure 41. Interior of the Bellville East DRC showing the geometric abstraction of the symbolic art on the stained-glass windows.

Oostersee Dutch Reformed Church

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which is identified with sculpture. (The Catholic art of the Renaissance and the Counter-Reformation was based, to a very large degree, on the sculpture of classical Antiquity – see Panofsky, 1972: 112-210, Wind, 1980: 177, 181-183). Walter Pater's much later remark that all art aspires to the condition of music, is based on this deeply Romantic attitude (Honour, 1981: 119), and is relevant to Koort's contention that architectural proportion, rhythm, contrast and interval can be used to express the spiritual, as in certain types of music (Koorts, 1974: 81-92).

This church, which, like the Vasco DRC, has an octagonal ground plan, was designed by APS Conradie and opened in November, 1973. A striking feature of the interior is the thirty two stained glass panels which stretch from the main entrance to the liturgical space on both sides of the church. Those on the right hand side (as viewed from the main entrance at the back) represent the Coming of Christ, while those on the left represent the Second Coming. (All information concerning the symbolic meaning of these panels has been derived from the brochure given out by the Oostersee DRC at the opening of the church on the 24th of November, 1973).

By the time the church was opened (the year before Koorts's book was published) attitudes towards symbolic adornment in a church had become somewhat more relaxed, as is evident from Koorts's own expressed opinions (see above). This is reflected in the symbolic art of the stained glass windows. The stained glass panels themselves are not rigidly rectangular, but consist of irregular hexagons, none of which are identical, so that the seemingly endless variation of the format lends a distinctly organic character to the whole.

The designs themselves are still highly abstract, but here and there the familiar organic forms of doves, lilies, and the sun (as well as those of trumpets and a sailing ship) can be seen. The more rigid geometry of the abstract panels is relieved by the introduction of contrasting curvilinear shapes, which, although still articulated in planes of flat, unmodulated colour, further enhance the sense of organic life. The dynamic use of these curved lines in the overall composition of the panels as well as in the individual panels, gives an effect of joyful vitality to the whole church interior which is significantly different from the calm austerity and rigid geometry of the church interiors discussed above.

Nevertheless, the image of Christ himself is never even hinted at. In panels 4, 5 and 6 (see photographs), which deal with His life on earth, he is referred to very indirectly by means of a field of lilies (panel 4, lilies symbolising the purity of the Virgin), the parable of the sower (panel 5, in which a field is discernible, but the Sower himself cannot be identified), and the wind and waves of the storm which He calmed (panel 6, in which the fish in the water, which refer to the Early Christian symbol of the fish, as well as the dove above, indirectly refer to Christ).

Figure 42. Stained-glass windows in the Oostersee DRC. The lily is clearly recognizable in the right-hand panel (panel 4), but it is impossible to discern the figure of the Sower in the left-hand panel (panel 5).

Thus, when the symbol is *conceptually* of a highly abstract nature (with the signifier at a considerable conceptual remove from the signified – i.e. Christ), it is permissible to use configurations which are *perceptually* fairly close to the thing (i.e. the symbol) which they represent. The lily, which is conceptually the furthest removed from Christ, is therefore the symbolic image which most closely resembles the real object to which it refers (i.e. an actual lily, as it can be observed in nature), while the dove and the fish are somewhat closer to Him and consequently more abstract (although still recognisable), and the sower, which is closest to Him of all these symbols, cannot be made out at all (see photographs).

The lilies are made up of various, subtly differentiated tones (on the flowers as well as the leaves and stalks), which create a fairly strong impression of tonal modelling (i.e. of light and shadow) – and therefore of three-dimensional form – even though the individual tonal planes still consist of flat, unmodulated colour. The dove and the fish, on the other hand, are rendered as flat, abstract images with a single uniform tone.

Figure 43. Stained-glass windows in the Oostersee DRC. From right to left: panels 5, 6 and 7. In panel 7 the Dove can be seen ascending Heavenwards. To the left of this part of the Crucifixion panel is visible.

Panel 8, which represents the Crucifixion, is the most abstract of all the panels (see photograph). It is virtually impossible to discern a cross in this panel, let alone a crucifixion, in spite of the fact that it is one of the simplest of geometric configurations. The composition is dominated by vertical strips, but a horisontal strip which would complete the cross shape is lacking. Instead, the horisontal bar of the cross is vaguely alluded to by a diagonal line which rather tentatively crosses over the verticals on the left. However, on the right hand side of the panel, which is almost twice as large as the left, the expected continuation of this line (which would complete the shape of the cross) is missing – except for the briefest suggestion, a short diagonal line which spans no more than the width of a single vertical strip, and which is slanted in the opposite direction. Although these diagonals are at a flat enough angle to suggest an approximation of a horisontal line, it is clear that the artist was at pains to avoid a clear cross configuration with horisontal and vertical elements crossing at right angles. By the same token none of the vertical strips are true verticals, but diagonals which slant either to the left or the right. Furthermore, the

'horisontal' effect of the flat diagonal on the left (the only significant approximation of a horisontal) is undermined by the fact that it forms the base of a triangular shape which extends to the top of the panel. Further steep diagonals and flat curves divide the surface up into a flat pattern of triangles and trapezoid shapes, none of which suggest a cross motif. The letters I N R I (the latin inscription which stands for 'Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews') have been incorporated into the design, although in a very abstract form.

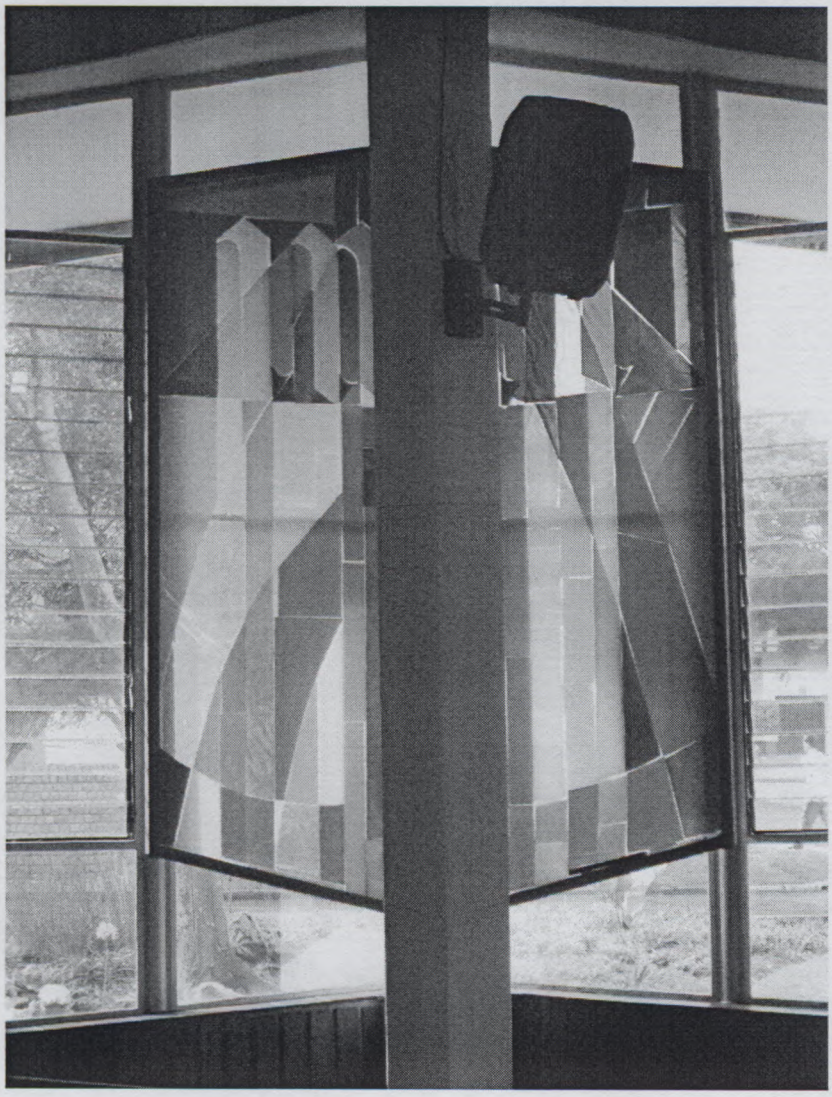

Figure 44. Stained-glass windows inside the Oostersee DRC. Panel 8: The Crucifixion.

This extraordinarily indirect representation of the cross and the Crucifixion is a telling indication of how powerful and deep-rooted the Protestant aversion to the crucifix still was

at this time. It is also a striking example of how this Protestant attitude could drive artists towards the furthest limits of abstraction. The cross, as a plain geometric configuration, is felt to be insufficiently abstract as a representation of the Crucifixion, and is therefore abstracted even further, so that it is virtually impossible to recognise it for what it is without the aid of the explanatory notes in the inaugural brochure. In other words, a symbol, which is already an abstraction, is abstracted even further until the resulting configuration all but loses any correspondence with the symbol it refers to, let alone the actual event which that symbol represents.

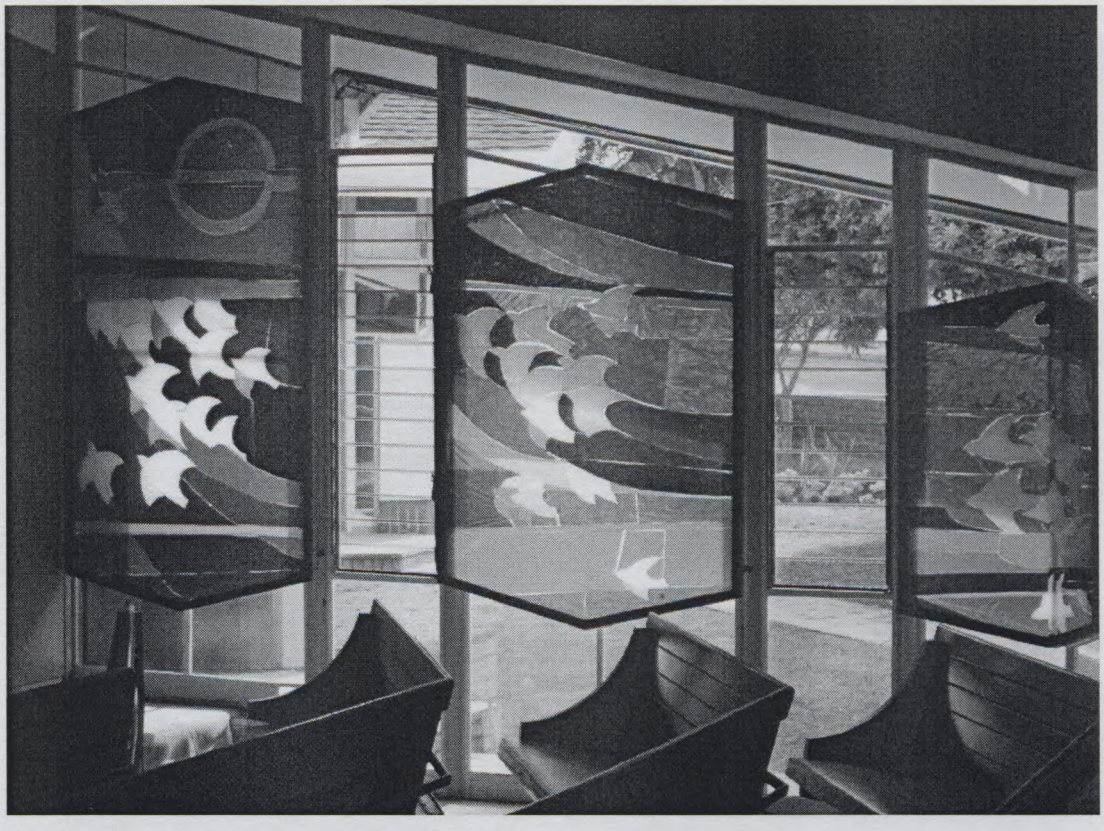

Figure 45. Stained-glass windows inside the Oostersee DRC. From right to left: panels 14, 15 and 16.

But this process of abstraction is even taken a step further. It states in the brochure that 'the base of the panel has the shape of an anchor and can be seen as symbolic of the cross which serves as an anchor in people's lives'. Thus the panel presents us with an anchor which represents the cross, which, in turn, represents the Crucifixion (the configuration of the anchor being more prominent and recognisable than that of the cross), so that, on the whole, several layers of abstracting devices, both conceptual and

perceptual, are employed to place the Crucifixion at the furthest possible remove from the image which represents it.

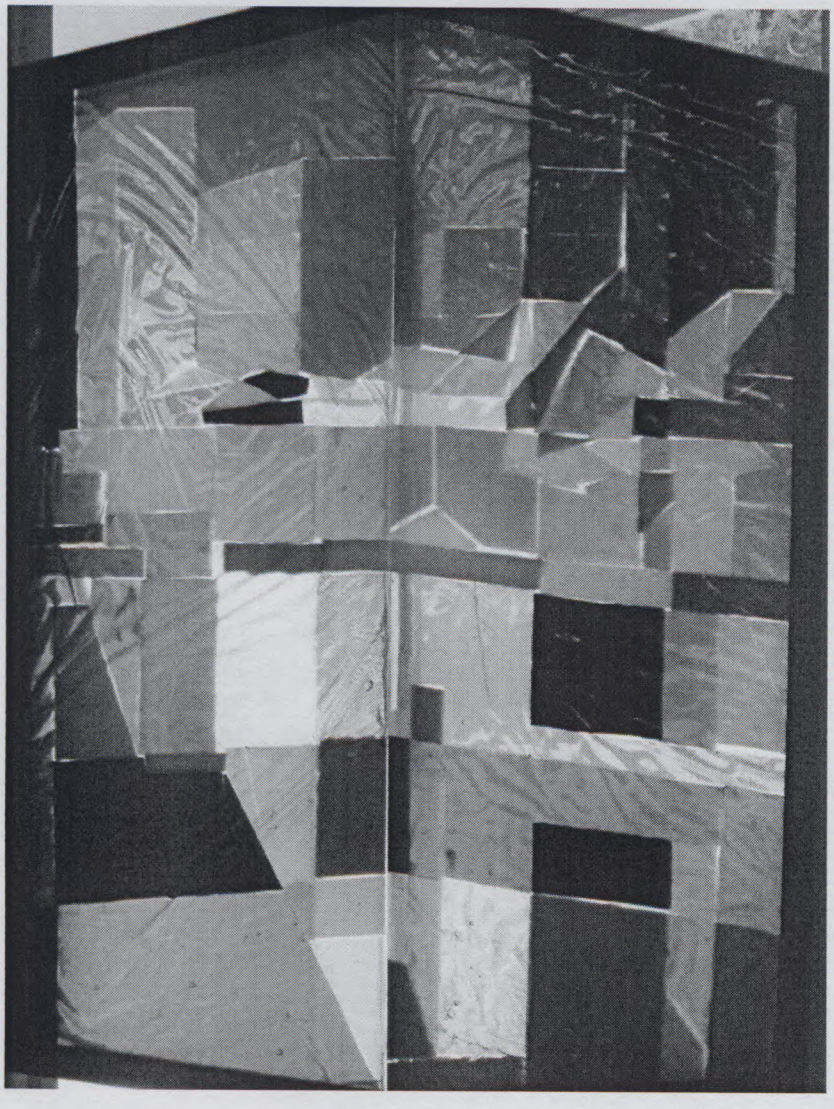

Figure 46. Stained-glass window inside the Oostersee DRC (to the left of the pulpit). Panel 14: The New Jerusalem.

For these reasons this is also, in contemporary terms, one of the most 'modern' looking of all the panels, while the field of lilies (panel 4), and the landscape with a sun, sea and flock of doves (panel 16, see photographs) look distinctly old-fashioned or conservative by comparison, being far more representational or 'realistic'. (During the Modernist era, which was entering its final decade when these panels were made, abstraction was commonly seen as an indication of advanced or progressive art).

On this note, the final three panels of the group on the left hand side of the church (which deals with the Second Coming) show the New Jerusalem (panels 14, 15 and 16). In panel 14 (see above), the Heavenly Jerusalem looks very much like a modern city, complete with what appear to be Modernist skyscrapers of sheer glass, steel and concrete.[79]

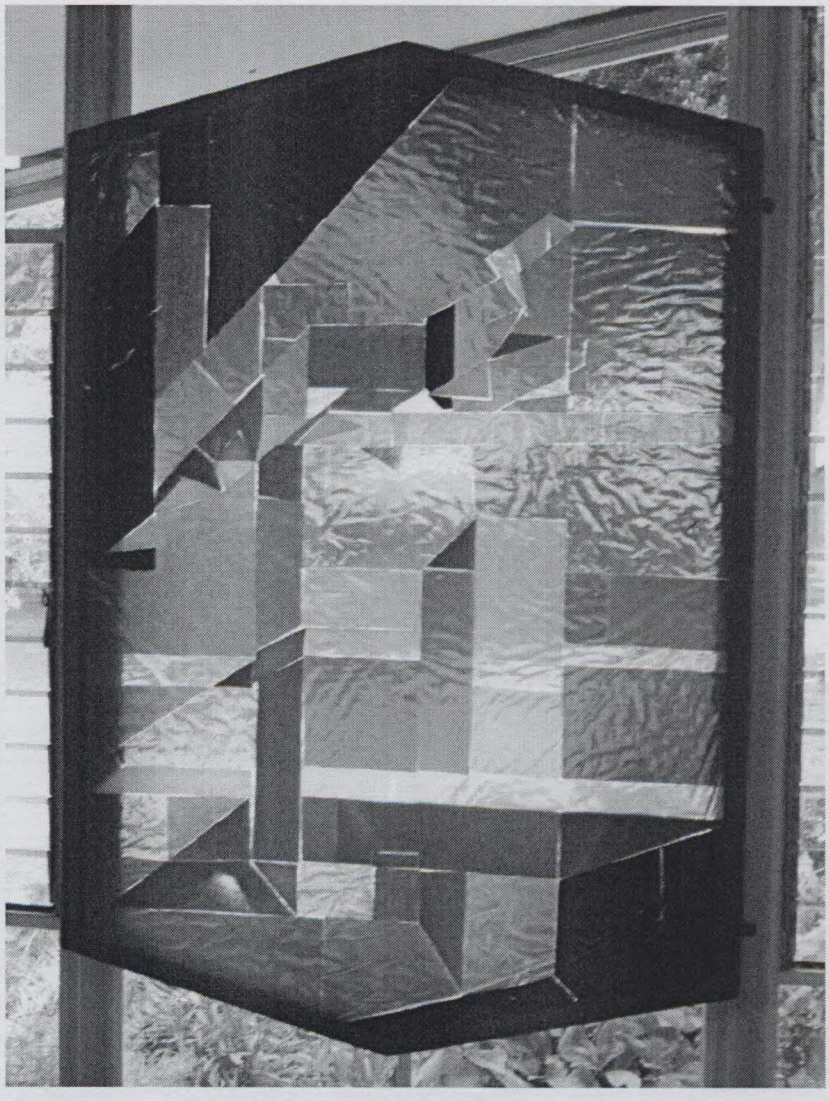

Figure 47. Stained-glass window inside the Oostersee DRC (to the left of the pulpit). Panel 15: the New Jerusalem.

[79] This scene brings to mind Adolf Loos's Modernist vision of an ideal city of the future (quoted above), which reflects the age-old European pre-occupation with an ideal city which is a model of the heavenly city (see Loos, 1908: 20; McLean in Toman ed, 1995: 118-119).

Apart from a small triangular shapes in the centre of the composition, there is no indication of the characteristic domes and spires which would traditionally make up the skyline of such a scene. (These triangles could easily be the roofs of modern houses, and in panels 15 and 16 the small triangles operate in a purely abstract way, so that the vertical 'skyscraper' element now pre-dominates – see above and below).

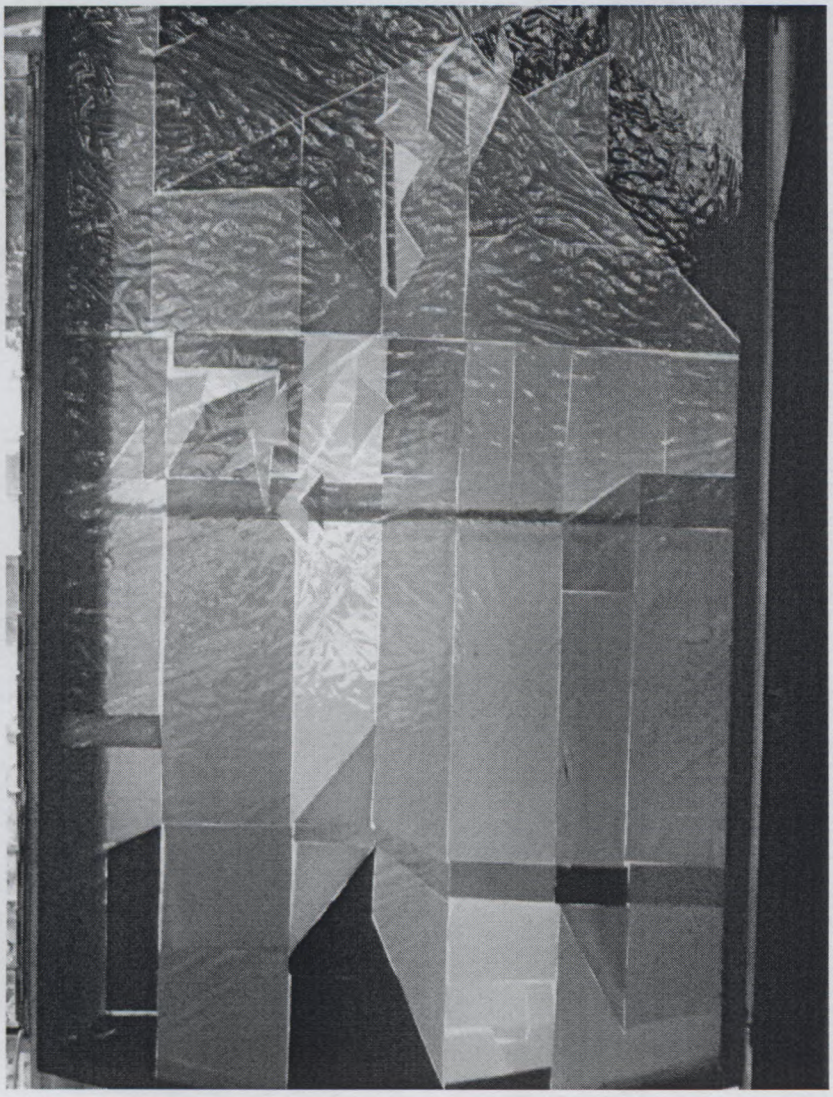

Figure 48. Stained-glass window inside the Oostersee DRC (to the left of the pulpit). Panel 16: The New Jerusalem.

All three panels are composed on a rectangular grid, with some diagonals which create the effect, either of tall tower blocks seen in perspective, or of shadows cast on these tall buildings by neighbouring tall buildings.

It would have been very easy to introduce dome (i.e.semi-circular) shapes without detracting from the over-all effect of the sixteen panels on this side of the church, since circular, semi-circular and curved shapes abound in these compositions which deal with the cosmic vision of the Book of Revelations (see photograph below). We must therefore assume that the lack of dome shapes in the heavenly Jerusalem (which are so characteristic of the skyline of that city) is not only intentional but also significant. The artist presents us with a New Jerusalem which is unmistakably a modern city – an ideal, heavenly city which is depicted in terms of Modernist architecture, and which is depicted by means of Modernist art.

Figure 49. General view of the stained-glass window panels on the left-hand side of the church (facing the pulpit).

That Heaven itself could here be represented by means of Modernist architecture as well as Modernist art is perhaps indicative of how fundamental the *Tweede Trek* agenda (of

conquering and christianising the modern city) was to the culture and successful empowerment of the emerging Afrikaner nation during the first half of the 20th century.[80]

With this in mind it is appropriate to conclude by quoting Rev Albertyn once again: 'God's Word starts with a garden – Paradise – but ends with a city – the New Jerusalem. In the Old Testament one finds mainly the depiction of the agricultural era of the world, but in the New Testament it is the era of the city. This will also be the direction of our church. In the beginning the rural perspective was dominant in religion, but the centre of gravity has now shifted to the urban aspect. May the church have the necessary vision and faith to settle successfully in this new environment' (1942, quoted in Vosloo, 2013: 20).

This chapter has demonstrated that modernist abstraction, particularly that of a rigidly geometric kind, is ideally suited to the iconoclastic needs of the Protestant faith. This is confirmed both by the relevant texts and by the artifacts themselves. The closer the subject matter of the latter moves to the person of Christ, the more stringent this iconoclastic need for abstraction becomes. Here, once again, the special relationship that exists between modernism and Protestantism has enabled the artists and architects of these Afrikaner Protestant churches to create liturgical spaces which are exceptionally well suited to the spiritual and aesthetic needs of these Afrikaner communities.

Revised edition

CONCLUSION

[80] To the extent that it could even be expressed subliminally, decades later, having become thoroughly integrated into Afrikaner culture and way of life. However, it is also possible that the artist was aware of Rev Albertyn's use of the New Jerusalem.

The apparent contradiction between the conservative values of Afrikaner communities and the radical modernism of the churches they built, has revealed a complex and many-faceted situation which gave rise to this phenomenon.

During the time in question the Church (i.e. the three Dutch Reformed Churches of South Africa) stood at the centre of Afrikaner cultural life. The vehement anti-modernism which was such a striking feature of theology in the 1930s (particularly that of the Dutch Reformed Church and the *GereformeerdeKerk*) was to a considerable extent a response to the dire situation of masses of working class Afrikaners who had been forced to leave the rural areas to find work in the cities as unskilled labourers.

But this anti-modernism was already manifested at the beginning of the century when, directly after the conclusion of the Anglo-Boer War, a Christian National education was first instituted in schools in the Transvaal to ensure that science was taught in accordance with the Bible and that Enlightenment values such as freedom, equality and brotherhood were not taught, on the grounds of not being Biblical. These conservative values, with which the church tried to shield the people from the perceived threats of modernism and modernity, must have greatly amplified the nightmare of urbanization for all those who came to the cities with no skills to compete in this highly competitive and bewilderingly modern environment, so that modernism and modernity were indeed experienced as a profound threat by them.

Since the prevailing anti-modernism had such deep roots in the socio-economic conditions of the time as well as in traditional Afrikaner culture, it is surprising that Afrikaner societies chose to build modernist churches, starting with the Bellville DRC which was opened in 1939 – particularly since the Church was the very source of this anti-modernism. However, DF Malan, himself a theologian, realised that Afrikaners must face the challenge of urbanisation, or perish, and, in his Tweede Trek speech of 1938 appealed to Afrikaners to see their economic plight as a second Great Trek, in which the new Blood River would be waged on an economic front in the cities. Analogous speeches were delivered all along the way during the Great Trek centennial of 1938, and, significantly, this re-enactment of the historic Great Trek was also called the *tweede trek*.

This *tweede trek* cultural movement, which incorporated the *Ekonomiese Volkskongres* of 1939, signalled an important departure from the rigid anti-modernism of the immediate past in that it acknowledged the fact that modernism/modernity (the modern industrial city)

had to be conquered economically, culturally and politically in order to ensure the survival of the Afrikaners. Soon afterwards the Dutch Reformed Church echoed these sentiments by stating (in the words of the Rev Albertyn) that the rural church must become a city church, or fall by the wayside.

It has been shown above that DF Malan's *Tweede Trek* concept had a striking counterpart in the modernist phase of the development of Afrikaner Protestant church design. Whether this was the result of a deliberate programme or not is uncertain, but one way or the other, As Vosloo points out, a central concern of the Dutch Reformed Churches of South Africa at the time was to facilitate the transformation of the farm church into a city church – something which these modernist churches achieved emphatically on an architectural front. Vosloo also shows that Malan's famous speech was the last of a series of*tweede trek* speeches which were originally delivered within a purely ecumenical context – at Church conferences dealing with the 'poor white' problem and the mass urbanization of rural Afrikaners. Thus the Church, by way of one of its ministers and theologians (Malan), effectively gave birth to the *tweede trek* concept.

The cover design of the Great Trek Centenary issue of *Die Huisgenoot* of December 1938 is significant in this context in that it demonstrates a clear intention to harness the work of a leading Afrikaans modernist painter, Pierneef, to serve the cause of the *tweede trek*. *Die Huisgenoot* was part of *Nasionale Pers*, of which DF Malan was one of the leading figures (as editor of *Die Burger*).

The Voortrekker Monument, the foundation stone of which was laid at the climax of the Great Trek centenary celebrations, on the same day that Malan delivered his famous *Tweede Trek* speech at the site of the battle of Blood River, has been shown to underscore the *tweede trek* agenda in its use of pure modernist architectural forms in its most sacred artefact, the cenotaph, on which heavenly light falls every year on the 16th of December – the anniversary of the Battle of Blood River – so that the historic Battle of Blood River and the new Battle of Blood River (waged in the arena of modernity) are powerfully fused together.

As part of the centenary celebrations of 1938, Verwoerd gave a speech in which exhorted Afrikaners to 'afrikanerise the cities'. In the same spirit the concept of *volkskapitalisme* was expounded, in terms of which Afrikaners had to conquer capitalism (which was destroying them) and transform it according to their national character – by which was

essentially meant that it had to be adapted to the principles of Calvinism. This *christenkapitalisme* had a counterpart in what may be called *christenmodernisme* in the church architecture. Just as capitalism could be transformed into *christenkapitalisme*, modernism could be christianised – could be adapted to fulfil the functions of the Protestant liturgy – so that modernity became an ally instead of a threat to the Afrikaner cause.

However, this research also led to the discovery of an unexpected relationship between modernism and Protestant church design. Since Hospinius published *De Templis* in the 16th century, Protestant treatises on church architecture have emphasised functionalism (in respect of the Protestant liturgy) as a major feature of church design, and the Afrikaner Protestant church architects and theorists who stressed functionalism in these modernist churches can be seen as a logical perpetuation of a centuries-old Protestant architectural tradition. Both the Afrikaner theorists and architects (in their statements) focus almost exclusively on the Protestant rationale for functionalism, and the American architect Louis Sullivan's 'form follows function' principle is virtually never accredited to its author. The same applies to Le Corbusier's 'plan as generator' principle, even though it is fundamental to the theory and practice of modernist Afrikaner Protestant church design.

This Protestant proclivity for a thoroughgoing functionalist approach to church design made modernism the logical choice for these churches. At the same time this choice answered the requirements of the *tweede trek*. Modernism could be embraced and conquered in a way that would scarcely have been possible had Afrikaners been Catholics. The farm church could thus be very effectively be transformed into a city church. There is sufficient evidence, both in the texts and the actual artefacts discussed above, of the way in which modernism, redefined as a functionalist expression of the Protestant liturgy, was used to achieve this transformation (in architectural terms). The discussion of Anthonie Smith's three pioneering churches provided the initial evidence for this.

But this Protestant functionalism does not constitute the full extent of this process of christianising modernism. The austere geometry of modernist architecture was ideally suited to the needs of the Protestant Church, which had favoured the blank wall above the richly adorned surfaces of a Catholic church interior for centuries. The belief and emotion behind this iconoclastic attitude were such that the sheer geometric austerity of

modernism could be readily transformed into a statement of Protestant belief (in respect of sacred art, ornamentation and perceived idolatry).

How well modernism suited Protestant aesthetic attitudes in this regard can be gathered by looking at an analogous case – that of Adolf Loos, whose intense antipathy towards ornamentation (which he identified with crime and degeneracy) drove him to strip architecture of all adornment, resulting in the geometric purity of his pioneering modernist designs.

This Protestant aesthetic preference, discussed above and further elaborated (in respect of fine art and symbolism), answered the research question which dealt with the issue of the extent to which modernism, as used in these churches, was possibly an expression of a specifically Protestant sensibility or worldview. Strong supporting evidence for this argument came from Robert Rosenblum (see above), who argues persuasively that the iconoclastic attitudes of Protestant, Jewish and theosophical artists like Mondrian, Rothko, Newman, Malevich and Kandinsky compelled them to express their spiritual visions in purely abstract terms. Le Roux Smith le Roux, in a letter to his brother Anthonie Smith, expresses a similar idea almost two decades earlier, subsequent to which the latter starts using abstract art (in stained glass windows) in his churches. It has been shown above that abstract modernist art, as used inside these churches, was ideally suited to the theological requirements of Afrikaner Protestant churches.

An investigation of the intellectual backdrop against which the guideline texts on church architecture were written, and particularly the role of the Broederbond, provides evidence of the complexity of the relationship between Afrikaner politics and church design.

Due to a specific combination of historic factors, as detailed above, modernism became a powerful vehicle for the expression of a new Afrikaner identity, one which was specifically formulated to deal with the challenges of the *tweede trek* and to facilitate the economic and political empowerment of the new Afrikaner nation. This new identity found one of its most characteristic expressions in cultural manifestations of the Protestant faith which was so central to the Afrikaner way of life, and modernist church architecture must count as one of the most significant of these.

The extraordinary extent to which modernism fulfilled the architectural and aesthetic requirements of the Protestant faith, as practised by Afrikaners at this time, together with

certain points made above, raises the question (which is well beyond the scope of this thesis) of the extent to which Protestant attitudes and beliefs informed or facilitated the development of modernism itself (i.e. in Europe and America), both in architecture and in fine art.

Furthermore, the case of Pierneef's painting for the cover of *Die Huisgenoot* in 1938, the example of the life history, cultural and political commitments of the artist JA Smith, as well as the work of the artists responsible for the stained glass windows and other sacred art inside these churches (as discussed above),raise the question of the role of modernist Afrikaner artists active during this period in the broad cultural movement exemplified by the *tweede trek*. In other words, to what extent was there a development in Afrikaner modernist fine art which ran parallel to that in the modernist church architecture?

Finally, it would be interesting, from a post-modernist perspective as well as in the light of the present-day liturgical requirements and general theology of the Dutch Reformed Church, to re-assess the achievements of the *sentraalbou* architects in terms of the search for a true Afrikaner identity in church architecture, as compared to the achievements of the modernist architects in this respect. In sharp contrast to the modernist churches, these structures rely on specific stylistic and figural elements to express a cultural identity, and this approach can now be evaluated (both in post-modernist terms and in terms of the Church's radically revised policy on sacred art and ornamentation) in a much more sympathetic light.

APPENDIX

PLAN AS GENERATOR: KUILSRIVIER DE EIKE DUTCH REFORMED CHURCH

In several of the churches designed by Anton Morkel he takes the wedge or fan-shaped plan pioneered by Anthonie Smith and widens the fan. The Parow-Panorama Dutch Reformed Church and the Durbanville-Bergsig Dutch Reformed Church are good examples. This has the advantage of accommodating more members of the congregation in close proximity to the pulpit. He also opens up the fan into the third dimension, as Johan de Ridder did in his famous 'tent' churches, so that the widest part becomes the

tallest part of the church space, which then slopes down towards the pulpit, which is the narrowest part of the space in both vertical and horisontal dimensions (see photographs). The church space therefore resembles the shape of a wedge and functions like a funnel or megaphone. According to the architect acoustics were a prime consideration in these 'funnel' designs, as he called them. He consulted acoustic experts in this regard (Morkel, 2012). This was also the case in Smith's designs decades earlier, as stated above. The megaphone principle was a feature of the 'tent' churches of Johan de Ridder, where its application assumed symbolic overtones[81] and determined the dramatic external appearance of some of these churches (photographs below of Totiusdal *Gereformeerde Kerk* by Frans Liebenberg).

[81] With regard to the appearance of the Parys church, De Ridder, in an interview with an American journal, stated that: '...the steeply inclined roof and ridge line rising up and away from the pulpit symbolises the Word of God emanating from the pulpit, spreading over the congregation and, through the transparent glass, out to the world beyond' (quoted in Le Roux, 2008: 14).

Figure 50. Totiusdal *Gereformeerde Kerk* showing the characteristic 'funnel' or 'megaphone' design. Photograph by Frans Liebenberg.

In the Kuilsrivier De Eike Dutch Reformed Church (opened 1978) Morkel takes the fan shaped ground plan and widens it until it becomes a full semi-circle, like a fan which has been spread out to its full extent. This allows for the maximum amount of church members to be seated in close proximity to the pulpit. Since, by general agreement, the need for all church-goers to be able to both see and hear the minister clearly (and thereby receive the Word of God) is of paramount importance in Afrikaner Protestant church design (see above), this solution is a sound one. When asked about the rationale behind the semi-circular groundplan, Morkel explained that the church council insisted that everyone must be seated close to the pulpit and see the minister clearly (2012).

Figure 51. Totiusdal GK. Photograph by Frans Liebenberg.

However, this does compel the minister to turn his head to the left and the right through an angle of almost 180 degrees in order to make eye contact with the whole congregation.The minister of this church, Rev Johan Morkel, who has been there for thirty

years, stated that this does not bother him at all.[82] He added that the low pulpit is ideal in establishing good rapport with the congregation, since the minister is closer to the eye level of the people – 'more like a brother amongst brothers than like a minister looking down on his flock.' Visiting ministers always commented very positively on this, with one of them, Rev Hannes Burger saying that: 'It's great to be so close to the people.'[83] Rev Morkel also stated that this is particularly beneficial at pastoral sermons and funerals, when such close contact and empathy with the congregation is vitally important (2014).

Both Van Selms and Koorts mention that the pulpit must not be too high, otherwise the minister loses touch with the congregation. Van Selms argues that, with smaller churches (as opposed to the huge cathedrals and churches of Europe) and sloping floors it is no longer necessary to raise the pulpit up high for everyone to see and hear the minister. But they only state the issue in the negative and do not stress or elaborate on the psychological (and therefore also liturgical) advantages of a lower pulpit (Van Selms,1954: 33-34; Koorts,1974: 67). In light of their stated determination, in true Protestant spirit, to remove all traces of separation between the clergy and the laity (see above), this would seem to be an opportunity missed. (Du Toit et al overlook this issue altogether).

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[82] Rev Gustav Meyer of the Bothasig Dutch Reformed Church, which has the same seating layout, said that this does not bother him, except for the seats on the extreme left and right (2014). (This is also one of Anton Morkel's churches).

[83] 'Dis lekker om so naby aan die mense te wees.'

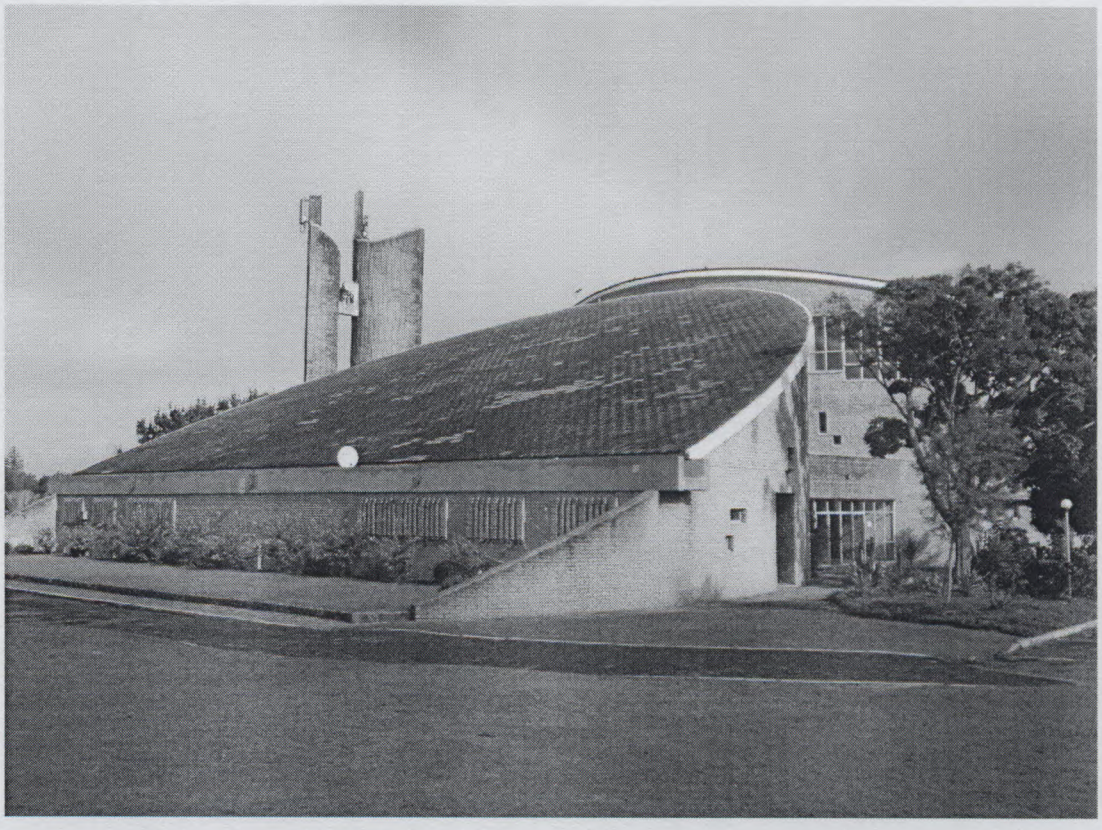

Figure 52. Exterior of the Kuilsrivier De Eike DRC showing how the semi-circlular plan has generated the entire structure.

Returning to the issue of eye contact between minister and congregation (in a church where the seating arrangement forms a semi-circle around the pulpit), Rev Arrie van Eck of the Parow Dutch Reformed Church (a *sentraalbou* church) said that where this does become a problem is in a church with a cross plan, because eye contact is interrupted when the minister moves his gaze from the front to the sides. But when there is a continuous flow of faces in a semi-circle, it is not a problem – except for the extreme left and right, perhaps. For this reason he advocates a fan-shaped layout (2014).

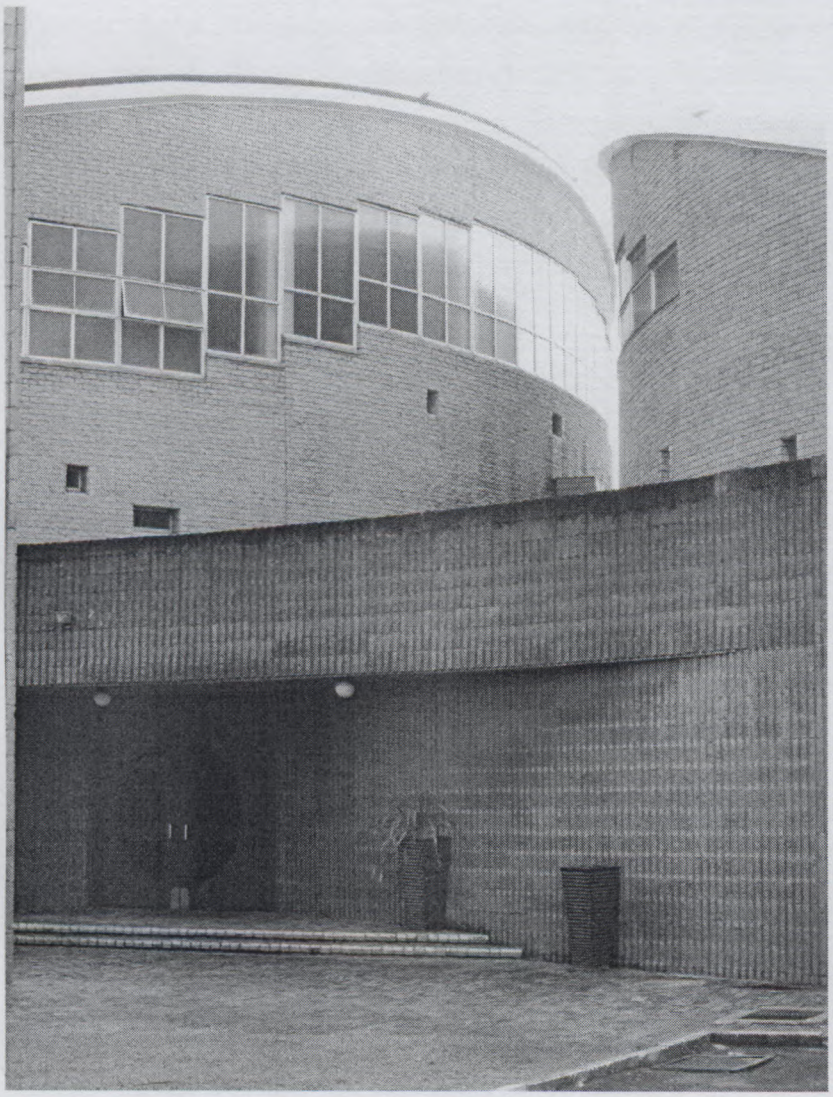

Figure 53. Exterior of the Kuilsrivier De Eike DRC showing the two confronted semi-circles of the plan repeated (in inversion) in the glazing of the front doors.

However, this fan should be sufficiently wide, since he also emphasises that the semi-circular seating layout means that members of the congregation can see each other, which is not possible when they are sitting in straight rows. They are also all facing the minister without having to look sideways. This creates a sense of warmth and community between the minister and his congregation during the sermon (Van Eck, 2014). This sense of community, like the rapport established by a low pulpit, should be a central concern of these authors (in terms of their stated aims), and the former could be described as the horisontal counterpart of the latter. Ideally, these two complimentary

effects should be combined, as they are in Smith's Strand-Noord Dutch Reformed Church, where a low pulpit and a (sufficiently wide) fan-shaped auditorium create these desirable effects. Smith's pioneering Bellville DRC, which has a remarkably low pulpit, is another excellent example (see photograph of interior above).

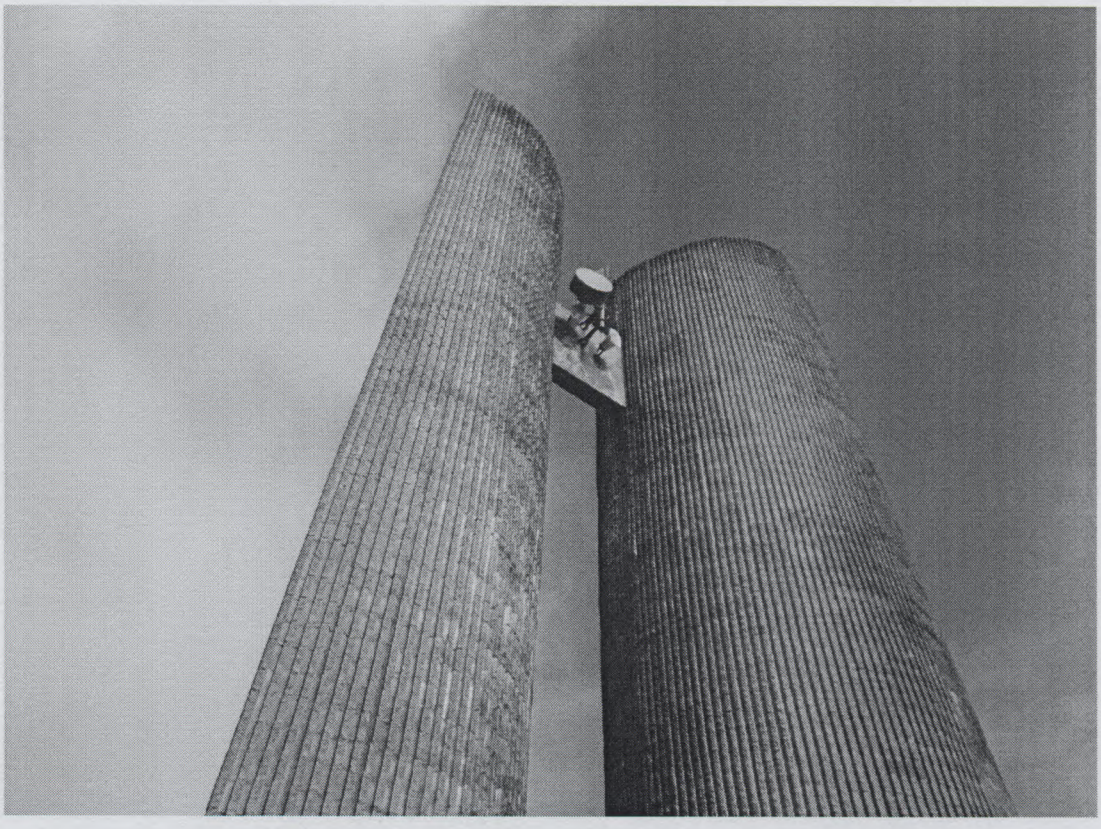

Figure 54. The twin steeples of the Kuilsrivier De Eike DRC, which in plan, repeat the two confronted semi-circles of the plan of the main chuch.

At the Kuilsrivier De Eike Dutch Reformed Church (see photograph above) Anton Morkel takes this semi-circular plan, which is determined by its Protestant liturgical function, and generates the whole structure of the church. He raises it up into the third dimension (so that the semi-circle of the plan becomes half a cylinder) and creates a flat roof which cuts through this half cylinder at an angle, so that the roof becomes half of an ellipse, and the tallest part of the curved wall (of the half cylinder) is opposite the pulpit (i.e. behind the congregation), while the pulpit is against the straight wall which is built on the diameter of the semi-circle and which supports the lowest part of the roof.

The church hall repeats this shape, but faces the other way, so that, in plan, two confronted semi-circles are conjoined on the curved sides (where the walls are highest) by means of interleading doors which can be opened up to accommodate extra seating (leading back into the church hall) for sermons when there are more church-goers than can fit into the church proper (see photographs).

This motif of two confronted semi-circles is repeated on the doors which lead into the church from outside, with the glazing taking on this shape in inverted form (see photograph). The steeple likewise consists of two confronted semi-circles (when cut through in plan) which rise up as two tall half-cylinders and are cut through at an angle to repeat the configuration of the church itself (see photographs above).

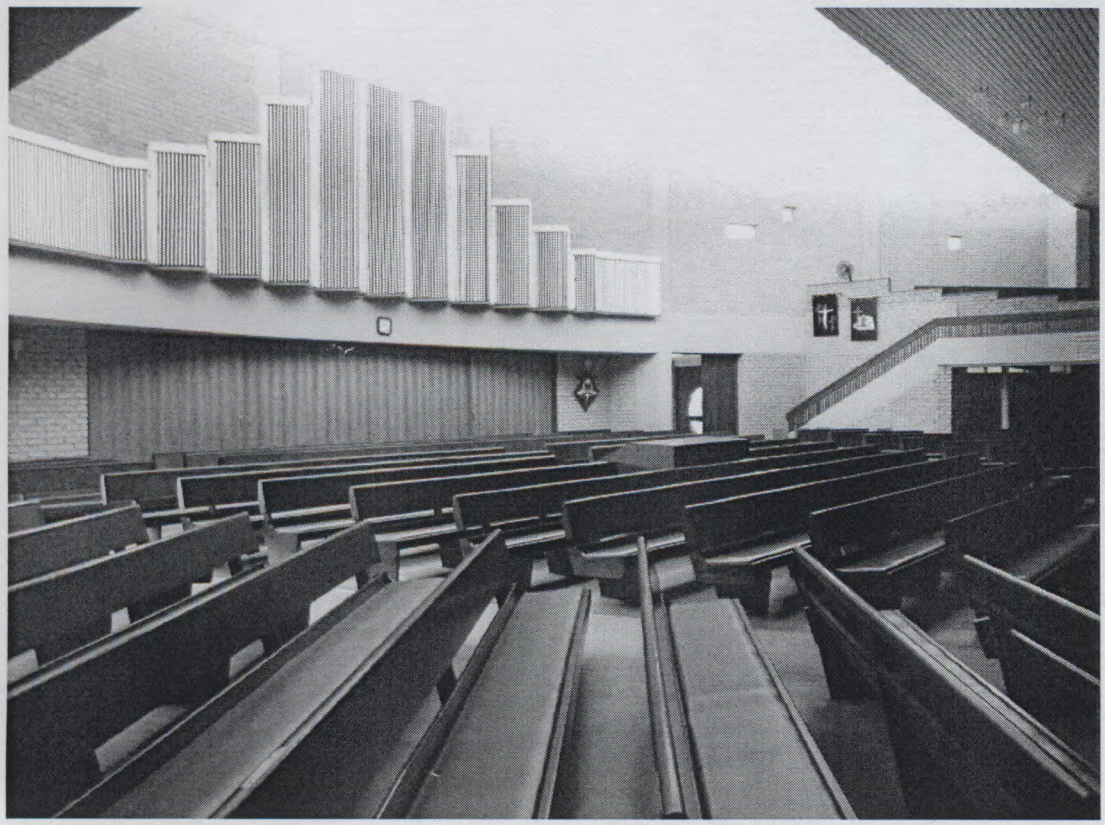

Figure 55. Interior of the Kuilsrivier De Eike DRC showing the fan-shaped arrangement of the seating and the doors at the back which open up to accommodate extra seating in the church hall. The pulpit is to the right of the photograph.

Thus Morkel has taken Le Corbusier's 'plan as generator' principle through from plan to exterior, generating the main volumes as well as details such as door glazing from this plan, which in itself is a purely functional half circle determined by the liturgical

requirements of a Protestant church. Furthermore, the 'cheese slice' shape of the church is determined by the acoustic function of the funnel or megaphone-shaped auditorium, which has been opened up to its fullest extent.[84] And since the spoken Word is the central function of these Protestant churches, form follows function with exceptional thoroughness here. As such it is a classic example of the 'christianised modernism' which typifies Afrikaner Protestant church design. Remarkably, when asked about this rigorous application of the 'plan as generator' principle, he stated that he was not aware of Le Corbusier's theories when he designed this church (Morkel, 2012).

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[84] In this form the auditorium loses some of its acoustic 'funneling' function, but this does not detract from the functionalist attitude which it expresses.

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