

Imagined Communities:
The Role of the Churches During and After Apartheid in Sophiatown

Willy Mafuta

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ABSTRACT

Many around the world have come to know South Africa as the rainbow nation, yet this notion has been subject to enormous critiques in the political discourse. The rainbow nation was conceived by the Government of National Unity that came to power in 1994, but it failed to materialize. What post-apartheid South Africa has yielded instead is a nation, or an imagined community, where race and ethnicity never receded. Although they are no longer pathological, race and ethnicity have become normative typifications of an overarching identity. Churches in particular have played a major role in creating a new identity.

Churches have managed to move beyond the yoke of race and ethnicity enforced during the Apartheid under the *Group Areas Act* and the Resettlement Acts, and epitomized by the destruction of the vibrant city of Sophiatown and, in its place, the building of Triomf, an Afrikaner imagined community. Churches have led the way in deconstructing the perceived or realized power or disempowerment that is residual to the Apartheid. In reconstructing the community, they have re-imagined an environment where race and ethnicity remain the standard component of the South African national identity. This re-imagining requires that race and ethnicity be constructed as relational rather than hierarchical. Moreover, it requires that one acknowledge the woundedness (e.g., shame, anger, guilt, hurt, humiliation, betrayal, fear, resentment) that racial typifications create. As a social construction, Churches in Sophiatown are fostering this ethical environment where these values are embraced.

I believe that any doctrine based on racial or colour prejudice enforced by the State is an affront to human dignity and ipso facto an insult to God himself.

Trevor Huddleston, Naught for Your Comfort.

DEDICATION

To Danny and Candy

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KEY WORDS

Identity Politics, Dutch Reformed Church, African Independent Churches, Race and Ethnicity in south Africa, South Africa Post-Apartheid, Role of the Churches, Rainbow Nation, Group Area Act, Group Resettlement Act, Sophiatown, Triomf, Trevor Huddleston

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AIC	African Initiated Churches
ANC	African National Congress
DRC	Dutch Reformed Church
JCC	Johannesburg City Council
NRB	National Bureau of Resettlement
NP	National Party
MCSA	Methodist Church of Southern Africa
TDRC	Triomf Dutch Reformed Church
CKAC	Christ the King Anglican Church
CCB	Council of Catholics Bishop
SACC	The South Africa Council of Churches

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION: MAPPING IMAGINED COMMUNITIES AND THE ROLE OF CHURCHES IN SOPHIATOWN

The Problem

Perhaps the most odious legacy of Apartheid is the forced removals of black South Africans from their residential areas and their resettlement to places far from White urban communities. Orchestrated by a series of legislations that the Dutch Reformed Church (DRC) sacralized, the Apartheid Parliament, in 1950, voted into law the *Group Areas Act*, giving the government the moral authority to remove non-Whites including Indians, Coloured, and Blacks from their residential areas. Sophiatown stands as an illustrative case of this divisive racial policy.

Designated as a “black spot” and judged too dangerous to be in such close proximity to White urban areas, the Apartheid government of DF Malan, in February of 1955, leveled Sophiatown and forced its residents into police vans to be transported to the southwest part of Johannesburg to a new place called Meadowlands.¹ In place of Sophiatown, the Apartheid Government built a new white suburb and named it Triomf.²

It is against this backdrop that my research attempts to construct the razing of Sophiatown as an illustrative and microcosmic case on how religion legitimates or delegitimizes social and political institutions. My interest in this study stems from my

¹ Located some 20 miles west of the business district of Johannesburg.

² Triomf is Afrikaans for the English version of Triumph. It referred to the first triumphant success in urban racial rezoning that set a precedent for its implementations all over South Africa.

desire to understand the role of the churches during the historical development that took place in Sophiatown under the Apartheid regime and how that role changed or did not change in the post-Apartheid era.

Primary Aims

The study comparatively delineates the role of the churches in Sophiatown during the period preceding and following the enactment of the *Group Areas Act* (1948-1962) and how that role is paramount to identity formation in post-Apartheid South Africa. What was the response of the churches at the time of the legislation and enactment of the *Group Areas Act*? Was it legitimization or delegitimation? Was it acquiescence? Were the church sighs of the oppressed to mitigate their sufferings? How and why did the churches construct that role? Was this role internalized all over the social spectrum of the church members or was it limited to the elites and the hierarchy of the church? What is the role of the church in the resurgence of racial and ethnic typifications in the current and post-Apartheid South Africa? These questions form the core of my research project.

Specific Objectives

The study explores what specific role the DRC and English-speaking churches (such as the Anglicans, Methodists and the Roman Catholics) played when the *Group Areas Act* was enacted in Sophiatown and how that role has changed in the resurgence of race and ethnicity as sub-group identities or typifications in the post-Apartheid South Africa.

The study argues that with the intent to build a Volsktaad as an imagined community, DF Malan's National Party appealed to the DRC sacralized power to impose racially divisive legislations such as the *Immoral Act*, the *Resettlement Act* and the *Group Areas Act*, which I discuss in chapters three and four. To this aim, the DRC could have

only acquiesced to the theologized politics it helped create. Other churches responded either by delegitimizing the Act or acquiescing and siding with the Government.

Moreover, the study argues, the resurgence of racial and ethnic typifications in the post-Apartheid South Africa forces the church to play a different role from the one they did under Apartheid. South Africans are embracing sub-group identities, such as race and ethnicity, as normative and not as imposed categorization. As such, the study argues, the role of the church is to foster an ethical environment where perceived and experienced power or disempowerment is deconstructed. Churches in Sophiatown are grappling with this endeavor.

Motivation for the research

This study stems out of my desire to understand the broader perspective of the role of religion in society and identity formation, especially the intersection of the churches with the historical development that took place in Sophiatown at the time of the enactment of the *Group Areas Act* and in the resurgence of racial and ethnic typifications in the present post-Apartheid society.

My interest in the subject began in my native country, the Democratic Republic of Congo. In the early nineties, I was a student delegate to the All Africa Youth Conference that was organized in Kinshasa.³ One of the key speakers was Frank Chikane, a South African Pentecostal pastor and an anti-Apartheid activist.

³ In their mission statement, The All Africa Conference of Churches is a fellowship of churches and institutions working for a common witness to the gospel by mobilizing to faithfully live the message of God's love, nurturing a common understanding of the faith, interpreting and responding to challenges to human dignity, and acting prophetically in word, life and service for healing.

As I listened to Chikane talk on social conditions of black South Africans under the Apartheid regime, and how the DRC orchestrated this odious system by lending its sacralized power to political institutions, I started to reflect on the extent to which the church in the Congo, in its own socio-context, lost its legitimacy and its prophetic voice by siding with the kleptocratic regime of Mobutu Sese Seko. Mobutu reigned over the Congo for 32 years before he was ousted from power by another dictator, Laurent-Desire Kabila.

At the time, one of the most daunting questions in my mind was why the church was silent while the country suffers political and economic turmoil with massive human rights violations, without the rule of law, or structures for social mobility, and millions of people living in abject poverty. I pondered this question over and over without a clear answer as to what might have been done to avoid the destruction of a country on the brink.

I was dissatisfied with the state of the church in the Congo as well as the political climate under which I was living my Christian faith. My own pastor and several others in the Christian church in the Congo were quick to argue wrongfully for the separation of church and state, which included advising church members not to get involved in politics and social transformation. This was abhorrent to me.

As a result, people adopted an escapist “pie in the sky” theology that satisfied their temporal needs. I saw this as a spiritual suicide and totally a one sided and narrow interpretation of the Scriptures. In my quest to find alternative answers on the true nature of the church and its social prophetic message, I wrote a major research paper for my Bachelor’s degree at the Université Protestante au Congo, on Martin Luther King Jr.’s ideology of non-violence. Dr. King urged dissenters to directly voice concern in the

public arena, through boycotts, mass demonstrations, and sit-ins, while utilizing the prophetic role of the church as a framework for his ideals.

Being convinced that the Church in the Congo was more a thermometer registering ideas rather than a thermostat that controls social transformations, I pursued my quest for understanding the prophetic role of the church by moving to South Africa to further my education at University of Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. It was during this time that I gained further insight into the impact the church could have when siding with either the oppressors or the oppressed.

In Johannesburg, I experienced firsthand the socio-economic conditions of black South Africans under Apartheid that Chikane had made reference to in my student years in the youth conference in Kinshasa. I remembered a group of us traveling from Cape Town to Johannesburg. We stopped to use restrooms near the town of Potchefstroom and were not allowed to enter because of our skin colour. It was a tragic humiliation of the human spirit.

On another occasion, a white colleague pastor deliberately asked me to remove a portrait of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. that was hanging in my office.⁴ To this fellow, the portrait was bound to offend White church members—an approach contrary to my convictions. Of course, the portrait never came down.

These experiences in Johannesburg exposed me to the reality of Apartheid institutionalization, whereby religious actors including churches advanced narrow interpretations of a Calvinistic, double predestination, and the theology of the sovereignty

⁴ I was serving as an associate pastor in Berea Baptist Church Johannesburg, a church comprised of black and white members.

of God. Moreover, these same experiences shook up my naivety and preconceived approach to race issues. I grew up believing that faith in Christ alone was enough to break the barriers of race and prejudice. Yet, I came to realize that if it does, then it needs more than just a basic assumption of faith as the ultimate concern. In the South African context, faith needed to be coupled with social mobilization and religious delegitimation, to build on overarching national identity.

As I studied South African scholars, such as Jean and John Comaroff, John and Steve DeGruchy, David Chidester, Jim Cochran, Hermann Giliomee, Lawrence Schlemmer and anti- Apartheid activists such as Allan Boesak, Beyers Naude, Desmond Tutu, Frank Chikane, Manas Buthelezi, and many others, I came to conclusion that legitimation and delegitimation the two sides of the same coin had been used by both the oppressed and the oppressors.

The DRC, for example, legitimates Apartheid by using biblical narratives while English-speaking churches delegitimize the same ideological system with the same narratives. I left South Africa hoping it would eventually construct an overarching national identity and that churches would be able to transcend pathological racial categorization.

It was during my graduate work, however, in the USA and Canada that the idea started to emerge, of writing a doctorate thesis on South Africa's stratified society and its historical narrative of Apartheid. As I gained insight on Peter Berger's religious legitimation and was exposed to David Chidester's religious idiosyncrasies on South Africa; as Lori Beaman introduced me to Michel Foucault and Anthony Gramsci's discourse on power dynamics; as she rationalized with me on the intersection of law, gender, and race, and exposed me to feminist thinkers such as Patricia Williams and Angela Davis, and social scientists such as Charles Taylor and Will Kymlicka; as I

theorized with Peter Beyer on religious particularizations in global societies, so too my interest in the subject accrued .

My choice of Sophiatown as an illustrative microcosm of Apartheid throughout South Africa emerged, however, after I watched Felicia Mabuza-Suttle, a South African talk show host, commemorating the 40th anniversary of the forced removals. During that show, I recalled the emotional pain and devastated narratives of how people were rounded up in trucks with their belongings scattered and forced to move to Meadowlands. I couldn't think of a more devastating experience than Sophiatown and that of District Six in Cape Town and a similar one in Durban. In all these cases, in the name of separate development, people were forcibly removed from their homes to designated locations not of their own choice.

By writing on Sophiatown, I am filling a void on the limited literature available on the role of churches in Sophiatown. Indeed there have been investigations on the role of religion in the political history of South Africa but not much has been done on local communities such as the case of Sophiatown.

Related works in the Field

Literature on Sophiatown is limited. Among the few is Modisane's memoir, *Blame Me on History*. Modisane narrates his personal experiences as a Sophiatown resident and as a reporter of the Drum magazine. He grew up in Sophiatown and attended the DRC Mission School. As he encountered the reality of living as a Black person under

the Apartheid regime, Modisane questioned his faith upbringing and was convinced that it was impossible to be Black in South Africa and be a good Christian.⁵

He rejected the colour-bar Christianity that the DRC preached. To Modisane, it was a Christianity that demanded his obedience and yet was plundering his body. It was a Christianity that taught him to seek for peace and comfort in bondage. It was a Christianity that on the one hand preached man was made in the image of God, and on the other hand dehumanized those who were racially different.⁶

According to Modisane, the Dutch Reformed Christianity preached the love of the neighbor while at the same time denounced him, defined him as savage and classed him among the beasts. To him, there was one moral standard for white Christians and another for black Christians.⁷ As a reporter, Modisane attended several Sunday morning church services and documented their reactions to his presence in their midst.

He investigated whether these churches practiced what they preached or whether they were more inclined to obey unjust laws of the *Group Areas Act* at the expense of the message of love and acceptance of the gospel.⁸ Unfortunately many of these churches did the latter. Modisane's narrative either as a young boy growing up in Sophiatown or later as a reporter gives a firsthand account on the role of the churches in Sophiatown during the enactment of the Group Areas Acts.

⁵ Modisane, *Blame Me on History*, 182.

⁶ Ibid, 183.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid., 194.

Another work that needs to be mentioned is the play *Sophiatown* by the Junction Avenue Theatre Company.⁹ The play deals with the rise and fall of Sophiatown in the hands of the Afrikaners. It also evokes the question of racial and language identity. For example, as the result of the *Group Areas Act*, different racial groups were settled in different imagined communities that the Afrikaners set for them. Blacks were sent to Meadowlands while Indians were sent to Lenasia and Coloureds to Eldorado Park.

As they moved to these “imagined communities”, they hung onto their language as identity. Rarely did they claim an inclusive or nationalist identity as South African, rather they were black South Africans who spoke Zulu, Xhosa, or Tswana or Sotho, or they were coloured or they were white Afrikaners who spoke Afrikaans. The play’s importance lies in its ability to delineate identity formation as racial identity.

David Goodhew’s book, *Respectability and Resistance, The History of Sophiatown* is perhaps one of the few recent publications on Sophiatown. Goodhew observes that in 1951 all Africans in the Western Areas of Johannesburg, including Sophiatown, were affiliated with a Christian denomination. The Church with a largest percentage of members was the Anglican Church, followed by the Lutheran, the Methodist, and the Calvinistic churches, including the Presbyterian and Dutch Reformed churches. African Independent churches, the Apostolic, Ethiopian and Zionists, accounted for six percent of the people surveyed.¹⁰

⁹ Purkey and Stein, *Sophiatown*, 1986.

¹⁰ Goodhew, *Respectability and Resistance: A History of Sophiatown*, 22.

According to Goodhew, although for most part, these churches were pro-active, supporting the people when it came to social and moral issues, they were not, however, unanimous in their stand.¹¹ Sometimes they diverged on their approaches by adopting either an acquiescence mode (instead of condemning acts of injustice) or discrimination from the Government of the time. My research explores why the churches in Sophiatown diverged when it came to the *Group Areas Act* and how this divergence was constructed.

Apart from limited literature on Sophiatown, the literature on the role of churches in South Africa in general has been the subject of a great number of scholarly works. People such as T. Dunbar Moodie, William A. de Klerk, J AltonTemplin, Irving Hexham, Leonard Thompson and Hermann Gilliomee have, for example, analyzed the invention of Apartheid by the Afrikaners and the DRC, as an ideology of nationalist mobilization.

Moodie, for example, traces the influence of the Calvinist theology of double predestination and how it influenced the leaders of the National Party.¹² Thompson, for his part, contends that the Afrikaners, in their struggle to justify their *raison d'être*, created an imagined community and used the DRC to legitimate a litany of myths, symbols, and rituals that embody their so-called unique character as a God-chosen people. Hexham observes the Afrikaner's mythology as a remembrance of a Golden Age, destroyed by the British, and a hope of a future society freed from British rule where Afrikaner values would prevail and the people would be restored in their former glory.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Moodie, *The Rise of Afrikanerdom: Power, Apartheid, and the Afrikaner Civil Religion*, 110.

Apart from work done on the legitimization of Apartheid, other scholars such as Beyers Naude, Desmond Tutu, Frank Chikane, Manas Buthelezi, Johan Heyns and Allan Boesak, have fought relentlessly to point out the hermeneutic flaws and immorality under which the DRC lent her sacralized power to the Apartheid regime. Boesak, for example, labeled the DRC's neo-Calvinistic theology as a theology that ignores the realities of the unbalanced relationship between rich and poor, white and black, oppressors and oppressed and the reality of oppression and liberation from oppression.¹³

Others scholars such as David Chidester, 1992, 1996; John and Steve de Gruchy, 2005; Jean and John Comaroff, 1991, 1997; Michael Worsnip, 1991; and James Cochrane, 1987; for their part, elucidate the history and establishment of Mission Churches in South Africa and their ambivalence on the question of Apartheid.

Emerging literature on identity formation and the post-
Colonial, post-Apartheid South Africa

Among a number of emerging South African scholars of social identity are Ivor Chipkin, Zimitri Erasmus, Kate Philip, Sarah Nuttall, Achilles Mbembe, and Abulkader Ayob. They argue the construction of identity formation in the context of post-colonial, post- Apartheid and global systems. According to them, the creation of the democratic South Africa at the time of globalization and information technology forces one to take into account the multiplicity of identities and to re-imagine the notion of belonging. They observe a trend into which a collective consciousness of belonging transcends nation states, thus leading citizens to claim multiple identities within the configuration of

¹³ Boesak, *Farewell to Innocence: A Socio-Ethical Study on Black Theology and Black Power*, 3.

imagined communities. Ivor Chipkin, for example, in his quest to delineate a South African identity asks a problematic question, “Do South Africans Exist?”¹⁴ By this question, Chipkin challenges the very essence of the South African nationalism and the quest for belonging in the broader sense of African nationalism.

Chipkin argues that identity is constructed in the political imagination of communities through nationalist struggles. National identity, to him, is an elusive concept that might or might not be central in determining a sense of belonging. Therefore, he wonders whether it is even necessary to spend time constructing an overarching identity in South Africa when people have lost sense of what really brings them together.

Following Chantal Mouffe and Ernesto Laclau, Chipkin suggests, however, that the essence of democratic values in *liberte*, *egalite* and *fraternite*, is conducive to the emergence of a nation as single entity where citizens could claim a collective consciousness that unites them, a feeling of belonging as opposed to a legal boundary.¹⁵ In his work on social mobility in the city of Roodepoort, Johannesburg, Chipkin gives an empirical plausibility in arguing that the post-colonial, post-Apartheid South Africa creates an environment where identity formation is being constructed no longer on bonds of inclusion and exclusion but on what he calls “common world.”¹⁶ In this sense, social categories of race or ethnicities do not dissipate. But what has changed, according to

¹⁴ Chipkin, *Do South Africans Exist? Nationalism, Democracy and the Identity of “the people,”* 2.

¹⁵ Ibid., 13.

¹⁶ Chipkin, “Middle Class in Roodepoort, Capitalism and Social Change in South Africa,” 83.

Chipkin, is the assertion of being “Afrikaner,” or “Coloured,” or Black, or “Indian.” Those assertions no longer signify antagonistic social positions as they once did under Apartheid.¹⁷ A new society is emerging in the present post-Apartheid South Africa, not in the sense of non-racial per se, but a new imagined community that is yet to be defined.

Parallel to Chipkin, Erasmus, in her efforts to counter the racialization category of the stratified South Africa, recommends that South Africans move beyond race categories by acknowledging race as normative and not as pathological. According to her, this acknowledgement allows one to move beyond denial and victimhood towards what she calls “ownership of complicity with racialized relations of power.”¹⁸

Erasmus argues that one cannot ignore or leave behind race categories, or become reductionist by embracing fatalistically racialized identities. One, however, should engage race and acknowledge the woundedness (shame, anger, guilt, hurt, humiliation, betrayal, fear, resentment) that comes with it.¹⁹ Erasmus urges that racial identities be understood as relational rather than hierarchical. To do this, she contends, requires an internal challenge and compassion to understand one’s inner individual racism and that of others.

Erasmus is adamant that the post-colonial, post-Apartheid era mitigates racialized identities that Apartheid invented. But to move beyond the yoke of race, and construct

¹⁷Ibid.

¹⁸ Erasmus, “Undoing the Yoke of “Race” in *Religion and Society*, 89.

¹⁹ Ibid., 89.

racial identities as relational, she muses that one should have the courage to confront it head on.²⁰ Religion certainly plays a non-negligible role in this endeavor.

Sarah Nuttall, is another emerging scholar of post-colonial, post-Apartheid discourse on identity formation. According to her, the reality of Apartheid “overdetermined” South African studies to the point of excluding other plausible historical narratives.²¹ Nuttall proposes a theory of entanglement as a way to recover those narratives and construct a new and imaginary South African society. She argues that, all along, entanglement has been in the South African historical narratives. It is about time, she muses, that social scientists turn their eyes on it, especially in the present post-Apartheid, post-colonial South Africa.

By entanglement, Nuttall refers to a means by which what was once thought separate “identities-spaces, histories- comes together and finds points of intersection in unexpected ways.”²² Furthermore, entanglement entails the notion of unexplored terrains of mutual experience emerging out of coercive and confrontational historical relation.²³ In this sense, entanglement allows the South African society “to move away from an Apartheid optic and temporal lens towards one which reifies neither the past nor the exceptionality of South African life.”²⁴

²⁰ Ibid., 92.

²¹ Nuttall, *Entanglement: Literary and Cultural Reflections on Post-apartheid*, 19.

²² Ibid., 11.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Ibid.

Nuttall suggests two plausible processes of entanglement. The first is to revisit “the concept of segregated space in socio-historical terms.” The second is to look at the “now” and “supersede interpretive models based on configurations of the past.”²⁵ By this methodology, Nuttall envisions a South African society whereby a rapprochement of social actors is constructed on the grounds of what brings them together rather than what divides them. This rapprochement creates an environment where conversations about power, race and identity take place, thus, suggesting that in entanglement oppressors and oppressed “do share the same episteme and do not inhabit incommensurate spheres.”²⁶

Achilles Mbembe, from his part, envisions a nonracial South African society whereby “the colour of one’s skin is superfluous in the overall calculus of status, dignity, opportunities, rights and obligations.”²⁷ Because a collective citizenship is weakening in South Africa, muses Mbembe, a non-racial society requires one to “deracialize assets and cultural capital” and reconcile equal protection, affirmation action, and non-discrimination.”²⁸

As it is the case of Chipkin, Mbembe contends that the post-Apartheid South Africa categories such as “Black,” “Afrikaner,” “White,” “Coloured” and “Asian” are

²⁵ Ibid., 20.

²⁶ Nuttall, *Entanglement: Literary and Cultural Reflections on Post-apartheid*, 19.

²⁷ Mbembe, “Passages to Freedom: The Politics of Racial Reconciliation in South Africa,” 5.

²⁸ Ibid.

deconstructed. These categories are no longer pre-fixed, he mused. Racism, in the post-Apartheid South Africa, becomes a matter of private belief rather than institutionalized.²⁹

For a non-racial South Africa to take place, however, argues Mbembe, the country must address the culture of *ressentiment* that is created by the collision of Black victimhood and White denialism, a Black's ownership of deprivation and White denial of belonging. Freedom and democracy, Mbembe contends, did not forcibly establish a culture of responsibility in South Africa. On the contrary, South Africa finds itself in a dilemma as it attempts to articulate "the ethics of care and responsibility, duties and obligations that freedom demands."³⁰ It is only by doing this, he muses, that South Africa stands a good chance of passing to humankind an example of a true non-racial society.³¹

Contribution to Knowledge

This study contributes to the broader field of religion in the post-Apartheid South Africa. It explores the role of the churches in South Africa during and after Apartheid, especially the matrix of religion as related to the sacralisation of political institutions and the construction of an overarching national identity. The study measures the role of churches in terms of legitimation or delegitimation, and acquiescence. Furthermore, it empirically verifies the validity claim that the post-apartheid rainbow nation that the GNU conceived of in its debut never materialized and that the new role of the church is

²⁹ Ibid., 6.

³⁰ Ibid., 8.

³¹ Ibid., 5.

to grapple with the resurgence of racial and ethnic typifications that have become normative and processes of the overarching national identity.

The thesis suggests that while the role of the churches under Apartheid was either to legitimate or delegitimate racial categorizations, this role has shifted in the post-Apartheid South Africa. What churches are doing, especially those in Sophiatown, argues the thesis, is to embrace the idea that one can have sub-group identity such as race and ethnicity and hold as well an overarching national identity. In this sense, contends the thesis, the role of the church is to create an ethical environment in which to sustain and deconstruct the vestige of perceived or experienced power or disempowerment that the legacy of Apartheid institutionalized.

Theoretical Framework

My research is qualitative and delineates the response of the churches in Sophiatown during the enactment of the *Group Areas Act* and the forced removals. It examines how that role has changed in the post-Apartheid South Africa. It attempts to reconstruct the razing of Sophiatown as an illustrative case and microcosm on how religious legitimation or delegitimation functions as a social construct in South Africa, to the point of imagining communities based on imposed racial and ethnic categorizations. It further examines how those categorizations become normative in a post-Apartheid society and investigates what processes contribute to an overarching national identity.

To this end, my thesis appeals primarily to Benedict Anderson's "imagined communities" discourse and the sociological study of religion, especially Peter Berger's legitimation analysis and his social construction of reality with Thomas Luckmann. Because processes of the social construction of imagined communities could foster a single identity or multiple identities, this thesis also refers to identity formation debated

by contemporary social science scholars, such as Phillip Dexter, Jose Casanova, Manuel Castells, Rose McDermont, Yoshiko Herrera, and Alastair Iain Johnston.

Constructing Imagined Communities

Benedict Anderson argues that nations are socially constructed imagined communities. It is not possible, he contends for members of any given nation to all know each other. Yet, in their collective consciousness lives the image of belonging, “a sense of a horizontal comradeship.”³²

Anderson traces his social construction of a nation as an imagined community to the Enlightenment. With the demise of traditional, hierarchical forms of social organization associated with Christendom, a new consciousness led to the creation of sovereign nations and finite and elastic boundaries.”³³

With the monopoly of the church in civil affairs circumvented, religious pluralism emerged and people were able to collectively and consciously live as imagined communities.³⁴ What made this imagined construction possible, in Anderson’s view, were print-capitalism and vernacular languages. With print capitalism and vernacular language people imagined that they were united by a collective consciousness despite the fact that they might not have met or known each other, yet they were members of a

³² Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, 7.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Casanova, *Public Religions in the Modern World*, 21. Casanova speaks of factors that have given shape to social differentiation and the demotion of religion in economic, political and social spheres. Among them are the Protestant reformation, the formation of modern states, the growth of modern capitalism, and the early modern scientific revolution.

broader community. Print- capitalism, in particular, allowed national consciousness to arise, so religious and political ideologies that were once tightly controlled could reach a great number of people who had been previously excluded.³⁵

Vernacular languages, for their part, became the vehicle of communication and point of connectedness among adherent members of imaged communities. The singing of a National Anthem in modern states is a typical illustration of this. No matter how banal the words and mediocre the tunes could be, argues Anderson, people unknown to each other utter the same verses to the same melody.³⁶

Anderson's theoretical analysis stands in contrast to the notion that nations are invented. In this sense, he distances himself from Gellner's argument that nationalism invents nations where they do not exist.³⁷ Gellner's approach to nationalism, argues Anderson, implies that communities could be juxtaposed to nations without an underlining collective consciousness that demands ultimate sacrifice as a pure expression of common values.³⁸ In this sense, dying, for example, for a nation as an imagined community is pure and grandiose as opposed to dying for a political organization or any international organization.³⁹

³⁵ Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 40.

³⁶ Ibid., 145.

³⁷ Ibid., 6.

³⁸ Ibid., 144.

³⁹ Ibid.

Anderson's construction of imagined communities also broadens the narrow and particularized understanding of community that early social scientists such as Karl Marx, Emile Durkheim and Max Weber respectively defined on the ground of class conflicts, solidarity or bureaucratic power. Karl Marx, for example, constructs a community on the assumption of class conflict. To him, community is the platform where interest groups within a given society compete for the means of production.⁴⁰

For Durkheim, a community is a bond of solidarity and social cohesion. Individuals are interdependent and rely on the skills and abilities of others to increase social cohesion.⁴¹ Weber, for his part, sees in the community or society as a locus for expanding bureaucratic power and decreasing individual autonomy. To him "community" is a subjective feeling of the parties, "whether effectual or traditional, that they belong together,"⁴²

While these early social scientists zeroed in on a homogenous and singular society to define a community, Anderson's approach covers modern societies whereby what makes a nation is not its singularity but the style from which it is conceptualized and imagined and the shared feelings and perceptions of its members.

This approach gives room to those who claim to be part of the nation a level of internalized consciousness. Members of a community internalize an image of the

⁴⁰ Marx, *Capital*, 512.

⁴¹ Durkheim, *The Division of Labor in Society*, 184.

⁴² Weber, *Economy and Society*, vol. 1, 40.

community not as a group of anomic individuals but as interconnected members who share equally in their fundamental community membership.⁴³

What is imagined, however, is not imaginary. Imagined communities are real social constructs that are distinct from imaginary ones. While imaginary societies are constructed on fallacious descriptions of collective consciousness and perceptions, imagined communities lay on mistaken and invented grounds. This means that the feelings of individuals within the communities may rest in a misguided perception of social events or erroneous grounds but they are however genuine.⁴⁴ In other words, individuals carry a common narrative or myth that fosters their identity.

In South Africa, from the settlement of colonial powers to the creation of the Union of South Africa in 1910, the institutionalization of Apartheid in 1948, and thereafter, the imagined communities were constructed and persist in a collective consciousness of racial, religious and ethnic categories. Names such as Volkstad, township, location, home land were constructed as imagined communities to propagate the hegemony of one race/religion/ethnic group over the other. Churches, for their part, incarnated imagined communities either to propagate or challenge the ideological system of Apartheid.

In the name of Apartheid, separate imagined communities were justified as God's sovereign will for human kind as narrated in the Bible. The tower of Babel periscope, which I discuss in chapter three, for example, served as ground to explain a regime of

⁴³ Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 7.

⁴⁴ Tamir, "The Enigma of Nationalism," *World Politics*, 423.

inclusion and exclusion. To the Afrikaners, the narrative of Pentecost also served to motivate separateness. These narratives were, however, also used by the proponents of liberation theology, to refute the hegemony of Apartheid by pointing out their hermeneutic flaws. Religion, in this sense, served as the source and norm to either legitimize or delegitimize the social construction of imagined communities. Where Anderson does not go further, for example in the construction of legitimation as a social order, Berger and Luckmann bring a new optic on how social construction could legitimate political power by constructing social typifications.

Berger and Luckmann's Religious Legitimation and social construction

Sociologists have long understood the dual role of religion as a “world-maintaining” and “world-shaking” force capable of legitimating and delegitimizing social structures, institutions, power, and privilege. Berger and Luckmann, for example, delineate objective and subjective processes entailed in the social construction of legitimation. They contend that legitimation is a social reality that individuals construct in their daily life in society.⁴⁵ Society, in this sense, is the product of human activity and consciousness.

This dialectic, according to Berger and Luckmann, entails “typifications” and “habitualization.” The same dialectic also involves language and institutionalization. It is by means of typification schemes, they argue, that an individual subject apprehends the

⁴⁵ Berger and Luckmann, *The Social Construction of Reality: A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge*, 20.

other.⁴⁶ Typifications set the tone on how one deals with the other. By face-to-face interaction, one's subjective consciousness creates schemes from which he/she categorizes other members of the society. What one knows or projects on to others affects his/her ability to relate in a reciprocal dynamic, argue Berger and Luckmann.⁴⁷

What typifications do is to create the ability to negotiate not only the apprehension of the other but also the interaction with the other within a typical and defined social context.⁴⁸ Typifications also entail what Berger and Luckmann call "incipient anonymity."⁴⁹ By it, typifications create a general category of social interpretation of conduct and behavior. Face-to-face encounter, however, breaks through this general category and individualizes the subject.⁵⁰ Through dialogue and interaction, on a face-to-face basis, social reality is constructed.

Habitualization, for its part, connotes the idea that individuals perform social and non-social activities that could be reproduced over and over with minimum effort because they fit into the behavior patterns of individuals of a given society.⁵¹ Berger and Luckmann argue that, although taken for granted because of the routine character they

⁴⁶ Ibid., 29.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 28.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 30.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Ibid., 50.

encompass, habitualized actions retain their meaning and are not lost as routine in the general stock of knowledge of the individuals.⁵²

Habitualized action also narrows the individual decision-making process to one single specialization. It frees energy and opens up ground for deliberation and innovation, argue Berger and Luckmann.⁵³ In other words, habitualized action gives room for creativity and channels energy to focus on other decision-making processes. Moreover, Berger and Luckmann contend, habitualization makes it unnecessary for any social or non-social activities to be defined anew or recreated.⁵⁴ In this sense, it is a habit that individuals create in the here and now of their social environment to construct meaning and reality.

For any institutionalization to take place, it should be preceded by habitualization, argue Berger and Luckmann.⁵⁵ This process entails a reciprocal typification of habitualized actions by the types of actors, they contend.⁵⁶ According to them, any such typifications constitute an institution. In other words, to Berger and Luckmann, institutions are born when habitualized actions are shared and/or available to all members of the particular social group.⁵⁷ In this sense, institutions are not created instantaneously; they are, however, the product of shared history.

⁵² Ibid

⁵³ Ibid., 51

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Ibid., 51.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

It is impossible, they muse, “to understand an institution adequately without an understanding of the historical process in which it was produced.”⁵⁸ Moreover, they argue:

Institutions by the very fact of their existence, control human conduct by setting up predefined patterns of conduct, which channel it in one direction as against the many directions that would theoretically be possible.⁵⁹

As shared habitualized actions become institutions, an objective social world is constructed and human life becomes coherent, meaningful and continuous.

It is here then that language sanctions personal and collective social meaning. Through processes of typification and anonymity of experiences, one is able to categorize meanings that she/he encounters in everyday life.⁶⁰ What language does as well is to transcend the here and now and make present objects that are spatially, temporally and socially absent. Language also gives expression and meaning to experiences that are located beyond the realm of subjective reality and brings them to the level of day-to-day life. In Berger and Luckmann’s terms, “language soars into regions that are not only *de facto* but *a priori* unavailable to everyday experience.”⁶¹ It is at this junction of objectivity that religion becomes legitimate.

⁵⁸ Ibid., 52.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ Ibid., 37.

⁶¹ Ibid, 37.

Legitimation, to Berger, is the socially objectivized “knowledge” that explains and justifies the social order.⁶² In this sense, legitimation is the answer to any questions about the “why” of institutional arrangements. These institutional arrangements could take several forms and be expressed in different levels, from simple entities such as maxims and proverbs to complex one such as theologies, systems of science and political philosophies and ideologies.⁶³ Institutional arrangement is encompassed in symbolic meaning system that makes it easy to justify the social order and thus avoid chaos.⁶⁴

In this context, religion is the most prevalent and effective form of legitimation, argues Berger.⁶⁵ This is because religion hides the constructed character of institutional order by placing its genesis in the supernatural.⁶⁶ In Berger’s terms, religion bestows upon social institutions an “ultimately valid ontological status that locates them within a sacred and cosmic frame of reference.”⁶⁷

Religion also roots social structures in the distant past and gives them what Wilson calls “an air of permanence” concealing the fact that they are dependent on man

⁶² Berger, *The Sacred Canopy: Elements of Sociological Theory of Religion*, 29. The sacred canopy presents a more comprehensive approach to religious legitimation as opposed to how it is elaborated and discussed in the social construction of religion. For the sake of my argument, I discuss legitimation from mostly Berger’s perspective, which I must admit, is not far off from what Luckmann would have argued.

⁶³ Wilson, “The De-Alienation of Peter Berger,” 428.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ Berger, *The Sacred Canopy*, 32.

⁶⁶ Wilson, “The De-Alienation of Peter Berger,” 428.

⁶⁷ Berger, *The Sacred Canopy*, 33.

for their maintenance.⁶⁸ Moreover, muses Wilson, religion also creates the illusion that the social order of man is in harmony with the fundamental order of the universe.⁶⁹ In this sense, religion is what Berger terms, “the establishment, through human activity, of an all-embracing sacred order that is capable of maintaining itself in the ever-present face of chaos.”⁷⁰

Because social constructs are processes of collective activity that engage individuals in a given society, any human experience that produces deviation in normal activity becomes a threat to the continued existence of the worldview or *nomos*.⁷¹ At this level, each *nomos* comes under a threat from its antithesis, the anomic experience. For *nomos* to sustain the cause and avoid to be disintegrated, it should be reaffirmed over and over, not by ignoring the anomic experience but by explaining it.⁷²

Therefore, to contain any potential deviation and allow the worldview to stand and provide the necessary structures that enable people to order their experience, mechanisms such as rituals and institutions need to be put in place. Berger calls these mechanisms “the first line of defense.”⁷³

For rituals and institutions to use this line of defense, they must be passed down from generation to generation, through the process of internalization. The problem is that

⁶⁸ Wilson, “The De-Alienation of Peter Berger,” 429.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ Berger, *The Sacred Canopy*, 51.

⁷¹ Ibid., 39.

⁷² Wilson, “The De-Alienation of Peter Berger,” 429.

⁷³ Berger, *The Sacred Canopy*, 36.

through this process of internalization, some powerful forces might call into question the validity of these institutions and rituals. This questioning has the potential to disrupt worldviews or social order.

Therefore to counteract these forces that include self-interest, stupidity, forgetfulness, and catastrophe, which end up contributing to the precarious nature of the society, a greater force needs to confront them head on.⁷⁴ This force is, in fact, the power of legitimation. In this sense, legitimation is a protective mechanism to counteract social deviation.

Although religion is an effective form of legitimation, “it cannot bestow credence on a reality unless that reality is grounded in a social structure into which it fits.”⁷⁵ This is to say that the combination of effective legitimation and strong plausibility structure is what makes reality convincing.⁷⁶ Berger expresses this idea when he argues that “all religious traditions, irrespective of their several ecclesiologies or lack of same, require specific communities for their continued plausibility.”⁷⁷

Berger’s assertions on legitimation join Marx, Nietzsche as well as Ludwig Feuerbach in their stipulations of human beings creating the gods who embody their own idealized conception of their aspirations, needs and fears. In the *Essence of Christianity*,

⁷⁴ Ibid., 34.

⁷⁵ Wilson, “The De-Alienation of Peter Berger,” 429.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ Berger, *The Sacred Canopy*, 46.

for example, Feuerbach argues that the object of any subject is nothing else than the subject's own nature taken objectively.⁷⁸

Feuerbach went on to say such are a man's thoughts and dispositions, such is his God; so much worth as a man has, so much and no more has his God.⁷⁹ Moreover, for Feuerbach, consciousness of God is self-consciousness and knowledge of God is self-knowledge. In this sense, God is the manifested inward nature, the expressed self of a man.⁸⁰

Berger, as well as Feuerbach, see a projection of everything "here below" with "up above." This projection is the domain of human social activities being transposed into the realm of divinities (reification). The logical consequence of this projection is that whoever participates in the institutional order, *ipso facto*, participates in the divine cosmos.⁸¹

For example, to explain death, present suffering or injustice, one should reinterpret them by offering other worldly rewards for present suffering or project a compensation for present injustice into the future.⁸² Those explanations of anomic experiences that threaten to disintegrate the *nomos* are what Berger called theodicies.⁸³ It is through those explanations that alienation occurs.

⁷⁸ Feuerbach, *The Essence of Christianity*, 12.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ Ibid., 13.

⁸¹ Ibid., 34.

⁸² Wilson, "The De-Alienation of Peter Berger," 429.

⁸³ Ibid.

Religious Alienation

In Berger's assumptions, alienation takes place when individuals refuse to re-appropriate the social order and self when confronting anomalies of suffering, injustice, and death. Individuals treat these forces, he argues, as objects confronting them to the same degree as laws of nature.⁸⁴ Berger agrees with Marx that the character of social reality as a human product could be removed from consciousness by religion. Yet Berger does not equate religion with false consciousness.⁸⁵

In alienation, the human *nomos* becomes the absolute divine cosmos argues Berger.⁸⁶ The belief here is that man's social type or his given identity and his total self are merged, stripping him of his independence from social environment. Choices, in this case, become "fictitious necessities."⁸⁷

On this stage of alienation, social institutions might lose their legitimized power and yet continue to function, not because they are effective but because they are deemed "right" from the social consciousness and reality of those who have created them. In other words, in alienation, legitimations continue to give meaning to social constructs that might have already been obsolete and rejected, except from those who have internalized them and deem them meaningful to sustain their agenda. This precarious reality prompts

⁸⁴Berger, *The Sacred Canopy*, 86.

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ Ibid, 89.

⁸⁷ Wilson, "The De-Alienation of Peter Berger," 429.

Berger to argue that, “the more abstract legitimations are, the less like they are to be modified.”⁸⁸

To eliminate alienation, however, an individual must step outside of the social order and directly confront the chaotic world for what it is. It is only then that he/she can live an authentic life. Accordingly, individuals live authentically, only in moments where they are without the comforting shelter of any form of legitimation.⁸⁹ In this sense, de-alienation occurs when religious institutions can pick and choose. Thus, neither its affirmation nor its denial of cultural values is absolute.⁹⁰

Once the Afrikaners and the DRC, for example, internalized obsolete presumptions of racial classification and White hegemony, it put them under the category of alienation as opposed to normal functioning of religion. In this sense, they couldn’t see beyond their immediate self-reality. Their neo-Calvinistic apparatus became absolute, normative, judging, and exclusive. Even in their collective consciousness, the “other” was reduced to a lesser level of humanity. This alienation culminated to the invention of Apartheid as separate development and separate imagined communities.

On Religion and Identity Formation

At the intersection of religion and identity lies the assumption that identity is collectively constructed and as such it is a religious phenomenon.⁹¹ In this sense, the

⁸⁸ Berger and Luckmann, *Social Construction of Reality*, 109.

⁸⁹ Ibid., 52.

⁹⁰ Berger, *The Noise of Solemn Assemblies*, 139.

⁹¹ Debray, *The Critique of Political Reason*, 185.

religious nature of our existence creates identity. Religion, in this context, is defined in the Durkheimian sense in which anything could be sacred as long as it religiously legitimized and ritualized.

Using Regis Debray's analysis, Phillip Dexter argues that through processes of inclusion, exclusion and opposition, social production of sacred space and time allows collective and typified identities to emerge.⁹² These identities, he contends, are believed to be a "constant and unavoidable feature of social existence." In his views, elements of social interaction that include but are not limited to culture, race, traditions, myths, religion, laws of physics and location give rise to institutions or social organization whereby collective identities are expressed.⁹³ In this context, contends Dexter, national and religious identities are the predominant form in a globalized world and are contingent to state, ownership and production, and power."⁹⁴

Moreover, argues Dexter, identity is forged in and through the historical process of organization and gives rise to both collective and particular identities.⁹⁵ While particular identities may come and go, he contends, residuals of collective identities are permanent.⁹⁶ Thus, he suggests that ethnic, racial, and cultural identities in South Africa

⁹² Dexter, "Perceptions, Imaginings, and Practices of Collective Identities in the Transition: National Identities and ethnicity in the Western Cape" in *Religion and Society in Transition*, " 69.

⁹³ Ibid.

⁹⁴ Ibid., 70.

⁹⁵ Ibid., 71.

⁹⁶ Ibid.

fluctuate and potentially could disappear. National identities, however, as a residual collective category are likely to stay permanently.⁹⁷

Whether collective identities as residual category are permanent is arguable. To contend, however, that particular identities or typifications such as racial and ethnic (Blacks, Coloured, Indians, Whites) in South Africa could disappear altogether is an overstatement. I am of the opinion that collective identities are not permanent and do not override typified identities. On the contrary, the social construction of collective or national identity entails the existence of typifications.

Berger and Luckmann's social construction aligns with the above assertions. According to them, typified identities are neither "waxed" nor "waned." Moreover they cannot be ignored in the construction of overarching or collective identities. This suggests that typified identities as a residual of social histories of individuals are true expressions of the collective, and are not collective per se and do not disappear, but are shaped, reshaped, and renegotiated.

Viewed from the global systems perspective, typified identities or particularizations are constructed as local and are expressions of the collective (global.) In their writings, for example, social systems scholars such as Jose Casanova and Manuel Castells delineate typifications as expressions of collective identities. Following a Harbermasian approach, Casanova, for example, constructs identity formation in the context of a democratic society where religions or religious organizations play the role of "enlivening the sphere of civic society and human rights."⁹⁸

⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁹⁸ Casanova, *Public Religions in the Modern World*, 232.

Casanova takes issue with the privatization of religions as it was assigned by the enlightenment and modernity. For too long, he argues, that enlightenment and modernity had given religions a marginal and private role, up to dismissing them in the public sphere of the society.⁹⁹ In the name of secularization, for example, religions were secluded to religious domain and were believed to disappear as societies become modern. Casanova challenges this assumption and contends that religions or religious organizations have gone beyond the role modernity and secularization has given them. They are well involved in the public sphere of the global society.¹⁰⁰

This is what he calls the “deprivatization” of religion in the public sphere. By “deprivatization,” Casanova refers to the refusing of religion to accept “the marginal and privatized role which theories of modernity and secularization had reserved for them.”¹⁰¹ This refusal, argues Casanova, has led to “the repoliticization of the private religious and moral spheres and the renormalization of the public economic and political spheres.”¹⁰² Casanova sees a return of religion to the public arena as “a mobilizing of integrative normative force.”¹⁰³

⁹⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., 5.

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

¹⁰² Ibid., 6.

¹⁰³ Ibid., 227.

In this context, religions continue to play a non-private role in the public arena of democratic societies. But for religions to play this role, argues Casanova, they should take a critical view of the modern system, and subsequently humanize the rational system of modernity.¹⁰⁴ By doing this, muses Casanova, they participate in Habermas' "unfinished project of modernity" meaning that religions should accept the differentiation of the society and the development of the scientific method.¹⁰⁵ Identities, in this context, are constructed along with differentiation of society and democratic values that delineate individual rights and freedom.

The 1994 democratic new South Africa, for example, fostered an environment where identity construction was no longer on imposed racial and ethnic typifications. In the new South Africa, identity as typification has become normative by social actors and constructed from several parameters including religious beliefs, values, and systems. This democratic post- Apartheid environment has given racial identification room to emerge and it is constructed along freedom of individuals and their cultural and religious apparatus.

No longer, is racial identification imposed on individuals (*identification raciale imposee*). It has become what Rim Maki-Bejar calls "*autoclassification raciale individuelle*."¹⁰⁶ In this, by their own choice, people embrace what racial category fits and represents them the best. They choose the social group to which they want to belong.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., 39.

¹⁰⁵ Casanova, *Public Religions in the Modern World*, 233.

¹⁰⁶ Makni-Bejar, Les Nouvelles figures d'alterite dans le roman post-apartheid de Nadine Gordimer in *L'Afrique du Sud, de nouvelles identitees*, 175.

A person who once was classified as a Coloured could auto-classify as Black. An Indian could accept being Indian or feel unwilling to be auto-classified at all, and see him/herself just as a human being. Democratic values certainly render this social process possible.

While Casanova constructs identity in the context of democratic societies, Manuel Castells delineates identity in the age of information-flows, or what he calls “network society.”¹⁰⁷ As some societies disintegrate and new ones are formed, he argues, network society allows religions to rediscover their true essence and find a new “lease on life.” According to him, religion plays a non-negligible role because humans seek solace and refuge in it.”¹⁰⁸

Castells, moreover, argues that identities are no longer built on the basis of civil society but on what he calls, “prolongation of communal resistance.”¹⁰⁹ By this, he means that the search for meaning that he considers identity formation “takes place in the reconstruction of defensive identities around communal principles.”¹¹⁰ Thus, following Alain Touraine, Castells distinguishes three different kinds of identity in the network society: legitimizing, resistance, and project identity.

¹⁰⁷ In his book, *The Theory of Network Society*, Castells elaborates on how power dynamics in society creates unbalance where one group can over control over the other. He calls them programmers and switchers.

¹⁰⁸ Castells, *The Power of Identity*, 2nd ed., 12.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., 11.

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

Legitimizing identity, he argues, has been the core value sustaining civil societies and maintaining nation-states. In the network society, he contends, the hegemonic or relational power that underlies this construction is put to test.¹¹¹ Nation-states lose the stable status they once had. As information flows, an imbalance of power is created, argues Castells, causing nation-states to lose their control over identity construction.¹¹² This opens room for people to construct their own identities, not only locally but also globally.

The second identity is resistance identity. In this category, argues Castells, excluded groups collectively construct identities and mechanisms of survival to resist the threat imposed by the hegemonic powers of institutions, ideologies, and interest groups. Because resistance identities are not bound by nation-states, they have the freedom to adopt survival techniques to confront the ever-changing, network society and offer meaning to social construction. In this *modus operandi*, religion can become an expression of resistance identity, “infusing meaning in highly organized society”¹¹³ and fostering stability in the midst of changing demographics.

What religions also do is surge “from historical exhausted social forms and affect the society in the making.”¹¹⁴ By impacting society, religions reiterate their “world-maintaining character” and suggest they are here to stay. Indeed, they are a force to be reckoned with in the network society.

¹¹¹ Ibid., 7.

¹¹² Ibid., 11.

¹¹³ Tayob, “Religion, Culture and Identity in a Democratic Society,” 19.

¹¹⁴ Castells, *The Power of Identity*, 108.

Castells' third type of identity is project identity. According to him, project identity entails the notion that social actors step outside of their constructed identities and challenge social structures.¹¹⁵ Here, social actors embrace projects that might transform society and commit themselves to those projects. As information flows in the modern era, actors are able to mobilize resources globally and promote a cause or project of their choice. This could range from environmental to social issues, such as HIV/Aids, human rights, poverty, economic global unbalanced, immigration, racism, social injustice and discrimination.¹¹⁶

What religions do in this context is to mobilize collective consciousness and provide support and resources.¹¹⁷ For example, when programmers and switchers, or those who act like technocrats in the network society, turn on or switch off the network and create an environment of coercion to bolster their respective agenda. Religions provide comfort and resources to those left at the periphery. Social actors, in this sense, adopt multiple identities to voice their concerns and come to the rescue of those left behind.

From the above three identities, one could arguably assert that identity formation in a network society is not a linear process, nor exclusive nor permanent. A network society allows identity to be both local and global, both collective and typified.

¹¹⁵ Ibid., 9.

¹¹⁶ Tayob, "Religion, Culture and Identity in a Democratic Society," 19.

¹¹⁷ Ibid.

According to Castells, the very idea of a network society allows one's identity to be simultaneously several things, national and sub-national.

The South African society certainly reflects this assertion whereby identity formation is collective (national) as well as typified (local). Neville Alexander refers to it as sub-national and national identities. He asserts that, in the South African context, "sub-national identities constitute part and parcel of the patchwork which is framed by the national identity"¹¹⁸ If one could construct identity as sub-national and national as Alexander suggests, how then does identity formation affect social behavior?

Methodology

I was granted ethics clearance from both the University of Ottawa Research Ethics and Integrity office and the South African Human Sciences Research Council, to conduct direct observation, semi-structured interviews of current and former church members and religious leaders of five different churches in Sophiatown and Meadowlands. Those churches include Triomf Dutch Reformed Church, Christ the King Church (an Anglican mission church), St Xavier Roman Catholic Church and the Methodist Church of Southern Africa of Meadowlands, Zone 3 and Zone 7. These churches comprise a representative cross-section of the South African religious market.

For a comprehensive, qualitative analysis, I interviewed a total of 30 church members, across gender, five from each church. An information/recruitment sheet was given to all attendees at each of the five churches. It described the purpose of the research

¹¹⁸ Alexander, *The Politics of Identity in Post-Apartheid South Africa in Challenges of Globalization, South African Debates*, 134.

and indicated how anyone willing to participate could contact me and volunteer. This recruitment/information sheet was published in the churches' newsletters and posted on bulletin boards. It was also distributed to interested parties who could contact me directly if they so wished. I conducted the recruitment process as well as the interviews personally, with no additional assistance. An integrative and comprehensive questionnaire was developed as a guideline for the interviews. Follow-up interviews were also conducted, to clarify statements or gain further understanding of concepts.¹¹⁹ Both individual and group interviews were conducted by me.

While attending Sunday-morning services and weekly activities in churches, I was granted access to church archives and I analyzed sermons, synods declaration, bible studies, prayer meetings, and reactions to Apartheid legislations. I was also invited to individual homes for further interviews.

Apart from participant observation and semi-structured interviews and local church archives, I extended my research to include the historical archives of the University of Witwatersrand, University of Pretoria and the metropolitan library of Johannesburg. In these archives, I accessed newspapers from the period before, during, and after implementation of the *Group Areas Act*. The South African Outlook, the Black Sash, Woerde en Daad, Die Transvaaler, The Star, The Rand Daily Mail, and Drum are amongst the journalistic material I studied.

At the University of Witwatersrand and the South African National Archives in particular, I consulted personal papers and letters of relevant clergy and parliament

¹¹⁹ Index questionnaire, see appendix 2.

members. Those two archives have extensive collections of private letters of Government officials at the time of the *Group Areas Act*, and documented interactions with religious authorities and members of the public at large.

The Ballinger's papers, for example, are of importance due to the fact that Ms. Ballinger was a representative of the native affairs in the parliament at the time of the *Group Areas Act* legislations.

The data collected was analyzed against the following variables: legitimization, delegitimation, acquiescence, and overarching national identity and race and ethnic typifications. To determine the role of the churches as legitimization, for example, I identified patterns that showed the extent to which a given church on a local or national level supported and encouraged the political institution during the enactment of the *Group Areas Act* as a matter of self-identity and survival.

Because legitimization entails the invention of an ideology and social mechanisms (e.g., rituals, myth and language) to protect against anomie, I delineated data related to theological affirmations and socio-cultural context that to justify and sacralize political power, in this case the Apartheid regime. If data suggested that political institutions advanced their agenda by appealing to a given church's religious doctrine, that church is likely to assume the role of legitimization.

A church was judged as having assumed the role of delegitimation, if the data showed the church rejected the status quo and challenged theological assertions. Moreover data should also suggest the church condemned and resisted the *Group Areas Act*. As with legitimization, delegitimation also appeals to theological assertions and symbolic systems to construct identity. Against this backdrop, interviews, theological doctrines, sermons and social activism were analyzed, to determine a given church's role in delegitimation.

Acquiescence mode refers to a given church's avowed policy of implicitly being critical of the political order, yet avoiding political activism. A church that is not explicitly engaged in political discourse, in this category would tend to adopt an acquiescence mode. Moreover, acquiescence does not imply a value judgment, whether a church ought to participate more openly or more actively against the political order or whether their participation is right or wrong. Rather, they must be politically engaged. In this sense, any data that reveals the level of a church's political engagement would determine whether a church adopted an acquiescence mode.

As a social category, identity is often constructed for reasons of power and survival. In the context of this study, identity construction shapes the role of the church in social discourse. This category analyzes data on identity formation, collected from semi-structured interviews. The aim was to assess what it takes, and what attributes are necessary, to have an overarching national identity in the present, post-Apartheid, post-colonial South African society, and what kinds of identities are emerging in South Africa today. In this regard, I asked certain questions: Do you identify with your ethnic background? Do you see yourself as South African? Do you feel 100% South African? If not, how so? Do you get involved in activities exclusively to your race? How important a role does race play in your life? Does your race give a perceived power or disempowerment? Do you feel more or less privileged compared to members of other groups? Do you feel genuinely South African? If so, why? If not, why not? Is there anything that keeps you from seeing yourself as a full-fledged South African? Do you think there are opportunities that are unavailable to you because of your culture/race/religion? Does your church preach political message as related to race, gender, ethnicity or culture? If so, what is the message? Is the message different under

Apartheid and post-Apartheid? Where do you see the future of South Africa as far as race and religious relationships is concerned?

Research Outline

To delineate the role of Sophiatown churches during Apartheid and how that role changed or did not change in the post-Apartheid South Africa, I outlined my research in six different chapters. In chapter one, I introduce the problem of the *Group Areas Act* and the forced removals of Sophiatown residents as a racial and ethnic categorization that was designed to exclude “the other” for the sake of creating an imagined community: an Afrikaner Volkstad. With this assertion in mind, I set specific research objectives and outlined the theoretical frameworks related to imagined communities, religious legitimations, and identity formation. I conclude the chapter with a methodology that is designed to empirically verify variables pertaining to the role of the churches and identity formation during Apartheid and post-Apartheid.

In chapter two, I discuss the history of frontier and colonial mission, and the establishment of the South African religious market, with specific attention to English-speaking churches, the African Initiated Churches, and the Dutch Reformed Churches. The chapter argues that Missionaries came to South Africa with an erroneous assumption of race superiority that was translated into class warfare, and a mercantile economy of land dispossession. The chapter brings the charge that English-speaking churches and their missionaries were precursors of a system that the Dutch Reformed Churches inherited, sacralized, and claimed it as a divine call.

From this, I elucidate, in chapter three, the role of the Dutch Reformed Church (DRC), in manufacturing and legitimizing the narrative of Apartheid. I contend that the DRC was instrumental in legitimatizing the Afrikaners’ political and social institutions

from a narrowed interpretation of the neo-Calvinistic tenets, and myths constructed from selected biblical text. All of this led to the enactment of racially divisive legislations.

In chapter four, I argue that before it was dismantled, Sophiatown was a vibrant community, and a “living organism” as Father Huddleston once called it. Sophiatown residents were dehumanized, mistreated, and carried the stigma of imposed racial categorization that was first practiced by the British and later legislated by the Apartheid regime. In Sophiatown, the residents recreated a world of spiritual healing that stood in contrast to the culture of the perceived world, the disarticulated world that the Apartheid regime had invented. For the disenfranchised and marginalized of Sophiatown, the world of Apartheid was not the real one. The real one was the world of healing from the oppression and dehumanization that apartheid imposed on them. In Sophiatown, the unemployed, the sick, the barren women, or the demon-possessed were healed by prayer. It is through healing that they constructed their identity.

The problem of Sophiatown, as it perceived by the Afrikaners, was that it was too close to a white, urban city. The Apartheid government could not bear the idea of having a “black spot” in the sea of white urbanites. They couldn’t stand the infiltration of “the other,” those deemed inferior and whose sole purpose was to serve the master Afrikaners in their imagined community. Therefore, to maintain their so-called “purity” the Afrikaners had to forcibly remove the “black spot” miles away from the city center. They invented racial divisive legislations and sought the sacralized power of the DRC.

In Chapter five, I address the response of the churches at the time of the legislation and enactment of the *Group Areas Act* in Sophiatown. In it, I argue that from the time the Bill was introduced in Parliament to its enactment, religious actors were not unanimous in their response. While it was not surprising that the DRC backed the Apartheid government by legitimatizing the Act, other churches such as the Anglicans,

Methodists and Catholics, struggled to adopt a uniform approach to deal with the massive human rights violation that the Act created. I argue that, in the response to the forced removals of the *Group Areas Act*, there were dissensions between local churches and the hierarchy of their respective denominations. Moreover, I contend that some churches did not want to jeopardize their standing with the government and so chose to be both apolitical and absent.

This role, however, has shifted in the post-Apartheid era. This is the reason why in chapter six, I argue that in the post-Apartheid era, churches are no longer grappling with an imposed racial and ethnic categorization, but exist within a new trend where race and ethnicity no longer carry the stigma they once did. They are no longer imposed and pathological; they become normative. In this sense, a South African can claim a typified identity while holding as well a national identity. What churches in Sophiatown are doing is fostering a new ethical environment whereby the perceived and experienced power or disempowerment that racially imposed categorization brought, is deconstructed.

I conclude the study by pointing out that it is dangerous for the ANC-run government to appeal to religious legitimation to advance its manifesto or ideologies, and dangerous for the church to sacralize it. I argue that the ANC-run government has reverted to old Apartheid categories, while the Church stands silent and stops short of criticizing it. For example, the state-run programs like race-based affirmative action have become the mantra of inclusion and exclusion. The Coloured people, in particular, feel excluded. As one coloured church member of St. Francis Xavier put it to me “we are not black enough for this Government.” On this ground, I contend that the church should take a stand and become the conscience of the nation. The failure to do so will take the country back to the old apartheid categorization where the church becomes the ANC at prayer, such as the DRC considered as the NP at prayer.

CHAPTER II

PARADIGMS OF MISSION CHURCHES IN SOUTH AFRICA: GRAPPLING WITH THE ENTANGLEMENT OF RACE, LAND AND CLASS WARFARE

Introduction

This chapter discusses frontier and colonial mission, and missionaries' enterprise of the eighteen and nineteen century and the establishment of the South African religious market with specific reference to the English-speaking churches, the African Initiated Churches and the Dutch Reformed Churches. It argues: (1) erroneous assumptions of race superiority; (2) racial discrimination in churches; and (3) shows relationship between apartheid and churches. The chapter brings the charge that the Dutch Reformed Churches inherited a racially divisive system that was deemed normative in the eighteen and nineteen century and practiced by English-speaking churches and their missionaries. While missionaries by at large aimed to evangelize the natives, they were unfortunately entangled with the racial divisive system of western hegemony that privileged them.

Thus, some of them came to South Africa with an erroneous assumption of race superiority that was translated into class warfare, and a mercantile economy of land's dispossession. As they settled and built local congregations, wittingly or unwittingly, missionaries and mission churches were entangled with the imperial and colonial apparatus of conquest and domination. They were "carriers of the social, cultural,

economic and political forces of the society of which they were part, in this case Imperial Britain.”¹

Therefore, they discovered religions among native South Africans when it fitted their interests and denied them religions when they didn’t cooperate or showed resistance. Moreover, racial discrimination prevailed in mission churches. While, for example, the Dutch Reformed Churches (DRCs) excluded blacks in their ranks on the pretense that they were inferior and heathens, missionaries of English-speaking churches propagated an ambiguous and vague social attitude on race issues, an attitude that led blacks to create their own African independent churches (AICs).

In this sense, the construction of Apartheid that sanctioned the Afrikaners Volsktad, as imagined community, was grounded on erroneous assumption that was already common practice in the South African, stratified society. By the time the National Party implemented it, however, the rest the world was distancing itself from sanctioning white hegemony as a social norm.

Paradigms of Religions in South Africa: Frontier

Hypothesis and the Cycle of denial and discovery

In the eighteenth century, the British philosopher and historian, David Hume said these words:

I am apt to suspect the Negroes ... to be naturally inferior for whites. There never was a civilized nation of any other complexion than white, nor even individual eminent in action or speculation. No ingenious manufactures amongst them, no arts, no sciences. On the other hand, the most rude and barbarous

¹ DeGruchy and Villa-Vicencio, *Apartheid is a Heresy*, 42.

whites, such as the ancient Germans, the present Tartars, have still something eminent about them, in their valor, form of government, or some other particular. Such a uniform and constant difference could not happen, in so many countries and ages, if nature had not made original distinction between these breeds of men.²

A century later, the same condescending and racist remarks were echoed when David Livingstone, a British missionary and explorer wrote:

We come among them (Africans) as members of a superior race and servants of a government that desires to elevate more degraded portions of the human family. We are the adherents of the benign, holy religion and by mere consistent conduct and wise patient efforts become the enjoinders of peace to hitherto destructed and downtrodden race.³

Western elites, travelers, colonial administrators, merchants and missionaries honestly believed that God, “in his providence, had chosen the western nations, because of their unique qualities, to be the standard-bearers of his cause even to the utmost ends of the world.”⁴ They pursued this aim with an imperial/colonialism mindset and an erroneous notion of race superiority, class warfare, and a mercantile economy of land’s dispossession.

In South Africa, from the time Bartholomew Diaz arrived in 1488, to the time the Dutch East India Company established a refreshment station in the Cape in 1642, to the

² Hume, *Essay and Treatise* (1768), 152 n.

³ Maquet, *Power and Society in Africa*, 242.

⁴ Bosh, *Transforming Mission*, 298.

imperial/ colonial and post-colonial era, bearers of so-called civilization, commerce, and Christianity carried the misapprehension of a race and moral superiority to foster their divine call.

In this sense, the discovery or non-discovery of religion among natives, for example, depended on their ultimate goals of conquest and domination. Western elites and missionaries were more inclined to deny religion when a frontier opened and discover religion when natives' land was dispossessed and white hegemony established.⁵ Chidester calls this scheme, "the Frontier Hypothesis."⁶

In 1600, for example, because of their resistance to the western elites and missionaries' endeavors, the Hottentots/ Khoisan, the first known inhabitants of southern Africa, were denied the status of having a religion, despite the fact that they had beliefs system. It was only when a settlement with white hegemony, power, and domination was well established among them, then they were given the status of having a religion. To recognize a religion among the Khoisan gave the settlers control over the indigenous.

In a similar way, White settlers did not recognize as religion the traditions of the Xhosa of the Eastern Cape. In 1800, for example, J.T. Van der Kemp wrote, "I never could perceive that they had any religion, nor any idea of the existence of God."⁷ In 1820, William Shaw, a Methodist minister, echoed the same sentiment when he declared

⁵ Chidester, *Savages System*, 69.

⁶ Ibid., 20.

⁷ Van der Kemp, "An Account of the Religion, Customs, Population, Government, Language, History and Natural Productions of Caffraria," 432.

that, “they (Xhosa) cannot be said to possess any religion.”⁸ Again in 1852, Alfred Cole, calling the Xhosa Kaffirs, a derogatory term that means heathen, wrote,

The Kaffirs can scarcely be said to have any religion at all ... the North American Indian has his Great Spirit; the Negro his fetish; the Hottentots his Grasshopper; but the Kaffir has literally no idea of Supreme Being or a future state.⁹

This non discovery of religion took place while the Xhosa, under the leadership of Mlanjeni, were resistant to the imperial and colonial influences. The Xhosa were, however, given, the status of religion, soon after the British Army took over their land and displaced many of them.¹⁰

In a desperate attempt to recover their land, the Xhosa turned to the very same religious systems that were denied to them. A council to the Xhosa Chief Sarhili, for example, reported that his teenager niece had a dream into which she saw Xhosa ancestors and some other people “who appeared with many cattle and promised to return to drive away the white invaders and restore land, cattle, and prosperity to the people.”¹¹ In anticipation of this return, according to the dream, the Xhosa had to sacrifice all of their cattle.¹²

⁸ Shaw, *The Story of My Mission in South Eastern Africa*, 1860.

⁹ Cole, *Cape and the Kafir*, 42.

¹⁰ Chidester, *Religions in South Africa*, 104.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Ibid., 51.

Thus, they sacrificed 400,000 cattle and stopped planting crops. This sacrificial ritual act turned out to be a national suicide. Forty thousand people died of starvation and another forty thousand had to be displaced and be incorporated in the colonial mercantile economy of division of time and labor.¹³

The cattle killing weakened the Xhosa. It didn't take long for the imperial domination to discover religions among them. A British government official, Joseph Cox Warner, was keen to argue that the Xhosa indeed had a religion.¹⁴ Warner declared that if the Xhosa were to be effectively converted and controlled, they had to be recognized as having a religious system rather than being labeled Kaffirs.¹⁵ He found among the Xhosa what he viewed as features of religious systems that include beliefs in ancestors, initiation of diviners, healing rituals, funerals, mourning, and sacrifices.¹⁶

These features, according to Warner, were enough to qualify the Xhosa as having a religion but it was a religion classified as inferior to Christianity. By recognizing a religion among the Xhosa, Warner was paving a way to the missions to propagate Christianity and subsequently control the Xhosa people.¹⁷

Apart from the Khoisan/Hottentots, and the Xhosa, the "frontier hypothesis" of deny and discovery of religion in the south eastern frontier among the Zulu was no

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Warner, Mr. Warner's Notes, 74.

¹⁵ Ibid., 75.

¹⁶ Ibid., 103.

¹⁷ Warner, Mr. Warner's Notes, 103.

different. One of the merchant travelers, Nathaniel Isaacs, having observed the Zulu society and political structure, came to a conclusion that the Zulu were as he puts it, “the most superstitious people and have no religion among them.”¹⁸

Isaacs went further to state, “the Zulu lacked any concept of deity, the immortality of the soul or the mystery of creation.”¹⁹ The Zulu, he argues, ignorantly conceive themselves to spring from reeds.²⁰ Isaacs later portrayed the Zulu King, Shaka, as lacking neither an idea of religion nor any knowledge of a super-agent such as a Supreme Being.”²¹ By denying religion among the Zulu, Isaacs was paving the way for new European interventions in the Zulu territory.²²

The discovery of religion among the Zulu emerged when King Shaka died and his successor King Dingane took the throne. By all accounts, Dingane was more diplomatic than Shaka and wanted to foster political and economic relationships with the British imperial power. In exchange for letting missionaries work in his territory, he wanted “gunpowder, horses, and some innovative technology in agriculture.”²³ But this endeavor would cost him the annexation of Natal to the colony.

¹⁸ Isaacs, *Travel and Adventures In Eastern Africa*, 248.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Chidester, *Religions in South Africa*, 120.

²³ Ibid.

As a political movement was underway to annex Natal, missionaries started to discover religion among the Zulu. For example, Gardiner drifted away from Isaacs' presumptions of the denial of religion among the Zulu to the discovery of their religion. In several interviews he conducted among the Zulus, he claimed that the Zulu always had the notion of deity that they called *Unkunlunkulu* or *Incosi-pezula*.²⁴

In a similar way, William Colenso wrote,

the Zulus have certainly two distinct names in their own tongue for the Supreme Being, and very expressive names, namely un-Kulunkulu, the Great-Great One=the Almighty; and un-Velinqange, the first out-comer, the First essence of Existence.²⁵

To better control the Zulu, missionaries discover religious affinities with their own religion, to elevate the Zulu to the status of human beings. Henry Callaway, for example, was of the opinion that there were intellectual, moral, and religious affinities between Europeans and Africans. In his words, both have same "potential."²⁶ What he meant by potential was a sense of common humanity. Thus, by virtue of this potential or common humanity, he wanted the Zulu to adopt new values and disciplines of time, labor, and skill."²⁷

In Callaway's assumptions, as long as the Zulu were classified as lesser human beings, they couldn't participate in the mercantile economy because they were not fit to

²⁴ Gardiner, *Narrative of a Journey*, 152.

²⁵ Colenso, *Diocese of Natal*, 243.

²⁶ Callaway, *The Religious Systems of the Amazulu*, 70.

²⁷ Ibid.

comprehend it. “Degraded people don’t have —neither do they comprehend —a mercantile economy that only western religion brings,” he contends.²⁸

P.W Harrison echoed this assertion when he declared, “missionary work is no enterprise of pity in which we of the smug and self-satisfied West take a superior religion, and hand it down to poor miserable and degraded heathens.”²⁹

Therefore, for the Zulus to participate in the mercantile economy, they had to be elevated to the status of human beings, share a common humanity with Europeans, and have their religions recognized so that they could be taught new values of western civilization, commerce, and Christianity.

This elevation was not, of course, for a noble or humanitarian recognition. It was a weapon of control. According to Shaw, finding affinities was an attempt to establish residual categories that entailed implicit negative discrimination.³⁰ The discrimination took place in forms of enactments such as land reservation, pass systems, and hut taxes. The Zulu had no choice but to enter the mercantile economy of class warfare and division of time and labor. This new societal structure eventually disrupted their cultural system and brought a clash of gender and class. The agricultural sector, for example, saw women being replaced by men and the plough became a new tool to plant crops.

The Zulu territory was not only the envy of the imperial power and missionaries, the Voortrekkers were also interested in it and wanted to establish their own influence.

²⁸ Callaway, *The Religious Systems of the Amazulu*, 70.

²⁹ Harrison, “Instructing Missionaries Misleading Natives,” 27.

³⁰ Shaw, “The Invention of African Traditional Religion,” 341.

Piet Retief, the leader of the Voortrekkers, used his kindness as a leverage to strike a treaty on land ownership. It is reported that at one time, Piet Retief retrieved King Dingane's stolen cattle from a rival King and in exchange, Retief requested a piece of land. The treaty reads as follows,

KNOW ALL MEN BY THIS, That whereas Pieter Retief, Governor of the Dutch emigrant South Africans, has retaken my Cattle, which Sinkonyella had stolen; which Cattle he, the said Retief, now deliver unto me; I, DINGAAN, King of the Zoolas, do hereby certify and declare that I thought fit to resign unto him, Retief, and his countrymen (on reward of the case hereabove mentioned) the Place called "Port Natal," together with all the land annexed, that is to say, from Dogela to the Omsoboeb River westward; and from the sea to the north, as far as the land may be useful and in my possession. Which I did by this, and give unto them for their everlasting property.

[Signed] De merk+ van Koning Dingaan.³¹

Retief's desire to acquire more of Zulu territory led him to use scare tactics, as well he threatened to dethrone King Dingane should he allow Voortrekkers and missionaries to propagate the Christian gospel in his territory. But this was to no avail. On the contrary, to curtail Retief's ever-present threat, King Dingane ordered his army to kill him.

³¹ Fairweather, *A Common Hunger: Land Rights in Canada and South Africa*, 60.

Retief's assassination prompted a group of 3000 Voortrekkers armed with muskets and cannons to march from the western coast to wage a war against the Zulus. On December 16, 1838, they attacked an army of Zulu warriors. Ten thousand Zulu warriors were killed, and the Voortrekkers had no casualties.³² The river turned so red with the blood of the Zulu warriors that the battle has come to be known as the Battle of the Blood River. The victory over the Zulu would come to have a religious meaning in the social construction of the Afrikaners volkstad. Malan would see it as the affirmation of God's call for their identity. Voortrekkers and missionaries took hold of the Zulu territory and partitioned it as they so pleased. More and more missionaries would arrive in the territory and expand their influence in different parts of South Africa.

In their endeavor, mission churches would embrace the same *modus operandi* of race superiority, land dispossession, and the mercantile economy of class warfare—a subject that is discussed in the following section.

Emergence of Mission Churches in South Africa

According to the 2001 population census, 80 per cent of South Africans, all races combined, belong to one of three religious traditions, which are constructed along linguistic lines.³³ They are (1) the English-speaking churches, also known as “Mission Churches” that include but are not limited to Methodists; the Anglican Church of the Province of South Africa known as CPSA (Baptists, Congregationalists, and

³² Ibid.

³³ Census in South Africa is done every ten years. The 2011 census did not include questions on religion.

Presbyterians); and (2) the Afrikaans-speaking Churches. Of the latter, the Dutch Reformed Church (DRC) is the largest. (3) In the African Initiated Churches (AICs), the leading group is the Zion Christian Church (ZCC).³⁴

English Speaking Churches

English speaking churches are Protestant churches that originally came out of the English Reformation. Their emergence in South Africa began in the early nineteenth century when missionaries transitioned from frontier missions, to establishing mission stations and building local congregations. They are distinct in their theology and polity.

While, for example, the Anglicans favor the episcopacy model, the Presbyterians, who for the most part came from Scotland, focus rather on their affinity with Calvinism. They share this Calvinistic background with the Dutch Reformed Church. The Baptists and the Congregationalists have their own differences as well, particularly on the question of pedobaptism. Congregationalists baptize infants while Baptists do not. For their part, the Methodists favor lay leadership, local pastors, and have a strong emphasis on pietism.

Despite their differences in theology and polity, mission churches are united by the use of the English language as mode of communication. On this ground alone, other religious faiths such as the Roman Catholicism could be included amongst English-speaking churches, although it did not originate from the English reformation. The irony of English-speaking churches, however, is that that most of their black members speak ethnic African languages in their services. Wittingly or unwittingly, missionaries who

³⁴ Stats South Africa, 2001. <http://www.statssa.gov.za/census01/html/default.asp>.

brought English-speaking churches to South Africa were entangled with the imperial and colonial apparatus of conquest and domination. They perpetuated it in their dealings with race, labor and land issues.

Missionaries honestly believed that they were morally and racially superior to the natives they were trying to convert to Christianity. As Villa Vincencio eloquently puts it “they (missionaries) never doubted the superiority of English cultural values over those of the African people whom they sought to proselytize.”³⁵ Missionaries were of the view that “the social order from which they came from was the Christian one, and on the whole did not think of African culture as anything other than the work of the devil to be rooted up.”³⁶

In the name of race superiority, missionaries dismissed African customs and institutions. They disrupted family structures to the point that the *kraal*, the center of African family life, for example, became the “scene of disagreement, of arguments, of indecision, where authority for patterned behavior was lost.”³⁷ They thought it was imperative to replace African customs, institutions and religion, with a benign and holy religion and civilization coupled with social norms of nineteenth-century Europe that they thought, “crystallized a moral code of universal validity.”³⁸

³⁵ DeGruchy and Villa-Vicencio, *Apartheid is a Heresy*, 54.

³⁶ Cochran, *Servants of Power*, 37.

³⁷ DeGruchy and Villa-Vicencio, *Apartheid is a Heresy*, 54.

³⁸ Ibid.

They saw the gospel and the imperial culture as one and the same, thus they wanted to Europeanize the Africans before even attempting to Christianize them. In this sense, they acted as “carriers of the social, cultural, economic and political forces of the society of which they were part, in this case imperial Britain.”³⁹ Missionaries were simply unable “to distinguish between the message of the gospel and the cultural baggage of imperialism.”⁴⁰ Self-criticism was not part of the agenda. What they did was to:

Transmit the values and structures embodied in British Imperial colonialist expansion without sufficient awareness to distinguish firmly between what was intrinsically worthwhile and what could lead to long-term destructive consequences for precisely those people whom they believe themselves to be championing.⁴¹

Even if they wanted to self-criticize, they were thrust into power struggles with the settlers, their sending-mission board and the colonial power they represented. This is because they were not self-representative. They were agents of their country and of the mission board that sent them. In this sense, it was convenient for them to promulgate the culture from which they were embedded. Cochrane captures this predicament when he wrote,

³⁹ Villa-Vicencio, *Trapped in Apartheid*, 42.

⁴⁰ Cochran, *Servants of Power*, 37.

⁴¹ Ibid., 26.

The matrix of forces which characterized colonial conquest and economic penetration did not represent self-conscious missionary ambitions. Yet these forces did enfold the missions and to them, in the stamp of Victorian self-assuredness, they made their contribution. They did so not because they were scheming, half-witted or malicious, but because they were of their time, of their place, and in an advantaged position in an expanding political economy increasingly characterized by a capitalist hegemony.⁴²

This thrust “had left the English-speaking churches to continue to show a reluctance to engage with Africa in a serious manner, leaving many African Christians ambivalent about their Africanness.”⁴³ The thrust has also created “an aura of whiteness on the missionary churches which still hovers over the English-speaking churches like an albatross.”⁴⁴

Missionaries’ misapprehension of race and moral superiority was also shown in social paternalism and deference to civil authority.⁴⁵ Missionaries were inclined to treat black converts as second class Christians. They believed that they were their guardians and had to provide help and guidance to them. It was their divine call to move their black converts from darkness of heathen culture to the light of Christianity and civilization.

This paternalism was the projection of the stratified society the missionaries came from. Because most of them came from working urban or rural British towns and not from upper social classes, they were subject to treatment of a stratified British society.

⁴² Ibid., 37.

⁴³ Ibid., 56.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

Moreover, they were under tight control from their sending-mission boards on what they could or could not do, sometimes in a condescending way. Subsequently, when they came to South Africa, missionaries perpetuated the same sentiment of paternalism that victimized them. They found in their black converts subjects of domination. It was a master- servant relationship.

In their deference to civil authority, missionaries of English-speaking churches had allegiance to the imperial power and were expected to support its policies in the colonies. In 1857, for example, an Anglican Bishop by the name Henry Cotterill wrote that it was imperative for any Anglican clergy to respect “the rightful authority of the civil government.”⁴⁶ To do otherwise, he contended, was “a dereliction of the duty a Christian owes to the government of his country.”⁴⁷

This same argument was echoed when H. J. Kidd wrote,

Unfortunately wherever the Church went, the State, like Mary’s little lamb, was also bound to go. For the Church of England, as by law established, was subject to the royal supremacy. Where its bounds spread, its bonds spread also, and a Bishop beyond the seas was no less an official and a servant of the Crown in matters ecclesiastical than was a Governor in matters of civil and political.⁴⁸

Moreover, at the turn of the twentieth century, a Methodist minister wrote,

⁴⁶ Goedhals, *From Paternalism to Partnership? The Church of the Province of Southern Africa and Mission*, 107.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

⁴⁸ Cochrane, *Servants of Power*, 12.

The flag has followed the cross. The missionary opened the way, first for the trader, then for the magistrate. Both trader and magistrate should be among the foremost friends of the missionary. Our injunction to the natives, "Fear God," has ever had its complement in the other injunction, "Honor the King."⁴⁹

As a service to the imperial power, the missionaries also wanted to teach, "Africans industrious habits, and create a demand for the British manufacturers."⁵⁰ This predicament, is perhaps, best summed up in the following article published in 1878,

We want to see the natives become workers ... And ... we believe Christianity will be a chief cause of their becoming a working people ... how this ... comes to be is twofold. Christianity creates needs. Generally speaking, every man will work just as much as he is required to do and not more. There will be a constant relation between the time a man works and his necessities ... If you want men to work, then, you must get them to need. Create need and you supply stimulus to work; you enlist the worker's own will on the side of labor. Few men anywhere, and certainly no heathen men, ever work for the mere pleasure of working. Now, the speediest way of creating needs among these people is to Christianize them. As they become Christianized, they will want more clothing, better house, furniture, books, education for the children, and a hundred other things which they can get by working, and only by working. But Christianity also teaches the duty of working, and denounces idleness as a sin. So to Christianize a Kaffir is the shortest way, and the surest, to make him put his hand steadily and willingly to the work that is waiting to be done. This will make it both his interest and his duty to work, will enlist, besides his bodily appetites, his home

⁴⁹ Ibid., 37.

⁵⁰ Cochrane, *Servants of Power*, 44.

affections, his mental powers, and his conscience, on the side of industrious habits.⁵¹

The deference to civil authority under imperial and later under the Union of the Republic of South Africa created a social environment whereby English-speaking churches' clergy were not always free to voice their opposition. Nor could they take action against the government when they trumped on the humanitarians rights of their black members.

With the exception of a few, most missionaries settled on what they deemed comfortable to them. For example, they had come to believe that racial segregation was the natural order of things and an acceptable social practice. To many of their liberal white members, racial segregation was necessary because it prevented blacks from “urban evils of alcohol, prostitution, and unemployment.”⁵² Therefore to preserve them, they contended, blacks needed to live in reserved areas with their own traditions.⁵³

The hierarchy of the Anglican Church perpetuated the same erroneous assumption with a slight twist. The Bishop of George, for example, wanted to “maintain separate and unequal condition for inclusion.”⁵⁴ He was of the opinion that a selective group of blacks that he called “clean, intelligent, well- educated and civilized men” could be fit to be “Junior Partner” on terms set and dictated by the whites.⁵⁵ This is what Cochran calls “a

⁵¹ Villa-Vincencio, *Trapped in Apartheid*, 45.

⁵² Chidester, *Religions in South Africa*, 94.

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

policy of Trusteeship” – a gradual inclusion of suitable ‘mature’ blacks into the ‘responsibilities and privileges of adulthood.’⁵⁶

The policy of Trusteeship permeated all spheres of the South African stratified society. English-speaking churches were caught up in it and struggled to preserve the interest of the whites, the social order of segregation they inherited while trying to foster genuine relationships with their black converts. This dualism, at times, made it difficult for them to side with their black members even on issues of human rights. The end result was that they became ambiguous when it came to race issues and were absorbed “into the established order of white South Africa, offering little more than token protest against the violations of their most fundamental values.”⁵⁷

For example, they “supported the racially discriminatory constitution of the Union of South Africa, despite opposition from African leaders who were members of their churches.”⁵⁸ They adopted a paternalistic stance on what was known as “native questions” such as separate residential areas for blacks.⁵⁹ They aligned themselves with the South African government and “were unwilling to act in concert with their African memberships in the struggle for equality and justice.”⁶⁰

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Villa-Vicencio, *Trapped In Apartheid*, 46.

⁵⁸ DeGruchy, “Grappling with Colonial Heritage: The English-speaking Churches Under Imperial and Apartheid,” 156.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ Ibid., 157.

The ambiguity of the English-speaking churches on race issues brings the charge that they “were directly involved in supporting the creation and control of a black workforce to serve capital interest in the Union of South Africa.”⁶¹ They might have protested the harsh working conditions of black workers, but often times they were “aligned with capital interests in creating and controlling a stable supply of labor.”⁶²

A poignant example came in the aftermath of the birth of the Union of South Africa, with the enactment of the Native Land Act of 1913. Knowing full well, that blacks would be reduced to migrant worker status without any prospect of social mobility, English -speaking churches had an ambiguous response that neither condemned nor endorsed the Act. This attitude was a precursor to several other Acts that would come into force when the Apartheid regime came into power.

The view was that blacks should not be “assimilated into white society, yet should develop industrial skills that would make them useful to white controlled economic interests.”⁶³ In the view of one Anglican Bishop “it may be God’s will that most of them (blacks) should always remain laborers, herd men, domestic servants, and the like, and that only a few should come to the front.”⁶⁴

The same view was also expressed in a Methodist periodical when it declared, “the relations between white and black could only be based on the combination of white

⁶¹ Chidester, *Religions in South Africa*, 88.

⁶² Ibid., 75.

⁶³ Ibid., 93.

⁶⁴ Cochran, *Servants of Power*, 152.

man's brain and organizing power, and black men's hands and sweat."⁶⁵ Christian leaders, argues Chidester," tended to concentrate on promoting a spiritual life among black workers that would adapt them to their subservient position in the South African class system."⁶⁶

Many examples in the mining industry demonstrate the complicity of mission churches to promote capital production at the expense of improved working conditions in the mines. In 1913, for example, Rev J.J Riston observed during an inspection of a mine that mine-workers were "heathen who are like oxen pulling at a yoke, and duly fed in return for content."⁶⁷ To him, mine-workers were "raw materials the Church should concentrate its forces."⁶⁸ Moreover, in the editorial of the Methodist Churchman, it read:

The Native is, we firmly believe, one of the best assets this country possesses. We need him to assist us to develop its vast resources, and he will help us, if we allow him, to make it a country in which an ever-increasing number of Europeans will live in comfort.⁶⁹

The church went as far as encouraging black workers not to voice their rights but to act as good obedient Christians by accepting their miserable conditions. In 1920 for example, "while the Dutch Reformed Church was forging an alliance with white workers,

⁶⁵ Ibid., 139.

⁶⁶ Chidester, *Religions in South Africa*, 96.

⁶⁷ Cochran, *Servants of Power*, 113.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ Ibid., 114.

the English-speaking churches were instructing black workers to be obedient, disciplined and loyal.

This gospel of class system was echoed in the political spheres whereby what counted was to maintain the superiority of whites as *baas*.⁷⁰ Strydom, the former prime minister of the Apartheid regime, expressed it in these terms,

Our policy is that the European must stand their ground and must remain baas (master) in South Africa. If we reject the Herrenvolk (master race) idea ... if the franchise is to be extended to non-Europeans, and if the non-Europeans are developed on the same basis as the Europeans, how can the European remain baas? Our view is that in every sphere the European must remain the right to rule the country and to keep it a white man's country.⁷¹

The best way to remain *baas* was then to keep blacks at a lower status and allow them to work only seasonally so that they could not become permanent features in white cities. If they have to be educated and trained, it should be for the reason of meeting the demands of their white masters. In fact, Verwoerd would bluntly say, "there was no place for the Bantu in the European community above the level of certain forms of labor."⁷²

Corollary to labor is the issue of the land. Hewson captures the idea beautifully when he says:

No one understands the complexities of the racial situation in South Africa until he has given due consideration to the significance of land and land hunger, until he has sought to

⁷⁰ Baas is the Afrikaans for master.

⁷¹ Bunting, *The Rise of the South African Reich*, 129.

⁷² Vervoed and Morris, *Apartheid*, 46.

understand the necessity for labor, and attempted to assess the exorbitant cost of what is called 'cheap' labor.⁷³

Desmond Tutu puts it in a different way by saying that “when missionaries came to Africa they had the Bible and we had the land. They said ‘let us pray.’ We closed our eyes. When we opened them we had the Bible and they had the land.”⁷⁴ As humorous as it is, this was the reality on land issue in South Africa. 80% of fertile land that belonged to black South Africans ended up in the hands of 20% of the minority white.

Land expropriation was a tool of power and control. It created cheap labor among the natives and disrupted the power of the chiefs in a way that the control of their subjects became challenging because they were landless and engaged in a capitalistic economy. Villancio summed it up when he wrote, “Dispossessed black people meant a cheap supply of labor for settler farmers; for the colonial powers, it meant the systematic destruction of rival political powers; and for the missionaries it meant the opportunity to incorporate such people into mission stations.”⁷⁵

In addition, colonial powers substituted individual tenure for tribal land tenure. They barred individuals from purchasing land and established missionaries as “dummy purchaser.”⁷⁶ By virtue of what was known as “Crown land”, ‘colonists were assigned the richer and more cultivated portions’ as well as much land still uncultivated and

⁷³ Hewson, “The Historical Background,” 44.

⁷⁴ Gish, Desmond Tutu: A Biography, 101.

⁷⁵ Villa- Vilencio, *Trapped in Apartheid*, 50.

⁷⁶ Cochran, *Servants of Power*, 25.

unoccupied, whereas' for the use of the native population much smaller portion" was reserved.⁷⁷

Wherever missionaries were allocated land, either by the power of the magistrate or by a process of maneuvering local chiefs, those lands became a foreign enclave.⁷⁸ Destitute of their lands, Africans became "foreigners in their own country."⁷⁹ This policy of exclusion would later be ratified by a series of Acts at the turn of the twentieth century and beyond. With the victory of the Afrikaners in the national election in 1948, more Acts of exclusion would be enacted.

African Independent Churches

In 1906, the Christian Express, reporting on the question of African Independent Churches, known at the time as Native church, wrote:

It may be that the Missionary Churches have been slow to recognize that the Native Church is quickly leaving its childhood behind, and is able to take upon itself an increased measure of self-control. It is conscious of new powers and is impatient of dictation. Because the parent has been slow to observe the development which was bound to come, and has not been quick enough to recognize the need of directing these new energies to work on useful and absorbing enterprises, the Native Church has in these separatist movements wrested from the parent's hand what it regards as its rights, and has asserted its ability to manage

⁷⁷ Ibid., 27.

⁷⁸ Saayman, "Christian Mission in South Africa: a Historical Reflection in Churches", 14.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

its own affairs.⁸⁰ (Christian express, 1906, on the question of Native Churches)

In the same year, the Church of Scotland missionary journal wrote,

During the past dozen years, the South African Mission Field has unhappily witnessed a number of secessions of Native Church members. Some of these have been from churches with both European and Native members. Others have been from Churches where the membership was entirely Native; so that these secessions have not been entirely due to racial feeling. Various reasons have been given by the seceders for the course they have followed. Most frequently the alleged cause has been difficulty of working together, a feeling of being curbed, or overshadowed, or otherwise restricted in the exercise of their activities, or a lack of mutual trust and confidence. In some cases these reasons have no doubt been sincerely believed and acted upon. In others they have been a mere pretext, cloaking less worthy motives. The number and extent of these secessions call for earnest consideration, if for no other reason that the danger they constitute to the Native church.⁸¹

Among several reasons that justify the emergence of African Independent Churches (AICs), in South Africa are the misapprehension of race superiority from mission churches toward their black converts and the politics of labor caused blacks to migrate from their native reserves for mining industry work in the urban cities.

The erroneous assumption of race superiority among missionaries and mission churches didn't leave many options for their black converts but to create their own

⁸⁰ Wilson and Perrot, *Outlook on a Century: South Africa, 1870-1970*, 375.

⁸¹ Ibid., 375.

churches. Mission churches treated their black members as inferior. In the words of Tshelane: “the missionary Christian churches and the white government did not regard black people as human beings with adequate mental capacities to make decisions on all issues concerning their lives.”⁸²

Indeed, blacks who were in leadership positions in mission churches, for example, were denied promotion and were considered as “junior partners” without any prospect of climbing the hierarchical ladder. They couldn’t preach as they wished, they couldn’t dance or sing, and couldn’t express themselves, they were always supervised.⁸³

Mission churches were, “slow to ordain African pastors, reluctant to give them full responsibility and admit them as equals.”⁸⁴ This frustration argues Kiernan “spilled over into defection and the formation of African Churches commonly labeled Ethiopian.”⁸⁵

Mokone, a black Methodist convert who was one of the first few to leave a mission churches and start his own, serves as a historical example of this frustration. In a letter sent to his superintendent, he made it clear that he was eager to worship God in his own way, far from the condescending supervision of missionaries and mission churches.⁸⁶

⁸² Tshelane, *International Review of Missions*, 174.

⁸³ Makhubu, *Who are the Independent Churches*, 19.

⁸⁴ Kiernan, “African Independent Churches,” 117.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

⁸⁶ Saunders, *Tile and the Thembu Church: Politics and Independency on the Cape Eastern Frontiers in the Late Nineteenth Century*, 514.

Moreover, in his testimony to the South African Native Affairs Commission, Mokone insisted that their desire to form their own churches was on the grounds that they wanted “to get ahead,” and have access to education, something that mission churches were not ready to offer. The following court transcript makes this point,

Q. Who do you represent?

A. I represent the Ethiopian Catholic Church in Zion

Q. What is that?

A. It is an organization which we have commenced lately since we resigned from the A.M.E Church.

Q. Are you the head of it?

A. Yes.

Q. What were you belonging to before?

A. To the A.M.E Church

Q. And before that?

A. We belonged to the Church of England before we joined the A.M.E Church

Q. Why did you leave that Church and start your own?

A. When we found that we could not get ahead, Makone and myself came together to raise the Church of Ethiopia, and later on we joined the A.M.E Church of America, because we found at the time that it would go better if we joined the American Church, as

they had education and other things better than we had. We considered that it would be better for us to join them, so that they could help us, being coloured people themselves.

Q. What was your object in leaving the A.M.E Church and starting a Church of your own?

A. We left on account of the promises they gave us when we joined them not being kept.

Q. During the six years you were a minister of the American Church, did you receive any grants from America at all?

A. Not one.

Q. Was there any political teaching in the Church during the six years you were a member of it?

A. Not to my knowledge.

Q. Have you in the Church that you have just lately started no white supervision whatever?

A. No.

Q. What is your object in starting a Church independent of the white man and of white control; seeing that your first attempt at that was a failure, what is the reason that you made a second attempt?

A. We have not seen that we have become a failure as yet.

Q. Did you not say you made a mistake by joining the A.M.E Church?

A. In joining the American Church we thought that, as they were our own colour, they would help us up, but we found that helped us down, and they took all the best positions without telling us a word, sending men from America.⁸⁷

Again in a manifesto sent to his colleagues, Mokone pointed out “the discrepancy between Christian missionary teaching and white missionary attitudes towards Africans.”⁸⁸ According to Mokone, all that Africans wanted “was to practice their Christian faith free of any interference from white church leaders who failed to understand the people with whom they worked.”⁸⁹

Mokone and his associates could no longer take the racial discrimination and paternalistic mindset they were subjected to. They wanted to build a true African church, with African values. They adopted the name of “Ethiopian.” “Ethiopia” “represented a promise of black redemption and liberation.”⁹⁰ Although they built an African church with African values, they retained, “the form of organization, mode of worship and the denomination identity of the parent body.”⁹¹

Apart from Mokone’s Ethiopian church, other AICs sprung up, including the Apostolics, the Millenarians, the Nazarites and the Zionists. The Zionists, in particular,

⁸⁷ DeGruchy, *The Church Struggle in South Africa*, 42.

⁸⁸ Ibid, 116.

⁸⁹ Ibid, 117.

⁹⁰ Chidester, *The Church Struggle in South Africa*, 117.

⁹¹ Kiernan, “African Independent Churches,” 116.

emerged in the context of the influx of migration that started from the discovery of gold in 1885.

The discovery of gold in the Witwatersrand created a demand for labor. “Being squeezed off the land and impelled into the system of labor,” argues Kiernan, “black migrant workers didn’t have a choice but to enter a capitalist system that exploited, distorted their social values and disintegrated their family system.”⁹²

The Land Act of 1913, for example, deprived blacks “of basic rights regarding the acquisition of land and the freedom to sell labor through bargaining in the open market, and thus severely limited all opportunities for their economic improvement and independence.”⁹³ In the words of Rev John Dube, president of the South African National Congress,

It is evident that the aim of this law (Land Act) is to compel service by taking away the means of independence and self-improvement. This compulsory service at reduced wages and high rents will not be separation, but an intermingling of the most injurious character of both races.⁹⁴

As they migrated to cities, black laborers were exposed to the exploitative capitalist system. Chidester depicts it in these terms,

It separated workers from wives, children, and families, who remained for the most part confined within one of the so-called homelands that functioned as reservoirs of cheap labor. That

⁹² Ibid.

⁹³ Degruy, *The Church Struggle in South Africa*, 47.

⁹⁴ Ibid., 47.

system was also based on the network of social controls that confined workers on the mines to single-sex hostels or compounds and restricted their movements through pass laws.⁹⁵

Mission churches were accomplices to the creation and implementation of this exploitative system. In the words of Chidester, “they were directly involved in the advancement of commerce and the extraction of African labor and had helped to create and sustain the violent underworld of the mining industry.”⁹⁶

In 1912, for example, the General Missionary Conference thanked De Beers (a mining company) for allowing missionaries in its compound to help create “a ‘morality’ and ‘loyalty’ among the workers.”⁹⁷ Fully knowing what was going on in the mining industry, mission churches—instead of objecting to the social conditions under which miners were subjected—rather saw an opportunity to evangelize them. They taught them to be obedient to their masters and to passively accept their exploitative conditions.

In another example, the missionary Ray Phillips was credited for engineering “the religious worldview of the mines.”⁹⁸ Phillips saw in migrant labor and compounds “blessed institutions through which the Almighty works to bring His will to pass in this great continent.”⁹⁹ Phillips was of the opinion that “the church had to capture the

⁹⁵ Chidester, *Short in the Streets*, 69.

⁹⁶ Ibid., 71.

⁹⁷ Cochran, *Servant of Powers*, 113.

⁹⁸ Phillips, *The Bantu Are Coming*, 31, 58.

⁹⁹ Ibid.

physical and mental life of these young men during six days of the week besides preaching the Gospel to them on the seventh.”¹⁰⁰

To this end, he introduced movies and games. He thought that this was a better way of “moralizing leisure times” of workers. While Phillips’ effort seems noble at face value, it was however, an “effort to make workers more docile in their dehumanization.”¹⁰¹ Chidester submits in these terms,

Black mineworkers were enslaved in the lowest circles of a hell owned and operated by the white-controlled mining industry, with the support of the state and the complicity of the church. Although it was supported by conventional religious resources, I want to suggest that the mining industry also achieved its own religious authority. The mining industry demonstrated its superhuman power by the symbolic, yet also real and systematic, dehumanization of the black workers.¹⁰²

It was under those conditions that many blacks found in AICs, and in particular the Zionists, “a source of spiritual healing to recover a human identity in the midst of dehumanizing economic, social and political environments.”¹⁰³ Moreover, in AICs, black laborers found an expression of cultural resistance that challenged their deprived conditions and gave them hope in a disarticulated world of racial segregation.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., 139.

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

¹⁰² Chidester, *Shorts in the Streets*, 73.

¹⁰³ Chidester, *Religions of South Africa*, 113.

AIC is currently the single largest Christian group in South Africa. The 1996 and 2001 census indicates that it makes up to 32.6% of all South African Christians and 38% of all black South Africans.

Table 1: African Initiated Churches in 1996 and 2001¹⁰⁴

<i>Church</i>	<i>Affiliates</i>	<i>% of Total Population</i>	<i>of All Christians</i>
ZCC	3,854,898 (4,971,931)	9.5 (11.09)	12.8 (13.91)
Other Zionist	2,136,728 (1,887,147)	5.3 (4.21)	7.1 (5.28)
Engenas ZCC	12,905		
Nazarethan	454,765 (248,825)	1.1 (0.56)	1.5 (0.70)
Other Nazarite	22,525	0.1	0.1
Other Apostolic	3,077,789 (5,627,320)	7.6 (12.56)	10.2 (12.56)
St. John Apostolic	217,601	0.5	0.7
Other African Apostolic	12,702		
Ethiopian	474,258 (1,150,102)	1.2 (2.57)	1.6 (2.57)
Ethnic	35,529	0.1	0.1
Other AIC	229,037 (656,644)	0.6 (1.47)	0.8 (1.84)
Other Baptist	139,777	0.3	0.5
Total AICs	10,668,515 (14,541,969)	26.3 (32.45)	35.3 (36.84)
Total South African Christians	30,058,742 (35,750,641)		74.1 (79.77)
Total South African Population	40,583,639 (44,819,774)	100	

¹⁰⁴ Source: Stats South Africa, 2001.

Afrikaans Speaking Churches.

This section surveys the history of the Afrikaans churches. Among Afrikaans speaking Churches, the Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk (NGK), also known as the Dutch Reformed Church (DRC) is the largest. Others are the Nederduitsch Hervormde Kerk (NHK) and the Gereformeerde Kerk (GK). Afrikaans speaking Churches have strong historical ties with the Reformed Church in Netherlands that dated back in the seventeen hundreds.

In 1652, for example, the Dutch East Indian Company also known as VOC, a government company of the Netherlands, established a refreshment station in the Cape for its ships traveling east from Europe. The station was designed to be a temporary stop to pick up fresh supplies, but by 1657, the company allowed some of its former employees to settle and farm.¹⁰⁵ Dutch Reformed ministers were both agents of the company and of the states in the Netherlands, and as such provided pastoral care to the settlers.

As the colony of settlers grew and expanded in the Cape, they built local DRC congregations and kept both political and theological ties to the Netherlands. This, however, changed with British occupation in the Cape. When the British took over the territory, the Cape DRC cut its political ties with the Netherlands and organized itself as an independent synod. “It was undesirable and impractical for the established church to be controlled from an enemy country,” contends DeGruchy.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁵ Chidester, *Religions of South Africa*, 77.

¹⁰⁶ De Gruchy, *Church Struggle in South Africa*, 3.

To the Dutch farmers and cattle herders, known as Voortrekkers, the British control gave them no option but to leave the territory. One of their contentions was that the British freed slaves were given the same rights as them and were considered as Christians to the same level as they were.

Anna Steenkamp, the niece of the Voortrekker leader Piet Retief, wrote,

As their (slaves) being put on an equal footing with Christians, contrary to the laws of God and the natural distinction of race and religion, so that it was intolerable for any decent Christian to bow down beneath such a yoke; wherefore we rather withdrew in order thus to preserve our doctrines of purity.¹⁰⁷

To this contention one needs, perhaps, to add the economic ramification as related to land and labor, contends Degruchy.¹⁰⁸ Degruchy asserts,

Was Anna Steenkamp only worried about the freedom of the slaves because this placed them on an equal footing with white Christians? Was she, and was the embryonic Trekker community, not equally concerned about the economic ramifications of such liberation?¹⁰⁹

It is arguable that when the British freed the slaves and placed them on equal footing to the settlers, the Voortrekkers were deprived of man power that they relied on to work the land and wanted to be on their own and escape the British dominion rule.

¹⁰⁷ Chidester, *Religions of South Africa*, 79.

¹⁰⁸ De Gruchy, *Church Struggle in South Africa*, 19.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

They started a trek that led them to the interior of the country. The Trek headed north to the Transvaal and Orange Free State. None of the DRC ministers were allowed to travel with them on this journey. They were, however, “laid by devout laymen, and sometimes ministered to by preachers of other traditions.”¹¹⁰ This journey to the interior would have a theological meaning to the Voortrekkers in their quest of an imagined community, a nationalist sentiment and identity. It was a journey that reminded them of the one that people of Israel took when they left Egypt en route to the Promised Land.

As they immigrated to the interior and settled in, they founded two other different Dutch Reformed Churches (DRCs): the Nederduitsch Hervormde Kerk (NHK), was founded in 1853 by Andries Pretorius; and the tiny Gereformeerde Kerk (GK), also known as “Doppers,” was founded in 1859 with the help of a renegade and former Dutch Church minister, Dirk Postma.

Theologically, the DRC, the NHK and the GK aligned with a neo-Calvinistic approach. The DRC, for example, were much influenced by the Calvinistic revival theology of the Netherlands. Its ministers embraced the motto of Groen van Prinsterer’s neo-Calvinistic approach that I discuss in chapter three.

Conclusion

In their endeavor to propagate the good news of the gospel, missionaries were entangled between religion and politics, which is between their church’s mission and the imperial power they represented. This prompted Villa-Vincencio to question whether they were imperialist conquerors or servants of God. Missionaries, beholden to both

¹¹⁰ Chidester, *Religions in South Africa*, 80.

earthly and heavenly powers, often struggled with the competing demands of imperial Britain and the gospel. On the one hand, they needed to propagate the moral superiority of the British Empire, but on the other hand, they often felt compelled, though not necessarily to the point of action, to support the rights of native Africans.

Sometimes, they handled this with sensitivity by defending the rights of the natives. But by and large, they propagated a false assumption that their race was superior and so treated natives as inferior heathens. This assumption permeated the English-speaking churches and the Dutch Reformed Churches. Through their dissension, African Initiated Churches emerged.

Although racial segregation was considered normative to many whites of the English-speaking churches, the DRC sank to an even more repressive level by re-inventing a system that was already in place thereby granting it divine sanction. Apartheid was and became the law of the land for about 50 years, from 1948 until its dismantlement in 1994.

CHAPTER III:

INTERSECTION OF RELIGION AND POLITICS: THE DUTCH REFORMED CHURCH, THE AFRIKANER NATIONALISM AND THE MANUFACTURING OF THE MYTH OF APARTHEID

Introduction

This chapter elucidates the role of the Dutch Reformed Church (DRC), in manufacturing and legitimizing the myth of Apartheid. Myth is understood in its social science usage, as common narrative upon which one's own lived experiences are grounded. The chapter contends that the DRC theologized the biblical narrative of apartheid and legitimized the Afrikaners' political and social institutions. They did this from a narrow interpretation of neo-Calvinistic tenets, and from a hermeneutic flaw of selected biblical texts. The end goal was to construct an imagined community (Volkstaat) and a nationalistic sentiment and enforce the policy of separate development or Apartheid.

The Dutch Reformed Church and the Afrikaner

Nationalism

Throughout South African history, several groups including the native Hottentots and Khoisan, the Bantu Africans, the Dutch travelers, the British colonialists and the Afrikaners, have constructed an imagined community / horizontal comradeship on a myth of a divine mandate. They viewed themselves either as a conveyor of modern civilization,

or simply as a resistor to this intruding enterprise. The Dutch, British and Afrikaners were the former. The Hottentots, Khoisan and Africans were the later.¹

It is not surprising then that religion became, the most powerful influence shaping values, norms, and institutions of the Afrikaners. The Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk (NGK), or DRC, for example, that was established in 1652, came to represent the incarnation of social, political, and economic identity of the Afrikaners and the most respected institution that was regarded with reverence and trepidation.²

In 1910, John Merriman, the 11th prime minister of the Cape Colony, after attending a DRC Sunday morning service wrote,

I am more sure than ever that in their democratic church lies the salt of the Afrikaner character. Many things they lack—imagination, education, energy—but faith they certainly have and that keeps them strong and sound.³

In another example, in 1915, D.F. Malan calling on the Afrikaners to unite against potential schism in the church, asserted that it was the duty of the church,

‘to be national in character and to watch over our particular national interests, to teach the people to see in their history and origin the hand of God, and further more to cultivate among the Afrikaner people the awareness of a national calling and destiny,

¹Willy Mafuta, “Religion and Development in South Africa,” (Th.D. diss., University of South Africa, 2010), 68.

² Gilomee, *The Afrikaners*, 384.

³ Scholtz, “Die ontwikkeling van die politieke denke van die Afrikaner,” 282-83.

in which the spiritual, moral and material progress and strength of a people is laid up.⁴

Malan, in an effort to unite the Afrikaner community against the colonists, also said that the church was the means by which God guided and forged the Afrikaners, and their church was the guarantee of their nationality.⁵

Historically, the bond between the DRC and the Afrikaners was reinforced by the threat of the African people and the British who constantly waged wars against them. For example, in 1838, the church rallied support to the Afrikaners as they fought the Zulus in the Battle of the Blood River.

In 1880, after the Anglo-Boer war, the DRC clergy rallied the Afrikaner communities against the British threat of Anglicization. It was also the church that was in charge of reconstructing the Afrikaner communities and rebuilding their shattered morale after the war was lost. The same year, it was again the Church that was at the forefront of the fight to secure the recognition of Afrikaner language rights in the Cape.

The constant threats from the Africans and the British created a horizontal comradeship that prompted a nationalist sentiment among the Afrikaners. Schalk Pienaar, in one of his essays, illustrates this notion. He wrote:

History so decided that of all countries in Africa and Asia colonized from Europe there was to be one and one only that cradled a new nation with a new language and a distinct culture, allied to but at the same time different from its countries of origin. A little nation, it is true, but with as great a right as any

⁴ De Kerkbode, 11 February 1915. –

⁵ Ons Land, *Kerk* 6 July 1915. –

other on God's earth to its place in the sun, as fiercely determined as any other in the last resort to fight for its existence with every weapon at its disposal.

It also so happened that this new nation was molded in the mills of a struggle for survival that has lasted for three centuries. It was but yesterday that the Afrikaners wrested from British imperial occupation the right to be a nation, to be independent in partnership with their countrymen of British stock. And today, with this battle that is all of Afrikaner history hardly fought, the demand comes that they submit to a new imperialism, not this time to the weapons of Europe, but to the numbers of Africa.

The answer, not unnaturally, is no.

Unlike the English in India and the Dutch in Indonesia, the Afrikaner has nowhere else to go. For him there is no Britain and no Holland to return to; for him no central shrine of national existence to survive the death of the outpost. On the soil of Africa he, and with him his history, culture and language, stay or perish.

Individual English and Dutch chose to stay behind in India and Indonesia on Indian and Indonesian terms. That in no way affected the continued existence of a British and Dutch nation to maintain them as Englishmen and Dutch on foreign soil. But if the Afrikaners are to stay—and where can they go? —On Bantu terms, they cease to exist as a nation. They will be absorbed into something that, whatever it will be, will not be an Afrikaner nation. Three hundred years of history, a century and a half of national endeavor in face of fearful odds, a fleeting moment of victory, would have been wiped out as though it never existed.⁶

⁶ Pienaar, "Safeguarding the Nations of South Africa," 3-4

Thus, the Afrikaners constructed an imagined community with the DRC's sacralized power to legitimate myths, symbols and rituals that embodied their so-called unique character as a God's chosen people. To propagate those myths, the Afrikaners simultaneously created the written language in which those myths were enshrined.⁷ Afrikaans as a language, in this sense, had come to represent a hallmark of Afrikaner imagined community and nationalism.⁸

Referring to the myths construction of the Afrikaners, Hexham contends that they comprised a remembrance of a golden age destroyed by the British, and a hope for a future society that was free from the British rule and where Afrikaners' values prevail, and the people restored to their former glory.⁹

The hope for the future was also constructed through myths manufactured in literature and particularly poetry. Among the Afrikaners poets, du Toit, also known under the pen name of Totuis, is perhaps, the most well-known. Totuis created myths that interpreted the sufferings and trials of the Afrikaners and their hope for the future. He saw in them not as a "historical accident," but God's providence in the affirmation of their calling as a God's chosen people.¹⁰

In his poem *By Die Monument* (At The Monument), for example, that was published in 1908 to fund the proposed monument of the Afrikaners who died in the

⁷ Hexham, *The Irony of Apartheid*, 33.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ibid., 31.

¹⁰ S.Du Toit, *Versamelde Werke van J.D du Toit*, 83.

British concentration camps, Totuis described the sufferings and the hope of the Afrikaners from the perspectives of *Die Kind* (The Child), *Die Vrou* (The Mother,) and the *Die Man* (The Man).

From the perspective the child, for example, Totuis wrote,

Her child slept with this sweet thought:

When I awake help will arrive from the Lord

The Mother received with eager hand

Her rations at last—but the child was dead.¹¹

This excerpt reflects both the despair and hope of the Afrikaners at the time where both children and parents were taken away from home to concentration camps by the British.

In *Die Vrou* (The Mother), Totuis emphasizes the continuous agony of the mother, giving her reactions to the tragedy of the internment. *Die Vrou* tells, as well, the story of a young thorn tree growing beside a road. A large wagon runs over it, bending it without destroying it. Being damaged but not destroyed, the tree started to grow again. As the tree heals and grows, the scar caused by the wagon remains.¹²

Hexham thinks that the message in this section is a metaphor of both the Afrikaners and the British. The wagon being the latter and the thorn tree being the

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Ibid.

former.¹³ It is also a message of forgiving and forgetting, argues Hexham.¹⁴ After what the Afrikaners have gone through under the British, they are called to forgive but not to forget. To forget, will only negate their divine calling as God's chosen people.

In *Die Man*, Totuis reflects the returning of a father to his ruined farm to find his family dead. He wrote,

The Kraal wall is rebuilt
the old hand helps again
but oh! the pain within
the grief old, yet ever new.
“My shepherd,” he sighed, “has returned,
My cattle also;
only my wife and child stay away,
and they will come no more.”¹⁵

By illustrating the torture of the Afrikaners in the concentration camps, Totuis aimed to mobilize his people and construct an imagined community with the bond of common heritage and suffering under the British Empire. This mobilization motif fostered a nationalist sentiment that rallied the Afrikaners under one banner.

In 1909, Totuis published another poem titled *Potgieter's Trek*. *Potgieter's Trek* is an epic monument to the Voortrekkers. Potgieter was a pioneer trekker who came to represent—in the eyes of the Afrikaners—the image of a leader with strong religious convictions. In fact the Potgieter's Trek was seen as a religious pilgrimage for freedom from the oppressive British rule.¹⁶ *Potgieter's Trek* translates the resilience of the

¹³ Hexham, *The Irony of Apartheid*, 35.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Du Toit, *Versamelde Werke van J.D du Toit*, Vol III, 183

¹⁶ Hexham, *The Irony of Apartheid*, 36.

Afrikaners, their faith in God and in the future, and their ability to endure hardship and persevere.

In *Potgieter's Trek*, the common theme of suffering and hardship as a distinctive character of the Afrikaners imagined community is once again emphasized. The poem begins with a historic backdrop of the Afrikaners,

Darkest Africa! Centuries old,
a wild world! I see your gloomy picture,
your endlessly vast savage coasts;
surrounded by storms; seething; inhospitable

But wait! Who comes? Spreading light?
on your southern borders: Light is moving! Commanding-
the trekker with his rifle, his wagon and Book,
in your interior he seeks his freedom¹⁷

In the Afrikaner myth manufacturing, these lines suggest a typology with the biblical figure, Abraham. As he was called, in the book of Genesis chapter 2 verses 1-2, to leave his country of Ur to journey to an unknown land, so too was Potgieter called to leave the secured western coast to the interior of the country.

The poem also suggests that Afrikaners were the precursors to a dark and uncivilized world. It portrays the Afrikaners as the people of Israel, chosen to lead the rest of the pagan world to civilization and faith. The following lines assert this:

But see! The world becomes wilder;
the fierce vermin worsen,
stark naked black hordes,
following tyrants.
How the handful of trekkers suffer,
the freedom seekers, creators of a people.
Just like another Israel,

¹⁷ Du Toit, *Versamelde Werke van J.D du Toit*, Vol III ,187.

by enemies surrounded, lost in the veld,
But for another Canaan elected,
led forward by God's plan.¹⁸

The reenactment of the Trek was a meaningful ritual that mobilized the Afrikaner nationalist sentiment and provided a religious legitimation to their cause. In 1938, for example, there was reenactment of the Trek departing from Jan van Riebeeck statue in Cape Town all the way to Pretoria. Chidester, in the following narrative, describes how this trek was received as it proceeded on its journey,

Popular enthusiasm for the ox-wagons was so great, however that eventually nine wagons were outfitted to trek around the country, visiting nearly 500 locations thorough South Africa. Dressing up as Voortrekkers, Afrikaners welcomed the wagons with great enthusiasm. The wagons were regarded with a kind of religious fervor as Afrikaner sacred symbols. People flocked to touch them, to obtain grease form their wheels, and even in some cases to baptize babies and perform marriages next to one of the ceremonial Voortrekker ox-wagons. Wherever the wagon stopped was declared holy ground. Local organization in towns and villages sprang up to organize festivities when the wagons arrived. When the wagons reached their destinations—at Monument Hill in Pretoria and Blood River in Natal—they were welcomed by torch processions, camp meetings, and an intensely religious enthusiasm.¹⁹

The third and last of Totuis' poem is *Ragel* (Rachel). *Ragel* tells the story of a mother who is not ashamed or frightened by her destiny, who is always ready to offer

¹⁸ Ibid., 199.

¹⁹ Chidester, *Religions in South Africa*, 195

herself and her children for their people and Fatherland.²⁰ It is a story of Afrikaner women who forcefully resisted the brutal tactics of the British Empire to starve the Afrikaner people to death by cutting off the food supply and sending them to concentration camps. As in previous poems where the incarnation of a biblical figure embodied the poem, in *Ragel*, Totuis explicitly sees a parallel between the biblical Rachel and the Afrikaner women. Totuis wrote,

Thus I think, Rachel,
of your lot and will
recall your suffering,
your greatest grief,
cruelly taken by surprise,
as long as the world remains.

Thus I think of
the Rachels of my land
who without home or house
were cruelly surprised—burnt
out of their homes,
pushed out into the veld.²¹

The myth of the *Ragel* is manufactured in light of ever present forces of chaos incarnate in the British and the Africans.²² Due to this ever present chaos, the myth of the story of Ragel becomes an appropriation of the Afrikaner women's story. It becomes a story that comforts them and brings them hope to look into the future. Furthermore, it becomes a story of a suffering servant. Like Israel suffered for the sake of salvation of the

²⁰ Hexham, *The Irony of Apartheid*, 39.

²¹ Du Toit, *Versamelde Werke van J.D du Toit*, Vol III 240.

²² Hexham, *The Irony of Apartheid*, 40.

whole, so too did the Afrikaners. The following lines expressed better this suffering servant predicament,

A voice is heard in Rama
wailing and loud lamentation,
Rachel, the mother of Israel, over
her children—they are no more
So groaned Rachel's ghost

but see, today Rachels
living Rachels, who weep
at the endless children's graves.

A voice is heard all over,
weeping and wailing bitterly;
Rachel, suffering Mother, weeps over
her children—they are no more.²³

Far more than moving works of art, Totuis poems, *By Die Monument*, *Potgieter's Trek* and *Ragel*, were myths constructed to foster an imagined community and to build a nationalist sentiment. Afrikaners saw themselves with a divine call and thus could not tolerate any elements of chaos to detour them from it. The British Empire and the Africans were such elements of chaos and had to be kept at bay because they were poised to destroy the social order. To maintain this social order and keep both the British and the Africans at bay, Totuis manufactured a prophet figure projection (Abraham (the biblical typology); an imagined community (Afrikanerdom, Volkstad, and Broederbond) and a suffering servant type (Rachel- *Ragel*-Israel) in his mythology.

As Hexham, put it, Totuis' poetry represents "the psalm to national deliverance, an interpretation of history that makes the past bearable and subsequently the irrational

²³ Du Toit, *Versamelde Werke van J.D du Toit*, Vol III ,268.

pattern of the past events fits into a divine scheme which removes their arbitrary appearance and eternally legitimates them.²⁴

Apart from myths manufactured in poetry, the construction of the imagined community and the Afrikaners nationalist sentiment was also drawn upon myths grounded on the DRC distortion of the neo-Calvinistic doctrine of the sovereignty of God and double predestination.²⁵ Historically, the DRC neo-Calvinist connection could be traced back to the theologian and statesman, Abraham Kuyper.

Kuyper and the neo-Calvinist Sphere Theology

Kuyper's neo-Calvinist stand was influenced by Groen Van Prinsterer, who founded the Separated Christian Reformed Church in Holland as a result of the schism that occurred in the Calvinist Church in 1834. Van Prinsterer was determined to wage war against the Calvinist revival in Holland that was embracing a liberal view. In this liberalism, he saw a threat to Calvinism's principles that, he thought, would lead to atheism and revolution.²⁶ Under the banner, "In isolation is our strength", van Prinsterer waged a war to promote his brand of Calvinism to stop the spread of liberalism.

Prinsterer died without fully implementing his vision. It was then Kuyper who, being strongly influenced by van Prinsterer's Calvinistic ideology turned it to an all embracing philosophy and lifestyle.²⁷ Kuyper contended that God created the cosmos as

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk (NGK) this is the Afrikaans for the Dutch Reformed Church.

²⁶ De Gruchy, *The Church Struggle in South Africa*, 6.

²⁷ Ibid.,

a multitude of circles of life, each circle characterized by its own nature and tasks, free and independent of each other.²⁸

In this sense, education, art, economics, and family life are spheres through which God operates directly. This has come to be known as the theology of “sphere sovereignty.” Kuyper saw God’s common grace operating in various dimensions of life, to the point of constituting the ground for a Christian nationalism.

With this philosophy in mind, Kuyper would go on to found the Free University of Amsterdam where eventually many South African Dutch Reformed theologians and future statesmen including D.F. Malan would be trained. D.F. Malan studied in the Netherlands at the time that Kuyper’s neo-Calvinistic “sphere theology”, was at its greatest influence. After his studies, he returned to South Africa with the conviction that the Afrikaners had to organize themselves separately in all walks of life.

Malan adopted the Dutch neo-Calvinists stand, “in isolation is our strength “to foster an Afrikaner “imagined community” with a separate cultural, religious and political institution. He believed that God had ordained Afrikaners to be of a separate nation.²⁹

Many critics think that Malan got it wrong. He misinterpreted Prinsloo’s ideology which only aimed the unity and strength in isolation in the context of neo-Calvinist in Amsterdam. Malan would, however, stretch it to apply it to the Afrikaners.³⁰

²⁸ Schutte, “The Netherlands: Cradle of Apartheid?” 25.

²⁹ Moodie, *The Rise of Afrikanerdom*, 70.

³⁰ Pauw, *Anti-Apartheid Theology in the Dutch Reformed Church*, 107.

Malan saw in Prinsterer's ideology a divine inspiration and a call to construct an Afrikaner imagined community or volksstaat. Malan's ideas would find a fertile ground in South Africa.

Few historical factors made it possible. One is the influence of racial prejudice and racism that was prevailing in the church and the other is the importation of romantic notions of nation and purity.³¹ As I have discussed in chapter two, there was already a climate of racial prejudice in the South Africa stratified society in the eighteenth and nineteenth century and that continued in mid-twentieth century. The church was caught up in it. In 1857, for example, the DRC synod proclaimed a resolution to separate worship based on racial categorizations. It was a decision that affected the polity of the DRC and its evangelical mission policy.

The resolution read,

The Synod considers it desirable and according to the Holy Scripture that our heathen members be accepted and initiated into our congregations wherever it is possible; but where this measure, as a result of weakness of some, would stand in the way of promoting the work of Christ among the heathen people, then congregations set up among the heathen, or still to be set up, should enjoy their Christian privileges in a separate building.³²

This resolution led to the creation of separate Dutch Reformed Churches for the Indians and blacks. Racial segregation became the norm with a divine mandate.

³¹ Kinghorn, "Die NG Kerk en Apartheid," 86.

³² De Gruchy, "Settler Christianity," in *Living Faiths in South Africa*, 32.

In 1935, the DRC mission board was of the belief that “every nation was to achieve as high a social status as it can possibly achieve.”³³ To this aim, argues Louw, the church “opposed disregarding of racial and colour differences between white and black in the daily course and encouraged and promoted social differentiation and spiritual or cultural segregation to the advantage of both sections.”³⁴

Apart the influence of racial categorizations, many Afrikaner leaders who studied in Germany came home in early 30’s with the notion of neo-Fichtean romantic nationalism. Fichte’s transcendental idealism, from which the Nazism found its ground, promoted the purity of the German nation and the “organic unity of language, culture and political self-determination.” This idea permeated the Afrikaners circle for a while and was only toned down after the defeat of Germany in Second World War.

With the notion of nation purity, the Afrikaners believed that the ethnic purity of a nation had a metaphysical basis that justified racial differentiation and segregation.³⁵ The DRC would become entangled with this ideal and would later provide theological basis to promote it, thus fostering the construction of a national sentiment and an imagined community (Volkstaat). The task was to find a biblical justification. In this regard, Louw contends, “the race question (*rassevraagstuk*) became central in much theological and church debate.” He asserted,

³³ Louw, *The Rise, Fall and Legacy of Apartheid*, 107.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Ibid., 110.

The argument was that God had created humanity so that it would be made up of different nations with strict boundaries between them. To the Afrikaners, it was God's will that nations could best bring glory to the Creator when the divisions between them were honored, or that racial mixing would lower the standards of the both the nations involved and thus be in conflict with God's plan.³⁶

Afrikaners 'academics, politicians and theologians would build upon this ideology to promote the politics of separateness. In their endeavor, they saw the Afrikaners as the chosen people with a divine mandate to exist separately. In 1942, for example, Gerhardus Eloff, one of the Afrikaners nationalists and a member of the Broederbond, a secret society of elites Afrikaners, declared,

The preservation of the pure race of the Boerevolk must be protected at all costs in all possible ways as a holy pledge entrusted to us by our ancestors as part of God's plan with our people. Any movement, school, or individual who sins against this must be dealt with as a racial criminal by the effective authorities.³⁷

In 1944, the same nationalist sentiment was echoed, when J.C. van Rooy, the Chairman of the Afrikaner Broederbond, wrote,

In every People in the world is embodied a Divine idea and the task of each people is to build upon the idea and to perfect it. So God created the Afrikaner people with a unique language, a unique philosophy of life, and their own history and tradition in order that they might fulfill a particular calling and destiny here

³⁶ Ibid., 111.

³⁷ Ibid, 197.

in the southern corner of Africa. We must stand guard on all that is peculiar to us and build upon it. We must believe that God has called us to be servants of his righteousness in this place. We must walk the way of obedience to faith.³⁸

Van Rooy wanted the Afrikaners to distinguish themselves from the other peoples in South Africa, and to pursue their so called “divine mission” to bring civilization to the native Africans by a mechanism of power, control, and separate development known as Apartheid.

From their part, DRC theologians, through synods, councils, and commissions, came out with biblical justifications. In 1947, for example, Prof E. P. Groenewald, a New Testament scholar, and a professor at the Afrikaans University of Potchefstroom, developed the following teachings from his interpretation of the scriptures:

1. Scriptures teaches the unity of mankind
2. The history of the tower of Babel (Gen 11) teaches us, however, that when people came together to “preserve the unity of mankind” it was God himself who, according to his sovereign will, created the “separateness” of people, establishing not only “separate peoples” (nations), but also separate geographical area and boundaries for each.
3. The event in Babel is underlined by Pentecost (Acts 2) and also in Acts 4:17.
4. In a separate paragraph entitled “It is God’s will that separate peoples should remain their separateness,”
5. If a nation guards its separateness (and therefore its purity of blood), it will enjoy the blessings of God.
6. Galatians 4 teaches us that the strong (the whites) have a responsibility to the weak (the blacks). In order to organize this relationship properly, two things are necessary. One is “responsibility in love” of white toward black; the other is the exercise of authority and piety. In other words, whites have the duty to exercise their love toward blacks—that is authority, because blacks are the subjugated people. Blacks, in turn, should honor and respect whites for doing

³⁸ Moodie, *The Rise of Afrikanerdom: Power, Apartheid, and the Afrikaner Civil Religion*, 110.

that—that is piety. “It may be expected,” the immature people shall subject itself willingly to the authority placed over it.³⁹

In the same year, the Federale Sendingraad (Federal Missions Council) of the DRC declared,

DRC policy amounts to the recognition of the existence of races and nations as separate units foreordained by God. This is not the work of human beings. Accordingly the DRC considers it imperative that these creations be recognized for the sake of their natural development through which they could fulfill themselves in their own language, culture and community. Although God created all nations out of one blood He gave each nation a feeling of nationhood and a national soul which had to be recognized by everyone.⁴⁰

The same commission would later argue that the best way in which whites and non- whites could co-exist was by way of a system of Apartheid in which each group developed separately and in its own sphere.⁴¹

In the General Synod of 1974, the DRC adopted the document on *Human Relations and the South Africa Scene in the Light of Scripture*, which came up with a sophisticated approach to justify Apartheid. It was no longer on traditional policies or on what scholars, or clergy said. It was not based on the biblical narrative of the curse of Ham, nor did the DRC transpose the “people of God” motif from Israel unto the

³⁹ Cronje, Regberdige, *Just Racial Apartheid*, 165.

⁴⁰ NGK: Federale Sendingraad-notules, 137.

⁴¹ Giliomee and Schemmer, *From Apartheid to Nation-Building*, 31.

Afrikaner volk. Instead, the DRC turned to the creation narratives and the proto-history of Genesis 1-11.⁴²

The synod saw in this text the ground to ethnic diversity as a will of God. The Synod contends that although the Scriptures upheld the essential unity of mankind and the primordial relatedness and fundamental equality of all peoples, yet ethnic diversity is in its very origin in accordance with the will of God for the dispensation.”⁴³

Because it was the Church’s prerogative to ensure that diversity persists, the conference warned against “the modern tendency to erase all distinctions among peoples.”⁴⁴

One could ask how is it possible that the Afrikaners sincerely believed that it was biblically justifiable to exclude the other based on racial typifications. How could, for example, Professor Groenewald, come up with a fallacious interpretation of racial separateness in the Bible and that was embraced in the DRC pews? White Afrikaners were certainly aware of the hardship that Apartheid created among blacks. They were aware of the dehumanization of the blacks. Yet they accepted and promoted separateness in the name of fallacious assumptions.

J. C. Pauw, in *Anti-Apartheid Theology in the Dutch Reformed Church*, argues that the Dutch Reformed Church was caught up in the strivings of the Afrikaner people and identified closely with the ruling Nationalist party during the era of apartheid.⁴⁵ It

⁴² De Gruchy, *The Church Struggle in South Africa*, 69.

⁴³ Ibid., 70.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Pauw, *Anti-Apartheid Theology in the Dutch Reformed Church*, 106.

came to represent, he contends, the religious and spiritual counterpart to the ideology of apartheid by providing an attempted Biblical justification for the segregation of races.⁴⁶

DRC members came to sincerely believe that separateness was a divine order and it was their mandate to propagate it. That is the reasons why writings of people such professor E. P. Groenewald found a fertile ground.

The National Party and the Manufacturing of Apartheid

The National Party was established in 1914, four years after the birth of the union of South Africa. It was a political party that was intertwined with religious affirmations of the DRC for the purpose of the Afrikaner nationalism. In 1915, after the revolt of the Afrikaner generals against the pro-British government of the Union of South Africa, D.F. Malan, a DRC clergyman and statesman, drafted a statement that aligned the church with the Afrikaners' resistance to British nationalism. The statement declared:

The church has a special calling with regard to the Afrikaner people. The church sees it as its duty to be nationalistic, to guard the specific national interest, and to teach the people to see the hand of God in its own history and to keep alive an awareness of its national calling and purpose.⁴⁷

It was after this revolt that the DRC, with the influence of the Broederbond, a secret society of Afrikaner intellectuals and religious leaders, formed an alliance with the National Party of J.B. Hertzog, who had supported the rebels against the ruling

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Loubser, *The Apartheid Bible: A Critical Review of Racial Theology in South Africa*, 22.

government of Jan Smuts' South African Party. For about nine years between 1924 and 1933, Hertzog's National Party had a majority in parliament. In 1934, when Hertzog joined Jan Smuts to form a government under the United Party, D.F. Malan and other Afrikaner nationalists saw it as a sign of betrayal and decided to form their own "Purified" National Party. They believed that Hertzog and Smuts were drifting away from Afrikaners idealism.

In 1938, on the day of the covenant that celebrates the vow to God that had been made by Voortrekkers, Malan addressed the Afrikaners to appeal to their nationalist sentiment. Malan declared, "Here at the Blood River, you stand on holy ground." They (the Voortrekkers) received their task from God's hand. They gave their answer. They made their sacrifices. There is still a white race."⁴⁸ The reference to the "white race" was a racist declaration for a political purpose not only to mobilize the Afrikaners but to stimulate their understanding of the religious calling as it was the case for the Voortrekker. It was also a reference of their survival to the threat of annihilation.

In March 1948, a couple of months before the May 28 elections, the Nationalist Party (NP), chaired by Paul Sauer, produced a document spelling out its apartheid policy in a report entitled, "*The Colour Question Commission*." The preamble of the report stipulated the notion that Apartheid grew out of the historical experience of whites, and was "based on Christian principles of justice and fairness."⁴⁹ Thus, according to the

⁴⁸ Chidester, *Religions of South Africa*, 196.

⁴⁹ Welsh, *The Rise and Fall of Apartheid*, 21

report, to equalize race, would undermine and destroy the white race as an independent and ruling race.⁵⁰

The report went on to establish three major premises that some historians consider the blueprint of Apartheid. Among these premises are assertions that the essence of the Apartheid was,

1. The maintenance of the white population of South Africa as a pure white race by the complete elimination of any miscegenation between white and non-white; its [the white population's] permanence as an independent political community and its further development on a Christian-national basis by the necessary protection in all spheres, and the drawing of a clear dividing line between white and non-white, thereby removing all possible causes of clashes of interest between white and non-white.
2. The maintenance of the indigenous non-white racial groups of South Africa as separate volk-communities (volksgemeenskappe) by combating all influences that undermine their respective identities, and the establishment of possibilities from them to develop separately, in a natural way, their own volk-character(volksaard), capabilities and calling, complemented and fertilized Christian civilization until becoming self-sufficient volks-units (volkseenhede).
3. The maintenance of the traditional trusteeship principle. The cultivation of national pride and self-respect by each group and the encouragement of mutual esteem and respect among the different race and racial groups in the country.⁵¹

This racialism would become the hallmark of the NP. When it came to power in 1948, their rise was a calculated effort to win power by forming an alliance with the small, Afrikaner Party (AP). This eventually gave them enough votes to secure the majority in parliament.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Ibid.

On May 28th 1948, the day of the victory of the NP, Malan declared, “Now, we feel at home again in our own country.”⁵² This was an appeal to the Afrikaner nationalists to boost their morale by reminding them how they felt marginalized during Hertzog’s and Smuts’ administrations. The statement was also designed to send a message that Apartheid, the umbrella under which he ran his campaign, was popular among the Afrikaners and would certainly become the *ordre du jour* of his administration.

Referring to Apartheid as the *nouvel ordre du jour* of D.F. Malan’s administration, Giliomee and Schlemmer argue that the political order the NP constructed after 1948 was “aimed at enhancing Afrikaner Nationalism by entrenching white political control in South Africa.”⁵³ They also argue that through Apartheid, Afrikaners governed not themselves, but also all other groups in the society.⁵⁴

Indeed, with a complex network of racial separation, exclusion and domination, and a religious legitimation derived from the DRC, the National Party of DF Malan would rule South Africa under the umbrella of the politics of separate development or Apartheid. The theology of Apartheid with its sources, norms, traditions, rituals and myths would proclaim what Chidester calls, “a racist gospel of salvation that attempts to justify the political policies of the National Party.”⁵⁵

⁵² Ibid., 27.

⁵³ Giliomee and Schlemmer, *From Apartheid to Nation Building, Contemporary South African Debates*, 41.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

In 1950, for example, a conference of the Federal Mission Council was convened to address what was then called the “native problem.” The conference adopted resolutions separating churches, schools, residential areas, and territories for racially defined groups.⁵⁶ The conference argued that the distinctive development of racially defined groups in separate territories was consistent with “divine purpose and destiny and that the pattern set by the DRC to create separate churches for racially defined groups be extended in South Africa to a total territorial separation.”⁵⁷

The conference used the emergence of the African Independent Churches as a positive result of its religious policy of ‘distinctive or separate’. To implement this policy, the conference called on D.F. Malan’s government to implement total segregation in all aspects of South African life.⁵⁸ Malan’s government would go on to implement the relocation of Black South Africans through pass laws, resettlement acts, amendments to land acts, and even forced removal of large populations. Such was the case of Sophiatown in Johannesburg and, District Six in Cape Town. It is believed that the government relocated about 3.5 million people in the interest of separate development.⁵⁹

In 1956, the Afrikaner Bureau of Race Relations (SABRA) and the DRC, joined efforts to organize a Volkskongress (People’s Congress). In their resolution, the congress declared:

⁵⁶ Chidester, *Religions in South Africa*, 199.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Platsky and Walker, *The Surplus People, Forced removals in South Africa*, 61.

A policy of integration will inevitably give rise to increasing racial tension and racial conflict and will eventually lead to the annihilation of the national existence of one or both groups. The Congress is convinced that the only acceptable policy, and a policy which is also practically possible, is a policy which is based on the principle of separate development, which must provide for the existence of separate communities in their own territories where each community will have the opportunity of full self-expression and development, and will be assured of a free existence and of the right of self-determination.⁶⁰

Ironically, this congress took place just a year after the “Congress of the Peoples,” a coalition of political movements opposing the government’s racial policies that drafted what was known as “Freedom Charter” which declared that South Africa belonged to all who live in it, black and white.

Inventing and re-inventing its stance on Apartheid, the DRC would continue to lend its sacralized power to the government for many years. The uniqueness of Apartheid, contends Boesak, does not lie in its inherent violence or brutality in dehumanizing the personhood of blacks, nor in the traditional alienations and costs in terms of human dignity and human relationship, but in the fact that it claims to be based on Christian principles.⁶¹ Boesak asserts,

It is Reformed Christians who have spent years working out the details of Apartheid, as a church and as a political policy. It is Reformed Christians who have presented this policy to the Afrikaner as the only possible solution, as an expression of the will of God for South Africa, and as being in accord with the gospel and the Reformed tradition. It is Reformed Christians who

⁶⁰ Ngcokovane, *Demons of Apartheid*, 155.

⁶¹ Boesak, *Black and Reformed*, 85.

have created Afrikaner ideals with the ideals of the Kingdom of God. It is they who have devised the theology of apartheid, deliberately distorting the gospel to suit their racist aspirations. They present this policy as a pseudo-gospel that can be the salvation of all South Africa.⁶²

Similar to Boesak's assertion, Trevor Huddleston, having observed firsthand the devastating consequence of Apartheid in the community of Sophiatown, questioned the divisive racial ideology that the DRC championed. For example, in 1955, the DRC in one of its commissions declared,

Every nation and race will be able to perform the greatest service to God and the world if it keeps its own national attributes, received from God's own hand, pure with honor and gratitude. God divided humanity into races, languages and nations. Differences are not only willed by God but are perpetuated by Him. Equally between natives, coloureds and Europeans includes a miss-appreciation of the fact that God, in His providence, made people into different races and nations. Far from the world of God encouraging equality, it is an established scriptural principle that in every community ordination there is a fixed relationship between authorities. Those who are culturally and spiritually advanced have a mission to leadership and protection of the less advanced. The natives must be led and formed towards independence so that eventually they will be equal to the Europeans, but each on their own territory and each serving God and their own father land.⁶³

This statement, according to Huddleston, carried the implication that all racial differences are not only willed by God in His act of creation, but are sustained by Him to

⁶² Ibid., 86.

⁶³ Huddleston, *Naught for Your Comfort*, 62

the end of time. Huddleston finds this assertion abhorrent and hermeneutically flawed. The same statement, muses Huddleston, assumed that there has ever been intermingling of races through the centuries without loss since the intermingling must be *ipso facto* contrary to the Divine Will.⁶⁴

Human history of course, muses Huddleston, tells a different story which is contrary to the DRC's stipulations.⁶⁵ DRC statements negate the idea that all men are of equal value in the sight of God and lead to assumptions that the white race was created to lead the blacks and that the blacks were to depend upon, to look up to and need the whites.⁶⁶

Yet this hermeneutic flaw would become the hallmark and the *modus operandi* of the Apartheid regime under D.F. Malan's administration. This was a point of no return for both the government and the DRC, a point of "alienation." What Berger argues is that alienated individuals refuse to re-appropriate the social order and self when confronting anomalies of suffering, injustice, and death. They treat these forces as objects, and they confront them to the same degree as laws of nature.⁶⁷ Among the Afrikaners, this alienation would be ground to institutionalize radical policies of separate development and racial divisions. They passed legislative bills that include but are not limited to the 1950 *Group Areas Act* and the 1954 *Natives Resettlement Act*.

⁶⁴Ibid., 63.

⁶⁵Ibid.

⁶⁶Ibid., 68.

⁶⁷Berger, *The Sacred Canopy*, 86.

Apartheid and Imagined Communities

The creation of volkstaad, location/ townships and native homeland, was the extension of racially divisive policies already in place during British colonial rule. The birth of the South West Township (SOWETO), in 1904, was an example of a segregated area reserved for natives that could be traced back to the structural segregation under the British rules.

Under the pretense of what was known then as “sanitary syndrome,” native Africans or non-Europeans were a sanitary threat to many British. They were judged unhygienic and therefore had to have limited contact with Europeans. This perception set a chilly effect among Europeans to absolutely keep Africans away from their residential areas.⁶⁸ As precautionary measures, they established township/locations in Cape Town, Durban and Johannesburg.

In a similar way, the South African Labor Party was also able to rally its constituency by claiming that “the town was an European area in which there was no place for the redundant native.”⁶⁹ With the intention to exclude non-Europeans from urban cities, the parliament went on to enact legislation, such as the 1913 and the 1936 Natives Urban Acts. Although this legislation granted some non-Europeans the right to own land, it was only allowed in restricted areas and never in cities where European decedents were likely to live.

⁶⁸ Christopher, *From Flint to Soweto*, 23.

⁶⁹ Elphick and Davenvenport, *Christianity in South Africa*, 71.

Because of their unfair and unjust character, the 1913 and the 1936 *Natives Urban Acts* turned out to be myths constructed to give a so-called security to the majority blacks, mused Cornelly.⁷⁰ According to him, they were rights that “codified the political and territorial separation of whites and blacks.”⁷¹ Yet at the time of their promulgation they were considered, just and fair and were supposedly enacted with good intentions. The following statement, by the Pretoria Department of Information in 1972, illustrates this assertion,

The Native Land Act was passed in 1913 ... The Major significance of this Act lay in the fact that it introduced the principle of a territorial division of the country between the Bantu and the White. Under the terms of this Act, some 8.9 million hectares of land, situated in the four provinces and chiefly in the east of Cape Province, were demarcated, registered and allocated to the Bantu on a permanent and inalienable basis. This Act prevents whites and non-whites from buying each other's land, and protects their respective rights. In this way, it decisively safeguards the tribal lands of the Bantu against being ‘eroded’ by economically stronger Europeans. The 1913 Native Land Act represents a sincere wish to lay down the broad lines of an equitable national policy.⁷²

This legislation produced just the opposite of their professed good intentions. Millions of non-Europeans were excluded from owning land in specific areas, and in some cases were even extorted from the very land they were entitled to. While these

⁷⁰ Cornelly, *Apartheid: Power and Historical Falsification*, 119.

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² De Kock, *Histoire de l'Afrique du sud*, 25.

legislations predated the NP, in order to sustain its political agenda of white control and separate development, the NP needed “retention and refinement of inherited colonial features and practices.”⁷³ Their 1948 victory gave them the mandate to do so. In their aim to create a racially pure society, they orchestrated similar legislations that included, but were not limited to, the Group Areas Acts and *the Resettlement Areas Acts*, forcibly removing millions of non-Europeans from the vicinity of white urban areas. In this sense, racially designated areas become imagined communities in the collective consciousness of those who inhabited them.

Names such as Afrikanerdom/Volkstads, and Kerks, townships/location that predated the NP were reinvented to suit the new *ordre du jour*. On this list, they added the invention of homelands to accommodate blacks on the grounds of their ethnic groups. This politics of separateness that propagated the hegemony of one race/religion/ethnic group over the others was institutionalized until the early nineties when it finally started to crumble and would later be dismantled.

Delegitimation and Dismantlement of Apartheid

Efforts to delegitimize Apartheid arose both from within the DRC and without. Religious leaders such as Beyers Naude, Allan Boesak, both DRC ministers, and other clergy and academics including Desmond Tutu, Frank Chikane, Manas Buthelezi, and Johan Heyns fought relentlessly to point out the hermeneutic flaws and immorality under which the DRC lent sacralized power to the Apartheid regime. In this process, most of

⁷³ Simon and Christopher, “*The Apartheid City*,” 61.

them turned to liberation theology formulations as a counter balance to the legitimization of the Apartheid regime and its progenitor the DRC.

Boesak for example, in *Farewell to Innocence*, labeled the DRC neo-Calvinistic theology as a theology that ignores the realities of the unbalanced relationship between rich and poor, white and black, oppressors and oppressed and the reality of oppression and liberation from oppression.⁷⁴ Boesak believed that it was only through Black theology formulations that what he called, “farewell to innocence” could take place. It is a farewell that is expressed in the attitude of the oppressed who have decided to move away from a kind of innocence that hid painful truths of oppression behind a façade of myths and real or imagined anxieties.⁷⁵

According to Boesak, the oppressed who believe in God, the Father of Jesus Christ, no longer want to believe in the myths created to subjugate them.⁷⁶ It is the Theology of Liberation that creates this environment where it is no longer possible to innocently accept history as it happens, silently hoping that God would take the responsibility for human failure.⁷⁷

Because of this kind of pressure and other related circumstances, including economic sanctions from the international communities, the DRC started to tone down its theological discourse of separate development and even shyly revisited lending its

⁷⁴ Boesak, *Farewell to Innocence*, 3.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

legitimation to the Apartheid regime. In 1982, for example, in Ottawa, the General Council of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches suspended the DRC. In this council, what was at stake was whether the DRC rejected Apartheid as sin or not. They made it clear that if the DRC chose not to reject Apartheid as sin, then it was in violation of the gospel.⁷⁸

It was then, in the 1986 General Synod, that the DRC announced racial separation could no longer be justified by the Bible. The synod went on to say that a forced separation and division of peoples cannot be considered a biblical imperative and the attempt to justify such an injunction as derived from the Bible must be recognized as an error and be rejected.⁷⁹ The DRC did not go as far as calling Apartheid as ‘pseudo-religious ideology,’ or a ‘heresy’ or a ‘sin’ or even an inherently unjust political system.⁸⁰

This is something that critics of Apartheid did not hesitate to do. Some of them such as John DeGruchy and Villa-Vicencio went as far to publish a book titled *Apartheid is Heresy*. Although the DRC did not go as far as that, the sign of toning down its theological discourse was an effort to divorce Apartheid from any religious legitimation that might have been provided by the Bible or by a church that claimed adherence to the Bible.⁸¹

⁷⁸ Engdahl, “Theology as Politics in Afrikaner Nationalism and Black Consciousness. A Close Reading of F.J. M Potgieter and Steve Biko,” 13.

⁷⁹ Villa-Vicencio, *Trapped in Apartheid*, 147.

⁸⁰ Chidester, *Religions in South Africa*, 211.

⁸¹ Ibid., 212.

This was the slow beginning of the DRC withdrawing the religious legitimization it lent to political power. While this was taking place, it was becoming increasingly evident that Apartheid could no longer be sustained, as such. P.W. Botha's government started to promote notions such as "reform" and "power sharing."

In light of the progressive withdrawal of the DRC's sacralized power, P.W. Botha's administration went on to manufacture alternative symbols, myths, rituals, and traditions and gave them a religious connotation and legitimization. Institutions of the state such as the South African Defense Force, the South African police, the public school system, public services such as hospitals, postal services and many others become a new sign of a religious nationalism. Communism then became the enemy that needed to be counteracted with a national religious sentiment.

Moreover, mandatory military services were imposed on all adult white males. There was a major involvement of a police chaplain to maintain the so called 'nation's common spiritual concern. Public schools saw the reinforcement of Christian biblical instruction in addition to the new South African religious nationalism. All of this was to no avail. It was becoming clear that the last bastion of Apartheid would crumble.

With the arrival of F.W. de Klerk in power that was followed by intense negotiations with Nelson Mandela of the African National Congress, Apartheid was officially dismantled and Nelson Mandela became the first black South African president in 1994.

Religion in South Africa is an effective form of legitimization because it relates the precarious reality constructions of empirical societies with ultimate reality. The Afrikaner people concerned with their survival, *raison d'être*, and hegemony skillfully managed to construct myths, rituals, symbols, and traditions to mobilize and propagate a nationalism sentiment and keep at bay the threat of both the British Empire and the Africans. The

myth manufacturing motif worked for a while but was eventually confronted head on by an opposition determined to dismantle the last vestige of Apartheid by challenging its legitimization with the very religious tools that prompted Apartheid in the first place. The case of Sophiatown and the building of Triomf, in its place, is a poignant illustration of religious legitimization and delegitimation in South Africa, thus suggesting the intricate relation of religion and politics.

CHAPTER IV

FROM SOPHIATOWN TO TRIOMF: THE DEATH OF A LIVING ORGANISM AND THE MANUFACTURING OF AN IMAGINED COMMUNITY.

Introduction

This chapter argues that prior to its dismantlement; Sophiatown was a vibrant community, and a “living organism.” While under apartheid, blacks, Indians and coloured were dehumanized, mistreated and carried the stigma of imposed racial categorization, yet they found in Sophiatown a place of solace where they constructed an imagined community.

Sophiatown, however, because of its proximity to the white urban city could have hampered the construction of *their* imagined community. This is at least how the Afrikaners perceived it. Therefore to keep this threat at bay, Sophiatown had to be eradicated. Through racial legislations, the Afrikaner government achieved its aim.

I start the chapter by introducing the history of Sophiatown from its creation in 1897 and the role that religion played in this imagined community. I, then, discuss the enactment of the *Group Areas Act* and the *Resettlement Act* and conclude the chapter by depicting how what was known as living organism died under the provision of the *Group Areas Act*.

Sophiatown: A Living Organism, 1905-1930 and 1950-

1960

In 1956, referring to Sophiatown, Trevor Huddleston wrote,

The truth is that Sophiatown is a community: a living organism which has grown up through the years, and which has struck its

roots deep in this particular place and in his special soil. ... A community with all the ordinary problems of a community, and made up of people and families both bad and good. A community, not an abstraction, and therefore personal and real in all its aspects. And because it is an African community, living in a city of South Africa, it has to grow together in a unique way. Xhosa and Sesotho, Shangaan and Motswana, Indian and Chinese, Coloured and White, have all contributed something to it ... the place is cosmopolitan in a real sense.¹

Located some 4 miles west of the Johannesburg central business district, Sophiatown began in 1897, when a developer by the name of Herman Tobiansky bought a 234 acre tract of land with the intention of developing it into a white suburb. He first rented it out to the Government and it was later reverted to him and surveyed in 1905.

Tobiansky named the area after his wife Sophia and the streets after his children as well as many other relatives – Gerty, Bertha, Edith, Ray, Judith, Morris, Miller and Toby.² As he began to build houses on the land, the Johannesburg City Council decided to build a sewerage system next to his development as well as building houses for blacks in the west part of Johannesburg from which towns of Newlands, Martindale, and Newclare also known as the Western Areas would emerge.

As the idea of living next to a depositing site and within proximity of black townships dissuaded the majority of white people from buying property in Sophiatown, Tobiansky started to sell land to Indians, Coloured people, and Blacks. In 1912, for

¹ Huddleston, *Naught For Your Comfort*, 135.

² Purkey and Stein, *Sophiatown*, vi.

example, the Chairman of the Parks and Estates Committee and who was in charge of allocating lands to non-Europeans declared,

There are, in Johannesburg suburbs, some of the stands of which were originally sold to white men, and where natives can now obtain ownership on stands on very reasonable terms. In Sophiatown, for example, we have a mixed population of white and black owners.³

Although a non-white person could purchase a piece of land in Sophiatown, it was not easy to acquire one. From 1912 and thereafter, a series of legislations, mostly grounded on the colour of skin, regulated where people should live. The *Natives Land Act, 1913* (subsequently renamed *Bantu Land Act, 1913* and *Black Land Act, 1913*; Act No. 27 of 1913) was an act of the Parliament of South Africa aimed at regulating the acquisition of land by "natives", i.e. black people. The Act, along with the 1936 Acts formed an important part of the system of Apartheid and is of importance for both legal and historical reasons, as discussed in the previous chapter.

Lesser known legislation, the *Native (Black) Urban Areas Act No 21 of 1923*, created a system of land tenure that deprived the majority of Black South Africa's inhabitants of the right to own land. The act decreed that only certain areas of the country could be owned by natives, which had major socio-economic repercussions. This legislation permitted the Governor-General to force blacks to take up residence in locations such as Native villages or Native hostels. Domestic workers who lived on the

³ Proctor, *Class Struggle, Segregation and the City: a History of Sophiatown*, 57.

premises of their employers were excluded from this decree.⁴ The end result was that many blacks were confined to newly formed slums of Soweto townships, with deplorable hygienic conditions, cramped spaces, and significant socioeconomic repercussions.

Leaving those conditions behind, some of the townships residents headed to Sophiatown. But the Johannesburg City Council couldn't keep up with the housing demands of migrant workers who were flocking to Sophiatown because they couldn't find adequate housing in hostels in the locations and townships. In Sophiatown, they discovered an attractive place to live. Migrants drew on a network of kin, village members and friends to help them find accommodation. In most cases they were single young men and women in quest for work. They could be subtenants with their own shack in the backyard or simply shared existing rooms with relatives or friends.

In 1923, it is estimated that the combined population of Sophiatown and the townships of Newclare and Martindale included 1,457 Africans, 79 Asians, 878 coloured and 557 whites.⁵ This racial mix coupled with owners, tenants, and subtenants made Sophiatown a unique cosmopolitan place in a literal sense.⁶

In the 1950s, Sophiatown's population underwent another large period of growth. The reported demographic representation at the time was about 54,000 Blacks/Africans, 3,000 coloureds, 1,500 Indians, and 700 Chinese.⁷ Working-class tenants of Sophiatown,

⁴ Ibid., 59.

⁵ Ibid, 58.

⁶ Huddleston, *Naught For Young Comfort*, 135.

⁷ Tom Lodge, *Black Politics*, 112.

sometimes without the knowledge of the landlords, were allowing sub-tenants to build shacks in their premises. It was possible to see ten to twenty people living in one single room.⁸

Sophiatown's uniqueness also resides in the fact that it represented what Proctor called, "a last foot in the doorway to white society."⁹ Indeed, many petit bourgeoisie blacks that included professionals, teachers, ministers, clerical workers, traders, craftsmen, and landlords who depended on property as their sole income felt that the government was disenfranchising and closing in on them.

The *Native Law Amendment Act No. 54* of 1952, for example, prohibited blacks from living permanently in the city unless they had been born there, had continuously lived there for fifteen years, or had worked for the same employer for 10 years. Anyone who didn't fit these criteria was to return to their native homeland or could only come to the city as a migrant worker on a six-month or one-year contract. Thus, to many migrant workers, and black elites who wanted to settle in urban areas, Sophiatown was an alternative place where they could establish themselves, despite being excluded from white areas. To them, Sophiatown was not a "black spot" as it had been labeled because of its proximity to white suburbs. It was a true suburb in its own right.

In 1953, Doctor Xuma, a prominent resident of Sophiatown, and former president of the African National Congress, questioned the idea of Sophiatown being "a black

⁸ Mphahlele, *Sophiatown tapes*, (University of Witwatersrand, 1988).

⁹ Proctor, *Class Struggle, Segregation and the City: a History of Sophiatown*, 60.

spot.” Xuma pondered whether it wasn’t the other way around, that white suburbs were invading Sophiatown. Doctor Xuma said:

When I first came to live on Toby Street, which is the boundary of Sophiatown, 25 years ago, I faced open veld and spent quiet Sunday afternoons under the trees where Westdene now is. Today, across narrow field, I face an array of European Houses. It is understandable when Africans crowd into an area. They have no choice. But why should Europeans, who object to our proximity, settle in the neighborhood of Africans when the whole of Johannesburg with its suburbs spreading far and wide, suburbs for the privileged and the less privileged, is theirs to choose from?
10

Although Sophiatown was home to prominent people such as Doctor Xuma and fostered many people who would later become well known such as, Desmond Tutu, Hugh Masekelela, Father Huddleston, Dolly Radebe, Miriam Makeba, Zakes Mokahe, Ezekiel Mphahlele, Athol Fugard, Felicia Mabuza-Suttle, Bloke Modisane, Can Themba, Don Mattera, and many others, it was also a city where pimps, shebeen, queens, prostitutes, and gangsters known as “*tsotsis*”, lived. It was nicknamed Kofifi and to many it was the Chicago or the New York of South Africa.

Nelson Mandela in *Long Walk to Freedom*, describes Sophiatown in these terms,

Sophiatown was one of the few places in the Transvaal where Africans had been able to buy stands, or plots, prior to the 1923 Urban Areas Act. Many of these old brick, and stone houses, with their tin-roofed verandas, still stood in Sophiatown, giving the township an air of Old World graciousness ... Sophiatown was convenient and close to town. Workers lived in shanties that were erected in the back and front yard of old residencies. Several

¹⁰ Xuman, Institute of Race Relations, 1953.

families might all be crowded into a single shanty. Up to forty people could share a single water tap. Despite the poverty, Sophiatown had a special character; for Africans, it was the Left Bank in Paris, Greenwich Village in New York, the home of writers, artists, doctors, and lawyers. It was bohemian and conventional, lively and sedate... Sophiatown boasted the only swimming pool for African children in Johannesburg.¹¹

Ezekiel Mphahlele, a writer and a lecturer recalling Sophiatown and its people, wrote,

They (people of Sophiatown) didn't feel constrained by any boundaries and it showed in their easy-going lifestyle. There was a great mixture of people passing through because of the freedom of mobility. One never had a sense of being cramped. It was a place where people could express themselves more freely than in any other place. Sophiatown had structures; it was never a shanty town. It was a real suburb with front gates which said, 'This is how I like to live.'¹²

Moreover, in an interview he gave in 1987, Mphahlele talked about the different social classes that existed in Sophiatown, the educated and the uneducated. These two groups intermingled in a dynamic social interaction. Mphahlele wrote of, "a lot of interaction, socially, and they (people of Sophiatown) mixed so very well without anybody being conscious that he was more educated than the next."¹³

¹¹ Mandela, *Long Walk to Freedom*, 154.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ ASI, *Sophiatown Tapes*, Ezechiel Mphahlele, 1988.

This social interaction is what Nadine Gordimer in her novel *A World of Strangers* describes,

... The whole cycle of living made a continuous and simultaneous assault on your senses ... men shouting in the street, a procession of some sort, perhaps a school or funeral parade, children quarrelling, a baby crying, a woman singing at a washtub, the rusty bray and slam of the communal lavatory in the yard as people trooped in and out of it ... there were summer nights in Sophiatown ... when no one seemed to go to bed at all ... Urchins gamboled under the street – lights ... There was singing and strolling; now and then one of the big American cars that the gangsters use would tear scrunching over the stones, down the street, setting long tongues of dust uncurling ... on such a night, suddenly, a procession would burst round the corner, swaying, rocking, moving by a musical peristalsis: men, women and children, led by a saxophone and tin whistles...¹⁴

From his part, Trevor Huddleston writes,

Sophiatown is not a location (township). That is my first reason for loving it. It is so utterly free from monotony, in its sitting, in its buildings and in its people. By historical accident it started life as a suburb, changed its colour at an early moment in its career and then decided to go all out for variety. A 3000 pound building jostles a row of single rooms: an “American” barber’s shop stands next door to an African window. You can go into a store to buy a packet of cigarettes and be served by a Chinaman, an Indian or a Pakistani ... I have said that Sophiatown is a gay place. It is more. It has a vitality and an exuberance about it which belong to no other suburb in South Africa: certainly to no white suburb.¹⁵

¹⁴ Gordimer, *A World of Strangers*, 162.

¹⁵ Huddleston, *Naught for Your Comfort*, 135

Religion played a no lesser role in the Sophiatown residents' daily lives and social construction than it did in other parts of South Africa. In fact religion, by a process of legitimation and delegitimation, turned out to be the most effective form of cultural resistance and identity formation. In mission churches and AICs, Sophiatown residents found both solace and sacred meaning for their social and political apparatus.

Father Huddleston put it in this way,

The overcrowd rooms ... wherein whole families must sleep and must perform all their human functions as best they may ... Again and again, hearing confession, I have asked myself how I can advise these children, how warn them, how comfort them when they have fallen ... I can shut my eyes and see old, blind Margaret, tapping her way along the street into the darkness which has been hers for many long years. Or there will be old Tryphena Mtembu. She has spent all her years ... mending sacks and inhaling cement dust into her old lungs so that she is never free from a fierce cough. She crippled with arthritis, infirm and with no pension after thirty years' work in a furniture shop ... It would be easy to list a score of others, who have lived in Sophiatown for the better part of their lives... folk who live ordinary lives in extraordinary conditions ... the only thing that is meeting the need for a sense of "community", of "belonging" in the broken and shattered tribalism of the town – dwelling Africans is the Church.¹⁶

In 1951, a survey conducted in Sophiatown and in the western townships suggested 70% of the residents were affiliated with mission churches including the Anglican Church (19%), Lutherans (17%), Methodists (16%), Calvinists (Presbyterian, Dutch Reformed, Swiss Mission, Paris Mission, and Berlin Mission – 12%), Catholics

¹⁶ Ibid., 97-103

(5%), and Congregationalists (1%).¹⁷ African Initiated Churches accounted for 10% of the population. Mission churches tended to Sophiatown residents' temporal and spiritual needs. In funerals, marriages, social and political unrest, many residents found a voice and identity in mission churches. Mission Churches "provided an opportunity for many who had previously had no contact with Christianity."¹⁸

In Sophiatown, priests played many roles. They were brokers of family disputes. They were social workers who prevented evictions of tenants and subtenants. They acted as loan officers. They served as medical advisors, even delivered babies. They served as a moral compass to residents, and they diffused the tension between the police and the township.¹⁹

Goodhew tells the story of one of the residents, Betram Molia, who settled in Sophiatown from Ladysmith. His story illustrates the intertwining of religion and the daily life in Sophiatown. Goodhew wrote,

For Moloi, coming to Sophiatown was highly disorientating experience. Feeling—and made to feel—like a country bumpkin, he found refuge in faith. His world centered on Christ the King, an Anglican Church, where one of the priests was his "spiritual father and guardian" and where his education depended on a church bursary. One of Moloi's most vivid memories was of a

¹⁷ Goodhew, "Working Class Respectability: The Example of the Western Areas of Johannesburg," 111.

¹⁸ Goodhew, *Respectability and Resistance*, 23.

¹⁹ CPSA AD843/G4-5 Rheinallt-Jones Papers Justice/Police C Luniss to Commandant, Newlands Police Station, 20 September 1939, R Raynes to Commandant, Newlands Police Station, 30 September 1939, 14 March 1940; Mosley, N. 1961 *the Life of Raymond Raynes*, London: faith Press, 80-3

priest haranguing the police after they had arrested him (Moloi) for a pass offense.²⁰

Not only did the police exercise excessive control over the issue of the pass document, which was a permit that allowed one to stay in a specific neighborhood, they were as well abusing their authority by randomly singling out individuals and then harassing them.

The case of Kortbooi, one of the gangsters in Sophiatown, illustrates another example of the intersection of religion and faith. Kortbooi, stabbed a school principal and was taken to Father Huddleston who later took him to the police station. Kortbooi, recalling the unfortunate incident, said,

I came and stabbed the principal and he died. I was a young boy at that time. I told my father about it and he took me to Father Huddleston. He said, “You”, I said, “I didn’t mean it” and he said, “I must take you to jail,” so he took me to the police station. From there they took me to number 4, my father bailed me out ... after that case I had twelve months.²¹

Mission churches also ran a group home for juveniles, a hospital and boarding schools. In 1939, for example, the Anglican Mission Church had three schools with a total of 2000 students.²² Boarding schools were important to for training black elites. Mphahlele called them “an important initiation.”²³ Despite their religious constraints,

²⁰ Goodhew, *Respectability and Resistance*, 23.

²¹ Kortbooi interview by Junction Avenue, tape recording, August 1985.

²² Kortbooi interview by *Junction Avenue*, tape recording, august 1985 Ibid, 24.

²³ Mphahlele, *Sophiatown tapes*, (Wits University, 1988)

Mphahlele wrote, “they helped us to find our own voice and to create our own environment different from what was imposed by the government.”²⁴

Among mission churches, the Anglican Church was the most vocal and the most socially engaged. With Raymond Raynes as the head of Sophiatown mission, the Anglican Church was involved in social justice issues ranging from provision of clean water, to street lighting, to representation of the resident’s grievances to the city council. Many other mission churches, on the contrary, were either less vocal or in some cases adopted a paternalistic ethos. They didn’t hesitate to reinforce the ideology of separateness and preached the so called inferiority of blacks, treating them as heathens and pagans.

Bloke Modisane, who grew up in a mission church but who later distanced himself from the stances of Christianity that he claimed were appalling, recalled an incident with an Elder of the Reformed Church. While addressing them, the Elder pointed his fingers to the ceiling and said that His God was far above and that they (black kids) were fortunate to be taught Christian values and attend school.

Modisane wrote,

I could not accept that this faith, which was demanding my obedience, was plundering my body and would not embrace me; I was appalled by its tyranny and its honeyed words which taught me to seek for peace and comfort in bondage. The harbingers of this faith revealed to me that ‘man was made in the image of God,’ then proceeded to dehumanize me; they taught me to repeat the Ten Commandments, with particular emphasis on, “love thy neighbor as thyself”, but in practice they showered

²⁴ Ibid.

denunciation on me, defined me as a savage and classed me among the beasts;²⁵

If there were a credo of the ten commandments of the Reformed Church and the Afrikaner nationalists, mused Modisane, it would go as followed,

I am thy Nationalists Government, thy white superiors, thou shalt have none others.

Thou shalt not take the name of thy Nationalist Government in vain, nor blacken my name overseas.

Thou shalt not be misled by others (The Communists, the English and the Jewish liberals, the jingo press, the A.N.C agitators) for I, thy Nationalist Government, thy lord, am a jealous god.

Honour thy Minister of Bantu Administration and Development that thy days may be long in the Bantustans.

Thou shalt not kill the white man.

Thou shall not covet thy white master's women, nor commit offence under "The Immorality Act' by having unlawful, and sinful, carnal intercourse and other acts in relation thereto.²⁶

Modisane was appalled by the double standard of mission churches: one morality standard for white Christians and another for black Christians and "even the sermon they

²⁵ Modisane, *Blame Me on History*, 183.

²⁶ Ibid., 184.

preached was a colour-bar one, he said.”²⁷ This one-sided morality and paternalistic ethos of mission churches confirmed the context and expressions of one of the surveys conducted in 1950 in Sophiatown.

The survey was conducted with intent to demonstrate that black Christians of mission churches were not living up to their Christian values. They were more inclined, according to the survey, to drunkenness and debauchery, thus making them uncivilized and pagans. The role of the mission churches was then to keep them in line by a rigorous church discipline.²⁸ The survey asserted,

A notable study of religion in black Johannesburg, could note that, “In daily life to be Christian is to be civilized ... without Christianity, civilization is unthinkable.” But to be civilized did not necessarily mean a rupture with less “respectable” aspects of life. That church members were prone to “heathen” customs such as brewing or consuming beer and gambling was an open secret. Regardless of whether beer-brewing should be seen as an indicator of morality, it was illegal for township residents throughout the period under consideration. It was also known that a number of the most prominent church-people were also prominent liquor brewers.²⁹

The problem with this assertion is that it set a different standard of moral values for black and white Christians. It also suggested that mission churches were more

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ In 1925, In the Transvaal Mission Quarterly, an Anglican priest writes, “There is a tremendous amount of loose living amongst our people ... but they are generally prepared to accept the discipline of the church. Another priest boasted on how those disciplined were inclined to change their so called pagan behavior and later were given leadership position in the local church hierarchy.

²⁹ USPG X/1026, *Ekuluteni newsletter*, 1959, interview 21. –

interested in pietism and conversion of blacks to the so called civilization of Christianity, rather than freeing them from the yoke of segregated laws and abject poverty. It was a contradictory message. While on the one hand churches preached that respectable values were part of social inclusion, on the other hand they aligned with state laws that preached social exclusion as a social cohesion.³⁰

Some who didn't attend mission churches turned to AICs, and some attended both. A limited number of AICs were in Sophiatown, because the Johannesburg City Council refused to grant them permits. This led some Sophiatown residents, especially the working class who comprised 82% of the population- (domestic and unskilled laborers, migrant workers), to travel to distant locations, such as Alexandra and Orlando in Soweto, to worship.³¹ There, far from mission churches, they sought solace and sacred meaning to their social and political foes.

Workers in the mining industry, for example, were deliberately kept unskilled and were on temporary contracts that made them vulnerable to any entrenchment. They were prohibited from bringing their families to South Africa, and were stripped of any human rights and dignity. They lived in compounds and hostels with inhuman and deplorable social conditions.

Their deplorable social conditions were intentionally orchestrated to keep the power of production in the hands of white people, and to keep labor low by ensuring a

³⁰ Goodhew, *Respectability and Resistance*, 21

³¹ This is not to say that black elites were not members of AICs. Xuma papers well documented that a substantial number of black elites and politicians were also drawn to AICs. (CPSA AD 843 Xuma Papers ABX330905 Xuma to Bishop Sims, AME, 5 May 1933; Bantu World, 25 August 1934; Kathleen Vundla, interview by the author, Johannesburg, 1988

supply of unskilled and illiterate black men. Johnson, for example, describes their living conditions in hostels and compounds in these terms,

The compounds range from the relatively small (30-50 men), run by schools to the great mine compound, housing 10.000 men or more... They are the dormitories in which as many as 24 workers may sleep, in double-decker concrete bunks. Defecating is also normally a communal activity, with lavatories allowing place for as many as 20 men to sit side by side.³²

The inevitable consequences of these harsh living conditions were the deterioration of values and morals, the dysfunction of many families and a fractured society at large. Promiscuity, prostitution, crime, rape, violence, drunkenness, became normative in black communities. This has led Alan Paton to write,

It was permissible to allow the destruction of a tribal system that impeded the growth of the country; it was permissible to believe that its destruction was inevitable. But it is not permissible to watch its destruction, and replace it by nothing, or by so little, that whole person deteriorates, physically and morally.³³

To make sense of their lives, mining workers and other members of the *lumpenproletariat* of Sophiatown found an escape of their social realities in AICs. AICs alleviated their impoverished conditions and attempted to transcend their sense of deprivation and inadequacy to meet their social and religious needs.³⁴ In AICs, they

³² Johnson. *How Long Will South Africa Survive*, 183.

³³ Paton. *Cry, The Beloved Country*, 146.

³⁴ Ibid.

constructed an imagined community where healing re-arranged the social order and fostered a sense of belonging and a common identity. Through healing, the disenfranchised, the rejected discovered a true world where they belonged and where they can socialize and find meaning.

In this sense, their world becomes the antithesis of the world of evil powers and dominion. Once the world of dominion and power is conquered, through healing, one can claim true self. As an example, a couple, who after years of being marginalized because they were haunted by bad spirits, was able to re-socialize after they were prayed for and healed. The couple tells the story in these terms,

During the night while we were asleep, the *tokoloshe* would come and walk on the roof, make strange noises in the kitchen and we would be unable to sleep. The house would be very hot as if there were more than five heaters in each room. We decided to call the *Bazalwane* (prophet) to come and help us. They held a church service at our house and prayed, binding the spirits, but still the *tokoloshe* came that same night. So, I went back to report that the *tokoloshe* was still visiting us. They decided to have a time of fasting, praying and seeking the will of God, and set aside three days to fast and pray. On the fourth night, they came back to my house and held another service. This service was quite different, I felt that God was with them, I sensed the presence of the Holy Spirit and I was convinced that something was going to happen that day. They prayed and prayed. The *tokoloshe* used to come at about half past twelve. They prayed until two or three o'clock in the morning. The *tokoloshe* did not come that night. The next night they came to pray with us and then left. The *tokoloshe* disappeared, and we have never had trouble again.³⁵

³⁵ Anderson, *Zion and Pentecost*, 272.

Their healing was a social identity that assured them that they were integrated and accepted members of the society.

Apart from organized religious institutions such as mission churches and AICs with its symbolic systems and ritual healings, religion in Sophiatown also intersected with a variety of informal parts of society. For example, political and town house meetings were opened and closed with prayer. In one of the illustrative cases, the magazine *Umteteli*, in 1953, wrote,

Mr. EP Moretsele presided and the proceedings opened solemnly with the singing of “Nkosi Sikelele,” followed by a reading from Isaiah (He shall not fail nor be discouraged, till he have set judgment in the earth: and the isles shall wait for his law” chapter 42). Fr. Trevor Huddleston, the only European on the platform, prayed and a lively air, harmonized like a part-song, was taken up vigorously by the audience while a collection was taken.³⁶

The social and religious aspiration of Sophiatown residents would be short circuited by the powerful machine of the Apartheid regime.

The Group Areas Act and the Group Resettlement Act

South African scholars do not agree on the genesis and intents of the *Group Areas Act*. Some argue the *Group Areas Act* emerged from a scheme to control non-white influx to white urban areas by rezoning, purposely targeting Indians and Coloured people.³⁷

³⁶ *Umteteli*, 24 January 1953.

³⁷ In his book, *The Making of Apartheid*, Posel embraces this view point.

Others contend the *Group Areas Act* was designed to quell violence in non-white slums, where the population included Blacks, Indians, and Coloured.³⁸

Other scholars have gone as far as to argue that the *Group Areas Act* was solely a post-World War II economic scheme for the Johannesburg City Council to restructure its labor force.³⁹ While I recognize the plausibility of these hypotheses, I however, argue that the *Group Areas Act* was a direct result of the religious influence and pressure of the DRC on D.F. Malan's National Party (NP) to re-enforce the institutionalization of Apartheid in all aspects of South African society, including the precarious and sensitive issue of land ownership and the influx of native labor in white reserved areas.

For example, prior to passing the *Group Areas Act* in 1950, the DRC's conference of the Federal Mission Council, that set the ground rules of "the native problem", also called on D.F. Malan's government to institute total segregation in all aspects of South African life.⁴⁰ Under the provisions of the *Group Areas Act*, total segregation took on a new meaning. The government controlled interracial changes in ownership and occupation of property throughout the country. Racial groups other than blacks, who were not affected by previous ordinances such as the *Native Laws Amendment Act* of 1937, were now included under the new provisions. Moreover, the 1950 *Group Areas Act* gave the government the prerogative to decide where members of any racial group should live as well as the power to enforce the new legislation.

³⁸ Mabin, "Comprehensive Segregation: The Origins of the Group Areas Act and Its Planning Apparatuses," 407.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

Additionally, the provisions of the *Group Areas Act* removed certain authority given previously to city councils. As Hart put it,

Apartheid laws significantly altered the traditional relationship between central and local government in South Africa. Implementation of the resettlement legislation intensified centralized control and saw to the virtual elimination of local government autonomy... In terms of the new legislation responsibilities traditionally undertaken by the local authorities such as urban planning, housing construction, and slum clearance, were increasingly superseded by the central state through the Native Affairs Department.⁴¹

Other complex clauses under the *Group Areas Act* also demonstrate the patronage of the Apartheid regime. The *Group Areas Act* stipulates,

Except for African townships, African and Coloured Reserves, and mission stations, all parts of the country that have not been allocated to specified groups are controlled areas. With certain exceptions, disqualified persons may not acquire or occupy property in a controlled area except under the authority of a permit from the Group Areas board. A “disqualified” person in this regard is one of a different group from that of the owner of the property.⁴²

Another clause reads,

The State President may declare by proclamation that any land or buildings within a defined area shall, as from a date not less than

⁴¹ Hart, “Master Plans: The South African Government Razing of Sophiatown, Cato Manor and District Six,” 87.

⁴² Horrell, *Group Areas: The Emerging Pattern*, 4.

twelve months after the proclamation, be occupied for a stated purpose only, e.g. for trading (and not residential) purposes.⁴³

These clauses were geared toward non-whites land ownership. To try to implement them in white areas would have been a contradiction of the core beliefs of Apartheid. Under the *Group Areas Act*, a South African urban area would have looked like this:

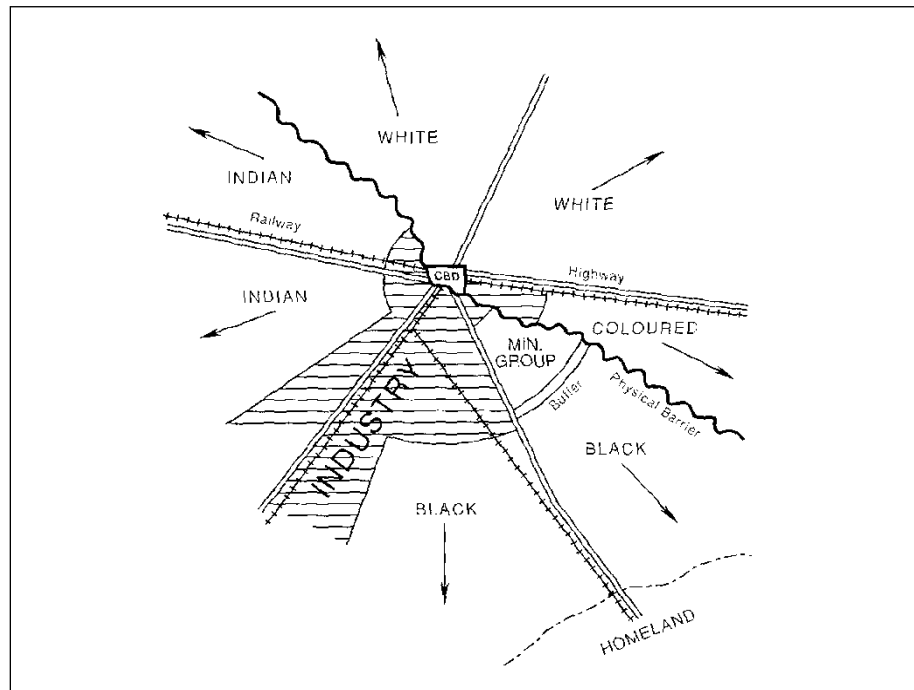


Figure 1 A model group areas city

Source: Urban Foundation

The White Paper, a document published to elaborate on the *Group Areas Act* states, a group area is,

⁴³ Ibid., 5.

An area which has been proclaimed for ownership and/or occupation by a particular race, and any person not belonging to the race for which the group area either for residential or business purposes, has to vacate the land on or before a date specified in the proclamation: such date cannot, however, be earlier than one year after the date of the proclamation. Such person may, however, remain the owner of the land for his lifetime, but he may only sell or bequeath it to a person who is qualified to own it.⁴⁴

The White Paper went on to say that,

The main purpose of establishing group areas is first to bring people of the same racial origin together and so reduce points of contact and friction; and second, to permit each racial group to develop along its own lines according to its language, culture and religion, and to give members of the Native and coloured groups an opportunity under proper guidance ultimately to assume responsibility for their own local government.⁴⁵

Moreover the White Paper continues,

The Bill envisages the division of the population of the Union, as in the case of the population Registration Bill, 1950, into three main racial groups viz White, Natives and Coloured with the provision that the Native and Coloured groups could each be subdivided further.⁴⁶

⁴⁴ Argus, *White Paper*, May 5, 1950 –

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

The implementation of the *Group Areas Act* required the expropriation of property, the devastation and remaking of countless urban landscapes, and the displacement of many thousands of people.⁴⁷

The *Native Resettlement Act* was also a tool for the DRC legitimization in Malan's government. In fact, while parliament was debating it, Malan, the prime minister and a former Dutch Reformed Minister, in a letter to an American Pastor John Piersma dated Feb 12, 1954, showed how the moral authority of DRC and the Apartheid policy were intertwined and entrenched in the Prime Minister's mind. In the letter Malan wrote:

A considered statement of behalf of the leaders of the Dutch Reformed Church, much the largest church in South Africa, whose doctrine your own Christian Reformed Church is in main agreement, was issued a few months ago on the occasion of an interdenominational conference called by the Missionary Council of the Dutch Reformed Church. The principles therein enunciated fairly reflect the basis upon which the Afrikaans churches have, ever since their establishment approaches South Africa's complex multi-racial problem. With due regard to their historical background, I may summarize these principles as follows:

The Church believes that God in His Wisdom so disposed it that the first White men and women who settled at the foot of the Black Continent were profoundly religious people, imbued with a very real zeal to bring the light of the Gospel to the heathen nations of Africa. These first South Africans lit a torch which was carried to the farthest corners of the sub-continent in the course of

⁴⁷ Hart, "Master Plans: The South African Government Razing of Sophiatown, Cato Manor and District Six," 84.

the last three centuries and whose light now shines upon the greater part of all non-White peoples south of the Equator.⁴⁸

Further, Malan went on to say:

Passing then from the historical and spiritual basis of Apartheid to its everyday political application as practiced by the present government is the art of possible ... I must ask you to give White South Africans credit for not being a nation of scheming reactionaries imbued with base and inhuman motives, nor a nation of fools, blind to the gravity of their vital problem. They are normal human beings. They are a small nation, grappling with one of the most difficult problems in the world. To them millions of semi-barbarous Blacks look for guidance, justice and the Christian way of life.⁴⁹

When parliament passed the *Native Resettlement Act*, there was an outcry from local media, religious leaders, business owners and many others. This was written in the March 4, 1954 edition of the Johannesburg Star,

Tremendous practical difficulties stand in the way of carrying out Dr. Verwoerd's fantastic schemes; but the fact that they will be difficult to carry out should not cause people to forget the undemocratic principles behind the measure. Dr. Verwoerd is flouting the wishes of the people of Johannesburg, usurping the functions of their properly elected body- the city council; forcing on them a scheme they do not want, and, on top of everything else, making them pay for it.⁵⁰

⁴⁸ DF Malan to Rev John Piersma, Feb. 12, 1954, Historical papers, B2.14.22, Wits University, South Africa. –

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ The Star (Johannesburg) March 4, 1954. –

The Newspaper went on to ask,

What is Johannesburg to do in the face of such reckless dictatorship? It seems to us to have no choice—it must fight Dr. Verwoerd, to save its self-respect as well as its pocket. For there is not the slightest doubt that the Verwoerd's Bills will hit Johannesburg hard.⁵¹

Similarly in its edition of March 5, 1954, another newspaper, The Rand Daily Mail printed,

Dr. Verwoerd's various measures for imposing apartheid on Johannesburg seem well set to spread muddle in all directions; but, for creating utter confusion, none of these has quite the possibilities of his latest experiment- the Natives Resettlement Bill ... The scheme looks perfect but we can foresee trouble ahead ... Suppose the City Council refuses to obey Dr. Verwoerd's instruction, how will the Board put them into effect?⁵²

The newspaper went on to say,

If the Board sets about spending the City's money, we foresee a certain amount of sensitiveness of the part of Johannesburgers as to how their money is being spent. They might like to seek the shelter of court interdicts, and so on. By and large, Dr. Verwoerd may be found to have paved the way to apartheid with the flagstones of litigation.⁵³

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Ibid, March 5, 1954.

⁵³ Ibid.

Referring to the *Group Areas Act*, Sparks asserts that,

They set specific limits to racial contact in almost every aspect of life- in housing, education, employment, entertainment, sport, public amenities, and personal relations. They gave legal force to apartheid on park benches, in buses, taxis, and railway waiting rooms, in theatres and concert halls and even in the ocean. They excluded blacks from the established universities and tried to exclude them from white church services ... Most lurid of all, in a replication of Hitler's Nuremburg Laws they prohibited mixed marriages and made sexual relations between consenting adults of different skin colours a criminal offense.⁵⁴

With these legislations in place, the tone was set to pursue the divisive racial policy of separate development by removing an entire organic community of Sophiatown with a clear aim to make room for the imagined community of Triomf.

However, the intent to move Sophiatown residents was not a new one. The first attempt occurred in 1932. This move was justified mostly on economic grounds and the logistic challenges to housing migrant workers. With the boom in the mining industry at the time, a great number of migrant workers flocked to the city of Johannesburg. Not being able to provide adequate lodging, the City Council instituted a series of proclamations to control their influx. One of the proclamations was to limit accommodation rooms in hostels to a specific number of migrant workers. But they were swamped by the influx and were not able to meet the demand. The solution was to crack down on individuals who didn't have legal accommodation. Because Sophiatown was the

⁵⁴ Sparks, *The Mind of South Africa*, 190

place where a great number of the surpluses of migrant workers were headed, it was the most logical place to target.

Other attempts to remove Sophiatown were made in 1936, 1939 and 1944. But each time, the Ministers of Natives Affairs were not able to make any decisions. With the cost of the war looming, each of the Ministers of Natives Affairs was reluctant to tackle such a huge undertaking. It was estimated that it would have cost 4 million British Pounds to build alternative accommodation for the natives.⁵⁵

It was only after 1948, that the question of removal became salient with the Malan regime. It took a different connotation other than economics. To the Afrikaner nationalists, it was a matter of principle and ideology. Although they recognized the impact of migrant workers on the South African economy, they couldn't however tamper with the ideology of separate development.

Their imagined community was constructed on the exclusion of others from their sacred geographic space. Afrikaner nationalists believed in an imagined community where Blacks, Indians and coloureds did not belong. In this sense, Sophiatown, to them, represented "the epitome of all evils of mishmash cohabitation."⁵⁶ It was a sceptic with the germs of *bloedvermenging*.⁵⁷

Moreover, Afrikaner Nationalists honestly believed that blacks were destined to work for their white masters and should not live at proximity to them unless otherwise

⁵⁵ Tom Lodge, *Black Politics*, 116.

⁵⁶ Sparks, *The Mind of South Africa*, 188.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

authorized.⁵⁸ Verwoerd once declared that blacks should be taught from childhood to realize that equality with Europeans was not for them.⁵⁹ Furthermore he said, “There was no place for a black child above certain forms of labour.”⁶⁰

This was the mindset of the most Afrikaner nationalists. For them blacks had to come and work for them and disappear back to their ghettos and shantytowns, far away from the pure white race. As if to say, “we don’t want any contamination from those black folks.” Thus, in the eyes of the Afrikaners nationalists, to let Sophiatown exist in such a proximity, not even within the required buffer zone of 500 yards between a white suburb and any black community, was morally wrong and a violation of the core principle of Apartheid.⁶¹ Sophiatown was just too close, “a black spot” to be reckoned with.

The scheme to remove Sophiatown residents was certainly making many business owners nervous. To them, the government was taking a slippery road by being willing to displace migrant workers, those same people who were vital to the South African economy. Business owners were also worried about the depletion of black customers from their businesses.

⁵⁸ In 1953, the Afrikaner nationalists introduced The Bantu education Act to propagate this fallacious notion. They invented structures and curriculum at school to enforce it.

⁵⁹ Apartheid Museum, *Souvenir Guide*, 27.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Sparks, *The Mind of South Africa*, 189.

The Federated Chamber of Industries, for example, was under the opinion that the Government didn't do enough consultation to proceed with the *Group Areas Bill*. In their letter to the Minister of Interior dated June 6, 1950, they wrote,

It is our considered opinion that no legislation should be passed which is calculated drastically to affect the industrial life of the country unless Parliament is in the position to judge accurately what the effects of such legislation would be. We realize that the Group Areas Bill is of the greatest national importance affecting all sections of the community but we submit that its actual incidence, when implemented, would in all probability be found to have a more profound effect upon industry than any other section of the community. We submit further, Sir, that effect cannot be gauged correctly except by way of thorough and objective investigation in which the organizations and persons qualified to do so would have the opportunity to participate.⁶²

At this concern of the South African Federated Chamber of Industries and other business owners, Verwoerd declared, "if South Africa has to choose between being poor and white or rich and multiracial, then it must rather choose to be white."⁶³

The Star in March 3, 1954 published the removal scheme as followed,

When the great move begins, it is expected that about 300 houses will have been built at Meadowlands by the end of April. These will house the first Native families to be removed. The Department of Native Affairs will supply the transport-probably a fleet of lorries to move Natives from the "black spots" to their new homes in Meadowlands. Nobody will be moved until a house is available at Meadowlands. About eight houses a day are now being erected at Meadowlands, but it is hoped to speed this up

⁶² South African Federated Chamber of Industries, *The Bellinger Paper*, 6th June 1950.

⁶³ Sparks, *The Mind of South Africa*, 201.

soon to 12 a day. Native families will move in “installments” as houses become available at Meadowlands.⁶⁴

The newspaper went on to say,

The procedure to be adopted for the actual move will be that those be shifted will be notified verbally of the impending move on a particular date and a formal written notice will also be served upon them. This will be done well in advance so that everything can be ready when the day arrives... The first Natives to be moved will be those in “buffer zones” in the vicinity of Sophiatown, Newclare and Martindale...⁶⁵

Therefore, in a showdown with the City Council of Johannesburg that was not keen to carry out the removal, Verwoerd sought more power in parliament by introducing a new bill.⁶⁶ *The Natives Resettlement Act, Act No 19 of 1954* empowered the Government to remove Africans from any area within and next to the magisterial district of Johannesburg.

Reacting to Verwoerd’s move, The Rand Daily Mail, on March 5, 1954, wrote, “Dr. Verwoerd’s various measures for imposing apartheid on Johannesburg seem well set

⁶⁴ Star, March 15, 1954

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ JCC wanted to avoid a potential widespread protest that could have put them at odds with an alliance of tenants, subtenants and property owners. In addition, the JCC sold Meadowlands to Government, thus reclude itself from carrying the load of moving Sophiatown residents. The JCC, wanted to salvage the situation by declaring that those who desired to purchase land in Meadowlands could have done so on a freehold basis. (See Tom Lodge, *Black Politics*, 103.)

to spread muddle in all directions; but, for creating utter confusion, none of this has quite the possibilities of his latest experiment—the Natives Resettlement Bill.”⁶⁷

The second reading of the Natives Resettlement Bill occurred in Parliament on March 23, 1954. On that day *Argus*, one of the newspapers in Cape Town, wrote,

To understand the human story behind the struggle that will open in Parliament today when Dr. Verwoerd moves the second reading of the Native Resettlement Bill, readers in the Cape should consider what would happen if the residents of Goodwood were told that, for reasons of Government policy, they must leave the thriving town they have built up over the years and move to a new site between Kuils River and Blackheath, where homes will be provided on lease, and where present home-owners may again own homes- but not the sites on which they stand; the sites will be held on leasehold only. Roots will be pulled up in the old place, but no rooting medium will be provided in the new. The residents will be moved at intervals decided on by the Government, and will leave behind them the schools, churches, and all other community buildings erected during the long period of establishment. They will have another 10 miles or so of overcrowded train travelling night and morning to get to work. They will see no gain anywhere for themselves.⁶⁸

Despite the opposition of white liberals in the parliament, the new Bill passed and provided not only for the removal of Africans from any area in the magisterial district of Johannesburg, but also established a Natives Resettlement Board (NRB) for the specific purpose of managing and executing these removal projects.⁶⁹

⁶⁷ Rand Daily Mail, Verwoerd Contempt for powers, March 5, 1954.

⁶⁸ *Argus*, Reaping the whirlwind, March 23, 1954

⁶⁹ Hart, Master Plans: The South African Government Razing of Sophiatown, Cato Manor and District Six,” 167.

Given a wide range of statutory powers, this board was, by means of a series of proclamations between 1954 and 1958, constituted into a local authority with the right to exercise influx control regulations and to engage in any activity generally associated with municipalities.

Parliament adopted the provision that

“If the council neglects to perform any act which it is required or empowered to perform under the *Natives Resettlement Act*, the Minister can give it notice to do what is required and if the council fails to comply “to the satisfaction of the Minister” he may direct the Resettlement Board to do the work and the board can recover the costs incurred by court action, by means of a special rate on all ratable property or deduct the amount from any subsidy, grant or other money payable out of the consolidated Revenue Fund or payable to the council by the Administrator.⁷⁰

It was also stated that the Minister had the prerogative to appoint an administrator who

“May alter the boundaries of any municipality, sever any portion of a municipality and constitute it a separate municipality or annex it to any other municipality.”⁷¹

This “extra-municipal” was a graphic example of Verwoerd’s determination to thwart any attempts by the Johannesburg City Council at non co-operation with the NRB.

⁷⁰ Star, What Could Happen if Vervoed and Council Had Head On Collision over removable Scheme, May 25, 1954

⁷¹ Ibid.

This debacle with the City Council led the Star Newspaper to write “The Minister is armed with every conceivable legal aid to carry out the western areas’ removal.”⁷²

White liberal critics saw the bill and its resettlement board provision as a source of trouble for the City Council. An article in The Rand Daily Mail pointed this out, asking,

“Suppose the city council does refuse to obey Dr. Verwoerd’s instructions, how will the Board put them into effect?” The newspaper went on to say, “It would take all the resources of the Johannesburg City Council—its labour force, administrative machinery and general organization—to carry out only half of the Verwoerd’s plan. How is a Board of nine members with no machinery and no organization at its disposal, going to carry out the whole plan?”⁷³

Moreover the Newspaper states:

Tremendous practical difficulties stand in the way of carrying out Dr. Verwoerd’s fantastic schemes; but the fact that they will be difficult to carry out should not make people forget the undemocratic principles behind this measure. Dr. Verwoerd’s is flouting the wishes of the people of Johannesburg, usurping the functions of their properly elected body, the City Council; forcing on them a scheme they do not want, and, on top of everything else, making them pay for it.⁷⁴

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ Rand Daily Mail, Dr Vervoed to Spend City’s Money, March 5, 1954.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

In addition, the Newspaper raises the question of what had to be done under what was going on. It wrote,

What is Johannesburg to do in the face of such reckless dictatorship? It seems to us to have no choice—it must fight Dr. Verwoerd to save its self-respect as well as its pocket. For there is not the slightest doubt that the Verwoerd Bills will hit Johannesburg hard. Not only will the City have to pay for the Minister's hare-brained experiments, but hundreds of traders in the city, who depend on the custom of Natives, will suffer severely when they find themselves without customers. Since every person in Johannesburg has a direct interest in opposing the Verwoerd's scheme, the city's leaders in the Council and in commerce and industry should start to put their heads together. They are confronted by a major crisis.⁷⁵

Despite Verwoerd's pressure on the City Council, they didn't budge and didn't cooperate with the government.⁷⁶ The task to carry out the execution of the removal was then left to the NRB.

Once it became evident that the government would remove Sophiatown residents, various organizations raised their voices in protest. These organizations included the Anti-Expropriation and Proper Housing Committee; the Sophiatown, Martindale, and Newclare Non-European Ratepayers' Association; the Western Areas Protest Committee and the African National Congress (ANC).⁷⁷

⁷⁵ Rand Daily Mail, "Dr Vervoed to Spend City's Money," March 5, 1954

⁷⁶ The City Council was composed of members of the liberal opposition party who didn't approve of the scheme.

⁷⁷ Goodhew, *Respectability and Resistance*, 146.

Their immediate reaction was to attack the official rationalization of the proposed scheme as a slum clearance project and to challenge the Government's planning of the scheme as undemocratic for failing to consult with the community. In their view, the issue of black property ownership and freehold rights were the prime reason Sophiatown was perceived as "a political corn in the apartheid boot."⁷⁸

The ANC censured the project for its "indescribable viciousness," and its "undemocratic, unchristian disregard for human dignity." The scheme was viewed as "wanton disruption of property and legalized robbery," and as "nothing less than a declaration of war on the African people as a whole."⁷⁹

The ANC was concerned that, should the government execute its scheme, rights of ownership of individuals would be snatched by force. People would lose their homes without the Government adequately compensating them. They were also concerned that some people would be provided homes in Meadowlands while others would simply be excluded, forgotten and left destitute.

Furthermore the ANC was concerned that the NRB would resort to evil methods to achieve the aims of the Government. The ANC could not see any good, faithful or well-meaning intentions in the scheme."⁸⁰ To them, the government was embarking as

⁷⁸ Modisane, *Blame Me on History*, 14.

⁷⁹ ANC Memorandum distributed to all ANC branches, trade unions, social, cultural sporting and religious organizations, Carter Karis Microfilm Collection, Reel 4B, 2: DA26: 41/3.

⁸⁰ African National Congress (Western Areas Region) Letter addressed to the House of Assembly on June 10, 1958.

they put it “on an unprofitable venture so big and undesirable as to create extreme frustration on the part of the victims.”⁸¹

Thus, they adopted the motto “*asihambi*” (we will not move) and encouraged residents to not fill out forms issued by the NRB and refused to board the trucks headed to Meadowlands. Moretsele, the Transvaal President of the African National Congress, in an interview with Drum magazine said,

Feelings are running high. Most of the people simply want to sit down and refuse to leave. Property owners in Sophiatown are against being deprived of land and buildings that have cost them so much time, money and energy. Many tenants too, realize that in Meadowlands they will be under severe restrictions: people simply don’t want to be herded into camp like locations: It’s against man’s dignity. Congress as you know believes in non-violence as much as within its power. Let those who want to provoke do so; we have progressive forces on our side.⁸²

But this public outcry of the media, residents and political leaders did not stop Dr. Verwoerd and his Apartheid removal-squad machine from carrying out the plan to resettle Sophiatown residents. At dawn on Feb 9, 1955, “Operation Ghetto Round Up”, the official name given to the removal project, got underway. As 2000 armed police and 86 trucks moved into Sophiatown to carry out the first batch of removals, a military camp was established in Toby Street and a cordon was set up around properties from which families were to be removed.

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² Drum, “Western Areas,” March 1955

Groups of police were stationed at each street corner and others patrolled the township throughout the day. The rest of the police force, armed with rifles and bayonets, formed separate units and marched to the houses, which had been served with a removal notice the day before.⁸³

Sophiatown: The Death of a Living Organism

I was shocked to see what Apartheid had done to our vibrant community. Houses were razed to the ground, as if Sophiatown had been bombed. The bustling township was no more. Triomf, a white suburb, was to be built, and as if to rub salt into our wounds, they retained the old street names.⁸⁴

Before we had even opened the front door, I just heard the hammer on the pillar of the verandah. It so beat the pillar that it sounded like a rockfall in those mines of Carletonville, a big sound that made me wonder if I was dying. That sound went right into my heart and I shall not forget it.⁸⁵

This is a vivid account on how the Apartheid destruction machine turned the vibrant community of Sophiatown into rubble.

Anthony Sampson, recalling the removal scene, described it as follows,

I drove into Sophiatown at dawn. The strip of land facing Westdene was blocked by eighty armed lorries with flying-squad cars, vans, motor-cycles and armed police. Two thousand police waited on Sophiatown. They stood at every corner, looking

⁸³ Van Tonder, "Sophiatown: Removals and Protest, 1940-1955," 193.

⁸⁴ Tutu, "Constrained to Encounter God in the Neighbour," 10.

⁸⁵ Purkey and Stein, *Sophiatown*, viii.

grimly at the people walking to work. They cordoned off the two streets scheduled for removal ... Sophiatown took on the look of a war zone ... Just after six o'clock, engines revved, motor-cycles roared, and one by one the lorries drove into Sophiatown with military precision, to the houses scheduled for evacuation. Furniture, stoves and bedding were lifted from the ramshackle huts into the lorries, while puzzled children watched. Two hours later, the lorries drove in a convoy to Meadowlands, with the tenants sitting high above the stacked furniture ... As the lorries left, demolition squads climbed on to the roofs on the deserted hovels and battered them down with pick axes and sledgehammers ... Sophiatown was disappearing.⁸⁶

Victor Mokhine who was 11 years at the time remembered the event in the interview he gave me in his office in Sophiatown,

Q: How old were you when Sophiatown was turned into rubble?

A: I was eleven years old.

Q: Please tell me what do you remember?

A: I remember the night of February 1955. We suddenly have this influx of a lot of policemen; the place has been surrounded. When we walk out in the morning we were very surprised that the whole place teeming with police men. They stopped people who were trying to leave the suburb going to work; in fact students couldn't go to school. Actually it was raining that particular morning. Then we had heard before that there was going to be a removal and we were expecting it to take place more or less around about the 12 of Feb. But incidentally the political party, religious groups and all lot of people were protesting against the removals, and intended to have a work stay away on the 12, but incidentally three days earlier on the 9, we heard suddenly invasion of the

⁸⁶Sampson, *Drum: A Venture into the New Africa*, 235.

police to come and remove people. And of course, from the very morning they randomly went to some properties, kids were a lot scared and they keep to our property. When we looked around we saw mountain police, someone on horses riding about, we heard that people have been moved out. My family and I were not moved immediately at the time. But on that first day families were moved from Toby Street, some from Ray Street, some from Berther Street.⁸⁷

My family and I were moved almost a year after the first families went to Meadowlands, we were moved in August 1956. We had enough time to prepare ourselves for that particular day because we were warned that we would be next.

But on the first day of removal, I still remember that there was a lot of chaos, lot of mayhem, people running around, some run away to the church, to the Anglican Church for asylum. They left their property.

When the first batch of 150 families was moved, Verwoerd received a report that said,

As the Natives moved out of their homes and rooms in the pouring rain, anti-rodent squads from the city health department moved in with cyanide gas pumps and when they had finished, gangs of Native wreckers took over and demolished the shanties.

There was no violence and no resistance by any of the families, who were glad to move, but several said their only worry concerned the new rents and the cost of travelling to their work from Meadowlands. White bread was handed out to each family at 9:30 am when the first truck reached Meadowlands, one loaf for every three people. Cool drinks were given to each Native and

⁸⁷ Victor Mokhine, interview by author, tape recording, Sophiatown, 6 February 2013.

before the truck moved on to the allotted houses, a dustbin was handed to each family. Then they were shown round their new homes and every piece of furniture was unloaded and put in place.⁸⁸

It has been argued that the absence of violence on the day of the removal was due to the fact that it was carried out three days earlier than planned. Therefore many residents were caught by surprise. Others argue that many subtenants seized the opportunity to be given better accommodation than they had in Sophiatown. Still others attribute the absence of violence to the NRB's decision to move tenants first and owners last.⁸⁹ The Apartheid regime took the absence of violence as a sign of public recognition of its policies by blacks, Indians and coloured. To the Apartheid regime, blacks, Indians, and coloured had come to terms with the idea that it was in their social, best interest to live apart and far from white neighborhoods.

Nothing, however, seems to substantiate the latter argument. In interviews I conducted, the question was asked whether having an alternative accommodation in Meadowlands was an acquiescence to the apartheid policy. Although Meadowlands offered an improvement of living conditions to some, it was not, however, taken as approval of the Apartheid policy. Mr. Moloi, a 69 years old resident of Meadowlands shared with me his opinion whether they voluntary consented to move to Meadowlands.

Q: How long did you live in Meadowlands before coming back to Sophiatown?

⁸⁸ Morris, *Apartheid: Illustrated History*, 48.

⁸⁹ Goodhew, *Respectability and Resistance*, 153.

A: I haven't actually come back to Sophiatown, I still live in Meadowlands.

Q: You enjoy being there?

A: Oh yes. I got used to it. I grew up there and spent all my time over there.

Q: So you are not angry against Apartheid? Are you angry about what the Apartheid did?

A: It was very much intolerable to have Apartheid. So much suffering and deprivation.

Q: Although they gave you a place to stay in Meadowlands?

A: Yes, they gave us a place in Meadowlands. The difference is that as a youngster we stayed in our own house in Sophiatown. Then the difference is because there was house ownership that was possible during that time. In Meadowlands it was rental. For a very long time a lot of people suffered. Those who couldn't afford to pay their rent, a lot were evicted, a lot of families were to locate back in rural areas because of their inability to pay their monthly rental, because it changes their standard of living. Because of their distance from their place of work, it drained out their resources it was a lot pressure from their finances resources.⁹⁰

The destruction of Sophiatown represented what Huddleston called "the death of a "living organism". Huddleston further wrote,

⁹⁰ Moloi, Interview by author, tape recording, Sophiatown, 12 March 2013.

Many of the streets are becoming heaps of rubble. The squalid shelters, the sordid rooms have been pulled down and the places where they stood lie open to the sun and to the sky. Beside them also lie the remains of houses which I have also known where families live happily and in pride of ownership. The good and the bad are destroyed together: Their occupants live in the neat monotony of Meadowlands.⁹¹

Referring to Meadowlands, Huddleston went on to say,

If you are used to the location, I suppose Meadowlands bears no comparison with any other ... being at least just as dull ... It was carried out with the connivance of the Christian conscience of Johannesburg', in spite of all we have tried to do, we have failed so utterly to uphold principle against prejudice, the rights of persons against the claims of power.⁹²

It took the government about 6 years, from 1955 until 1961, to clear up Sophiatown. It is estimated during this period 2500 households with average of 10,000 people were removed annually.⁹³ Sophiatown residents were resettled in Meadowlands, 20 miles west of Johannesburg in houses that were known as “square box houses”, referring to how they were built. While blacks were moved to Meadowlands or leave altogether to resettle in rural areas, Indians and Coloureds were each moved to different townships that included Lenasia and Eldorado Park. Existing townships of Newclare and WNT were rezoned as exclusively coloured.

⁹¹ Huddleston, *Naught for Your Comfort*, 142.

⁹² Morris, *Apartheid: Illustrated History*, 51.

⁹³ Goodhew, *Respectability and Resistance*, 158.

Purkey illustrates this racial dissention in the play “Sophiatown.” In it, Charlie, a coloured man and Mingus, a black man had to break up their friendship and each had to go in a different direction because of their racial classification.

Mingus: Charlie, do you know who you are? Have you ever looked at yourself, stared at that face of yours, and asked yourself who you are? Looked in the car mirror and asked, “Who am I?” You just can’t come with me.

Charlie: I will

Mingus: No! Listen. You can’t come with me because you are a Coloured. Me – I am black, black as the ace of spades. But you are Coloured. Me. I am going to Meadowlands because we lost, you can’t. Just understand one thing Charlie. We lost Sophiatown and you are on your own. So just take your suitcase and say goodbye. Please, Charlie, goodbye. ⁹⁴

During the removal, those who were not relocated either because they did not qualify were rendered homeless and had to hang on to their dilapidated houses.⁹⁵ Their conditions were deplorable and subhuman. The ANC took aim at the government by pointing out that the NRB was deficient in purchasing existing homes to be demolished or finding adequate housing for legitimate residents who qualified for relocation. The ANC also pointed out the arbitrary and humiliating methods the NRB adopted as criterion for selection. The ANC report states,

⁹⁴ Purkey, *Sophiatown*, 69.

⁹⁵ In a complex set of criteria only the Government knew, people were denied because they were single, or were sick, or left town and didn’t meet the deadline, others forgot to register.

To carry out this selection (who is entitled from who is not) the Board prepared a list of unthinkableably stupid and humiliating questions to use for the purpose of conducting a “quiz test.” Here the young officials of the Board have an opportunity of amusing themselves and the test invariably ends up to be a cruel and ghastly torture at the expense of those who are subjected to it.⁹⁶

On March 3, 1960, the Black Sash conducted a set of interviews among residents who were still hanging to their homes in dilapidated state. The Black Sash wrote,

They are living without roofs over their heads; their only shelter being the walls of the houses that still remain standing. The water has been cut off and they are paying three pence a bucket for water which they obtain from a shop in the vicinity. There is no sanitation.⁹⁷

To the Black Sash, Sophiatown was a social evil and thus recommended that the Government take action without delay and alleviate the pain and suffering of residents. To add insult to injury, the police were executing the full force of the law in the control of the pass. Many found themselves in and out of jail and with exorbitant fines that they couldn't pay.

In place of Sophiatown, the government built a new residential area for medium income whites and named it Triomf. While Doctor Verwoerd's success in razing Sophiatown was seen, among the Afrikaners, as good policy and God's providence, to many others it was denounced as a scheme to foster the Apartheid ideology and its

⁹⁶ African National Congress (Western Areas Region).

⁹⁷ Black Sash, Memorandum on the conditions obtaining in Sophiatown, March 3rd, 1960.

principle of white domination and separate development. This ideology of separate development, the cornerstone of Apartheid, would be institutionalized for over 50 years and would be dismantled in 1994.

In February 2006, 50 years after the first removal, the City of Johannesburg officially reinstated the old name Sophiatown replacing the name Triomf. At the event celebrating the reinstatement, Doctor Guma, the former rector of Christ the King Anglican Church said, “This is the day of celebration, not a day of triumph.”⁹⁸ This same reconciliatory tone was also found in the words of the Mr. Masondo, the former deputy Mayor of the City of Johannesburg,

Sophiatown is the past we dare not forget. It is the future we must invest in. All of us without exception have responsibility to help create the future that will be the envy of the world—a democratic, non-racial, non-sexist and prosperous society. This is where we are going. We should defend and deepen this achievement—a healed nation. ⁹⁹

Today South Africa is a changed society. It is a society, described by Professor Heyns, shortly before his assassination, as one where political power and religious legitimation are called to live out, “A new morality and a new anthropology based on the reality of a new heart.” This new morality and anthropology requires the church stop

⁹⁸ Davie, *It's Sophiatown again, 50 Years Later* (Official Website of the City of Johannesburg, February 13, 2006); available from http://www.joburg.org.za/2006/feb/feb13_sophiatownw.stm

⁹⁹ Ibid.

functioning as a political party and the state adopt a new political thinking that will lead to changes in political structures.¹⁰⁰

¹⁰⁰ Heyns, "Change of Heart Needed," *The Star*, 11 Nov 1994, 12.

CHAPTER V

THE ROLE OF THE CHURCHES DURING APARTHEID, 1950-1962: RESPONDING TO THE ENACTMENT OF THE GROUP AREAS ACT AND THE FORCED REMOVALS IN SOPHIATOWN.

Introduction

This chapter addresses the response of the churches at the time of the legislation and enactment of the *Group Areas Act* in Sophiatown. It measures the churches in terms of legitimization, delegitimation and acquiescence. In this sense any church that supported the group areas was inclined to legitimate the system of racial typifications. Those who opposed the group areas by and large delegitimated the system. Some other churches were apolitical and tended to acquiesce with the government policies.

What the chapter argues is that from the time the Bill was introduced in Parliament to its enactment, different churches reacted differently. While it was not surprising that the Dutch Reformed Church (DRC) gave its backing to the Apartheid government and thus legitimized the Act, other churches such as the Anglicans, Methodists and Catholics, struggled to adopt a uniform approach to deal with the pathological typifications of race and ethnicity that the Act enforced.

The chapter starts by discussing the DRC's backing of Apartheid ideology and racial legislations that led to the *Group Areas Act* and the forced removals of Sophiatown residents. It elucidates the response of Christ the King and the Methodist Church of Southern Africa (MCSA) and concludes by asserting St. Francis Xavier's stand as it confronts the pathological racialization of Sophiatown residents.

Dutch Reformed Church and the Forced Removals

As I have argued in previous chapters, the DRC (Afrikaans: *Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk*, abbreviated *NGK*) was the epitome of Apartheid legislations and that without her sacralized power the Apartheid regime would have not been in a position to enact and implement the Group Areas Acts and forcibly remove Sophiatown residents to Meadowlands. As Kuperus puts it, “leaders dominating the DRC (NGK) and the state held similar opinions on the majority of policy issues. Most of the time, the DRC (NGK) leaders gave their unequivocal support.”¹

It was well known during Apartheid that to be a DRC member, was to belong to the Afrikaner imagined community and therefore a supporter of the nationalist agenda. Nat Nakasa captivates this trilogy in one of his essays where he depicts his encounter with a white Afrikaner. Nakasa writes,

I remember having dinner with a friend in one of the less prosperous white suburbs. One of the guests that night was a talented Afrikaner painter... My host had hinted earlier that the painter was a Nationalist [i.e. National Party Supporter], a supporter of Dr. Verwoerd’s apartheid policy. The same man had spent much of his afternoon trying to keep alive a newborn African baby which had been abandoned on a pavement.

... Having talked about his paintings and jazz we gravitated inevitably to the colour question. I wanted to know if he really was a Nationalist, and he said yes. We had by now warmed to each other, lighting cigarettes for one and all, sharing the same concern about the food which seemed to take a long time getting ready.

¹ Kuperus, *State, Civil Society and Apartheid in South Africa: An Examination of Dutch Reformed Church- State Relations*, 76.

‘But what kind of a Nationalist are you? I asked.

‘But why?’

‘How can you vote for Apartheid and then come and drink a brandy with me?’

‘But there is nothing wrong in drinking brandy with you. I would like to drink

With you anywhere. At my place or yours for that matter.’

‘What if I told you that I have no place?’

‘What do you mean?’

‘Just that, I have no place and that’s because of the laws you vote for.’

‘What?’ Where are you going to sleep tonight, for instance?’

‘I don’t know. I may sleep here; wherever I can find a bed tonight.’

The painter was moved. I liked seeing his puzzled face.

‘Well, if ... you mean what you’ve said, you can come and live with me.

We have a whole empty room in that house.’

Now I stopped being amused. Something was wrong somewhere.

‘But the party you vote for has passed the law which says that’s illegal, too,’

I said.

Now the painter was blushing. He looked the other way and picked up his glass.

I became more and more irritated.

Why are you a nationalist if you are willing to stay with me?

Don’t you want the races to be separated?’

Suddenly the painter took his glasses and looked at me appealing:

‘You see,” he said, “I am an Afrikaner. The Nationalist Party is my people’s Party. That’s why I vote it.’²

While Nakasa doesn’t mention the DRC in this dialogue, the last three lines could just have been written as “Hey, I am an Afrikaner and I am a Dutch Reformed, the National Party is my people’s Party, and the Volkstaad is my community. That is why I vote it. ” As I discussed in chapter three, the entanglement between the DRC and the Afrikaner people could be traced back to the time the first Dutch merchants accosted in the Cape in 1652.

² Nakasa, 1975: 21-23

This entanglement was, however, heightened in the years following the creation of the National Party in the thirties and its subsequent victory in the national election in 1948. During this time and beyond, the DRC was well immersed in legitimating the right of the Apartheid government to consolidate power and enact several racial laws. In 1942, for example, the DRC recommended to the Minister of Native Affairs that racial segregations, which were already a standard in the DRCs, be made into laws all over the country. The Church declared,

It is the conviction of the majority of Afrikaans-speaking South Africans and the majority of the Dutch Reformed Church that the only way of insuring the continued survival of the nation is by observing the principles of racial separation.³

Effectively, within two years of coming to power in 1948, the National Party enacted several racial laws that included the Group Areas Acts. Moreover, in 1950, the Church called a conference in the town of Bloemfontein, in Orange Free State. At the conclusion of the conference, the Church made recommendations to the State to separate all spheres of the South African society along racial lines that included schools, churches, and residential areas.⁴ They called it, “autogenous development.” Explicating what it entails, the conference states,

The policy of autogenous development which we advocate ... is no static condition but dynamic its separate development. It proposes a process of development which seeks to lead each population group to its purest and speediest autonomous

³ Chidester, *Religions of South Africa*, 199.

⁴ Ibid.

destination under the hand of God's gracious providence. The policy is the means to an end, namely an independent status. It envisages the elimination of conflict and fiction, of the unhealthy and unequal competition between the more and the less developed.⁵

Furthermore, the conference went on to say,

It is imperative that the reserves should be transformed into true national homes for the Bantu in which a healthy social and family life could be secured for the people... In order to carry out our policy of separate development of the various race groups it would be necessary gradually to eliminate the Bantu from European industrial life. He should rather be integrated into a new industrial system to be developed in the native areas ... the conference expressly holds that politically the Bantu should gradually be given the opportunity of self-government in his own territory, and of managing his own affairs.⁶

Making the case to the parliament on "the autogenous-development" Bill, M.D.C de Wet Nel, the Minister of Bantu education at the time, said the following words,

The first is that God has given a divine task and calling to every People [volk] in the world, which dare not be denied or destroyed by anyone. The second is that every People in the world of whatever race or colour, just like every individual, has the inherent right to live and develop ... in the third place, it is our deep conviction that the personal and national ideals of every ethnic group can best be developed within its own national community ... This is the philosophical basis of the policy of Apartheid ... To our People this is not a mere abstraction which

⁵ Kinghorn and Prozesky, *The theology of Separate Equality: A Critical Outline of the DRC's position on Apartheid*, 67.

⁶ The Racial Issue in South Africa (Bloemfontein: D.R. Mission Press, 1953), 7-8

hangs in the air. It is a divine task which has to be implemented and fulfilled systematically.⁷

In 1952, in order to fulfill this so called divine task, the church agreed with the government that black labor was needed to maintain white privileges and keep the economy running. The church went as far as lending its sacralized power to justify the government decision to relegate blacks to imagined communities that they call “homelands.”⁸ To the DRC, it was morally right and biblically justified for blacks to be consigned to imagined communities of their own where they would proceed with their own separate development. What the government had in mind, however, was that these imagined communities would serve as reserved areas to extract black labor to work as migrants in urban white cities.

In 1953, the biblical narrative that justified Apartheid, especially Prof Groenewald’s assertions on the Tower of Babel in Genesis 11 and the Periscope of Pentecost that I discussed in chapter three was prevalent in the collective consciousness of the Afrikaners. In this sense people like CB Brink, the moderator of the Transvaal Synod saw in it God’s intention for humankind to live as separate nations and people. Constructing his own theology, Brink adds to the Tower of Babel narrative, the creation story and the eschatological narrative of the Book of Revelation. He contends that right from the creation, God was the “Maker of Separations.” God separated light and darkness, waters above/waters/below, land and sea, males and females. Brink saw in this

⁷ O’Meara, *Forty Lost Years*, 73

⁸ Ibid.

separation the nature on how God operates. More over to Brink, God's recommendation to Noah to be fruitful and multiply, should be read as God commending human kind to be fruitful and divide into separate groups, tribes and nations.⁹ In the same token, Brink saw the eschatological narrative of the Book of Revelation as indication that even in the end of time God would judge people separately by nations, tribe, and ethnicity. Brink's theology permeated the collective consciousness of people in the DRC pews.

Moreover, the concept of *Volkschristianisierung*," permeated as well the Afrikaners collective consciousness. *Volkschristianisierung*," is a German word that entails the notion that the text of Matthew 28: 19-20, requires that the gospel be preached to people as ethnic units.¹⁰ It is a notion rendered popular in early twentieth century by the German philosopher Gustav Warneck. Warneck's ideas were entrenched in the global mission enterprise of the time. Warneck contended that the great commission (*panta ta ethne*) does not apply to one on one ministry that is to minister and baptize individuals as single entity but to the entire community. In his views, the text of Matthew recommends that missionaries do evangelism work and baptize native ethnic groups so that they would grow and form an independent identity of their own.

Early in the nineteenth century, through the work of the Stellenbosch missiologist Johannes du Plessis *Volkschristianisierung* was becoming the norm among the DRC. Its missionaries, Rufus Anderson and Henry Venn, would propagate the idea with a new twist of what they called the "three selfs": self-government, self-support, and self-

⁹ Chidester, *Religions in South Africa*, 201

¹⁰ Du Toit, "Missionaries, Anthropologists, and the Policies of the Dutch Reformed Church," 623.

propagation. This was an ideal for which they wanted young churches to strive. ¹¹With *Volkschristianisierung* in mind, the DRC adopted in one of its synods, in the early fifties, the resolution to create separate churches for Indians and blacks and coloured communities. The DRC saw in the creation of these communities the fulfillment of the great commission at a time when race had become a criterion of differentiation. During this same period there was a rise of African independent churches in South Africa. To the Dutch Afrikaners, this emergence of AICs was understood as the direct result of *Volkschristianisierung*.

This is why in many DRC Afrikaners' minds, the 1955 forced removals of Sophiatown was a biblical mandate and therefore acceptable. In their views, Blacks, Coloured and Indians needed to be relocated to their respective imagined communities with their own culture and churches. Very little is, however, documented on the DRC official response to the forced removals. The assumption is that the forced removal was an important part of the construction of the Afrikaners imagined community and therefore they could have only legitimated it and acquiesced to the substantially theologized politics that the DRC helped create and that led to the land dispossessions of the Africans.” ¹² DRC Church members, including those of the Triomf Dutch Reformed Church of Sophiatown, shared this assumption. TDRC was built after the destruction of Sophiatown to accommodate white and blue collar Afrikaners, who were relocating to

¹¹ Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 331.

¹² Lephakga, “The History of Theologised Politics of South Africa, the 1913 Land Act and Its Impact on the Flight from the Black Self,” 2.

Sophiatown. TDRC members saw the forced removals as a divine mandate. Chris Swanepoel, a 76 years old church member, for example, notes,

The church (DRC) understood the removal as a missionary opportunity for the Dutch Reformed to fulfill his calling to bring light to black people. The church thought that God gave us a pathway to preach to the blacks and one way of doing it if they were given their own land so that we can go to them.”¹³

Another church member, Dan Dutoit, 71 years old, went on to say,

We were told that the Bible itself recommended separation of colours. At the time it was acceptable ... it was then good for them (blacks) to have their own community, their own churches, and their own people.¹⁴

For her part, Mrs. Mienie, 58 years old, notes that they were caught up with the apartheid ideology that they thought was good for the Afrikaners in assuming their divine responsibility to other races.¹⁵

Moreover a Dutch Reformed Afrikaner pastor, Nikki, confided to me,

“The forced removals were part of the overall plan to build a true volkstaat for the Afrikaners. The DRC could have only consented to it and even blessed it.”¹⁶

¹³ Chris Swanepoel, interview by author, tape recording, Sophiatown, 12 March 2013.

¹⁴ Dan Dutoit, interview by author, tape recording, Sophiatown, 12 March 2013.

¹⁵ Murel Mienie, interview by author, tape recording, Sophiatown, 14 March 2013.

¹⁶ Nikki, interview by author, tape recording, Sophiatown, 12 March 2013.

Referring to the DRC's mission theology and Apartheid, the South African historian Allister Sparks writes,

The Church (DRC) gave great impetus to the Apartheid idea. It replaced the sense of guilt with a sense of mission, teaching not only that apartheid is not sinful but that it is in accordance with the laws of God. To implement it is therefore a sacred task which the Afrikaner people have been specially "called" to perform.¹⁷

If some Afrikaners justify the forced removals on the grounds of biblical narrative of the tower of the Babel, the creation story, the periscope of the book of revelation, and the *Volkschristianisierung* other members, however, did not share the same view. To the latter, the forced removals was justified on the grounds of the precarious living conditions in which residents of Sophiatown found themselves. Moreover they attributed the removals to the economic power struggle that existed between land owners. One of the TDRC members, Daniel Visser, 71 years old and whose father was a South African Police (SAP) detective at the time of the removals is of this opinion. He notes,

Sophiatown was the worst slum ever. Every corner of Sophiatown had a shop owned by an Indian. One time, a man came to my father and said to him that they have been refused to buy any groceries from an Indian shop in the next block because the man who owns their building wanted them to buy only in the building they lived. So they were forced to buy from the same shop owner that owned the building. This created an untenable situation for many and there were riots that is why they had to be moved. When the removal took place, it was the Indians who made the

¹⁷ Allister Sparks, *The Mind of South Africa*, 153.

big deal out of it because they knew they would lose businesses.¹⁸

This theory didn't have much traction among the Afrikaners themselves or other communities. Most agreed that the Apartheid government had an agenda and Sophiatown was a test case of the apartheid ideology. To fail would have jeopardized the whole system in place.

Another theory lay blame on the British. Mr. Visser, a TDRC member, for example, states, "They (British) are the one who started the non-sense of racial divisions."¹⁹ Mr. Visser goes on to say,

I hope the church should have not followed in the separation of whites and blacks, a non-sense that the British started in 1930 that blacks stay outside the cities, and with entrance with white people and black people and it was carried over in the modern times. It was bad that the church agreed to the government policies to classify blacks as second class citizen.²⁰

This endgame blame was entrenched in the collective consciousness of the Afrikaners. It was as if they wanted to expunge their conscious from guilt. Therefore it was easy for them to blame the British instead of the church's theology that legitimized racial legislations. As Giliomee puts it, "what counted for the Afrikaners was the maintenance of public order and security through a policy sanctioned by the church or in

¹⁸ Daniel Visser, interview by author, tape recording, Sophiatown 12 March 2013.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Ibid.

line with privately held moral and religious principles.”²¹ Moreover, many Afrikaners believed that they were God’s chosen people and as such had a divine mandate to spread the *Volkschristianisierung* to blacks.

From this assertion, many TDRC members either agree or strongly agree that Apartheid was the right thing to do. Mr. Visser, for example, argues that apartheid was about a redistribution of the land and each racial group got their share.²² He states,

The positive thing about Apartheid as I could see it, black people were allowed to have large track of lands, expropriated from white farmers and given to blacks ... they were allowed to develop with the help of tax payers. They were all happy to be in their own areas. They were given grants to create jobs for local people.²³

Mr. Visser is referring here to the creation of imagined communities called “homeland” that the South African apartheid government created to give the so-called autonomies to blacks so they could develop themselves.

Because of the prevailing assumption that Apartheid was right, it comes as no surprise that the opposition to the forced removals was only among a pocket of DRC church members, a subject not discussed in the scope of this thesis.²⁴ To delegitimize

²¹ Giliomee, *The Afrikaners*, 619.

²² Daniel Visser, interview by author, tape recording, Sophiatown, 12 March 2013.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ J.C Pauw’s work, *Anti-apartheid Theology in the Dutch Reformed Family of Churches* is one of the most comprehensive work that brings a historical perspective to the emergence to the Apartheid opposition within the DRC’s body. Other books include Boesak, *Farewell to Innocence* and Beyers Naude *Hope for Faith: a conversation*. These books do not, however, refer

the forced removals, however, would have been a contradiction to the very *Volkschristianisierung* the DRC believed in and the biblical narrative of the Tower of Babel and the Book of the Revelation. The DRC was convinced that it was the moral imperative to build imagined communities for both Afrikaners as well as blacks. Consequently, they ignored the human and moral cost that the forced removal created. Thousands of people were homeless and many families were separated.

If the majority of Afrikaners legitimated the forced removals and thus consented to the DRC sacralized power, this was not the case for Christ the King Church of Sophiatown that chose to delegitimize the forced removals and the racial typifications it enforced.

The Response of Christ the King Church of Sophiatown and the Anglicans

Christ the King is an Anglican church located uphill on Ray Street.²⁵ The first thing that catches one's attention is its six story brown brick bell tower. Built in 1933, Christ the King Church was one of the three properties that were not flattened in 1955 during the Group Areas Acts.²⁶ The reason given is that the architect, who built the church, Mr. Fleming, partnered with the architect who designed the Union Building in Pretoria.

specifically to the opposition to the removals of Sophiatown but rather to the apartheid in general. Resources on the removals per se are very limited.

²⁵ Refer to Photo Appendix

²⁶ The other two were Dr. Xuma house on Toby Street and the Anglican boys' house.

Mr. Victor Nkhone, the curator of Sophiatown Heritage Foundation, explained it in these terms,

The reason why Christ the King was not demolished is that the Anglican Church was an old church and that people like Father Huddleston and Reaves have the support of all the Anglican churches in the country. The second reason is that the Bell Tower of the church was already declared as a national monument. The church had been built by someone who was very close to the government, Herbert Baker. He designed the Union Building in Pretoria. The architect of the church and him worked together.²⁷

After the Forced Removals, the altar of the church was, however, deconsecrated in 1964. In 1967, the church was sold to the Department of Community Development. In 1970, the conservative Nederduits Hervormde Kerk (NHK) bought the church and used it as a Sunday school building. In 1983, it was sold to another Afrikaner church, Pinkster Protestant Kerk. After several years in the hands of the PPK, the Anglican Church of South Africa bought it back in 1997. At the entrance of the compound's green gate, there is a plaque that reads,

So little money was available for its construction in 1933 that Architect F.L. H Fleming called it, "a holy barn." The bell tower was added in 1936 and has been the landmark ever since. In 1940 Father Trevor Huddleston, an outspoken opponent of apartheid was appointed Rector, and the Church became an icon of the liberation struggle. In 1955, during the forced removals, Huddleston was recalled to England. Once the congregation left the area, the church was deconsecrated and sold. The site was re-consecrated as an Anglican Church in 1997. Bishop Huddleston's ashes are interred here at his request.

²⁷ Victor Nkhone, interview by author, tape recording, Meadowlands, 20 March 2013

When one enters the sanctuary, on the right hand side, there is the Archbishop Trevor Huddleston's board room. The inscription on the plaque reads,

This room was blessed by

the Right Reverend Bishop Brian Germond

on June 17, 2012.

Prayer for Africa

(Fr. Trevor Huddleston):

“God bless Africa, Guard her people,

Guide her leaders and give her peace.”

Trevor Huddleston was one of the outspoken priests of Christ the King and to some degree personifies the response of the Anglican Church during the *Group Areas Act*. He was the man in the field. With his prophetic voice, Christ the King rejected the status quo and challenged the theological assertions of the Apartheid in general and the forced removals in particular. On this ground alone, it was a church that was engaged in the delegitimation motif. With Huddleston, Christ the King condemned and resisted the enactment of the *Group Areas Act* and sided with the disenfranchised and the oppressed of Sophiatown. As the plaque at the entrance of the church puts it, “through him, Christ the King became an icon of the liberation struggle.”

Huddleston was appointed rector of Christ the King Church in 1940 and stayed in Sophiatown until he was recalled back to England in 1955. Upon his death in 1998, the South African parliament paid him tribute and issued the following statement,

Dated 23 April 1998 THAT THE HOUSE:

Notes with great sadness the passing away of Archbishop Trevor Huddleston on 20 April 1998.

Recognizes:

The enormous contribution that the late Archbishop made to the liberation struggle, and in particular his founding of, and involvement in, the Anti-Apartheid Movement in the UK; and

that his personal relationship with the oppressed majority was such that he will always be known by the black people of our country as *Father* Huddleston.

believes that , during the worst chapter of South African history, he had the strength, courage and the conviction to stand up against the apartheid oppressor and to mobilize the world to help end the suffering of the people of South Africa; and

pays tribute to one of the greatest champions of freedom and equality the world has ever seen, an internationalist who helped to deepen the relationship of friendship and solidarity between our country and the peoples of the world.

S.G Mfenyan, Secretary to Parliament.²⁸

Huddleston's opposition to the *Group Areas Act* started in 1953. During the defiance campaign, for example, Huddleston declared,

It has been, if I am not mistaken, the teaching of the Christian Church throughout the ages, that when Government degenerates into tyranny its laws cease to be biding upon its subjects. The only point at issue is at what point does tyranny begins.²⁹

Later in the same year, Huddleston participated in a protest meeting that was held in Odin Cinema in Sophiatown to challenge the Group Areas Acts. Reflecting on why the church should engage in political delegitimation, Huddleston wrote,

That Sunday morning at Sophiatown brought home to me, as nothing else had done, how very far along the road we had already travelled. Against this, Synod resolutions and Episcopal utterances simply would not do. It seemed to me then, and it seems even more certain to me now, that the only way to meet this thing (Apartheid) as Christian was to try at least to arouse the Christian conscience ... it seems to me then, as it seems to me at this moment, that the Church was largely unaware of all this, or, if aware, was not prepared to take any strenuous action.³⁰

Huddleston challenged the very essence of the Apartheid government and its theological and biblical affirmations. He asserted,

²⁸ Robin Denniston, *Trevor Huddleston: A life* (New York: St Martin's Press, 1999), xx.

²⁹ Bob Clarke, *Anglicans against Apartheid*, 93.

³⁰ Worsnip, *Between the two fires*, 98.

The doctrine upon which all legislation, and all activity in the Union of South Africa today is based [the] ... doctrine of white Supremacy for all time, is essentially in its very essence an expression of the theory which our Blessed Lord condemned utterly. It says more clearly than anything else could do: "Render unto Caesar the things that are Gods'. For it says quite clearly and unmistakably in word and deed, there can be but one ruling community in this land, a sovereign white government, and this must endure for all time; and all that conflicts with this conception of the State is *ipso facto* wrong, illegal, and cannot be allowed to exist.³¹

Huddleston was of the belief that one should delegitimize injustice and discriminatory laws that sidelined and disfranchised millions of people for the only fact that they were born blacks. In his well acclaimed book, "Naught for the Comfort", he points out why delegitimation was necessary. He wrote,

I believe that, because God became Man, therefore human nature in itself has a dignity and value which is infinite. I believe that this conception carries with it the idea that the State exists for the individual, not the individual for the State. Any doctrine based on racial or colour prejudice enforced by the State is therefore an affront to human dignity and *ipso facto* an insult to God himself. It is for this reason that I feel bound to oppose not only the policy of the present government of the Union of South Africa, but the legislation which flows from this policy.³²

³¹ Ibid., 103

³² Huddleston, *Naught for Your Comfort*, 17.

One of the church members of Christ the King, Susan Maphoso, 81 years old remembered how Father Huddleston was arrested after a meeting of protest against *the Group Areas Act*. She notes

Father Huddleston. I saw him one day, he had a meeting at Odin about this removal, the police were pulling him out the meeting to get into their car that we called “kuala.” They were pushing before even the meetings ends.³³

Another church member, Tshepo Letsoalo, a retired public administrator, commenting on the removal and the role of father Huddleston, says,

The church was in the forefront of the resistance. Father Huddleston was much against the forced removals...³⁴

Furthermore, another church member by the name of Simon Ramhela, 75 years old, recalling the day of the forced removals and role that the church and Father Huddleston played during the removals, notes,

I was born in Sophiatown and lived in Good Street. I was 18 years old at the time of the removal. What happened that day, we were very much surprised. When we wake up in the morning we found that Sophiatown was surrounded by police and soldiers. I was still living with my parents back then. We lived in one room house. We shared everything in one room, bedroom, kitchen and so far. We were renting. My parents weren't happy. In my age it didn't matter church. The church was revolted towards that (forced removals). It is unfortunate they didn't have those powers to stop everything. Even the man you see in pictures here,

³³ Susan Maphoso, interview by author, tape recording, Sophiatown, 17 March, 2013.

³⁴ Tshepo Letsoalo, interview by author, tape recording, Sophiatown, 17 March 2013.

Huddleston, he actually was the first man in the morning of the forced removals. He was at St Peter's college. The priest in charge at the time phoned him to come because people are been removed from Sophiatown.³⁵

Huddleston's efforts to delegitimize the forced removals found an ally in the person of Rev. Ambrose Reeves, who was the Bishop of Johannesburg. Reeves became as well an outspoken voice of the church at the time of the enactment of the Group Areas Acts. When, for example, the Parliament voted in favor of the Group Areas Bill, Bishop Reeves reacted to it in a speech delivered in the city of Johannesburg. He was quoted in the March 9, 1954 edition of the Star saying,

The legislation "will do a grave injustice to thousands of human beings who, while they may be voiceless and voteless, have the same feelings as we have."³⁶

The Rt. Rev went on to say,

"The substance of these Bills compels us to wonder out how far the Government is going to encroach on the internal affairs of any local community."³⁷

Furthermore, in the Watchman, he wrote

³⁵ Simon Ramhela, interview by author, tape Recording, Sophiatown, 17 March 2013.

³⁶ The Star(Johannesburg) March 4, 1954

³⁷ Ibid.

“The church has the right to speak out bodily whatever may be the consequences, whenever basic human rights are threatened. This is not interfering with politics.”³⁸

Reacting to the 60,000 residents removed in the first phase of “Operation Ghetto Round Up,” the Right Reverend Ambrose Reeves was quoted in the Rand Daily Mail of Feb 14, 1955,

In the name of God we are bound to protect against this shameful thing ... In any event there is not the slightest justification for compulsory removing the whole population and razing to the ground all the buildings in that area. Few things have happened in South Africa more crazy than destroying property in this irresponsible fashion.³⁹

While the hierarchy of the Anglican Church was in agreement to delegitimize the *Group Areas Act*, they were not, however, in one accord on how to pursue it. There were dissensions between the proponents of direct actions and those who were inclined to protect the doctrine of the Church. The church’s hierarchy was more aligned towards what the *Kairos* document calls “Church theology.” It is a theology that sought reconciliation between races without political confrontation.⁴⁰

One of the well-known proponents of this theology was, perhaps, the Archbishop of Cape Town, Geoffrey Clayton. Clayton was of the opinion that the church should not be involved in political engagement; it should rather stick to its true nature. As he puts it,

³⁸ The Watchman (May 1954), 3.

³⁹ Rand Daily Mail (Johannesburg) February 14, 1955.

⁴⁰ Kairos document. 1991.

“the church best served a society when it is “being itself.”⁴¹ According to him, the role of the church was “the salvation of the individual, because the Christian must testify to the fact that we are citizens of two cities, the earthly and the heavenly.”⁴² Clayton also believed that” the church must take its stand between the two fires of worldliness and unworldliness.⁴³

Moreover, Clayton was convinced that one should not provoke the state. To provoke the State, he argues, was to increase antagonism.⁴⁴ In this sense, the role of the church, to him, was to find ways of conciliation rather than provoking the government.⁴⁵ By not willing to confront the States, Clayton’s was taking the church to a mode of acquiescence. It was an approach that Huddleston and Reeves did not consent. Both of them adopted direct actions and confrontation with the State as a way to delegitimize its racialization policies.

Huddleston, for example, rejected the conciliation approach and labeled it as dormant. According to him, one should make the choice between “either identification with blacks in their struggle and in their injury, or of ecclesiological abstraction from the socio-political realm.”⁴⁶

⁴¹ Worsnip, *Between the Two Fires*, 93

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 110

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 106

Taking a stand against the ecclesiological approach, Huddleston wrote,

The church sleeps on. It sleeps on while 60,000 people are moved from their homes in the interests of a fantastic racial theory ... it sleeps on while a dictatorship is swiftly being created over all Native Affairs in the Union, so that speech and movement and association are no longer free ... the church sleeps on- though it occasionally talks in its sleep and expects (or does it?) the Government to listen.⁴⁷

Clayton didn't like Huddleston's words and took offense at them. He responded by writing, "Did ... the Father Provincial of the community of the Resurrection thought that his Archbishop was talking in his sleep?"⁴⁸

Alan Paton, Archbishop's Clayton biographer, referring to this incident argued that Clayton was the incarnation of the church and any criticism toward the church was certainly geared towards him. Paton wrote,

In one particular sense Clayton was the church. He could not have condemned more strongly, and in the name of the Church, the Bantu Education Act, the destruction of Sophiatown, the restriction of people by Ministerial edict. Was this the church occasionally talking in its sleep, and expecting the Government to listen to it?⁴⁹

Neo Motlabane, the current pastor of Christ the King in Sophiatown, conceded that the hierarchy of the church and some local parish priests were often in collision.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 106.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 109.

⁴⁹ Worsnip, *Between the Two Fires*, 108.

Motlabane argues that because the hierarchy of the church was not in touch with the reality on the ground and limited itself to synod declarations, some local priests stepped in to fill the void and took a different position from the one of the hierarchy of the church.⁵⁰ Christ the King Church is a typical illustration of this dissention, says Motlabane.⁵¹

Many church members of Christ the King praised the church's role in being vocal and at the forefront to delegitimize the forced removals and the odious system of Apartheid. One of them Michael, a 38 years businessman, says

This is the church that was a hub to resistance. It helped black people to have meetings in here during the Apartheid era. That was very good of the Anglican Church. I only know of what Trevor Huddleston did. And when I moved, I was living opposite the church, and then I realized that I was living opposite to a monument. And that this is the church that allowed the political parties to hold their meeting in the Church. So Father Trevor invited people to church and he said you come to church and after church you can hold your meetings. So if the police came they couldn't stop people. How would you stop people from worshipping God? Fear is a bad thing it breaks down your confidence. My father was one of the strong guys that were on ANC side. A lot of the other family members were for the NP. That because people didn't know the history of Apartheid. The history that was taught to us at school was about English and the Boer war and ShakaZulu. But none of the Apartheid history was given to us. That chapter was closed and so we won't know why

⁵⁰ Motlabane, interview by author, tape recording, Sophiatown, 15 March 2013.

⁵¹ Ibid.

we are fighting the white people but the same people hid that from us.⁵²

To Christ the King members, Sophiatown was an imagined community that provided comfort, security and identity. Its destruction was an attempt to destroy their core existence and socialization construction. Because the Church was involved in the delegitimation of the *Group Areas Act* and its enactment, its role became a legacy that was carried out through generations. It is known, for example, people like Hugh Masekelela, one of the great South African musicians who got his first trumpet from father Huddleston became a vocal critic of Apartheid. Desmond Tutu found his call to ministry in Christ the King, Sophiatown, and continued to speak out against Apartheid. Many others would go on to become outspoken critics to delegitimize Apartheid. Christ the King, was not, however, the only religious body that played a delegitimizing role during the forced removals. The Methodist Church of Southern Africa, (MCSA) was also at the forefront of opposing the *Group Areas Act* and forced removals.

Methodist Church of Southern Africa (Meadowlands Zone

3 and 7) and the Forced Removals

The MCSA (Meadowlands Zone 3 and Zone 7) emerged out the Sophiatown Methodist church. Sophiatown Methodist was located on Gold Street and was destroyed with many other buildings at the time of the Group Areas Acts and the forced removals. Church members who moved to Meadowlands constituted a congregation that first worshipped in the classrooms of Meadowlands No. 1 School, which is now known as

⁵² Michael, interview by author, tape recording, Sophiatown, 18 March 2013.

Emzimbubu. In 1959, the church applied for a site to build in Zone 3; it was granted. The Rev. Dr. J.B Webb, chairman of the Transvaal and Swaziland District, dedicated the building. In 1961 a satellite church was opened in Zone 7.

Members who were interviewed fondly remembered the Sophiatown Methodist and all that it represented: an imagined community and a haven to many residents. For example, Mrs. Khumalo, 81 years old, a retired teacher and the daughter of the pastor at the time, recalled the small vibrant church where her dad preached. She says

We had a good choir and good church service and people were kept on coming to attend our church. I was part of the choir that went to England and we very much enjoyed it.⁵³

Another member, Susan Mophoso, 91 years old shares the same sentiment when she said,

One thing was well known of the Sophiatown Methodist was its choir. I was not part of the choir but we all enjoyed it whenever they were singing. They were very good. The choir was even invited to tour Europe.⁵⁴

In 1955, when the church was reduced to rubble, church members scattered in surrounding townships with the bulk of them moving to Meadowlands. Recalling the forced removals, Mrs. Mophoso said,

⁵³ Mrs. Khumalo, interview by author, Edendale, 12 January 2013.

⁵⁴ Susan Mophoso, interview by author, Meadowlands, 20 March, 2013

I was one of the first groups to be moved to Meadowlands. I remember it was on Thursday. There is a short cut from Sophiatown to Meadowlands. We were to be driven around from Sophiatown, Florida, Visteck and then Meadowlands. It was like the great trek of the Israelites. They didn't take us on the short cut.⁵⁵

Moreover Mrs. Mophoso went on to say,

We were not happy. The government demolished our mission. It was the DRC that encouraged the government. The DRC wanted people to join their churches. I couldn't join them because I am born Methodist. Things started to go wrong when the Apartheid took over.⁵⁶

In a similar way, another former church member, Elizabeth Nobathane, 78 years old, says,

We all were against to move. We didn't have better houses but we didn't know whether what the government was saying was right. We have works here, we have businesses, we could have not just left things to go to a place we don't know.⁵⁷

Not much, however, is documented on how specifically the Sophiatown Methodist, as a local church, reacted to the forced removals. The interviews conducted

⁵⁵ Susan Maphoso, interview by author, tape recording, 20 March, 2013.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Elizabeth Nobathane, interview by author, tape recording, 20 March 2013

suggest, however, that the church participated in the defiance campaign against the forced removals. Not only did the church oppose the *Group Areas Act* but the whole Apartheid system that enforced racial typifications.

In a similar way, the MCSA as a governing body was involved in the campaign to delegitimize Apartheid and its pathological racial laws. For example, in 1953, the church reiterated a statement they submitted in 1948 regarding constitutional rights of the underprivileged in the South African society. The statement reads,

No person of any race should be deprived of constitutional rights or privileges merely on the grounds of race, and morally binding contracts protecting such rights or privileges should be regarded on the high level of a pledged word. Political and social rights especially of the underprivileged groups should not be reduced but rather developed and expanded into greater usefulness.⁵⁸

The Star of March 29, 1954, reported that the Methodist Church, after refraining from “active agitation against this policy (*Group Areas Act*)” could no longer keep silent.⁵⁹

Dr. J.B Webb, reacting to the *Group Areas Act* Bill, wrote,

If the name of South Africa has been blackened everywhere, this has been caused by each successive Act of Parliament designed to deprive non-European inhabitants of this country of existing

13. ⁵⁸ The Churches' Judgment on Apartheid (Cape Town: The Civil Rights League, 1948),

⁵⁹ Star, March 28, 1954.

rights, without making adequate compensation in any acceptable form.⁶⁰

Dr. Webb proceeded to stipulate a four point argument on why the MCSA opposed the *Group Areas Act*. He stated,

Its (the *Group Areas Act*) initial application to the western areas of Johannesburg and the proposed removal of the Africans *en masse* show clearly that it is not a genuine slum clearance scheme which it purports to be.

It deprives non-European owners of their freehold rights without granting similar rights in the alternative settlement scheme. This is a grave and dangerous injustice to those concerned.

Negotiations hitherto have carefully avoided direct consultation with the constituents most vitally affected- the Africans themselves.

The statement that the vast majority of the inhabitants of the western areas are in favour of the scheme is not true. A referendum would easily establish this, and I challenge the Minister to take such referendum.⁶¹

Moreover Webb wrote,

Before writing this letter, I consulted the leaders of our African Church of the Witwatersrand, which numbers nearly 15,000 full

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Ibid.

members apart from adherents, and without one dissentient they approved the substance of the protest.⁶²

Webb concludes by making an appeal to the Government. He wrote,

I admit the complexity and difficulty surrounding any question of race relations in this country. But I am passionately convinced that this is not the way to solve our problem.⁶³

Dr. Webb's appeal, however, fell into deaf ears of the Apartheid Government. As the government went ahead with the forced removals, the MCSA continued to delegitimize it. Not everyone however, within the MCSA was in agreement with the strategy adopted, the direct confrontation with the government. There were dissensions among MCSA adherents. Whites Methodist liberals who were enjoying the privileges of Apartheid were concerned that they could be affected should the government retaliate against the church. Blacks on the other hand were not convinced that the Church was looking after their interest.

To diffuse this dissention and keep the church as a united body, the MCSA, in 1958, declared that it was a "One and undivided people." The statement reads,

We believe that it is the will of God that the church must be one and undivided. The conference declares that its conviction that it

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ Star, March 28, 1954

should be one and undivided trusting to the leading of God to bring this ideal to ultimate fruition.⁶⁴

According to Reverend Sangweni, the pastor of MCSA zone 3,

This was a very strong statement against Apartheid. The church was divided even when we went to synods. We were divided at the time. Whites were accommodated in towns, blacks were accommodated in townships.⁶⁵

The statement, however, wasn't enough to stop an exodus of members within the MCSA, argues Kumalo.⁶⁶ White middle class left the church in great numbers. Many other Methodist bodies which were affiliated with the MCSA left as well. To many of those who left, the position of the church to stay "undivided" didn't address the reality of the racial issues within the denomination.

In 1960, at the Cottesloe consultation, the MCSA joined other English speaking churches and reiterated its criticism to the Apartheid racial legislations that stripped many blacks of human rights and confined them to segregated places with deplorable living conditions. One of the resolutions of the Cottesloe consultation was the recognition of equal rights of diverse racial typifications in South Africa.

The resolution reads,

We recognize that all racial groups who permanently inhabit our country are part of our total population, and we regard them as

⁶⁴ Kumalo, *Methodist with White History and Black Future*, 45.

⁶⁵ Z. Sangweni, interview by author, tape recording, Meadowlands, 20 March 2013.

⁶⁶ Kumalo, 72

indigenous. Members of all these groups have an equal right to make their contribution towards the enrichment of the life of their country and to share in the ensuing responsibilities, rewards and privileges. No one who believes in Jesus Christ may be excluded from any church on the grounds of his colour or race. The spiritual unit among all men who are in Christ must find visible expression in acts of common worship and witness, and in fellowship and consultation on matters of common concern.⁶⁷

Referring to their participation to the consultation, the president of the MCSA wrote,

I am for one quite convinced that we were led to be of one accord at one place by the Holy Spirit at Cottesloe. As leaders of the delegation, I was proud of the contribution we were able to make.
68

The response of the MCSA to the consultation, argues Kumalo, was not only positive but also sought meaningful ways to implement its resolutions.⁶⁹ Three years later, in October 1963, the MCSA would elect their first black president, the Reverend Seth Mikitimi, a former delegate to the Cottesloe consultation. In his capacity as president, Rev. Mikitimi was, “the Methodist loftiest figure nationally and had to deal with racial issues facing the Methodist body and indeed the country.”⁷⁰

⁶⁷ Leslie A Hewson, ed. Cottesloe Consultation. The Report of the Consultation (Johannesburg, 1961), 74.

⁶⁸ Hewson, December consultation. Methodist Missionary Review, 32 (1961)

⁶⁹ Kumalo, *Methodist with a White History and a Black Future*, 52.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

If the Methodists and the Anglicans were at the forefront to delegitimize the *Group Areas Act*, the Catholic Church adopted a different stand.

St Francis Xavier Catholic Church/Martindale-Sophiatown

St Francis Xavier is located on Bernard St, a mile downhill south of the Anglican Church, Christ the King. ⁷¹When one drives by St Francis, there is an inscription on a marble plaque that reads,

This marble plaque was part of the original altar of this church. It is placed here to commemorate all those who suffered so much when the *Group Areas Act* scattered the people of this community then known as Sophiatown.

Established in 1926, the Catholic Church wanted to reach out to the growing Sophiatown's population that erupted in the early twenties. They wanted to build a church and a school. Fr. Ives Saccadas who was the vice-provincial for the Transvaal, was instrumental in making it happen. He built the church and named it after the great catholic missionary St Francis Xavier.

In 1932, with the initiative of the Notre Dame Sisters of Namur, Belgium, St Francis Xavier opened a convent school that in its first year hosted fifty-three children. In its second year, the number of students went up to four hundred. This number continued to grow reaching a thousand students by the year 1945. Referring to the convent school, one of the parishioners at the time noted, "One school is outstanding in its keenness and success in Catholic training, this is St Francis Xavier, Martindale."⁷² This success was,

⁷¹ Refer to Photos in Appendix

⁷² The story of our Parish, unpublished material, St Francis Xavier Catholic Church

however, shattered by the forced removals on Feb 10, 1955. Father Muldoon who witnessed the removals wrote,

With a whole fleet of army lorries in attendance, lining the streets were thousands of police armed with rifles and revolvers and few stun guns at various points.⁷³

“It was terrible”, he said “the convent-school was boarded up and left unoccupied, its eighteen classrooms standing empty.”⁷⁴ Fr Kotze, the current priest at St Francis Xavier, commenting on the Feb 10, 1955 forced removals wrote, “It was a fateful day in the life of Sophiatown and in the life of St Francis Xavier’s Church.”⁷⁵ Moreover, Father Kotze went on to say,

“The aim of the nationalists was to have no black areas in a white areas. They said they would move the people of Sophiatown, literally en masse, and they were moved in 1955. The first settlement was in Orlando West.”⁷⁶

Zake Hoffmeyer, 61 years old, a current church member of St Francis Xavier who attended the convent school when he was a child and who later joined the church, recalled the removals in these terms,

We were told that Sophiatown was about to be moved. All churches, the Anglican and the Catholics tried out their best to

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ Farther Kotze, interview by author, tape recording, Auckland Park, 27 Feb 2013.

save it, but they couldn't succeed. And then came Bantu education which was introduced in 1954. All the schools that were not prepared to go along with that became private schools, and St Francis was one those schools. But because of their finances, parents had to pay for fees, and the government couldn't cover the grant, it couldn't last. The school was finally closed. My family and I left before people were removed. We moved to Linden for a while. Because it was a white area, we moved again from there and came back to Sophiatown, and moved to Lenasia, a designated area for Indians.⁷⁷

Another church member, Michael Adams, 72 years old, recalled the racial typifications that the Apartheid enforced, he says,

Sophiatown was a cosmopolitan town. We had coloured people, Indian people, black people. When Apartheid came in power, they dismantled the whole thing. They said, coloured go this side, blacks and Indians were moved faraway in Lenasia. The movie "Cry the Beloved Country" was made here. It was the government that didn't want to see people mixed, that is why they called it "Apartheid," split them, divide them and rule them.⁷⁸

The role of the Catholic Church towards the *Group Areas Act* and many other Apartheid legislations was at first apolitical and acquiescent. The Catholic Church was not at the forefront to delegitimize the Apartheid. As Father Kotze puts it," the church was kind of "Johnny came lately" to understand the intrinsic evilness of the Apartheid.⁷⁹ Father Kotze went on to say,

⁷⁷ Zake Hoffmeyer, interview by author, tape recording, Sophiatown, 20 March, 2013.

⁷⁸ Michael Adams, interview by author, tape recording, Sophiatown, 20 March 2013.

⁷⁹ Father Kotze, interview by author, tape recording, Auckland Park, 27 February, 2013

The Catholic Church came into the theological dimension of what was happening in Apartheid, a little bit late. The first statement was issued in 1952, by the South African conference, condemning Apartheid as a crime against humanity, intrinsically evil. Thereafter, the Bishop Conference issued a number of statements and the leading Archbishop was Dennis Hurley.⁸⁰

At St Francis Xavier, for example, priests were cautious not to be at the forefront of resistance to the removals. A current church member Thelma Boysen, 61 years old, explained it in these terms,

The Catholics were not involved because we had lots of priests from overseas. We had father Delon for example, he was French. They were not familiar with the situation in Sophiatown. While the Anglican Father Huddleston knew how to move around people. Our priests didn't play a bigger role.⁸¹

What transpired at St Francis Xavier, at the time of the forced removals, was part of the national trend in the Catholic Church in the first decade of the Apartheid government. The Catholics voiced their concerns only in issues pertaining to their interest. They said little to nothing about legislations that the new nationalist government passed included laws such as the *Group Areas Act* that was having a devastating effect on the human rights of most South Africans,⁸² As Kearny puts it,

When the rights of the church were threatened (as in the case of the Bantu Education Act) there was no hesitation about taking up

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ Thelma Boysen, interview by author, tape recording, Sophiatown, 20 March 2013

⁸² Ibid.

the issue strongly; when the issue was one of human rights in general, there was much caution.⁸³

In 1997, Bishop Dowling, recalling the role the Catholic Church in the fifties, states,

“The complicity of the Catholic Church in the past is found in acts of omission rather than commission.” There were times when it was more concerned with itself as an institution, rather than as a servant of God’s people, times when it was more concerned with not having expatriates deported than with drawing attention to the wrongs being done.”⁸⁴

Indeed, for reasons of security and survival, the Catholic Church chose to be apolitical and acquiescent. The Catholics in South Africa were aware of their minority status in the overwhelming Protestant environment and had so many foreign priests in their rank who depended on the government benevolence to issue visas for them to stay in the country. Under these circumstances, to oppose the government would have been “to jeopardize the religious freedom the church enjoyed.”⁸⁵

In 1952, for example, Archbishop Hurley fell short to call on the government to address the pressing issue of racial exclusion. He rather called on blacks themselves to claim their rights to the government.⁸⁶ Bishop Whelan, from his part, refrained from

⁸³ Kearny, *Dennis Hurley*, 76

⁸⁴ South African Press Association, November 17, 1997

⁸⁵ Kearny, *Dennis Hurley*, 76.

⁸⁶ Garth Abraham, *The Catholic Church and Apartheid, The Response of the Catholic Church in South Africa to the first decade of National Party rule 1948-1957*, 51.

engaging the government and rather recommended “maintaining and preserving the separateness of the faith”.⁸⁷ When later they broke their silence, it was with a paternalistic and euro-centric statement that perpetrated the same racial misconception that government was promoting. The statement declared that

“The great majority of non-Europeans, and particularly the Africans, have not yet reached a stage of development that would justify their integration into a homogenous society with the Europeans.”⁸⁸

The statement went on to say,

While many black persons were qualified for civil participation, the majority was totally unprepared for full participation in social and political life according to western standards.⁸⁹

Reflecting back on this statement 45 years later, Archbishop Hurley consented that the Catholic Church was “way out of line with what was happening in South Africa at the time. We were writing, he added, for a timeless and serene society, untouched by political agitation.”⁹⁰

In 1953, when the *Group Areas Act* was enacted, the Catholic Church’s response was to consult with the government. In one of his addresses to the Catholic Women’s

⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁸ Paddy Kearny, *Dennis Hurley, Truth to Power*, 64

⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁰ Ibid.

League of Transvaal, Bishop Whelan, recommended the church to be submissive to the government and not to confront it or oppose it.⁹¹ This was a clear illustration of the acquiescence mode that the Catholic Church adopted at a time.

However, when the 1953 Bantu Education Acts and the 1957 government restriction of blacks from attending worship in white churches were promulgated, the church took the government head on. This was a shift from its previous role of apolitical and acquiescence to wanting to delegitimize racial Typifications laws. The Catholic Church knew, for example, that the Bantu education challenged the Church's chief means of evangelization, in a sense that Catholic schools could be in government's control. They knew that once the state takes over, their influence to forge a new generation of Catholics would be lost. As Kearney puts it, "the church thought that many Catholics would fall away from religious practices and vocation would dry out."⁹²

Therefore, in a conference held in Pietermaritzburg, Archbishop Hurley consented that the Bantu Education Act was a win/lose situation for the church, and as such the church should not have hesitated to clash with government. As he puts it, "the sooner the church clashed with the government the better."⁹³ Hurley went on to say that "if we wanted the right to contribute to the formulation of a new policy, we must oppose Apartheid now."⁹⁴

⁹¹ Ibid., 91.

⁹² Ibid., 70.

⁹³ Ibid.

⁹⁴ Ibid., 73.

In Sophiatown, local priests and the Conference of the Bishops tried to save the school with no avail. In this regard one of church members, Rebecca Motoi, 65 years old notes that,

In the struggle Catholics are not mentioned. But there were some priests who were very involved. I can mention Father Hurley from Durban, that man suffered. Although Catholics were not vocal, they also acted in the backseat. As I mentioned for the school, they tried everything for the school not to become under the government as Bantu education for that was a low type of education. So people can say Catholics didn't take a forceful play, but they did.⁹⁵

Similar to the Bantu education, when in 1957, the government triumphed over freedom of assembly, included prohibiting worship across racial lines, the Catholic Church joined other churches to voice their opposition. They issued a statement on July 21, 1957, that was to be read in all churches that, "the Catholic Churches shall remain open to all without regard to their racial origin."⁹⁶

Later, the Conference of the Bishops made another statement denouncing Apartheid as a "fundamental evil." In that statement, Archbishop Hurley called for the elimination of racial discrimination. He asserted that "the big obstacle to the single society is the colour prejudice of the white man and not necessary differences between races."⁹⁷

⁹⁵ Rebecca Motoi, interview by author, tape recording, Sophiatown, 20 March 2013

⁹⁶ Kearny, *Dennis Hurley*, 112.

⁹⁷ Dennis Hurley in Bentley Anderson, *Scholar Traces Catholic Conscience in Apartheid South Africa*, Fordham University. 27.

In the same year, the Southern African Catholic Bishops' Conference (SACBC) also condemned Apartheid as:

A system that was nothing more than the endorsement and advancement of white supremacy." One in which "the white man makes himself agent of God's will and the interpreter of His providence in assigning the range and determining the bounds of non-white development.⁹⁸

Father Kotze conceded that although the statements of the Conference of the Bishops were powerful and good, but they didn't carry the majority of the lay people in the pews.⁹⁹ As he puts it,

The Catholic laity as people generally in South Africa, were very afraid of the Apartheid breaking down and being swamped socially, politically and culturally. They were basically afraid. There are of course great lay leaders both in the Conference of the Bishops and other churches, who really stood up in many ways. There was one organization in which I was the chairperson at the time, we started it in 1968, CARE, Catholic Action for Racial Equality. We had become under the surveillance of the security forces.¹⁰⁰

Although, the SACBC continued to voice their opposition to Apartheid during the Group *Areas Act* and in subsequent years, they were, however, selective on issues. They

⁹⁸ Ibid.

⁹⁹ Father Kotze, interview by author, tape recording, Auckland Park, 27 February, 2013.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

were inclined to be cautious on issues of human rights and vocal when their security and survival was threatened.

Conclusion

What transpires in the role of the churches under Apartheid is that churches primarily acted to preserve their religious identity and mode of survival. In this sense, their response to the *Group Areas Act* and the forced removals was not unanimous. For example, while the DRC legitimated the Act, the Anglican and the Methodists vowed to delegitimize it. In the process of doing so, they run into dissensions in their rank. Sometimes local priests were not in accord with the hierarchy of the denomination. Among the Catholics, the response was ambivalent, depending on what was in stake for them. They were inclined to align with the government on matters of human rights, and oppose the government when their interests were menaced. They were both apolitical and absent. The post-Apartheid South Africa, however, challenges the role of the churches in all new level. It is no longer a matter of religious identity and survival but how to respond to racial and ethnic typifications that have resurged as processes of a collective national identity. Churches in Sophiatown are grappling with this endeavor.

CHAPTER VI

THE ROLE OF THE CHURCHES IN THE POST-APARTHEID SOUTH AFRICA: ON RACE AND IDENTITY IN THE “RAINBOW NATION”

Introduction

In January 1994, three months before the historic transition of power and the first democratic election in South Africa, James Barber, writing for the *International Affairs*, raised a series of questions regarding identity and nationalism in South Africa. He stated,

The uncertainty which surrounds nationalism in the post-apartheid state can be expressed in the form of overlapping questions.

Will a single overriding national identity emerge, or will there be a variety of national groups without a strong common identity?

South Africa has been a fragmented society in the past; will a post-apartheid society provide the conditions for the development of a strong common identity?

Will the new government seek to stimulate a sense of common nationalism or will it rather accept and build upon diversity?

Are ethnic divisions an unavoidable “reality” which will shape future politics?¹

¹ James Barber, “South Africa: The Search for Identity,” *International Affairs*, vol. 70, No1 (Jan, 1994), 68.

It is now known that when the Government of National Unity (GNU) came to power, they were preoccupied with building a single overarching national identity where racial and ethnic group identities would have weakened or receded all together. They wanted “a political symbol of unity among the diverse people of South Africa.”² They coined it, “a rainbow nation.”³ They organized government campaigns such as “*Simunye*” (we are one) and “*Masakhane*” (working together) to promote the “rainbow nation.” Yet this endeavor turned out to be an uphill battle that in the eyes of many observers, failed to materialize.⁴ As one of the conservative Dutch Reform Church (DRC) pastors suggested to me, “the notion of rainbow nation is a myth.”⁵

What transpires, however, in the current and post- apartheid South Africa is a trend whereby one doesn’t need to pursue, at any cost, the singularity of an overarching national identity. Rather allow multiple identities to emerge as typifications or particularizations of the collective national identity. In other words, sub-group identities/typifications such as race or ethnicity in South Africa have been all along

² Valerie Moller, Helga Dickow, Mari Harris, South Africa’s “Rainbow People,” National Pride and Happiness, Rhodes University, Grahamstown.

³ It is believed that Bishop Desmond Tutu was the first to use the term when he preached in the town of Tromso, Norway on Dec 5, 1991. In his sermon he said, “At home in South Africa I have sometimes said in big meetings where you have black and white together: Raise your hands!” Then I’ve said: “Move your hands,” and I’ve said: “look at your hands- different colours representing different people. You are the rainbow people of God.” And God, remember the rainbow people in the Bible is the sign of peace. The rainbow is the sign of prosperity. We want peace, prosperity and justice and we can have it when all people of God, the rainbow people of God, work together.

⁴ M.F Ramutsidela, National Identity in South Africa: The search for Harmony, *Geo Journal*, Vol 3, No1 (Sept 1997), pp99-110

⁵ Nikki, interview by author, tape recording, Pretoria, 16 February, 2013.

processes of the superordinate/overarching national identity, and had never receded or weakened. What the current and post-apartheid South Africa gives them, however, is a second look, a new optic that might have escaped the eyes of many identity construction observers.

Thus, a new society is emerging whereby more and more South Africans identify themselves with their racial and ethnic background while at the same time claim a national identity. In this new society, racial assertions such as Afrikaner, Coloured, Black, Indians no longer signify antagonistic social positions as they once did under Apartheid.⁶

Against this backdrop the chapter argues that for this new emerging society to be durable, fundamental structural changes that challenge power imbalances must be instituted. In this endeavor, Churches have a major role to play. They have the ability to foster an ethical environment where love, justice, reconciliation and care can deconstruct power imbalances in the society. It is an endeavor that Churches in Sophiatown are grappling with.

The chapter starts by providing a historical background of the construction of an overarching national identity in South Africa with specific reference to the African National Congress and the pursuit of a singular national identity. It elucidates how typifications/subgroup identities (such as race and ethnicity) are processes of the collective identity. The chapter finally elaborates on the role of Sophiatown churches, Christ the King (a homogenous black church), St Francis Xavier Catholic (a multiracial

⁶ Chipkin, "Middle Class in Roodeport," 83

church) and the conservative Triomf Dutch Reformed Church (TDRC), and how they are engaged or did not engage in constructing an ethical environment where race and identities do not fall in the backdrop of imposed racial categorizations.

The African National Congress (ANC) and the pursuit of a
singular National Identity.

The need to build an overarching national identity has been a core value of the political gospel of the African National Congress (ANC). In 1909, for example, at the verge of the creation of the Union of South Africa, Pixley Seme, one of the African political leaders of the time, delivered a speech at a convention where he declared, “we are one people ... these divisions, these jealousies, are the cause of all our woes and of all our backwardness and ignorance today”.⁷

In 1912, when the South African National Congress which later became the ANC, was founded, its pioneers included John Dube, Salomon Plaatje, Pixley Seme, Walter Rubusana and many others, envisioned a collective identity for all South Africans.

The same vision was expressed in 1955, in Kliptown, Johannesburg, when an alliance of political parties that included the ANC proclaimed their core principles in the document entitled “Freedom Charter.” In it, they highlighted the notion to bring all people of South Africa together and give equal rights to all racial and ethnic groups. The Freedom Charter states,

There shall be equal status ... for all national groups and races, all people shall have equal rights to use their own language and

⁷ Benson, 1985, 24.

customs, and “all national groups shall be protected by law against insults to their race and national pride.”⁸

In 1957, Chief Albert Luthuli reiterates this position when he declared that “the ANC believes in a society in which the white and non-white peoples of the Union will work and live in harmony for the common good of all fatherland”.⁹

Again in 1988, in the ANC constitutional guidelines, the same core value of a single national identity is reaffirmed: “It shall be state policy to promote the growth of a single national identity and loyalty binding on all South Africans”.¹⁰ The constitutional guidelines went on to say, “The state shall recognize linguistic and cultural diversity of the people and provide facilities for free linguistic and cultural development”.¹¹

When the ANC won the elections in 1994 and formed the GNU, the same core values were reiterated in the new constitution that was adopted in May 1996. In its preamble, it states, “we, the people of South Africa believe that South Africa belongs to all who live in it, united in our diversity.”¹²

⁸ Francis Meli, *A History of the ANC: South Africa Belongs to us* (Harare, Zimbabwe Publishing House and James Currey, 1989), 210-3.

⁹ Luthuli Albert, A Letter to the Prime Minister, Mr. J. G. Strijdom, 8 May 1957

¹⁰ Thomas Karis and Gwendolen M. Carter, *From Protest to Challenge: A documentary history of African Politics in South Africa* (Stanford, CN: Hoover Institution Press, 1977), vol.3, pg. 523.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996.

Yet, despite these efforts, South Africa has been characterized by lack of common ground on which a national identity could possibly be developed.¹³ The bases on which the South African nation was built failed to produce a common national identity, instead such bases led to parallel national identities which the GNU tried hard to harmonize when elected in power.

This lack of common ground could be traced all the way back to the creation of the union of South Africa in 1910. Right from the start, South Africa as a nation was built on the grounds of racial exclusion and inclusion with competing national projects for white and blacks.¹⁴ Afrikaner leaders such as Louis Botha and Jan Smuts, for example, wanted a nation comprised exclusively of Afrikaners and English. Blacks were excluded.¹⁵

Other Afrikaner leaders such as Malan and Hertzog, from their part, wanted an exclusive nation of Afrikaners only. In fact, in 1913 both Malan and Hertzog formed the National Party that they claimed “represented the interests of a distinct Afrikaner nation.”¹⁶

This policy of exclusion and inclusion prompted black leaders to seek an alternative of their own. Yet, they too were divided on how to build it. While the ANC promoted a non-racial, non-exclusive nation, the Pan Africanist Congress (PAC) was of

¹³ Ramutsindela, “National Identity in South Africa: The search for Harmony,” 101

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Ibid.

the belief that South Africans belonged only to the African people. To the PAC, “the multi-racial character of the South African nation was a contributing factor to the denigration of African identity and promoted a European heritage and tradition”.¹⁷

Considering these early divisions, it was as if South Africa was doomed to fail in developing a national identity. Yet, it could be argued that in its debut “rainbow nation,” the GNU promoted a successful story. For example, they had a coat of arms, a new national flag and two national anthems that were embraced by all South Africans. Three national sporting teams (soccer, rugby, and cricket) that were previously segregated, enjoyed the overwhelming support of the country.

Moreover, data collected within the two years of democracy, the 1995 South African World Values Survey conducted by Markinor and the 1996 MarData syndicated Omnibus Survey, found that there was a strong appeal of “rainbow” as a political symbol that united all South Africans. In addition, this appeal was accompanied by the feeling of a national pride among South Africans.

¹⁷ Fatton, 1986

Table 2: Percentages Happy, Satisfied and Proud to be South African by Racial and Income Groups¹⁸

		Race				Household Income			
	Total	B	C	I	W	L	M	H	R/dk
Very happy	35	28	58	50	54	27	37	53	41
Quite happy	37	27	29	37	41	35	41	41	32
Not very/not at all proud	28	35	13	13	5	38	22	6	27
Life satisfaction									
Satisfied	48	37	64	72	84	32	54	83	50
Dissatisfied	52	63	36	28	16	68	46	17	50
Proud to be South African									
Very proud	83	86	83	82	64	87	85	71	78
Quite proud	14	10	16	15	31	10	13	24	16
Not very/not at all proud	3	4	1	3	5	3	2	5	6
N(unweighted)	2935	1618	396	196	729	911	926	619	479

¹⁸ Source: World Value Study, 1995 Markinor Survey

Table 3: Percentages Happy Satisfied and Proud to be South African by racial and income Groups¹⁹

		Race				Household Income		
	Total	B	C	I	W	L	M	H
GLOBAL HAPPINESS								
Very happy, happy	57	59	55	70	49	60	54	59
Neither/nor	21	21	26	20	18	18	25	18
Unhappy, very unhappy	22	20	19	10	33	22	21	23
PROUD TO BE SOUTH AFRICAN								
Very often/fairly often	65	66	59	68	63	65	63	67
Sometimes/sometimes not	16	14	26	24	20	16	16	18
Seldom/never	19	20	15	8	17	19	21	15
N(weighted)	2259	1593	211	66	389	654	944	636

Nine years later in 2003, the South African Social Attitudes Survey (SASAS) conducted a similar survey with similar results. Eighty-three percent of respondents strongly asserted that they would rather be a citizen of South Africa than of any other country. Ninety-three percent of them were very proud of South Africa.

¹⁹ Source: Quality of Life Study, 1996, Mark Data Survey

Table 4: Percentage of People by Race Agreeing to the following statements²⁰

Statement	Black	Coloured	Indian	White	Total
Would rather be a citizen of South Africa than any other country (%)	88	68	81	65	83
Base	1881	221	68	287	2457
Very proud or somewhat proud of being South African (%)	94	94	96	86	93
Base	1881	221	68	285	2459

Table 5: How Proud are you of being South African? Comparison by race over time²¹

Proud of being South African	1995	1997	1998	2000
Black African	93	95	95	94
Indian/Asian	92	89	84	83
Coloured	94	92	95	87
White	87	85	73	75

Although these indicators, spanning nine years, revealed a strong allegiance to the country, and a strong nationalist sentiment, they were not, however, translated into the overarching national identity that the GNU had in mind, with sub-identities such as race and ethnicity being eroded. In fact, sub-identities or typifications are alive and well in South Africa.²² Recent social science researches, publications and interviews conducted in Sophiatown substantiate this assertion.

²⁰ Source: SASAS, 2003.

²¹ Source: Burgess, 2002.

²² Cynthia Kros, *the seeds of Separate Development, Origins of Bantu Education*, 2.

For example, Giliomee's recent publication that the Afrikaners had never broken a genealogy reaffirms this position.²³ Moreover, Thabo Mbeki, the former South African President, by his own admission, acknowledged that South Africa is a divided nation with one white and rich, and the other black and poor, thus affirming the very presence of typifications in South Africa.²⁴ Scholars such as Chipkin, Nuttall, and Mbembe have all observed the same phenomenon. Furthermore Nikki, a Dutch Reformed Minister confided to me how Afrikaners are reasserting their identity than any time since the end of Apartheid.²⁵ Makni-Bejar puts it in these terms,

En termes d'appartenance la nouvelle société sud-africaine continue à s'identifier selon les communautés identitaires ... L'intention classificatoire est la même qu'au temps de l'apartheid. Les recensements de population de l'ère post-apartheid continuent à classer les personnes par "autoclassification" raciale individuelle et non plus sur une identification raciale imposée. C'est à dire, les recensés doivent s'identifier eux-mêmes par rapport à cinq possibilités d'appartenance offertes: Africain Noir (Black African), Métis, Indien ou Asiatique, Blanc ou autre (spécifier). À cette exception près, les groupes de population d'aujourd'hui ne sont que la version euphémisée des groupes raciaux d'hier.²⁶

²³ Giliomee, *the Afrikaners*,

²⁴ Thabo Mbeki, *The Star*, 2010.

²⁵ Nikki, interview by author, tape recording, Pretoria, (March, 2013).

²⁶ Rim Makni-Bejar, *Les Nouvelles figures d'identité dans le Roman post-apartheid de Nadine Gordimer* in *L'Afrique du Sud: de nouvelles Identités*, Marie Claude Barbier and Gilles Teule, eds. (Aix-en-Provence: Université de Provence, 2010), 175.

All of the above suggest that to build an overarching national identity in the current and post-apartheid South Africa requires one to take into account sub-identities or typifications. In fact, both overarching identity and typifications are not mutually exclusive. Group identities such as race and ethnicity, for example, are the fabric of the South African society and can neither be ignored nor suppressed. Black and white in South Africa could have a strong typification or group identity combined with a strong national identity.²⁷ In this sense, far from being an impediment to the construction of a collective/ overarching identity, typified identities are actually processes of it.

Group Identities and National identity in the post- apartheid

South Africa.

The underlying assumption here is that racial and ethnic solidarities have not weakened. They are, on the contrary, mounting, and have been constructed no longer on bonds of inclusion and exclusion, as was the case under Apartheid but on what Chipkin calls a “common world.”²⁸ “Common world” to Chipkin is not a society with new patterns of sociability that transcend race or ethnicity but rather a society where race is valued and free of the imposed categorization it carried under the Apartheid.

What is happening now in South Africa is that people who have always belonged to sub-group identities such as race and ethnicity are eager to claim their affinity and this has become normative. It is as if South Africans are saying, we reject the pathological

²⁷ Marlene Roefs, 37.

²⁸ Chipkin, Middle Class in Roodepoort, Capitalism and Social Change in South Africa, Public Affairs Research Institute, long Essays/ Number 2, June 2012, 83.

Apartheid imposed categorizations and we value our true selves as typifications of the collective identity. In this sense to be an “Afrikaner” or “Coloured”, or Black, or “Indian”, although it might still carry a perceived or experienced power or disempowerment, it is no longer an imposed categorization. It becomes normative to be identified with a racial or ethnic identity.

For instance, participants (N = 30) in this study were asked: “Do you identify with your ethnic background? Do you see yourself as South African? Do you feel 100% South African? If not, how so?” Twenty-eight (28) of the participants identified themselves with their ethnic background of Black, Coloured, Indian or White. Only two (2) participants identified with their religious identities and viewed themselves as Dutch Reformed Afrikaners. But all identified themselves as South Africans. However, not all, feel proud to be South Africans. To be proud of South Africa was related to their take on the government’s handling of the country and how they were personally affected economically. Among those who were the most dissatisfied were the Coloured and White respondents.

Table 6. Sophiatown Resident Interviews²⁹

Statement	Black	Coloured	Indian	White
Do you identify with your ethnic background?	15	5	5	3
Do you see yourself as South African?	15	5	5	5
Do you feel 100% South African? If not, how so?	15	2	5	1

²⁹ Source: Willy Mafuta, 2013.

These findings corroborate the 2003 SASAS data analysis on National Identity Index by race group which illustrated that Black South Africans have the strongest national identity, Whites the weakest and Indians/Asians and Coloureds were in-between.

Table 7. National identify (NI) index by race group³⁰

Race	N	Mean	Std. Dev.
Black African	1753	3.9	0.77
Coloured	189	3.7	0.81
Indian/Asian	59	3.7	0.88
White	257	3.3	0.89
Total	2258	3.8	0.82

Another series of questions were posed to the participants: Do you participate in activities exclusively to your race? How important a role does race play in your life? All of them responded that they were involved in racial group activities and that race was part of who they were.

Table 8 Sophiatown resident interviews³¹

Statement	Black	Coloured	Indian	White
Do you participate in activities exclusively to your race?	15	5	5	5
How important a role does race play in your life?	15	5	5	5

³⁰ Source: SASAS (2003).

³¹ Source: Willy Mafuta, 2013.

Once again, the result corroborates findings in other researches that have demonstrated that people who live in all exclusive racialized neighborhoods were inclined to stay in that neighborhood and get involved in social activities pertaining to that neighborhood. In the case of this study, former Sophiatown residents, for example, who moved to Meadowlands, an all homogenous Black neighborhood, didn't intend to live elsewhere and were active members of their community.

Moreover, as I interacted with residents of Sophiatown which has become a multiracial town, I discovered that people tend to be clustered in their own racial grouping. This might suggest that if a neighborhood is racially diverse, the inclination was for members of the same racial group to be associated with people of the same colour and ethnic back ground.

Church membership in Sophiatown was also revealing. When the respondents to the study were asked why they joined the church, their responses were varied. Some did join the church because of a pastor who conducted a funeral of a relative or a friend; others came on friends' invitations and in other cases, they joined because their relatives were already members. For instance, Thelma Boysen, one of the members of St Francis Xavier, said to me,

This is the only church I have ever known. I like the spirit of the church and you can feel the unity in the church.³²

Another member from Christ the King Church (CKC) who was displaced during the *Group Areas Act* when asked why he came back to join CKC stated,

³² Thelma Boysen, interview by author, tape recording, Sophiatown, 20 March 2013.

“After the reclamation of this church, we were asked to come back, we the people who used to worship here and give this church full support. So we came in numbers until the church was a full parish.”³³

On further enquiry on whether they have ever been involved in any other church of a different race and whether they felt welcome, all but one was once involved in a different church.

Table 9. Sophiatown resident interviews³⁴

Statement	Black	Coloured	Indian	White
How you ever been involved in any other church of a different race?	1	0	0	0
Have you felt welcome	yes	—	—	—

What this suggests, apart from St Francis Xavier Catholic church which is a multi-racial congregation, is that Sophiatown residents were more inclined to join a church of their own racial grouping. TDRC, for example, is an exclusively white congregation. CKC and the Methodist Church of Southern Africa (MCSA) Meadowlands, Zones 3 and 7 are homogenous Black churches. MCSA Meadowlands churches were even divided further along ethnicity line. The majority of those who worship in Zone 3 were Zulu and those of Zone 7 were Sotho and Tswana. This classification was ground for exclusion and inclusion. This division, however, no longer carried the pathological stigma that was associated with them under the Apartheid

³³ Lawrence Boysen, interview by author, tape recording, Sophiatown, 17 March 2013.

³⁴ Source: Willy Mafuta, 2013.

regime. They have become normative and South Africans are embracing it as part of their collective national identity.

In this sense, sub-group identities such as race and ethnicity have turned out to be processes of the construction of a national identity. A South African can claim his/ her racial category while at the same time asserting a national identity. The 2003 SASAS data analysis found, however, that black South Africans as compared to any other racial ethnicity were more inclined to have a strong race identity combined with a strong national identity. The following table illustrates the findings.

Table 10. Dual identities: Nation and race, by race ³⁵

Race	Race	None	National	National and Race	Total	Base
Black African	24%	11%	16%	50%	100	1388
Coloured	29%	22%	10%	39%	100	316
Indian/Asian	30%	23%	17%	29%	100	191
White	32%	24%	15%	30%	100	273
Total ³⁶	26%	15%	15%	44%	100	2168

This pattern is as well confirmed in Sophiatown whereby among racial categories, Blacks come first as having a strong national identity. As the 72 years old Zanarus Mukwana, a member of Christ the King Church, puts it,

³⁵ Source: SASAS (2003)

³⁶ Percentage totals may not add up to 100 per cent because of the effects of rounding off.

I am first South African. South Africa is my land of birth. I cannot divorce myself from being South African and then African. I don't want that to be removed from me. This church has played a major role in my life. ³⁷

While South Africans are embracing their racial diversity and ethnicity, to move beyond the yoke of race and mitigate the perceived and experienced power and disempowerment it carried under Apartheid, and that it could potentially still carry, one has to construct race as relational and not hierarchical, acknowledge it as normative and not as pathological. ³⁸ One also has to acknowledge the woundedness (shame, anger, guilt, hurt, humiliation, betrayal, fear, resentment) that comes with it.³⁹ The role of the churches, in this context, is to foster an ethical environment where this acknowledgement takes place. Churches in Sophiatown are grappling with this endeavor.

On Race and Ethnicity in Sophiatown: A search for the
Role of the Churches in the Post-Apartheid South Africa.

With the resurgence of racial and ethnic sensitivities in the post-apartheid South Africa, churches have shifted their roles. They have departed from the traditional legitimization/delegitimation role they once played under apartheid and where racial divides and ethnicities were imposed. They have moved to the role of fostering an ethical

³⁷ Zanus Mukwana, interview by author, tape recording, Sophiatown, 24 March, 2013.

³⁸ Zimitri Erasmus, "Undoing the Yoke of Race" in *Religion and Society in Transition*, vol. 6, David Chidester, Abdulkader Tayob, Wolfram Weisse, eds. (New York: Waxmann, 2004), 89.

³⁹ Ibid.

environment where race and ethnicity are asserted and reinterpreted with a new narrative of reconciliation, forgiveness, relational, and disempowerment.

Among churches that are grappling with this new role in Sophiatown, are CKC and St Francis Xavier. Other churches such as the TDRC are ambivalent and apolitical when it comes to issues of race and ethnicity. CKC, through artifacts, sermons and processes of socialization among its members, has adopted a culture in which race and ethnicity are acknowledged and are given a new meaning. For instance, when one walks into the sanctuary, it is a living museum with murals and pictures depicting different stories in the life of the church. In one of those pictures, there is the tower of the church with words, “1934-2004, Never Again My People Be Put To Shame.”⁴⁰ These words are a rejection of race hegemony from the time of the Land Acts until Triomf was reverted to Sophiatown in 2004.

The sanctuary also has banners all around the walls. One of those banners reads, “Bear one another burden.” When asked why that banner was there, Rev Motlabane asserted that it symbolizes a mutual support and understanding for black and white through a socialization process.⁴¹ “That is what the Bible asks to do,” he asserts.⁴²

As one approaches the altar, one is mesmerized by a giant painting with a huge cross in the background. In the middle of the painting, Jesus is depicted as a Black person and he extends his arms across in a sign of welcome. On his left and his right hand side,

⁴⁰ These words are found in the sanctuary of Christ the King Church, Sophiatown.

⁴¹ Motlabane, interview by author, tape recording, Sophiatown, 29 March , 2013.

⁴² Motlabane, interview by author, tape recording, Sophiatown, 29 March , 2013

the painting depicts disciples and ordinary people, all of whom are Blacks and they are looking right at Jesus.

When one exits the sanctuary on a lateral door, at the back of the church, one encounters two giant granite pillars; one with a plaque commemorating the life of Zakes Makgoana Mokae, a well-known South African actor who was featured in Athol Fugard's play *Mr. Harold and the Boys*.⁴³ The other granite rock is of Father Trevor Huddleston, the anti-apartheid activist who requested that his ashes be buried at CKC.

Apart from artifacts in the sanctuary that depict an ethnocentric approach, through sermons, bible studies and prayer meetings, not only the leadership of the CKC encourages social interactions among members but reminds them of their divine call as Christians to love their country and be law-abiding citizens. To achieve this dual call, Rev Motlabane preaches about trust and becoming fish of men. In one of his sermons about trust, he refers to the miracle of Jesus changing water into wine, he declared,

The story of Jesus changing water in wine is a story of trust. Mary the mother of Jesus knew that Jesus would do something and she trusted him. She was not worried, that is why she felt safe to tell the servants to do whatever he tells them to do. If only we do whatever Jesus expects of us, all those difficulties we are facing would be resolved. When the servants did what they were told to do, water was turned into wine. That wine was made by somebody who was completely God and completely human. If you let Jesus in your life, your life would be completely full. If you want God to help you, he can do something with your life. What you need to do is to trust Him. Mary knew that only Jesus was able to sort things out. We should stop the blaming game to

⁴³It is a play that symbolized a new dawn of racial relation in south Africa where all south Africans despite their origin would be considered as equals and live in peace and harmony in a new society.

one another and instead we should be going to God. Let's continue to do what we are told to do. Yes we have problems, yes we have challenges in life, yes we are tempted, we are tempted to do something wrong, we shall trust God and have faith like Mary. When you are inside, do not do things on your own, do things God tells you to do. You will touch the lives of many people around you. If things are rotten, you can change them. As Christians, we should be the light. As Christians we should be the shalom of South Africa. So let's share shalom to one another. We gain nothing by talking bad about other people. We should rather pray for one another.⁴⁴

It is by trusting God, declared Rev. Motlabane that he himself was able to forgive the Afrikaners for the personal pain and humiliation he went through when he was incarcerated at the John Vorster prison in Johannesburg at the age of nineteen while opposing Apartheid. Moreover, he declared, it was through reconciliation that he was able to be healed.

When asked whether he was still angry with Apartheid or he has forgiven and forgotten, Motlabane replied,

Yes, I am angry. I am still angry but I have moved forward. I can forgive but I cannot forget. I grew up in the prison, I lost number of people. I am not going to lie on that. Apartheid destroyed the lives of the black people. Number of my friends were detained and killed ... the scares are still there. We are not going to pretend. Reconciliation was there and we can't pretend. I wrote my honours and master's thesis on Reconciliation. I am healed myself inside but I am saying that I will never forget what it's

⁴⁴ Sermon Preached In Christ the King Church, Sunday March 10, 2013.

done to us. Families were destroyed because of apartheid- our generation can't even tell you and when they tell you they cry.⁴⁵

Maman Kukie, a Church member recalled similar experiences of disempowerment she was subjected to as a child while attending the school of Sophiatown. She states,

Sophiatown was good. The only thing I didn't like about Apartheid was that education was bad. There was a Coloured school there. They gave Coloured children soup and bread. We had to have a penny to provide to buy a lungwena. Jobs were given to Coloured people. If I am Black, you are coloured, you get the job. It was like that, even the education.⁴⁶

Moreover another church member who was forced to move to Meadowlands after his house was destroyed, subsequently noted,

I didn't like Apartheid. We were deprived of so many things in life. We had a schooling system here, they changed the curriculum and so forth, bringing Bantu education alike just to teach us to be able to say "hello Baas" and work and full stop. We had no privileges here. The whites had so many. We had no rights; we were bullied by the powers, rugby. We were bullied right through ... we were deprived of so many things. It wasn't good.⁴⁷

⁴⁵ Rev. Matlabane, interview by author, tape recording, Sophiatown, 12 March, 2013.

⁴⁶ Maman Kukie, interview by author, tape recording, Sophiatown, 20 March 2013

⁴⁷ Simon Rhamela, interview by author, tape recording, Sophiatown, 20 March 2013.

The disempowerment experienced by Reverend Motlabane and his church members suggests that to move beyond the yoke of race, one has to acknowledge the pain Apartheid brought with it. By acknowledging the pain of Apartheid, one could foster an ethical environment of reconciliation and forgiveness, and therefore deconstruct the perceived and experienced power or disempowerment.

According to Rev Motlabane, this is what the Church is called to do: to serve as a ministry of reconciliation. Rev. Motlabane understands reconciliation as an ongoing process and the Church should not remain quiet about it. He says,

We still have some challenges. The church is not quiet. Reconciliation, people are quiet about this. It is a process by which we need to work on. The victims are the ones that came to the TRC [Truth and Reconciliation Committee]. The perpetrators didn't come forward. We are working together to produce a rainbow nation. Our role is to work with the government to build this beautiful country of us.⁴⁸

It isn't clear whether he advocates reconciliation as an open forum as the GNU instituted in 1995 or simply as an ongoing community dialogue. Whatever it is, Reverend Matlobane is of the opinion that it is the role of the church in the post-apartheid era to foster an environment where forgiveness and reconciliation can take place and allow typifications such as race and ethnicity to be asserted and reinterpreted anew.

⁴⁸ Rev. Motlabane, interview by author, tape recording, Sophiatown, 20 March 2013.

Moreover, Motlabane believes that churches should take a closer look into the social welfare of the community and to engage carefully on politics without being swallowed into the political interest of those in power.⁴⁹ He asserted,

I am here to revive the memory of Trevor. Trevor came up with what was known as “Malume scheme.” It is an idea of providing to the community what is needed. For example providing a loath of bread and milk to the needed families of Sophiatown. Another example of our involvement to the community is to open the doors of our building so that the people of Sophiatown can have access to it any time they want. The church is also involved in combating crimes, assisting HIV/aids patients. I believe that the Church must be the voice of the people. That is what Trevor did and I am following on his footsteps..⁵⁰

In a similar way, Zamarus Mukwana, a church member says,

Christ the King is doing good things. From the early days of Sophiatown, fathers, monks, who were here, they did everything for us, our parents used to work for wages. The church built schools for us, they helped poor people, they had school feeding scheme, they were doing everything to help the poor, the needy. This church was closed after the removal, they didn’t want us here. Fortunately the building didn’t come down. Now we are here back, we are trying, spiritually and otherwise, the church is doing well.⁵¹

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Rev. Motlabane, interview by author, tape recording, Sophiatown, 20 March 2013.

⁵¹ Zamarus Mukwana, Author interview, tape recording, Sophiatown, 20 March 2013.

Motlabane also believes that the church shall fight for justice and make its voice heard whenever there is injustice or abuse of power from the political actors. He refers to the case of Nkandla, the home town of the current president of South Africa, Jacob Zuma. President Zuma built a multi-million rand mansion at the taxpayers' expense while people around the town live in abject poverty. In cases like this, argues Motlabane, the Church shall voice her dissatisfaction and not be silent. It is not right, he mused, when people are suffering, that such palaces are built.⁵²

Mukwana, vividly echoes the dissatisfaction with the government when he says,

I am not happy about many things with the current government. There is nothing like it is for all. It is for privileged few. I am not happy with what is happening right now. We knew that whites they bullied us because they felt they were superior. Now we come back, we think that we got it now, we got our black government. Ok it is for white and blacks, Africa for Africans. What is happening, so many people are poor, people are staying in porches house, and they are beating the money. I don't think that is right. I am not happy.⁵³

Motlabane hopes that the hierarchy of the church takes the lead and becomes as he puts it, "the mouthpiece of the church and be vocal".⁵⁴ It should not be left to individuals' voices.

Motlabane states,

⁵² During the campaign of his re-election in March 2014, Zuma dismissed the contention by arguing that the majority of South Africans do not see it as a problem, and only the educated who are bringing attention to it, for their political gains.

⁵³ Zanarus Mukwana, interview by author, tape recording, 20 March 2013

⁵⁴ Rev Motlabane, interview by author, tape recording, 20 March 2013.

As an individual, I have my own opinion, I am not happy personally with something. If one is not happy, he should say, “Thy said the Lord.” I can’t comment of this further because it might go against our leaders. But I hope they step it and be vocal. With me in the area here I am vocal, I play my part in anything that is challenging to the community.⁵⁵

Motlabane’s assertions on what the church should be doing, to denounce injustice and confront the disparity of social inequalities in the stratified South Africa, is what Boesak calls, “a re-appropriating of the prophetic stance.”⁵⁶ In this sense, the church re-appropriates the speech and words of Scripture, so its message acquires prophetic expediency.⁵⁷ This is an endeavor that with which CKC is grappling.

Apart from CKC, St Francis Xavier⁵⁸ presents a different model of a church grappling to foster an ethical environment where reconciliation and forgiveness take place, where the legacy of perceived and experienced power or disempowerment is deconstructed. St Francis Xavier is a multiracial congregation.

As in the CKC, at St Francis Xavier, race and ethnicity are not emphasized; rather, members talk in terms of transcending race and ethnicity. They describe their church in terms such as “the most colourful church,” “race is not an issue here,” and “there is unity in here” and “there is no race hierarchy.” Michael Adams, one of the members puts it this way,

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Boesak, *Tenderness of Conscience*, 159.

⁵⁷ Ibid., 154

⁵⁸ Photo Source: Willy Mafuta, 2013, Sophiatown

St Francis is the most colourful church ever. All nationalities and races are represented. There are social ties among members and you can serve at any capacity you want within the church.⁵⁹

Another church member Rebecca Motoi said,

There is no hierarchy at St Francis, no fight about races in this church. They once tried to separate us. The police once watched this church so closely.⁶⁰

Another church member, Zake Hoffmeyer, when asked whether he had problems having two White priests being on the leadership of the church replied,

I grew up with a white priest. At the time priests came from overseas and there was no black priest. The Black priests have only started getting in priesthood recently. Even in America they have lots of Hispanic priests. There is a general shortage of priests. We also have lots of priests coming all around Africa. There are no many white priests anymore. The beauty of the Catholic Church is that it is the same all over the world. Even if I go to America or any place in the world even you don't understand the language you can follow the mass. What St Francis is today is because of father Kotze.⁶¹

According to Hoffmeyer, race or ethnicity is not what comes in his mind when he worshipped at St Xavier. He joined the church 15 years ago because, in his terms, "I find this church very colourful." This is the same image that another church member painted

⁵⁹ Michael Adams, interview by author, tape recording, Sophiatown, 22 March 2013.

⁶⁰ Rebecca Motoi, interview by author, tape recording, Sophiatown, 22 March 2013.

⁶¹ Zake Hoffmeyer, interview by author, tape recording, 22 March 2013.

earlier. Moreover, according to this church member, “If you come once to St Xavier you are likely to come back again regardless of the colour of your skin that is why it is packed today.”⁶²

Indeed, on the Sundays I worshiped at St Francis Xavier, the attendance was around four hundred people and the church was packed. Half of the attendance was Coloured, the other half was split between Black Africans, Whites, and Indians. The leadership, however, was mostly White and Coloured.

When asked how they racially define themselves, Michael Adams was quick to point out that he sees himself as a human being, not as a Coloured person. He even questioned the assumption under which he was classified as a Coloured. He said,

I was classified in the Apartheid as a coloured and this was how they decided to classify any one that was a mix. The government went on to enact mix marriage act to prohibit racial cohabitation. Then they gave people different privileges based on their races.⁶³

Furthermore, he went on to say

“I see myself as a human being, just as a person. A Coloured is a mix, it can be a mix of White and Black or a mix with Indian. I am not so sure why they called people Coloured.”⁶⁴

⁶² Zake Hoffmeyer, interview by author, tape recording, Sophiatown, 22 March 2013.

⁶³ Michael Adams, interview by author, tape recording, Sophiatown, 22 March 2013.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

The way church members describe their church and themselves is congruent with St Francis Xavier's mission statement. In it, it reads,

St Francis Xavier exists "to proclaim and aspire by the power of the Holy Spirit to live in the Good News of Jesus Christ, through promoting justice and love in a way that affirms all people and all of creation." ⁶⁵

The statement goes on to say,

Justice gives meaning to love, and love gives meaning to justice. By justice we mean inclusiveness, respecting diversity, promoting the life of all people (especially the young), promoting the life of our planet and deepening awareness of injustice. By love we mean kindness, courtesy, hospitality, reconciliation, acceptance, affirmation, harmony, and sensitivity. By living this vision, we build faith, peace, and hope in our parish community and in the world.⁶⁶

Father Kotze, who has been at St Francis Xavier for 34 years, conceded that this mission statement has been the hallmark of St. Francis. Those who crossed St. Francis Xavier's doors, irrespective of their background, race or ethnicity are welcome. Father Kotze's words remind me of my first Sunday at St Francis Xavier. Not knowing who I was or why I was attending the service, out of the blue, one of the leaders came to me and asked whether I would be willing to take water to the priest so that it could be blessed. I felt at St Francis Xavier a welcoming atmosphere.

⁶⁵St Francis Xavier Catholic, Mission Statement 2003

⁶⁶St Francis Xavier Catholic , Mission statement 2003

Through sermons, social groups, and Bible studies, St Francis Xavier promotes an overarching identity where race and ethnicity is transcended. Those interviewed at St Francis Xavier believe that their Christian faith helps them transcend race and ethnicity. They, therefore, they identify themselves as Christians and human beings and then South African. They show a strong inclination of a national sentiment but do not claim to be proud as South Africans, especially in the context into which the current government is running the country.

They were not, however, shy to voice concerns pertaining to their non-imposed racial classification “Coloured, or Whites, Blacks.” Among them, the Coloureds are disappointed in the way in which they have been treated under the current government. Michael Adam, for example, says,

I know the Coloureds were slightly better treated under the Apartheid, because we spoke Afrikaans, the language of the master. Under this government, we are worse off. We are not black enough for them. Coloureds are suffering. They are moving out of the country because there is no future for them. Look the townships of Coloureds, it looks like a third world country. There is lots of drugs over there. I am very disappointed with this government.⁶⁷

Father Kotze echoes this sentiment when he talks about race and the ANC, he says

Racialism as such, I think ... is there. The majority of South Africans were born and brought up as two separate cultures. It is going to take many generations to overcome the generation of the

⁶⁷ Michael Adams, interview by author, tape recording, Sophiatown, 22 March 2013.

past and the hope lies in children born in post 1994, who knew nothing of Apartheid. Largely, there is a certain racialism but I don't think it is pronounced as the ANC government would call it. Everything that goes wrong is blame on the Apartheid regime. It is a tragedy. They need to put it behind and move on. They are the government in power. I think racialism exists to certain extent among blacks, coloured, and Indians ... I don't think whites are specially cornered when it comes to racialism. It depends of course how you define it.⁶⁸

According to Father Kotze, the legacy of racial divisions permeates the South African society, but it shouldn't serve as an excuse for the current government to hide behind its failure to deliver on the needs of the population. The role of the church, in this context, argues Father Kotze, is:

... to be the social conscience of a nation. Churches should be leaders of moral, ethics and social responsibilities. In many ways the Bishops conference is still quite vocal, and hasn't ended. When criticisms are due, there is a great deal to criticize the post 1994 government. There is a great deal to draw people awareness on some of the tragedies of the ANC government in terms of health, education and labor.⁶⁹

What needs to be put in place contends father Kotze, is to assess the outcome of programs such as affirmative action and Black Economic Empowerment (BEE), and make fundamental structural reforms that don't fall under the old racial categories. He says,

⁶⁸ Father Kotze, interview by author, tape recording, Auckland Park, 27 February, 2013

⁶⁹Ibid.

I think, there are some outstanding leaders in the black population. On a day to day basis, when I meet black people, I find it miraculous they don't seem to carry around resentment; they are not buried in the past, but are finding their way forward. The hope of South Africa, however, lies in education and employment. These are the two major things. Unfortunately, I think affirmative action, sooner or later has to go. One of the tragedies of the moment is that some of those in power, especially at a municipal level, simply haven't with no faults of their own, education. One of the greatest damage the apartheid did was the education act with Dr. Verwoerd. I think, in time to come public office must be opened to those who are the best qualified to run whatever, social, political, outreach, health, and education. There is no doubt that affirmative action was necessary, I think BEE was on its own way tragic because it lifted up a handful of blacks people. Too many blacks, however, their lives have not changed at all since the worst of apartheid.⁷⁰

Indeed, the risk with race-based affirmative action is that it can recreate the very power imbalances it supposes to redress. In 2009, although sixty four percent (64%) of South Africans supported affirmative action, the number is, however, split among racial lines. Black support is higher (at 76%) than Coloureds (26%), Indians (21%), and Whites (22%). The same survey suggests that although 62% of South Africans agree that an affirmative action policy creates a society that is more unified, the support is lower among Indians and Whites.⁷¹

Although Church members in Sophiatown support race-based affirmative action, they were, however, critical on how it has been implemented. To most of them it has been counterproductive, creating dissention among Blacks and widening the gap of

⁷⁰Father Kotze, interview by author, tape recording, Auckland Park, 27 February 2013

⁷¹ 2009 HSRC survey

separation with other racial groups. It is in this context that churches in Sophiatown have been proactive and have worked closely with the government to promote an equitable redistribution based on moral ethics and new legislation that can actually be enforced. From the pulpit, they proclaim anti-corruption messages and have fostered an ethical environment to hold the current government accountable and redress power imbalances of the legacy of Apartheid. If this has been the case for both Christ the King and St Francis Xavier, it hasn't been so far for the TDRC.

The TDRC has been apolitical and conservative with reference to its role in grappling with power imbalances in the post-apartheid era. What attracts one's attention when approaching the TDRC is the name Triomf. As discussed in previous chapters, the word "Triomf" is a loaded term. It connotes the victory of the Afrikaners in implementing the *Group Areas Act* in Sophiatown. Although the name Triomf was reverted to Sophiatown in 2004, the leadership of the church decided to keep it.

One of the church members, Andre Visagie, believed that to keep the name Triomf was a sign of defiance to the new government that was making sweeping changes all over the country, including replacing old names with new ones. According to him, it was a decision that the leadership took a unilateral decision without consultation with the congregation.⁷² As a conservative Afrikaner church, the leadership was much aligned with conservative views of Apartheid and was not ready to relinquish the Afrikaners' history at the request of a new government.

⁷² Andre Visagie, interview by author, tape recording, Sophiatown, 19 March 2013.

For instance, they were not keen to embrace members of other racial groups. Since its founding in 1967, the TDRC accounted for one person of colour. This person happened to be a female janitor of the church and who later joined. Other than her, there is no record of the TDRC opening its doors to people of any other racial group. Yet in the eyes of the TDRC, their church was a welcoming congregation. Mr. Visser asserted,

TDRC never discriminated. People of colour are welcome. We had a young black lady. She was in Sunday school, she was confirmed here and her mother is still a member of the congregation. Whenever we have events at the church, she attends.⁷³

Referring to me, one of the church members went on to say, “my generation never discriminates, however if my mother in law was here she would have been appalled by your presence”.⁷⁴ Although she wasn’t there at the time I worshipped with them, I felt, however, that my presence as a Black person in their midst made few of them nervous. Other than the secretary that I had met on two previous occasions and the five people who had lined up to be interviewed, on the Sunday that I was there, no church members showed a sign of willingness to be befriended.

As I made my way to the back of the church to conduct interviews, I was looking for any visible sign of the church’s involvement in the political discourse of South Africa. I couldn’t find any intentional social engagement sign (banner, poster, or articles) to convey a message other than an apolitical role the TDRC has played since the end of

⁷³ Daniel Visser, interview by author, tape recording, Sophiatown, 19 March 2013

⁷⁴ Daniel Visser, interview by author, tape recording, Sophiatown, 19 March 2013.

Apartheid. Since the end of Apartheid, the TDRC moved from the legitimization motif it held under Apartheid to an apolitical role where it focuses more on the otherworldly and not on social engagement. For instance sermons at TDRC were on self-pietism and nothing was preached on an explicit political involvement or racial awareness of power imbalances.

For instance, Dr. Groote, the visiting pastor, preached on the biblical narrative of the miracle of Canaan where Jesus turned water into wine. In his sermon, he said,

Mary knew that Jesus and Jesus alone can help solve problems. We face different challenges and we need to go to Jesus. When we have problems in marriages we need to go Jesus in faith and trust, because if we don't then we start blaming each other and then it turns into fighting. ... In the church of God we do the same, and before we know it, we have fighting and there is no one to take the word of God forward. Yes, there are problems, challenges but we must turn to Jesus. Temptations are present in life. When they occurred, we shall trust in God.⁷⁵

This sermon was slightly different from the one that was preached at CKC. While CKC focuses on its social implication to trusting God and being the *shalom* of South Africa, TDRC emphasizes on self-pietism and otherworldly. It is no surprise that many TDRC members still see themselves as the chosen people of God, a conservative Apartheid view, with a mission to lead the Heathens to the Kingdom of God. In this sense, to be a chosen people of God is to be an Afrikaner. Nikki, a conservative DRC pastor in Pretoria, conceded that many Afrikaners still define reality in the prism of Apartheid. Nikki went on to say,

⁷⁵ Dr. Groote, Sermon preached at TDRC, Sunday February 24, 2013

“... there is backlash when it comes to identity in South Africa, many Afrikaners are searching for their identity but they are looking not in the direction of a rainbow nation. There is frustration and utopia among Afrikaners and they are going back to old glories of the Afrikaners”⁷⁶

The resurgence of Afrikaners racial and ethnic category challenges the normative category that is emerging in South Africa. While racial and ethnicity are no longer defined under the imposed rules of Apartheid, Afrikaners are longing for the old racial categories that brought their hegemony over other races. They seem to cling to barriers that favored them under Apartheid.

As I interacted with TDRC members, categorization such as race and ethnicity are still constructed in the old model Apartheid imposed. It is not surprising Mr. Swanapeol said,

In my new work I am forced to interact with Black people, many of them are arrogant because they have a Black government.⁷⁷

When they were asked how they feel about being part of the post-apartheid South Africa, most of the TDRC members had concerns that were aimed at the government's handling of the country. Some of members would have wished the maintenance of a segregated path between White and Blacks. Mr. Visser said,

The Black people go about their business as usual and we go about us as well. I know some of them have become arrogant

⁷⁶ Nikki, interview by author, tape recording, Pretoria

⁷⁷ Mr. Swanepoel, interview by author, tape recording, Sophiatown, 26 March 2013

because they are in power. I know that some White people will still curse Black people but the majority of them go their way.⁷⁸

Another church member, Mrs. Mienie went on to say,

I am concerned about the spending and the possibility of them having to finish the money that is in the coffers. A lot of Black people are also concerned about this. Money is getting into the wrong hands and going in the wrong direction. There is no easy way to reverse it. The massive spending and the way they do things for themselves and not for the people. That is the fear I have. They squander instead of improving things for people.⁷⁹

In 2009, the Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC) reported that sixty nine percent (69%) of South Africans agreed or strongly agreed that race relations had improved as opposed to fifty seven percent (57%) in 2003. The disparity, however, was drawn along racial lines. Seventy three percent (73%) of blacks either agreed or strongly agreed that race relations had improved, as opposed to fifty eight percent (58%) of whites and fifty six percent (56%) of Coloureds. Indians accounted for seventy percent (70%).

A similar disparity applies to employment and unemployment. The 2012 Employment Equity Report places White men and women at the highest representation in top management of corporations. In addition, they account for the greatest number of land owners. The average household income is six times higher for Whites as compared

⁷⁸ Daniel Visser, interview by author, tape recording, Sophiatown, 26 March 2013.

⁷⁹ Mrs. Mienie, interview by author, tape recording, Sophiatown, 26 March 2013.

to African householders.⁸⁰ When it comes to unemployment, it is much lower among Whites and higher in Black communities.⁸¹

The disparity of employment and unemployment that Apartheid created continues to be perpetrated in the post-apartheid South Africa. No nation could cling to the “rule of property” if it wants to pursue an overarching national identity. It is one thing to give away political power and another one to hold the monopoly in land, capital, corporation, and wages. For the TDRC to be relevant and join the new society that is emerging in South Africa there should be a true change of heart in its members and the realization that the future resides in the disempowerment of perceived and experienced power of the legacy of Apartheid. In this sense the Church role is to preach a message of hope, justice, love, and care.

⁸⁰ Twenty Years Review, South Africa, 1994-2014, 79.

⁸¹ Statistics South Africa, “census 2011.”

CONCLUSION

We believe that the Church has the political responsibility in the sense that we should continue to seek the Lordship of Jesus Christ over every area of life. The prophetic task of the Church is not yet over and must be fulfilled at least as vigorously now as in the past. Moreover, when a new Government is in place we shall have to be as clear and we tried to be vis-à-vis the white minority regime. The watchword here “prophetic faithfulness.” We shall also have to continue to respond to calls from the community to act with them in order to address the wrongs in our society.¹

St Francis is the most colourful church ever. All nationalities and races are represented. There are social ties among members and you can serve at any capacity you want within the church.²

I am first South African. South Africa is my land of birth. I cannot divorce myself from being south African and then African. I don't want that to be removed from me. This church has played a major role in my life.³

Primarily, my thesis aims to investigate the role Sophiatown churches took, preceding and following the enactment of the *Group Areas Act*, 1948-1962. The evidence I found demonstrates that the churches have played and continue to play a role that is paramount to the formation of identity in the people of post-Apartheid South Africa. My hope is that what I have found will make a contribution to the broader field of religion in

¹ Allan Boesak, Director's Report, Foundation for Peace and Justice, 1989-1990.

² Michael Adams, interview by author, tape recording, Sophiatown, 22 March 2013.

³ Zanarus Mukwana, interview by author, tape recording, Sophiatown, 24 March 2013.

the post-Apartheid South Africa. By writing on Sophiatown, I try to fill a void on the limited literature available on the role of churches in Sophiatown. So much has been written on the role of religion in the political history of South Africa but very few have given specific attention to the *Group Areas Act* and identity construction in historic Sophiatown.

Sophiatown presented a good case study because it was an illustrative and microcosm of the divisive racial policy under Apartheid and how different churches responded to it. Its importance lies as well on how the very same churches are responding, in the post-Apartheid era, to the growing trend of racial and ethnic typification that fosters a collective national identity.

In this regard, my research question covered two different periods, during Apartheid and the post-Apartheid period. Under Apartheid, I framed my question around three variables: Was the response of the churches, at the time of the legislation and enactment of the *Group Areas Act*, legitimization, delegitimation or acquiescence? To define my variables and respond to the research question, I appealed to Benedict Anderson's theoretical framework on imagined communities and Peter Berger and Thomas Lukmann's analysis of religious legitimization as social construction.

In Anderson's argument, for example, nations are socially constructed as imagined communities. According to him, it is not possible for members of any given nation to all know each other. Yet, in their collective consciousness lives the image of belonging, "a sense of a horizontal comradeship."⁴ Applying this theory in the context of

⁴ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities, Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1983), 7.

my thesis, I asserted that from the time of settlement of the colonial powers to the creation of the Union of South Africa in 1910, and the institutionalization of Apartheid in 1948, and thereafter, communities as groups of people were constructed and continue to be constructed on collective consciousness of racial, religious and ethnic categories. Names such as Volkstaad, township, location, and homeland were constructed as imagined communities to propagate the hegemony of one race/religion/ethnic group over the other. Churches, from their part, incarnated imagined communities either to propagate or challenge the ideological system of Apartheid. In the name of Apartheid, separate imagined communities were justified as God's sovereign will for humankind as narrated in the Bible.

Berger and Luckmann's theoretical approach helps to formulate a comprehensive assertion on religion and religious legitimation. Berger and Luckmann point out that religion has dual functioning. It can either be a "world-maintaining" and "world-shaking" force capable of legitimating and delegitimizing social structures, institutions, power and privilege. Furthermore, they delineate objective and subjective processes entailed in the social construction of legitimation. They contend that legitimation is a social reality that individuals construct in their daily life in the society.⁵ Society, in this sense, is the product of human activity and consciousness.

According to them the dialectic of human activity and consciousness entails "typifications" and "habitualization". It is by means of typification, they argue, that an

⁵Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann, *The Social Construction of Reality, A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge* (New York: Double Day and Company, 1966), 20.

individual subject apprehends the other.⁶ Typifications set the tone on how one deals with the other. By face to face interaction, one's subjective consciousness creates schemes from which he/she categorizes other members of the society. What one knows or projects on others affect his/her ability to relate in a reciprocal dynamic, argue Berger and Luckmann.⁷

Moreover Berger went on to define legitimation as the socially objectivized "knowledge" that serves to explain and justify the social order.⁸ In this sense, legitimation is the answer to any questions about the "why" of institutional arrangements. These institutional arrangements could take several forms and be expressed on different levels, from noncomplex entities such as maxims and proverbs to complex ones such as theologies, system of science and political philosophies, and ideologies.⁹

With Berger and Luckmann's assertions in mind, I delineated how the Afrikaners approached religious legitimations. Indeed to the Afrikaners, the omnipresent threat and potential chaos from the British and the Africans, prompted them to appeal to religious legitimation to mobilize the Afrikaners nationalistic sentiment and to sacralize Apartheid. They achieved this through the process of myths manufactured in language and

⁶ Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann, *The Social Construction of Reality*, 29.

⁷ Ibid., 28.

⁸The sacred canopy presents a more comprehensive approach to religious legitimation as opposed to how it is elaborated and discussed in the social construction of religion. For the sake of my argument, I discuss legitimation from mostly Berger's perspective, which I must admit, is not far off from what Peter ⁸Berger, *The Sacred Canopy: Elements of Sociological Theory of Religion* (New York: Anchor Books, 1990), 29.

⁹John Wilson, "The De-Alienation of Peter Berger," *An Interdisciplinary Journal*, vol. 52, no.4 (Winter 1969): 428.

theological distortion of the neo-Calvinistic doctrine of the sovereignty of God and double predestination.

If this was my quest to understand the role of the church during Apartheid, in the post-Apartheid era, my research question was to explore the role of the church as it relates to identity formation, especially in the resurgence of race and ethnicity as typifications. In other words, my assumption was that since race and ethnic identity were essential to the Afrikaners in their quest to build imagined communities, and that this prerogative was no more since the dismantlement of the Apartheid, I wanted to know how people defined themselves in the post-Apartheid era and whether the church had anything to do with this identity formation. To this aim, I appealed to identity theory scholars such as Phillip Dexter, Jose Casanova and Manuel Castells.

My assertion, in this case, was that identity formation is a religious phenomenon and as such the religious nature of our existence creates identity. I defined religion in the Durkheimian sense that entails anything that deems to be sacred. To elaborate on my assertion, I appealed to Philip Dexter's analysis on the social product of sacred space and time. Dexter argues that through processes of inclusion and exclusion, sacred space and time allows collective and typified identities to emerge.¹⁰ According to Dexter, identities are believed to be a "constant and unavoidable feature of social existence." In his views, elements of social interaction that include but are not limited to culture, race, traditions,

¹⁰ Philip Dexter, "Perceptions, imaginings, and practices of collective identities in the transition: National Identities and ethnicity in the Western Cape" in *Religion and Society in Transition*, vol. 1, Abdulkader Tayob and Wolfram Weisse, eds. (New York: Waxmann Munster, 1999), 69.

myths, religion, laws of physics, and location give rise to institutions or social organization whereby collective identities are expressed.¹¹

Moreover, argues Dexter, identity is forged in and through the historical process of organization and gives rise to collective and particular identities.¹² While particular identities may come and go, he contends, residuals of collective identities are permanent.¹³ Thus, he suggests that ethnic, racial, and cultural identities in South Africa fluctuate and potentially could disappear. National identities, however, as a residual collective category are likely to be permanent.¹⁴

From Dexter's assumptions, I examined identity in the context of global systems and contended that typified identities or particularizations are constructed locally and are expressions of the collective (global). I referred to Jose Casanova and Manuel Castells who delineated typifications as expressions of collective identities. Casanova, for example, following a Harbermasian approach, constructs identity formation in the context of a democratic society where religions or religious organizations play the role of "enlivening the sphere of civic society and human rights" as he puts it.¹⁵

¹¹ Dexter, "Perceptions, imaginings, and practices of collective identities in the transition: National identities and ethnicity in the Western Cape," 69.

¹² Ibid., 71

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Jose Casanova, *Public Religions in the Modern World* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1994), 232.

Casanova takes issue with the privatization of religions as it was assigned by the enlightenment and modernity. For too long, he argues, that enlightenment and modernity had given religions a marginal and private role, up to dismissing them in the public sphere of the society.¹⁶ In the name of secularization, for example, religions were secluded to religious domain and were believed to disappear as societies become modern. Casanova challenges this assumption and contends that religions or religious organizations have gone beyond the role modernity and secularization has given them. They are well involved in the public sphere of the global society.¹⁷

Bearing this in mind, in my methodology I developed a series of questions to assess how people defined themselves and whether religion played any role in this identity formation. I asked, for example, do you identify with your ethnic background? Do you see yourself as South African? Do you feel 100% South African? If not, how so? Do you get involved in activities exclusively to your race? How important a role does race play in your life? Does your race give a perceived power or disempowerment?

My findings suggest that during Apartheid, the Dutch Reformed Church (DRC) sided with the Government to sacralize legislations that perpetuated the hegemony of the Afrikaners, thus creating perceived and experienced power and disempowerment and imposed racial and ethnic categorizations to Coloureds, Blacks and Indians. They did this to preserve their so-called identity and create an Afrikaner Volkstaat. The forced

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Casanova, *Public Religions in the Modern World* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1994), 5.

removals of Sophiatown's residents to Meadowlands fitted into this stream of a utopian plan.

The response of other churches (Anglicans, Methodists, and Catholics) was varied. The Anglicans and Methodists delegitimated racial divisive legislations. The Catholics were ambivalent, siding with the Government when it was convenient and distancing themselves when their interests were threatened. What emerges, as well, in the findings is that even churches that opted to delegitimize Apartheid and its racially divisive legislations, could not reach a consensus on how to approach it. Dissentions remained, from among the clergy and church hierarchy, down to the laity.

I anticipated the church's role would be different in the post- Apartheid era, but was surprised when the data suggested otherwise with regard to the affirmation of race and ethnicity as typifications. To verify what I observed, I conducted interviews in five different churches and interviewed thirty participants. On the question of overreaching identity, for example, only two (2) participants identified with their religious identities and viewed themselves as Dutch Reformed Afrikaners. But the rest, twenty-eight (28) identified themselves as South Africans. Nevertheless, not all were proud to be South Africans. To be proud as South Africans was related to their view of the government's handling of the country and how they were affected personally and economically. Among those who were the most dissatisfied were the Coloured and White respondents.

On the question of race and ethnic typification, I enquired how they joined the church and whether they were ever involved in any other church of a different race and whether they felt welcome, all but one was once involved in a different church. The response was varied. What it revealed, however, was that apart from St Francis Xavier Catholic church, which is a multi-racial congregation, Sophiatown residents were more inclined to join a church of their own racial grouping.

From all of the above, my assertions were that, in post-Apartheid South Africa, sub-group identities such as race and ethnicity had turned out to be processes of the construction of an overarching national identity. In this sense, a South African can claim his/ her racial category, while at the same time assert a national identity. As a result of my findings, I posit that, in the post-Apartheid South Africa, the Church no longer grapples with institutions grounded in racially divisive legislation, but face a growing trend whereby race and ethnicity are no longer imposed and pathological, but normative.

To sustain this trend, however, I argue, homogenous ethnic and multi-racial Churches in Sophiatown are providing a moral and ethical environment where racial and ethnic typifications are upheld, and perceived, and experienced power or disempowerment is deconstructed. Whether this role could be replicated all over South Africa remains to be determined.

The current state of affairs of the South African government, however, makes many wonder if they are not reverted to what I call “reversed Apartheid.” It appears that the ANC-run government is reverted to old racial categorizations by appealing to the Church to sacralize its claims and ideologies. Consequently, it is fostering an environment where perceived power or disempowerment continued to be perpetuated. It is as if we are witnessing a “reversed Apartheid” in South Africa. Few examples assert this claim.

First, the rhetoric of the ANC run government seems to be a reminiscence of the old categorization of the divine mandate to rule the country. During the last presidential election in April 2014, for example, Cyril Ramaphosa, the ANC Deputy President,

speaking to the crowd at the Lucas Moripe Stadium at Atteridgeville, west of Pretoria, said that “God wants south Africa to vote for ANC. Ramaphosa went on to say that “it was an instruction from God and it should be obeyed.”¹⁸

President Zuma, himself, accepted the invitation to become an honorary pastor of a local church so that he carries the title of Reverend or a minister of God. In this capacity he is able to speak to the people of South Africa as God’s messenger. The claim of the ANC to have a divine mandate to rule the country has led Nokuzola Mndende to argue that, “the present government is nothing else but Christianity at prayer.”¹⁹ It is ironic that those same words were used for the National Party during the Apartheid which was then considered the DRC at prayer.

Second, state-run programs, such as race-based affirmative action, have become the mantra of exclusion and inclusion. Whites, Indians, and Coloured have been complaining that they have been unfairly treated when it comes to redistribution of goods, services, and employment. As Mr. Boysen, a coloured member of St Francis Xavier put it to me,

I am very disappointed in this government ... the way they are acting. Everyone in the cabinet is there to enrich themselves. It is who you know to get the job. Coloured people are suffering. Our children are suffering as well. They are unemployed. My son moved to New Zealand last week with all his kids. A lot of people are doing that because there is no future for our kids. I don’t want to be negative but coloured children are really suffering that is

¹⁸ www.sabreakingnews.co.za/2014/01/20/ramaphosa-god-wants-sa-to-vote-anc/

¹⁹ Nokuzola Mndende, *From Racial Oppression to Religious Oppression: African Religion in the New South African Society* in Walsh, T ed., *Religion and Social Transformation in Southern Africa*. Minnesota: Pergon House, 1999, 152.

why they have drugs issues in their townships. Some of them in the government are not qualified for those positions. They don't know what is going on. The real people are not put in those positions ... We have been treated unfairly under this government. It is as if we are not black enough for them.²⁰

Third, the ANC run government has favored Christianity over other religions and has used the church as its religious ally to sacralize its manifesto and ideology on the grass roots level of the religious masses. Moreover, it has appointed pastors in high profiles position within its cabinets, thus circumvented the church from critiquing the government.

Perhaps the open letter the Reverend Canon Barney Pityana sent to President Jacob Zuma, in which he has asked him to resign, best depicts the current state of the affair of the ANC run government. It is worth citing it in length,

Dear Mr Zuma

AN OPEN LETTER ON THE STATE OF THE NATION AND ANC

I write this letter with a simple request: that you resign from all public office, especially that of President and Head of State of the Republic of South Africa.

I am, of course, aware that you have been re-elected President of the African National Congress, the majority party in our National Assembly. I am also aware that, in terms of our electoral system, that allows the ANC to present you as a candidate to the National Assembly and use their majority therein to put you in office,

²⁰ Boysen, interview by author, tape recording, Sophiatown, 26 March 2013.

without much ado. It would also appear that by its recent vote the African National Congress has expressed confidence in your leadership. You can then understand that I am taking an extraordinary step, and I can assure you one that has been carefully considered, in asking for your resignation.

Our country is in shambles, and the quality of life of millions of ordinary South Africans is deteriorating. Confidence in our country, and its economic and political system, is at an all-time low. There is reason to believe that ordinary South Africans have no trust in your integrity as a leader, or in your ability to lead and guide a modern constitutional democracy that we aspire to become. That, notwithstanding the fact that our Constitution puts very minimal requirements for qualification as a public representative including the highly esteemed office of President and Head of State, and Head of the Executive. What is clear, at the very least, is that the President must have the means and the inclination to promote and defend the Constitution, and uphold the well-being of all South Africans. I have reason to believe that, notwithstanding the confidence that your party has placed on you, you have demonstrated that you no longer qualify for this high office on any of the counts stated above.

As President and Head of State you should take responsibility for the lamentable state in which our society finds itself. This prevailing toxic and amoral environment must surely have something to do with the manner in which you assumed office, by trampling down on all semblance of the rule of law, and corrupting agencies of state. We are constantly reminded of the truth of Shakespeare's words: "Some rise by sin, and some by virtue fall" (Measure for Measure II.2) The result is that we are in a Macbethian world where there is absence from the moral landscape of this dear land of ours any sense of positive good, any sense of personal involvement in virtue, loyalty, restraint. As a result we are in the morass of paralysis of moral power as a society. I believe that we are justified in exclaiming with Marcellus in Hamlet 1.iv "something is rotten in the state of Denmark." And so we say "All is not well."

As citizens we need not ask of our President and Head of State any more than the practice of virtue. To live a virtuous life is to express the goodness of and the possibilities for good in human

living. These have at times been expressed as the cardinal virtues: temperance, courage, prudence and justice. For that the leader must lead by example, be a person of common wisdom, and understand the environment of her/his operations enough to serve the people and be driven by a desire to govern well.

There is no place in this for exploiting the high office for personal gain or benefit, or using state resources to buy loyalty, or to elevate party or family above the public good. Without this radical prescription of service our democracy is hollow, becomes a dictatorship of the Party, until the next elections when the voters once again get coaxed to vote for The Party! The personal attributes of a leader are an important assurance that our democracy is in good hands: excellence in virtue, truth, trust, wisdom, insight, discernment, and sound judgment.

That cesspit of a-morality is to be found in the prevalence of rape in all its brutal forms, in the disregard for loyalty – how does one explain that a close friend of Anene Booysen 's brother in Bredasdorp is one of the suspects of her murder. You yourself know only too well that a daughter of a close friend and comrade of yours accused you of rape! Though, happily, you were acquitted of the charge, the stench of disloyalty and taking advantage of unequal relations remains. South Africans live in fear, they are angry; they are poor (and getting poorer) and burdened by debt. What could be alleviating poverty, like social grants and social housing, is failing in practice because the poor have what is due to them pocketed by corrupt officials, and instead suffer the indignity of living life as beggars in their own land. Whether it be from marauding criminal gangs, or crime syndicates that appear to operate with some impunity, or the elderly terrified of their own grandchildren, or neighbours who cannot be trusted, or girl schoolchildren who are at the mercy of their teachers who [may](#) rape or abuse them, or corruption and theft from public resources by government ministers and public servants, or failure to meet the basic requirements of schooling most notably school textbooks not being delivered on time, or citizens who die in our hospitals because there are no doctors , or no medicines, or the thousands who dies on our roads, or protesters like Andries Tatane in Ficksburg, or the Marikana 46, or those murdered by the Cato Manor police death squad in extra-judicial murder, South Africans live in fear. Are we effectively in

a police state? This situation is the direct result of the failure of public policy.

Besides the social and moral breakdown that engulfs our society, the economic woes for ordinary South Africans are not abating. Social inequality has widened since the end of apartheid – and that is something to be ashamed of. The extent of escalating unemployment in our country is surely nothing to be proud of, and poverty that has become endemic, almost irreversible, that haunts our every being cannot be gainsaid. The gaping disparities between rich and poor is a sad indictment on a party that has been in government since the onset of our constitutional democracy. The inadequacy of policy is attested to by the succession of downgrades by rating agencies, and the despair of the poor expresses itself in incessant demonstrations throughout the length and breadth of our country.

South Africans are angry, and they have every reason to be so. There is evidence that your party and government no longer have the intelligence, ideas or initiative to take bold, radical and necessary steps to arrest this slide into oblivion. Besides just being without the intelligence to change the course of history, evidently your party and government do not even have the inclination preoccupied as it is by a relentless programme of self-enrichment. Not even the otherwise promising National Planning Commission Report will solve the challenges we face because it is too little too late, lacks specificity and is without urgency or determination. Yes, we also have the promise of a multi-billion rand infrastructure development spend that is bound to end up in failure no less than the ignoble defence procurement debacle, based on the prevailing rector of corruption in government. Why, because there are already signs that this initiative has become the target of looters and thieves, many of whom with the full knowledge of the political elite in your party and government. This failure of government is also to be seen in the lamentable e.toll saga, in the handling of the farmworkers demands and essential decision-making in the highest office in the land: the appointments of the Chief Justice, of the Head of the NPA, in government by demands rather than by policy and principle, The picture that emerges is one of lack of leadership that is courageous about things that matter. Yes, we see it in the majority of appointments you make that, with notable exceptions, are

lacklustre and mediocre. These include appointments to cabinet, Provincial Premiers, and even political appointments to diplomatic service, and a gradual erosion of the independence of significant institutions like the judiciary by blatant political interference. These are nothing but an insult to the intelligence of South Africans.

Notwithstanding all this, there is a sense that this country is without an imaginative, transformative chief executive. Instead, where serious matters, as in the outrageous use of state resources to build extensions to your private home amounting to some R206m (if we accept Minister Thiulas Nxesi's assurances, which no reasonable South African should!), you indulge us in the art of equivocation. Is it true that every room in the Nkandla Zuma Estate has been paid for by the Zuma family? Or is it that every room now occupied by the member of your family has been so paid for? You and your ministers so often address us with this double sense of the absurd, and obscured meaning to cover the truth. There is widespread use of state resources as a piggy-bank to meet the demands of your office or for electioneering or other forms of state patronage. Ministers like Tina Joemat-Peterson seem to labour under the belief that it is the responsibility of their office to make the resources of their offices to be available to the President at his beck and call. What about the Guptas, citizens of India who have managed to ingratiate themselves and wormed themselves into the very heart of this nation. The benefits are obvious: they get to summon ministers to their compound and issue instructions; they manipulate the cricket governing council with disastrous results; and the paper they publish has access to large resources from state agencies for which no other newspaper was ever invited to tender. Yes, we are in the midst of a new Infogate Scandal! It can only be in a 'banana republic' where foreign elements can succeed so easily. I wonder where else is that happening, and what about the security of the state? That would definitely never happen in India.

At the centre of this is a President who lacks the basic intelligence (I do not mean school knowledge or certificates), who is without the means to inspire South Africans to feats of passion for their country and to appeal to their best humanity. I mean being smart and imaginative, and being endowed with ideas and principles on which quality leadership is based. Our problem as a country

begins by our having as head of state someone devoid of "the king-becoming graces' to establish "virtuous rule". It therefore sounds very hollow when you protest that as President you deserve respect. I wholeheartedly agree that the office of Head of State must be held with respect. But I submit that you are the author of your own misfortune. There is hardly any evidence that you are treating your high office with the due respect you expect of others; to bestow on the highest office in the land dignitas and gravitas is your duty. No wonder that there was a time that international observers were overly concerned about the unfinished business of criminal investigations against you, and of course, that little matter you are so proud of, your many wives and innumerable progeny – as one with potency to sow his wild oats with gay abandon. In your language this is about your culture. Besides there are far too many occasions of gratuitous disregard for the law and the constitution, and unflattering mention in cartoon media, and often your name features in associations with activities that suggest corruption. South Africans have very little reason to hold their President in awe or respect. On top of that the President makes promises he never keeps, and does not even think he owes anybody an explanation. What happened to the gentleman's ethic, "my word is my bond"! Truth, while never absolute, must be the badge of good leadership.

My counsel to your friends and comrades who seek to protect your reputation by marching onto the Gallery and intimidate the owner of the gallery and the artist of The Spear, or those who are offended on your behalf by the Lady justice cartoon by Zapiro, or the Secretary General of the ANC who summons the Chairman of Nedbank, or the Chief Executive of First Rand for a telling off about the re-branding campaign of the FNB; or the offence caused to some by the decision by AmPlats to restructure its business operations and the threats it was subjected to; or the threats by the General Secretary of the Communist Party and his Stalinist Taliban to legislate respect for the President – none of that would be necessary if you yourself held your high office with a modicum of respect.

Besides these social ills we remain a divided society. We are not just divided by class and wealth (although that is true), or by race, or by gender as the pandemic of violence and brutality against

women is the signature tune of our country to our shame; but most alarmingly, the ugly spectre of ethnicity and tribalism that has been accentuated during your Presidency needs to be nipped in the bud. Clearly, you are not the President to campaign against this malady, nor are you interested in operating above the tribal fray as other Presidents have done. Social cohesion clearly is not on your agenda. I do not mean just occasionally dressing down some opposition politician, or pointing fingers at "clever blacks", or outrage at some indecent racist incidents. I do not even mean a badly organized Social Cohesion Conference or the discredited Moral Regeneration Movement. I mean a coordinated programme of government utilizing the instruments of state and institutions supporting democracy, like the Human Rights Commission, to drive a national strategy of social cohesion. Even universities, once the bastions of civilized life as WEB du Bois puts it, producing an intellectual corps for society that is critical, and independent, are now fast becoming reduced to apologists of failed government policies.

As a critical observer of government and the African National Congress under your leadership, I note that the tenor of government and party is fast drifting towards the conservative, authoritarian, reactionary organization, presiding over a kleptocratic state; and that is intolerant of South Africans expressing themselves. When leaders and governments know that they no longer rule with the consent of the ruled, and without their participation in their democracy they get to be afraid of even their shadows. It often takes on the persona of a playground bullyboy whenever it is unable to answer some pretty sharp critical questions about the conduct of government, and about the prevalence of crime and corruption in South Africa, or about false promises. The ANC is getting to take on a semblance of a mafia organization, a Big Brother that syndicates hard dealings against others, isolates and silences critical voices, and uses state patronage to neutralize and marginalize others. One can observe the makings of a totalitarian, fascist regime.

I am reminded proudly that it was not always like that. There has been much over time that South Africans can be very proud of. I can think of Josiah Gumede challenging John Dube for the leadership of the NNC in the 1920s where, as Peter Limb puts it in his magisterial study of THE ANC'S EARLY YEARS, the

ANC had become miserable and "getting lost in mist and sea of selfishness" (does that not sound familiar?). Dube, it was judged, had become conservative, and associated with ethnic nationalism. What we miss [today](#) is that radical urgency that Josiah Gumede introduced into NNC politics, that uncompromising commitment to shape the destiny of the oppressed. Instead we get a party and President preoccupied with ethnic culturalism, and that has no idea about turning the tide of the economic life of the people of this country. There have been other examples as well which led to the ascendancy of Chief Albert Luthuli, and the removal of the likes of AB Xuma and James Moroka. Nowadays a conservative, reactionary tribal leadership is celebrated and lionised but never censured as it continues to keep a Machiavellian stranglehold and power over the organisation. The ANC is being held captive by reactionary, corrupt forces. The ANC is in danger of being reduced to a tribal club with hangers-on who seek patronage and a hand in the politics of theft. It is exactly such a tribalist sentiment that has caused the Department of Justice and Constitutional Development to drive relentlessly a piece of legislation like the Traditional Courts Bill whose constitutionality is suspect, but which more importantly, clearly undermines the advances this nation has made with regard to the rights of women, and it threatens to introduce a layer of criminal justice that parallels that established by the law of the land. In a land where some 50% of the population is made up of young people and women a leadership is required that trusts the instincts of young people and that radically eschews all forms of sexism and disregard for women. A not dissimilar sentiment especially in the Department of Justice and Constitutional Development must explain the abortive Secrecy Bill, and the secret revival of the National Keypoints Act is surely part of this culture of secrecy.

Besides, our country needs a President who understands democracy especially that a constitutional democracy functions with checks and balances; that power is always exercised under check, and never in an arbitrary manner. The Head of State must be comfortable with the powers of the Constitutional Court and never to threaten at every turn to subject them to review, and to know that good governance flourishes with the oversight of parliament, and of independent organs of state, and that opposition parties are loyal opposition and patriotic and mandated by voters to champion particular positions in the public sphere. Opposition is of no mere nuisance value. It is the lifeblood of

democracy. Some of your utterances suggest that you just do not get it.

I am raising my voice comprehensively now after having promised in 2009 that I shall hold my peace, and give your government a fair chance to perform. I had warned that much of your "victories" in the run-up to Polokwane and thereafter were merely pyrrhic victories. They would yet come to haunt you, I reasoned. Indeed, they have. But now any political analyst will warn that we are on a drift to a totalitarian state, twisted by a security machinery into silence and worse. Those of us who still have voice are obliged to warn against the prevailing trend. One way of addressing this confidence deficit would be for the President and all public representatives to be subjected to a probity test, to declare for public scrutiny their tax affairs, and all matters of conflict of interest. It is also not asking too much to expect that all public officers, including civil servants must express confidence in the system they preside over by sending their children to state schools, and to utilize public health facilities. This must surely include all public sector unions like NEHAWU and SADTU. Leadership matters. Leadership must be accountable and must be exemplary, and must be inspirational. That is where you fail.

Please spare us another five years under your leadership. Spare yourself any further embarrassment of ineffectual leadership. You will be judged harshly by future generations. I ask you solemnly, resign.

Yours
BP

sincerely

Rev. Pityana's open letter to the president serves as a catalyst to religious actors to revisit what role the church ought to play in the present state of affairs in South Africa. I am of the opinion that the church should be the conscience of a nation and hold government to its moral obligation to serve the people and not to appeal to old apartheid pathological categorizations. The Church should continue to foster an ethical

environment and long lasting structures that deconstruct the perceived and experienced power and disempowerment that the Apartheid brought. If the church is no longer in position to assume this role, and instead spending time to sacralize the ANC run government ideologies and claims, it loses its prophetic stance.

The Church shall maintain a critical distance to be able to say to the government “Thy Say Lord.” It should not have to play a party/political role but rather have a prophetic voice of critical expediency. In this sense, what Boasack said, in the 90’s at the dawn of a post-apartheid, newly democratic South Africa, is still as relevant today:

We believe that the church has the political responsibility in the sense that we should continue to seek the Lordship of Jesus Christ over every area of life. The prophetic task of the church is not yet over and must be fulfilled at least as vigorously now as in the past. Moreover, when a new government is in place we shall have to be as clear and we tried to be vis-à-vis the white minority regime. The watchword here “prophetic faithfulness.” We shall also have to continue to respond to calls from the community to act with them in order to address the wrongs in our society.²¹

If the church fails to act today, it can only embolden the ANC-run government to appeal to the old apartheid categorizations to justify their means to the end, which is to stay in power until Jesus comes back as ANC leaders have been saying. To circumvent this risk, the church should continue to be the conscious of the nation. The church should not let its words to become the “words of political expediency, the phrases of media propaganda, bloated verbosity of what passes for parliamentary discourse.”²²

²¹ Allan Boasack, Director’s Report, Foundation for Peace and Justice, 1989-1990.

²² Allan Boesack, *The Tenderness of Conscience, African Renaissance and the Spirituality of Politics*, (Stellenbosch: Sun Press, 2005), 159,

Maybe the wisdom lies in the simple words of the 90-year old Mrs. Mphoso from MCSA meadowlands zone 3, when she said, “Minister can be involved in politics but not belong to a political party. If every political party is in the church how is he going to work with people?”²³

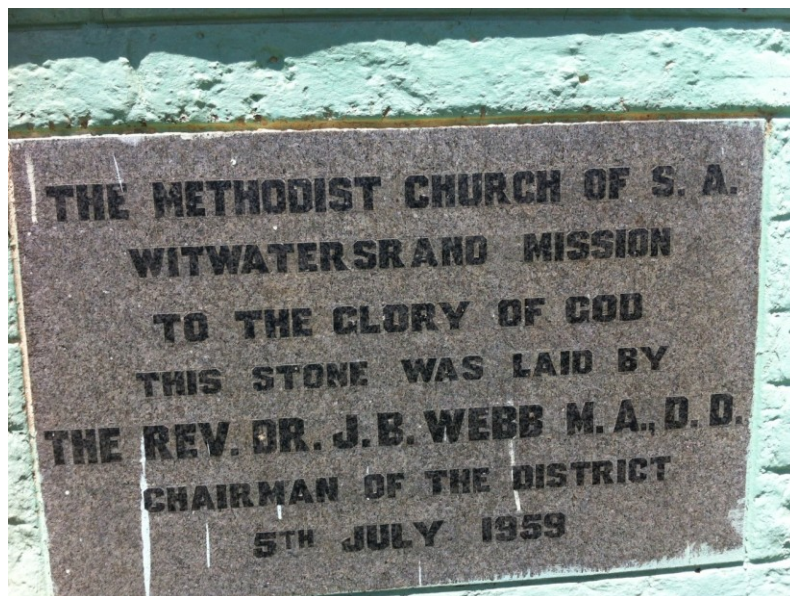
²³ Mrs. Mphoso, interview by author, tape recording, Meadowlands 20 February 2014.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1: ADDITIONAL FIGURES



Christ the King Church
Source: Willy Mafuta, 2013, Sophiatown



Methodist church of Southern Africa – Meadowlands Zone 7
Source: Willy Mafuta, 2013, Meadowlands



Former site of Bantu Methodist Church of Sophiatown
Source, Willy Mafuta, 2013, Sophiatown



1952 Bantu Methodist Church Choir
Source: Methodist Church of Southern Africa Meadowlands Zone 3 Archives



Author at the entrance to St Francis Xavier
Source: Willy Mafuta, 2013, Sophiatown



Sanctuary Alter at Christ the King Church
Source: Willy Mafuta, 2013, Sophiatown



St. Francis Xavier Church Building
Source: Willy Mafuta, 2013, Sophiatown



Despite poverty, squalor and violence, Sophiatown (1953) was exuberant and alive.
Source: Jürgen Schadeberg, Images from the black '50s



Sophiatown 1955. Writers, politicians and journalists live side by side with gangsters, entertainers and black and white 'Bohemians'.
Source: Jürgen Schadeberg, Images from the black '50s



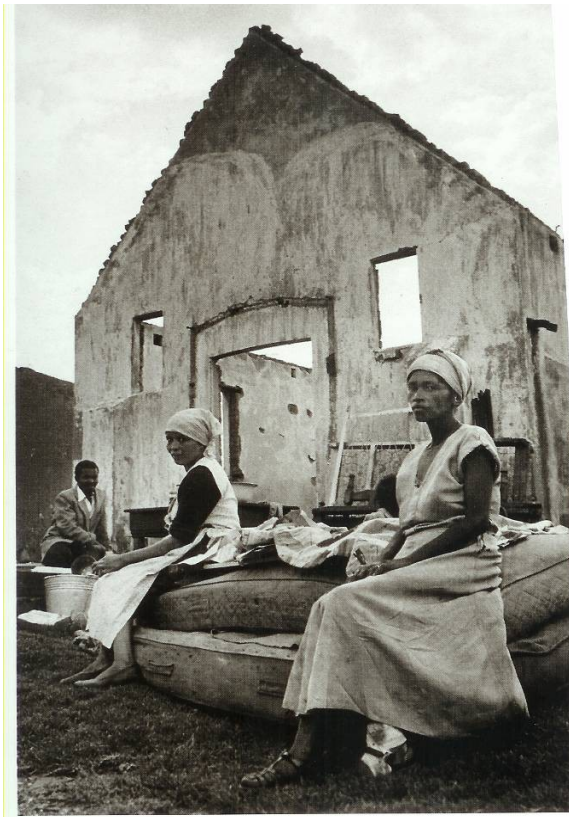
Sophiatown 1955. February 10 – eighty lorries and 2000 armed police move into Sophiatown.

Source: Jürgen Schadeberg, Images from the black '50s



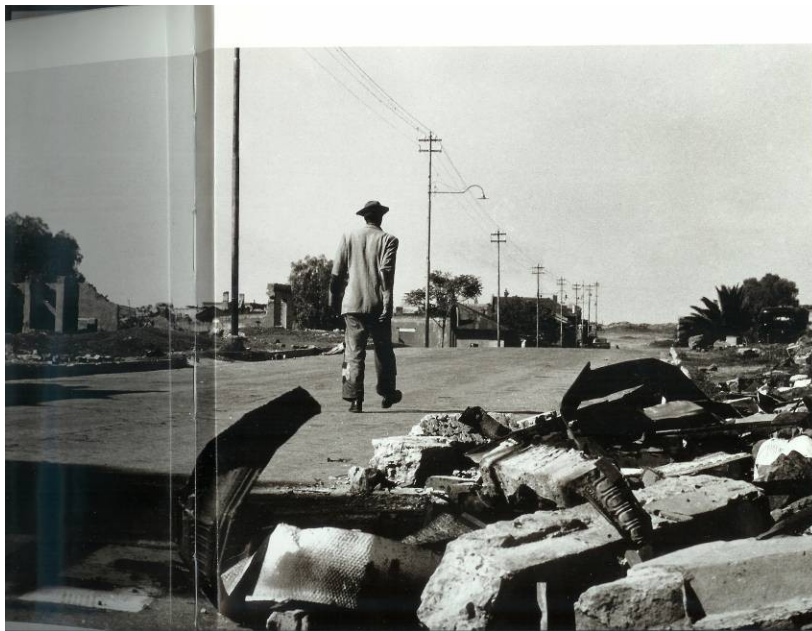
Sophiatown 1955. Sophiatown echoed in defiance.

Source: Jürgen Schadeberg, Images from the black '50s



Sophiatown 1959. Waiting for the trucks, to take them to Meadowlands, their home has been demolished.

Source: Jürgen Schadeberg, Images from the black '50s



Sophiatown 1959. Most of the houses in Sophiatown had disappeared.

Source: Jürgen Schadeberg, Images from the black '50s



Township where Sophiatown residents were relocated, 2007.
Source: Willy Mafuta, 2007, Soweto



A view of Sophiatown 2007
Source: Willy Mafuta, 2007 Sophiatown



Christ the King Church today.
Source: Willy Mafuta, 2007, Sophiatown



Tomb of Father Trevor Huddleston, Sophiatown 2007.
Source: Willy Mafuta, 2007, Sophiatown



Father Huddleston, here in 1955, was in the forefront of protests against the removal of the people of Sophiatown.

Source: Jürgen Schadeberg, Images from the black '50s



Source: Star Newspaper, 1954



Operation Ghetto Round Up was launched from this police station
Source: Willy Mafuta, 2007, Sophiatown



Author with Elizabeth, a former resident of Sophiatown
She was 10 years old when her family was resettled.
Source: Willy Mafuta, 2007, Sophiatown

APPENDIX 2: ETHICS DOCUMENTS



Imagined Communities: The Role of Churches during and after Apartheid in Sophiatown

INFORMATION SHEET AND CONSENT FORM

Who we are

Hello, I am Dr. Willy L. Mafuta, I am a Ph.D. student at the Dept. of Classics and Religious Studies, Faculty of Arts, University of Ottawa, Ontario, Canada, and my supervisor is Prof Peter Beyer.

What we are doing

I am conducting a research on the role of the churches during and after Apartheid in Sophiatown at the time of the enactment of the *Group Areas Act*, 1950-1955 and in the current and present post-apartheid South Africa. I am studying how religious beliefs influence political decisions and our social identity.

Your participation

I am asking you whether you will allow me to conduct one interview with you about your knowledge and opinions of the role of your church during the enactment of *Group Areas Act* in Sophiatown and her current role in South Africa. If you agree, I will ask you to participate in one interview for approximately 30 minutes to one hour. I am also asking you to give me permission to tape record the interview. I tape record interviews so that I can accurately record what is said.

Please understand that **your participation is voluntary** and you are not being forced to take part in this study. The choice of whether to participate or not, is yours

alone. If you choose not to take part, you will not be affected in any way whatsoever. If you agree to participate, you may stop participating in the research at any time and tell me that you don't want to go continue. If you do this there will also be no penalties and you will not be prejudiced in any way.

Confidentiality

Any study records that identify you will be kept confidential to the extent possible by law. The records from your participation may be reviewed by people responsible for making sure that research is done properly, including members of the ethics committee at the Human Sciences Research Council. (All of these people are required to keep your identity confidential.) Otherwise, records that identify you will be available only to people working on the study, unless you give permission for other people to see the records.

The information you provide will not be published unless you give your specific permission in writing at the end of this consent form. All identifying information will be kept in a locked file cabinet and will not be available to others. We will refer to you by a code number or pseudonym (another name) in any publication.

Risks/discomforts

It is possible that during the interview you might experience discomfort or stress. If I ask you a question which makes you feel sad or upset, we can stop and talk about it a little. There are also people from the Sophiatown Community Psychological Services, located at 4 Lancaster Street, Westdene, 2092, who have said that they are happy to talk with you about those things that upset you, if you need any assistance later. If you need to speak with anyone after I have left, a professional person can be reached at the following telephone number: Tel: 27-11-4828530 ,

Benefits

There are no immediate benefits to you from participating in this study. However, this study will be extremely helpful to us in developing a research proposal on this topic that we hope will promote a greater understanding on how religion can serve as an instrument of peace and social cohesion in post- apartheid south Africa.

If you would like to receive feedback on our study, we will record your phone number on a separate sheet of paper and can send you the results of the study when it is completed sometime after August 2013

Who to contact if you have been harmed or have any concerns

This research has been approved by the HSRC Research Ethics Committee. If you any complaints about ethical aspects of the research or feel that you have been harmed in any way by participating in this study, please call the HSRC's toll-free ethics hotline 0800 212 123 (when phoned from a landline from within South Africa) or the REC Administrator at the Human Sciences Research Council on 012 302 2012, e-mail research.ethics@hsrc.ac.za

CONSENT

I hereby agree to participate in research on the role of the churches during and after Apartheid in Sophiatown. I understand that I am participating freely and without being forced in any way to do so. I also understand that I can stop participating at any point should I not want to continue and that this decision will not in any way affect me negatively.

I understand that this is a research project whose purpose is not necessarily to benefit me personally in the immediate or short term.

I understand that my participation will remain confidential.

.....

Signature of participant

Date:.....

I hereby agree to the tape-recording of my participation in the study.

.....

Signature of participant

Date:.....

APPENDIX 3: FOCUS GROUP QUESTIONS

Imagined Communities: The Role of the Churches during and after Apartheid in Sophiatown

Focus Group Questions:

1. What do you think of the role of churches during Apartheid? Did your church perform political function during apartheid?
2. What was your church stand during the removals of people of Sophiatown to Meadowlands? How your Church would have acted differently?
3. Do churches in South African are integrated or work along racial or/and ethnic lines?
4. Do churches contribute to dialogue and understanding or to division and conflict?
5. What should be the role of churches in the new South Africa?
6. How should churches in South Africa foster a national identity sentiment?

Follow-up Interviews Questions

Personal Background

1. Age and occupation
2. Education
3. Gender
4. Race
5. Self-described social class

Cultural and religious Identity

1. Do you identify with your ethnic background? Do you see yourself as South African? Do you feel 100% South African? If not, how so?
2. What is your church affiliation?
3. What do you think about other religions in South Africa? Are some better than others?
4. Is there a conflict between your culture and your religious affiliation?

5. Who are your Church leaders' role models? What influence do they have in you and how you see yourself?

Culture and religious involvement:

1. Do you involve in the activities of your cultural and ethnic community? If so, how and to what extent?
2. What do you think about other cultures? Are some better than others?
3. Have you ever been involved in any other religions? Is there a difference between religion and spirituality? Are you religious or spiritual/both/ neither?
4. How important religion does play in your life? What do you do to practice your religion? Has your attitude toward your religion and/or religion in general ever changed? If so, what were the circumstances?

Integration and overarching identity

1. Thinking about your friends, what is their ethnic background? What sort of ethnic composition does your church, neighbourhood have? Have you ever been involved in any church of a different race than yours? Did you feel welcome?
2. Do you involve in activities exclusively to your race?
How important race play in your life?
Does your race give a perceived power or disempowerment? Do you feel more or less privileged compared to members of other groups?
3. Does gender play a role in how you socialize? If so, in what ways? Is that influenced by culture /religion?
4. Do you feel genuinely South African? If so, why? If not, why not? Is there anything that keeps you from seeing yourself as a full-fledged South African? Do

you think there are opportunities that are unavailable to you because of your culture/race/ religion?

5. Did you experience racism or discrimination of any kind because of your race, culture or religion?
6. Are you politically active? Do you vote? What Political party do you vote?

Attitudes

1. What do you think about the differences between men and women when it comes to political engagement and leadership of the church? Do you think there are certain roles for which men are more suited than women and vice versa?
2. Are men and women treated differently in your religion or church affiliation?
3. Are you inclined to date or marry a partner of your own race, culture or religion?
4. Do you see South Africa, a more diverse and tolerant country or a more ethnic and exclusive one? If so, how?
5. Does your stand on Apartheid change or remain the same? Do you think Apartheid was essential or detrimental to South Africa?

Church affiliation political or apolitical involvement

1. Are leaders of your church involved in the political platform of the country?
2. Does your church preach political message as related to race, gender, ethnicity or culture? If so, what is the message? Is the message different under and post-apartheid?

Personal and country futures

1. Are you likely to continue to live in South Africa or immigrate to a different country?
2. Where do you see the future of South Africa as far as race and religious relationship is concerned?
3. What is the biggest problem facing South Africa today? Do you have a role to play in it? How do you think Church should respond to it?

Varia:

Is there anything you wanted to talk about? Have I missed something?

APPENDIX 4: LIST OF INTERVIEWEES

This appendix contains a list of people who participated in this research through semi-structured interviews.

1. Ma Khumalo
2. Simon Ramhela
3. Tshepo LeTsoalo
4. Warona Matsile
5. Elizabeth Nobethane
6. Michael Harris
7. Vuyelwa Mgudlwa
8. Tswani Samenela
9. Mbali Zwang
10. Victor Mokhine
11. Zanarus Mukwana
12. Andre Visagie
13. Nikki
14. Murel Mienie
15. Ann Wigley
16. Daniel Visser
17. Victor Kotze
18. Neo Motlabane
19. Z. SanGweni
20. Michael Adams
21. Thelma Booysen
22. Zake Hoffmeyer

23. Rebeca Motoi
24. Susan Maphoso
25. Siphho
26. Mabaso
27. Moloi
28. Chris Swanepoel
29. Dan Dutoit
30. Lawrence boysen

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