

The recoding of a society: The publishing platform of the Dutch Reformed Church and its capturing of social consciousness, 1916–1960¹

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Abstract

The undercarriage of Afrikaner nationalist mobilisation was assembled by a small group of language engineers during the opening decades of the twentieth century. Particularly influential within this broad literary project were the Afrikaans clerics who clustered around the *Zuid-Afrikaanse Bijbel Vereniging* (ZABV, later *N.G. Kerk Uitgewers van Suid-Afrika*), the official publishing wing of the Dutch Reformed Church (DRC). Propped up by this platform, DRC writers contributed to the linguistic shape of Afrikaans and crucially steered the affixed matter of nation building along a defined religious route in the image of a Christian-National Afrikanerdom. By the start of 1940 a sociological function within the operation of the ZABV lent itself to the nationalist agenda of capturing the consciousness of Afrikaner society. This notably contributed to the creation of an indoctrinated and self-concealed Afrikaner bloc based on the perpetuated myth of an unquestioned and divinely affirmed national uniqueness.²

Keywords

Zuid-Afrikaanse Bijbel Vereniging/ N.G. Kerk Uitgewers van Suid-Afrika; Dutch Reformed Church; Christian-Nationalism; social consciousness; Afrikanervolk; second Afrikaans language movement

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- 1 This contribution originated out of a chapter originally written for my PhD. What follows is therefore a select re-working of this chapter. Within the broader chapter a word of gratitude must be extended to my study supervisors Retief Müller and Ruhan Fourie, as well as Hans Renders from the Biography Institute at Groningen University under whose tutelage I have gained a deeper academic awareness of historiography and in particular biography.
 - 2 As it pertains to the time in question the names *Zuid-Afrikaanse Bijbel Vereniging* (prior to 1950) and *N.G. Kerk Uitgewers* (post 1950) are used interchangeably throughout.

Introduction

In 1958 Jan Oberholster, archivist of the Cape Dutch Reformed church (1939-1959), concluded that the function of the Dutch Reformed Church's (DRC) publishing apparatus was fundamentally to safeguard the unique moral and spiritual vibrancy of Afrikaner society.³ Isabel Hofmeyr has shown that twentieth century Afrikaner nationalism was not imposed but engineered by literary entrepreneurs who propagated nationalist ideas through the vessel of language.⁴ At the nerve centre of this literary project was the *Zuid-Afrikaanse Bijbel Vereniging* (ZABV), and the clerics it clustered, which drove this nationalist narrative along a strictly defined religious route.

The ideological tenets of nationalism, as David Kaplan and Kathryn Hannum have stipulated, fundamentally rest upon a constructed set of ideas perpetuated through language and reliant on a curated sense of collective identity.⁵ As it relates to the twentieth century Afrikaner ethnic movement – comprised of constituent parts which worked in relative tandem to groom Afrikaner social consciousness for the acceptance of an exclusive political identity – Herman Giliomee has pointed to Afrikaans clerics as key opinion-makers.⁶ Stanley Trapido reiterated this position by denoting the significance of the DRC as a mechanism of social cohesion which was instrumental in forming a psychological bedrock upon which nationalism thrived.⁷

3 Jan Andries Stefanus Oberholster, *Nie van brood alleen: geskiedenis van die Suid-Afrikaanse Bybelvereniging* (tans N.G. Kerk Uitgewers en -Boekhandel) 1818–1958 (Kaapstad: N.G. Kerk Uitgewers, 1958), 75.

4 Isabel Hofmeyr, "Building a nation from words: Afrikaans language, literature and ethnic identity, 1902–1924," in *The politics of race, class and nationalism in twentieth-century South Africa*, ed. Shula Marks and Stanley Trapido (London: Routledge, 2014), 86–102.

5 David Kaplan and Kathryn, *Nationalism* (London: Routledge, 2024), 7–14.

6 Hermann Giliomee, "Afrikaner politics: How the system works," in *The rise and crises of Afrikaner power*, edited by Heribert Adam and Hermann Giliomee (Cape Town: David Philip, 1979), 196, 240–243.

7 Stanley Trapido, "Political institutions and Afrikaner social structures in the Republic of South Africa," *The American Political Science Review* 57, no. 1 (March 1963): 83.

This contribution endeavours to show the role which the ZABV, as a Synodal enterprise, played in shaping Afrikaner identity. The influence which language associations and secular linguists had on the evolution of Afrikaner nationalism during the second language movement has received notable academic attention. However, the interjection of clerics in this development, and the publishing platform facilitating them, has received lesser such scrutiny. From this premise the case will be made that affixed to the religious material produced by the ZABV was a sociological function which actively lent itself to the nationalist agenda of capturing and controlling Afrikaner social consciousness.

Finding a folkish vehicle: the ZABV as language organisation

The route of the religious press in Southern Africa was predominantly blazed by the inference of scriptural distribution and edifying literature as auxiliaries to the missional task which had attached itself to the mounting missiological awareness from the start of the nineteenth century.⁸ In contrast to the English-speaking missionaries who were rooted in an international literary tradition and preoccupied with translation projects focused on black communities, the Dutch Reformed Church's (DRC) independent entry into the domain of literary production was more ethnocentric in character.⁹ A questionable moral consciousness, or rather lack thereof, apparent within the early nineteenth century Dutch-speaking community rattled the highest echelons of the Cape DRC and initiated the establishment of the *Zuid-Afrikaanse Bijbel Vereniging* (ZABV) in 1818.¹⁰ The founding objective of the ZABV was to stem this moral recession through bible distribution with the neediest class of the Dutch-speaking

8 Gustav Bernhard Augustus Gerdener, *Recent developments in the South African mission field* (Cape Town: N.G.; Kerk Uitgewers, 1958), 224–233; P.J. Schutte, *Sendingdrukkers in Suid-Afrika 1800–1875* (PhD diss., Potchefstroomse Universiteit vir C.H.O, 1969), 27–30.

9 Jeff Opland, “The drumbeat of the Cross: Christianity and literature,” in *Christianity in South Africa: a political, social and cultural history*, edited by Richard Elphick and Rodney Davenport (Cape Town: David Philip Publishers, 1997), 297–315.

10 While the ZABV was not established as an official DRC organisation, its founders and subsequent directors were DRC clerics and its operations remained closely bonded to the DRC until it was made an official Synodal enterprise in 1903.

white population as focal point.¹¹ The floating of a *British and Foreign Bible Society* branch at the Cape in 1820 supplanted this role of Bible distributor and nudged the ZABV definitively into the terrain of extra-biblical literature.¹²

In 1903 the ideological trajectory of the ZABV was brought under the official administration of the DRC as the Cape Synod assumed control of the society.¹³ The commandeering of this publishing apparatus coincided with the beginnings of a wider ideological shift into the socio-political realm within the DRC.¹⁴ Particularly in response to the plight of poor white Afrikaners, social factors as much as theological ones emerged in the rationale of the DRC.¹⁵ This soon merged with an upsurge in nationalist rhetoric to form the idea of a *volkskerk* (people's church).¹⁶ These developments facilitated the elbowing of Afrikaans clerics into the epicentre of the twentieth century Afrikaner nationalist movement which was built on language- and cultural organisations.¹⁷

The second Afrikaans language movement was directed from 1905 by a new generation of Afrikaner intellectuals who lobbied for the advancement of Afrikaans as the precondition to ethnocultural survival against the threat of anglicisation.¹⁸ This new group amalgamated themselves around

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- 11 Andries Dreyer, *Historisch Album van de Nederduitsche Gereformeerde Kerk in Zuid Afrika* (Kaapstad: Cape Times Beperkt, 1910), 186.
 - 12 Abraham Petrus Smit, *God het laat groei: geskiedenis van die Bybelgenootskapsbeweging in Suid-Afrika 1820–1970* (Kaapstad: Die Bybelgenootskap van Suid-Afrika, 1970), 1–7, 11–16.
 - 13 Oberholster, *Nie van brood alleen*, 20–22.
 - 14 In the aftermath of the South African War (1899–1902), and the increased urbanisation of Afrikaners since the opening of the goldfields, the growing poverty within Afrikanerdom at the mercy of an industrialising context became a mounting concern for the DRC. As a result, social factors, alongside theological ones, predominated DRC rationale during the early decades of the twentieth century.
 - 15 For an engagement on this topic, as it relates to this argument, see: Robert Morrell, *White but poor: Essays on the history of poor whites in Southern Africa 1880–1940* (Pretoria: University of South Africa, 1992).
 - 16 Thomas Dunbar Moodie, *The rise of Afrikanerdom: Power, apartheid, and the Afrikaner civil religion* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1975), 69–72.
 - 17 Mariana Kriel, “Culture and power: the rise of Afrikaner nationalism revisited,” *Nations and Nationalism* 16, no. 3 (2010): 402–422.
 - 18 Herman Giliomee, *The Afrikaners: biography of a people* (Cape Town: Tafelberg, 2012), 364–369.

two newly convened language associations¹⁹ and fostered the rationale of developing the Afrikaans language and nationalist sentiment amongst Afrikaner people as two sides of the same coin.²⁰ The clerics, as forefront movers within the language dispensation, interjected a religious ethic into the debate. Addressing a convention of the *Taalbond* shortly after the reorganisation of the ZABV, Adriaan Moorrees²¹ defined language as the thread which stitched together the organic components of national identity as ordained by God.²² In 1911 Hermanus Stephanus Bosman, chairman of the DRC's federal council, pulled together the threads of nationalism, mother tongue, and religion on an institutional level. Upon stating a direct relation between Afrikaner national fortune and the volk's commitment to their language, Bosman offered the DRC as the exclusive mechanism capable of Afrikaans cultural salvation.²³

However, the language movement was not one of unanimity. What pegged the ideological perimeters of this language deadlock was not the relevance to nationalism, but rather the substance of language. Representing middle-class interests, which made up a significant portion of the Cape DRC, cultural leaders of an older generation such as Moorrees intensely lobbied against Afrikaans. Presenting it as a backwater dialect and a threat to the cultural link with the Netherlands, this pro-Dutch faction sought to promote a simplified version of Dutch as a new national language.²⁴ In 1907, while a student in the Stellenbosch Seminary and the first chairman of the Stellenbosch *Afrikaanse Taalvereniging* branch, Tobias Ballot Muller contended in the contrary. Pointing to a dwindling nationalist sentiment

19 In the North the Afrikaanse Taalgenuootskap was established in 1905, while the Afrikaanse Taalvereniging was established in the South a year later.

20 Petrus Johannes Nienaber and Gabriël Stephanis Nienaber, *Die geskiedenis van die Afrikaanse beweging* (Pretoria: J.L. van Schaik, 1941), 135–145.

21 Moorrees was a professor at the Theological Seminary in Stellenbosch (1908–1930) and a staunch advocate of Dutch over Afrikaans. Moorrees was also a longtime chairman of the *Taalbond*, an organisation with a pro-Dutch orientation. See: Gustav Bernhard Augustus Gerdener, *Bouers van weleer* (Kaapstad: N.G. Kerk Uitgewers, 1951), 195–204.

22 Adriaan Moorrees, “Onze rechtmatige taal,” speech presented on the language debate, DRC Archives, Stellenbosch, PPV 225.3.6.

23 *Handelingen van de Derde Vergadering van den Raad der Ned. Ger. Kerken in Zuid-Afrika*, Maart 1911, Bloemfontein, DRC Archives, Stellenbosch, 57–60.

24 Nienaber and Nienaber, *Die geskiedenis van die Afrikaanse beweging*, 140.

amongst Afrikaners – a clear and worrying regression from the nationalist high days directly following the war – Muller posited that the only solution to saving the Dutch language in South Africa was by bringing it ever closer to the general *volkstaal*.²⁵ In so doing, Muller presented Afrikaans not as a break with Dutch but as the natural evolution thereof according to the organic national character of the *volk*. In the magazine *Die Brandwag*, published by the *Afrikaanse Taalgemeenskap*, the cleric Willem Postma defined this nationalist creed of the movement: “a *volk* which does not respect its mother tongue [Afrikaans], can acquire no self-respect and can therefore not become a great *volk*”.²⁶

The ZABV progressively clustered together part-time linguists within the DRC establishment and at moments coincided with the agenda of these Afrikaans language associations. Already in its 1909 programme the ZABV paraphrased the broader movements’ fixation to stimulate literary output, albeit of a demarcated genre: “religious literature according to the needs of our *volk*”.²⁷ However, a more methodical character to the ZABV’s programme came in 1916 with the establishment of a publication commission convened under the dual mandate of broadening and managing the society’s publication productivity, as well as expanding its societal reach.²⁸ Within a year the language debacle was tabled as the commission received its first Afrikaans manuscript.²⁹ While this ushered in a plethora of requests for Afrikaans, the ZABV was bonded by the official language policy of the DRC which remained Dutch orientated.³⁰ The toeing of the DRC’s language line did not, however, reflect the full

25 Tobias Ballot Muller, “Die Taalbeweging in ons land,” *Student journal of the Stellenbosch Seminary*, March 7, 1907, DRC Archives, Stellenbosch, KS 1924.

26 Willem Postma, “Die Afrikaanse Taal: die ontstaan daarvan,” *Die Brandwag*, February 15, 1912, 593, DRC Archives, Stellenbosch, PPV 222.4.2.

27 “Verslag van de Z.A. Bijbel Vereeniging,” *Handelingen der twee-en-twintigste vergadering van de Synode der Ned. Geref. Kerk in Zuid Afrika*, Kaapstad, October 14, 1909, 85, DRC Archives, Stellenbosch.

28 Meeting of the ZABV Head Management, 10 December 1915, DRC Archives, Stellenbosch, KS 1607.

29 Meeting of the Publication Commission, 23 August 1917, DRC Archives, Stellenbosch, KS 1612.

30 Meeting of the Publication Commission, 10 August 1918; 11 February 1919, DRC Archives, Stellenbosch, KS 1612.

spectrum of sympathies in ZABV management. This was poignantly illustrated by Gustav Bernhard Augustus Gerdener's – a leading member of the publication commission – authoring a biography on the Voortrekker leader Sarel Cilliers which coincided with these language deliberations. On an orthographic level Gerdener employed the linguistic framework of the *Afrikaanse Woordelys en Spelreëls*; produced by the *Suid-Afrikaanse Akademie* and published in 1918.³¹ On a philosophical level, which would come to produce dividends for the nationalist cause in due course, Gerdener made a concerted effort to “*ver-Afrikaans* [Afrikaan-ise] that which is typical of this country.”³²

The ecclesial repercussions of the language movement came to a head in 1919 when the DRC's federal council officially promoted Afrikaans to the pulpit with the judgement that it was the true language of the Afrikaner *volk*.³³ Adjacent to this decision was a report submitted to the Cape Synod, bastion of the Dutch old guard, which recognised the expressive potential of Afrikaans and tentatively recommended its elevation with the condition that it be further developed into a “civilised form”.³⁴

The ZABV recognised Afrikaner society's fertility for Afrikaans, as well as the accompanying commercial motive, and geared its resources accordingly. In 1923 the publication commission stipulated that “more pamphlets and series of works in Afrikaans must be published with a specific focus on the youth ... due to the fact that children and adolescents no longer read Dutch in general.”³⁵ What followed was a wholesale translation of English and Dutch literature into Afrikaans which included several memoirs, devotionals, and an entire literary industry by Andrew

31 Nienaber and Nienaber, *Die geskiedenis van die Afrikaanse beweging*, 153.

32 Gustav Bernhard Augustus Gerdener, *Sarel Cilliers: Die vader van Dingansdag* (Pretoria: J.L. van Schaik, 1925), 4.

33 Handelingen van de Zesde Vergadering van den Raad der Ned. Ger. Kerken in Zuid-Afrika, 6 March 1919, Johannesburg, DRC Archives, Stellenbosch, 20.

34 “Rapport van de commissie in zake het Afrikaansch,” *Handelingen der vier-entwintigste vergadering van de Synode der Ned. Geref. Kerk in Zuid Afrika*, Kaapstad, October 16, 1919, 39–40, DRC Archives, Stellenbosch.

35 Meeting of the Publication Commission, February 1923, DRC Archives, Stellenbosch, KS 1612.

Murray.³⁶ Published in the same year as the DRC's decision, and following the path set by the journalist Gustav Preller,³⁷ Gerdener's biography was of the first in Afrikaans and was considerably lauded in church periodicals for its contribution to the language struggle.³⁸

The ZABV most prominently resembled the trappings of a language association during the late 1920s and early 1930s. This period saw the ZABV's energy entirely absorbed by the translation, curation, and revision of a new ecclesial song and Psalm book, *Die Nuwe Halleluja* (1931), printed by the Nasionale Pers.³⁹ From its outset the project was developed by the ZABV to have bearing in a broad syntactical sense. In 1926 the commission laid down a strict linguistical rubric which governed the translation team and particularly emphasised the unique style of Afrikaans away from Dutch.⁴⁰ Resultantly, a formulative effect on the literary shape of Afrikaans ensued and by the mid-1930s the ZABV resembled a cooperative hub between theologians and linguists such as Jacob Daniël du Toit and Eduard Christiaan Pienaar.⁴¹ The sense amongst those engaged of the project's extra-ecclesial relevance was stipulated by Gerdener⁴² in a 1937 radio broadcast. Gerdener extolled *Die Nuwe Halleluja* for its contribution to expanding the poetic capacity of Afrikaans and generating subject matter for Afrikaner imagination along religious parameters.⁴³ The development of Afrikaans within the religio-cultural life of Afrikanerdom was augmented

36 Meeting of the Publication Commission, 21 June 1921; January 1932, DRC Archives, Stellenbosch, KS 1612.

37 Preller published the first biography on a Great Trek leader, Piet Retief, after which he inaugurated an entire Voortrekker literary industry, see Hofmeyr, "Building a nation from words: Afrikaans language, literature and ethnic identity, 1902–1924," 97.

38 Gereformeerde Maandblad. March 1919, 79, DRC Archives, Stellenbosch, Tydsk 271.

39 *Die Nuwe Halleluja: Psalms, gesange, en ander liederes vir huis, dag- en sondegskool en jongeliedeverenigings* (Kaapstad: Zuid-Afrikaanse Bybelvereniging, 1931).

40 Meeting of the Publication Commission, May 1926, DRC Archives, Stellenbosch, KS 1612.

41 Meeting of the Publication Commission, March 1934, DRC Archives, Stellenbosch, KS 1612.

42 From 1929 Gerdener was the editor in chief in the team tasked with compiling songs and revising the language of the song and psalm book.

43 Gustav Bernhard Augustus Gerdener, "'n Vergelyking tussen die Nederlandse en Afrikaans berymde Psalmbundels," *Radiotoesprake deur G.B.A. Gerdener*, DRC Archives, Stellenbosch, PPV 79.4.

by the 1933 release of the Afrikaans Bible and subsequent translation of DRC confessional documents by the ZABV thereafter.⁴⁴

At the belly of this discernible momentum shift in the ZABV operation lay a corresponding ideological objective to shape Afrikaner readership in a DRC image. Akin to the nationalist strategy of the Afrikaans associations, historiography formed the crux in this task of synthesising an Afrikaner identity. During the 1920s Johannes du Plessis⁴⁵ regularly lobbied the ZABV to stimulate both history writers and church history publications.⁴⁶ A tangible result came in 1924 when the ZABV published *Kerkgeskiedenis vir ons volk*; the first church history in Afrikaans, co-authored by Gerdener, and its intended market being young DRC members.⁴⁷ It was concurrently in the arena of historiography that the Dutch old guard, Moorrees most blatantly came up against the DRC's new language leanings. Moorrees' considerable church history, *Die Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk in Suid-Afrika 1652-1873* (1937), in which he was engaged since 1917, was refused by publishers due to its use of Dutch. Resultantly, it had to be translated into Afrikaans by his daughter before it was eventually published.⁴⁸

To the Cape Synod of 1936, with the battle for Afrikaans long concluded, the ZABV sounded a revised agenda which rerouted resources behind a nation building project bolstered on a reimagined, religiously coded historical narrative.⁴⁹

44 Meeting of the Publication Commission, February 1931, DRC Archives, Stellenbosch, KS 1612.

45 Du Plessis was an influential professor of Theology at Stellenbosch and a leading member in the ZABV as well as its publication commission.

46 Meeting of the ZABV Head Management, 12 December 1923, DRC Archives, Stellenbosch, KS 1607.

47 Gustav Bernhard Augustus Gerdener and Lourens Matthys Kriel, *Kerkgeskiedenis vir ons volk* (Kaapstad: Zuid-Afrikaanse Bybelvereniging, 1924).

48 Handelingen van de Veertiende Vergadering van den Raad der Ned. Geref. Kerken in Zuid-Afrika, 16 May 1935, Johannesburg, DRC Archives, Stellenbosch, 52.

49 ZABV Synodal report, Publication Commission, October 1936, DRC Archives, Stellenbosch, KS 1612.

Writing a volk into existence

During the 1920s a significant upswing in historiographical interest imbued the DRC which manifested in Synodal discussions and directly implicated the ZABV. The first item of business was to streamline the process of historical research through the systematisation of archival repositories. This was the premise of the *Kerkgeskiedenis-boustowwe Kommissie* (Church history primary source commission) which was coordinated in 1927 with the instruction of standardising archival records for church historical research.⁵⁰ The focal point being the lesser developed repositories of the three northern DRCs, the commission's assignment to gather and compile relevant sources culminated in the publication of *Boustowwe vir die geskiedenis* (1930) under Gerdener's oversight.⁵¹ In addition to the *boustowwe kommissie*, was the appointment of Andries Dreyer as the Cape DRC's first archivist.⁵² To the Cape Synod of 1932 Dreyer presented his yearly report which was a source of encouragement for the church as he stated that the number of researchers had notably increased on account of the structuring of DRC archives under an official archivist.⁵³

This preoccupation with expanding the DRC's historiographical productivity continued well into the 1950s. In 1951 a subsequent commission was convened with the specific task of analysing the state of history writing and plotting a path for future publication. Amid the suggestions in its report to the DRC federal council in 1957 the commission solicited a Synodal effort to upgrade church archives in accordance with scientific principles while emphasises was placed on facilitating cooperation between church, academic, and state archives for the benefit of church historical

50 Handeling van die Tiende Vergadering van die Raad van die Ned. Geref. Kerke, 24 March 1927, Heidelberg Tvl, DRC Archives, Stellenbosch, 59.

51 Gustav Bernhard Augustus Gerdener, *Boustowwe vir die geskiedenis van die Nederduits-Gereformeerde kerk in die Transgariep* (Kaapstad: Nasionale Pers, 1930).

52 Johannes Visser, 'n Historiese oorsig oor die lewe van eerw. Andries Dreyer en 'n kompilasie van sy werke (MTh diss., Stellenbosch Universiteit Stellenbosch, 1981), 27–31.

53 Andries Dreyer, "Verslag van die Archivarius Synodi, August 31, 1932, DRC Archives, Stellenbosch, PPV 934.

research.⁵⁴ This exhibited a striking ideological tenet which braced the DRC's historiographical scheme from the late 1920s and reinforced a baseline historical paradigm that the birth of an Afrikaner society and the arrival of Christianity (in name the DRC) were synonymous.⁵⁵

Prominently affixed within the task of manufacturing an Afrikaans literary culture were historical thinkers clustered around the *volksgeskiedenis*⁵⁶ tradition which sought to reinterpret Afrikaner history in mythic strokes.⁵⁷ Afrikaans church historians were particularly consequential in constructing the religious token upon which this nationalist historiography was leveraged. It is important to note, however, that during this period Afrikaner church and secular historians were welded together in both approach and outcome, whereby the agenda of creating *volkseenheid* (ethnic unity) preoccupied methodology. Engaging with this idea, the historian Floris Albertus van Jaarsveld stated that the “image of the past is not designed by professional historians,” but rather that it “exists in the historical consciousness of the *volk*.”⁵⁸ From this perspective van Jaarsveld identified Afrikaans clerics as crucial curators of a romantically re-interpreted national history. A position which correlates with the conclusion drawn by Hermann Giliomee that history and theology formed the two ideological pillars of apartheid.⁵⁹ The cross-pollination of the ecclesial with the secular at the base of the *volksgeskiedenis* tradition was palpable in the establishment of a Synodal archive commission in 1945. The leadership of which included the company of Hendrik Bernardus Thom,

54 Handeling van die Vyf-en-twintigste Vergadering van die Raad van die Ned. Geref. Kerke, 27–29 March 1957, Pretoria, DRC Archives, Stellenbosch, 69.

55 Van Riebeeckfeeskommissie van die N.G. Kerk, *Ons bou 'n nasie: Feesboodskap aan ons Kerk en Volk* (Kaapstad: N.G. Kerk Uitgewers van Suid-Afrika, 1952).

56 See further: Thula Simpson, “Towards a school of their own”. *History beyond Apartheid: New approaches in South African historiography*, edited by Thula Simpson (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2022).

57 Hofmeyr, “Building a nation from words: Afrikaans language, literature and ethnic identity, 1902–1924,” 96–98.

58 Floris Albertus van Jaarsveld, *Die evolusie van apartheid* (Cape Town: Tafelberg, 1979), 65–66.

59 Hermann Giliomee, *Hermann Giliomee: Historikus. 'n Outobiografie* (Cape Town: Tafelberg, 2016), ix.

head of the history department at Stellenbosch University from 1937, and the ubiquitous Gerdener.⁶⁰

As it pertained to church's direct publishing agenda, the ZABV perpetuated an Afrikaner origin myth which concentrated on the DRC. "The church did not only capture the life of the *volk* at a later stage through mission work but was a powerful factor in the development of the *volk* from the earliest days".⁶¹ A dramatic capstone of this tradition was a small booklet, *Ons bou 'n nasie*, published in conjunction with the Synod's *Van Riebeeckfees Kommissie* (Van Riebeeck festival commission) and led by Jacobus Cornelis Gideon Kotzé.⁶² The booklet reflected the influence of the ZABV on wider, non-ecclesial Afrikaner society as it was specifically intended to embolden the church's role in the forthcoming national tercentenary celebration of Jan van Riebeeck's arrival at the Cape.⁶³ True to nationalist form, the booklet based its historical paradigm on a perceived prayer by van Riebeeck and followed the *volksplanting* (national foundation) myth which reimagined the arrival of white Dutch settlers as the expression of a divine plan with cosmic consequence:

"Van Riebeeck's arrival thus has meaning for the world; it also has meaning for heaven. How would Africa (and especially South Africa) have looked like if the gospel sounds had never been heard in this dark heathen continent".⁶⁴

As the agent of God's intervening work, so the booklet maintained, the DRC was the source of Afrikaner identity and the catalyst of an independent Afrikaner nation. An identity characterised by Calvinist ideas of election which positioned Afrikaners as a people set aside for a higher calling.⁶⁵

60 Handeling van die dertigste vergadering van die Sinode van die Ned. Geref. Kerk in Suid-Afrika, 18 October 1945, Kaapstad, DRC Archives, Stellenbosch, 397.

61 Tobias Nicolaas Hanekom, *Kerk en volk: Die verhouding tussen Afrikaanse lewenskringe* (Kaapstad: NG Kerk uitgewers, 1958), 96.

62 Kotzé was a professor at the Stellenbosch Seminary who succeeded Gerdener.

63 Meeting of the Executive Council, 16 August 1951, DRC Archives, Stellenbosch, KS 1610.

64 Van Riebeeckfeeskommissie, *Ons bou 'n nasie* (Kaapstad: N.G. Kerk Uitgewers, 1952), 6.

65 Ibid., 21–23.

By this point the ZABV was, therefore, squarely positioned in the task of nation building. Gerdener, who carried significant weight in the publication commission and whose work on the *boustowwe kommissie* had levelled a resource standard for subsequent historians, placed great emphasis on the role which historiography (and specifically church history) played in the cultivation of national identity. He especially attributed authority to biography, albeit in the form of hagiography, as the best suited methodology for the task of inspiring national sentiment:

“Therefore, the life descriptions of our heroes must help to arouse interest and to instil love for the past, and especially to rescue the glorious deeds of our heroes from oblivion, so that in this time of material progress we may always remain inspired with pure motives and high ideals.”⁶⁶

This position echoed one taken by Johannes du Plessis three decades earlier when he argued that youngsters could only be moulded into great people through the reading of the lives of great individuals.⁶⁷ Resultantly, biographical works ranked notably high on the publication commission’s criteria from its inception; two out of the first five books it published were biographies.⁶⁸ The utilitarian functionality of biography to encourage character engineering was weaponised by the ZABV to the ends of nation building. This was stipulated as much by a publishers’ note in the paratext of a collective biography published in 1951: “There are few things which have as influential an impact on a person’s life as the studying of the life history of blessed Christian leaders.”⁶⁹

In its manifesto-like 1936 report, the ZABV made the greater production, and wider distribution, of biographies a priority. This alludes both to a ready-made consumer market which attracted the interest of publishers

66 Gerdener, Sarel Cilliers, 10.

67 Johannes Wynand Louw Hofmeyr, *Attie Hofmeyr van Nyasaland: Een lewenschetse van Ds. Adrian Louw Hofmeyr Zendeling der N. G. Kerk in Nyasaland, 1901–1919* (Stellenbosch: Het Administratie-Bureau, 1921), 11–12.

68 Meeting of the Publication Commission, 10 August 1918, DRC Archives, Stellenbosch, KS 1612.

69 Gustav Bernhard Augustus Gerdener, *Bouers van weleer: Lewensketse van enkele groot figure uit die geskiedenis van die N.G. Kerk in Suid-Afrika* (Kaapstad: N.G. Kerk Uitgewers, 1951), paratext opening sleeve cover.

and the drive of the ZABV to produce material to aid the development of a particular vision for a Christian-National Afrikanerdom.⁷⁰ Out of this infrastructural intent emerged a conspicuous rise in biographies and autobiographies of Afrikaner clergymen by the latter half of the 1940s.⁷¹

Gerdener's 1919 biography again offers insight into the influence of DRC writers on the sentimental trajectory of Afrikaner nationalist imagination. From a cultural purview, Gerdener's reconstruction of Sarel Cilliers served in assembling the religious undercarriage of nationalist mobilisation. A historical reinterpretation which contributed to fashioning Voortrekker leaders into what Lize van Robbroeck has pegged as icons of Afrikanerdom.⁷² Gerdener's portrayal of Cilliers served the broader theme of seemingly supernatural nobility by which he narrated the Voortrekker story.⁷³ Describing his protagonist as the prophet of the Great Trek, Gerdener constructed the religious significance of the Voortrekker narrative and detailed the event of Bloodriver⁷⁴ as proof of the Afrikaner nation's divine election. Significantly, Gerdener's rendition of the Bloodriver episode was ethno-specific as his depiction of its religious relevance explicitly excluded an English-speaking white division from Port Natal.⁷⁵ It was, therefore, more than any prior tradition, Gerdener's interpretation of Cilliers and the religiosity of the Voortrekkers which incorporated the DRC into the

70 ZABV Synodal report, Publication Commission, October 1936, DRC Archives, Stellenbosch, KS 1612.

71 See: Marthie Cronjé, *Botie van Magwero* (Kaapstad: N.G. Kerk Uitgewers, 1956); P.J. Viljoen, *Ek kyk terug* (Kaapstad: NG Kerk uitgewers, 1958); Willem Nicol, *Reënboog oor my jeug* (Kaapstad: NG Kerk Uitgewers, 1956); T. N. Hanekom, *Helperus Ritzema van Lier* (Kaapstad: N.G. Kerk Uitgewers, 1959); *Professor G. M. Pellissier* (Kaapstad: N.G. Kerk Uitgewers, 1958); Andries Adriaan Louw, *Andrew Louw van Morgenster* (Kaapstad: N.G. Kerk Uitgewers, 1965); FGM du Toit, *Ds. H. L. Neethling: sy lewe en werk* (Pretoria: NG Kerk boekhandel, 1979); FGM du Toit, *Hermanus Stephanus Bosman: 1848–1933* (Pretoria: NG Kerk Boekhandel, 1979); P B van der Watt, *John Murray. 1826–1882. Die eerste Stellenbosse professor* (Kaapstad: NG Kerk Uitgewers, 1979).

72 Lize van Robbroeck, "Die Voortrekker seek koers," in *Van volksmoeder tot Fokopolisiekar: Kritiese opstelle oor Afrikaanse herinneringsplekker*, ed. Albert Grundling and Siegfried Huigen (Stellenbosch: Sun Press, 2008), 129.

73 Gerdener, Sarel Cilliers, 31–41.

74 An episode of conflict between a group of Voortrekkers and Zulus which took place on 16 December 1838; see:

75 Gerdener, Sarel Cilliers, 31–41.

historical event and shaped twentieth century Afrikaner historical, and ethnic consciousness.⁷⁶

Capturing a volk

In his contribution to the first volume of *Koers in die Krisis* (1935) the DRC cleric, and right-wing firebrand, Christiaan Rudolph Kotzé considered the relation between the Christian and the press. His concluding remarks hinged the actualisation of a Christian-National Afrikaner state on the extent by which Calvinist inclined publishers controlled public opinion.⁷⁷ This insistency to lay claim to the consciousness of broad Afrikaner society annotated the ethos of the ZABV and manifested on two operational fronts: inwardly defensive (DRC congregants) and externally-offensive (wider Afrikaner society). Herein, arguably, lies the most far-reaching influence left on South African society by the DRC's official publisher.

During the first half of the twentieth century, ideological control over the ZABV presided in the Cape and commanding structures were implemented to safeguard this control.⁷⁸ However, by the end of 1950 a major overhaul – stemming partly from the acute financial losses riding on the back of the failed *N.G. Kerkpers*⁷⁹ – shifted the structure of the organisation into a franchise-like model. Earmarked by a name change to *N.G. Kerk Uitgewers van Suid-Afrika* (NGKU), the rejuvenated structure signaled the expansive ambition of the publisher on a trans-regional scale. While the northern territories were given official clout through the reservation of managerial seats, the distribution mechanism was sub-divided into the *N.G. Kerk Boekhandel* (Cape and Free-State) and *N.H. of G. Boekhandel* (Transvaal

76 van Jaarsveld, *Die evolusie van apartheid*, 47–48.

77 Christiaan Rudolph Kotzé, “Die Christen en die pers,” in *Koers in die krisis I* (Stellenbosch: Pro-Ecclesia Drukkery, 1935), 297–302.

78 Meeting of the Publication Commission, September 1925, DRC Archives, Stellenbosch, KS 1612.

79 The N.G. Kerkpers was an attempt by the DRC to establish an independent printing house. The first sounding from within the DRC for the establishment of an independent press came in 1920. In 1947 this endeavour saw fruition with the establishment of N.G. Kerkpers in Woodstock which, after three years, was liquidated. With the liquidation of the *Kerkpers*, assets were absorbed by the Nasionale Pers, and printing contracts were also promptly re-established with Nasionale Pers.

and Natal).⁸⁰ In 1951 the Transvaal DRC gained further independence when it assumed control of the branch in Pretoria.⁸¹

The 1950s concurrently saw the diversification of the DRC's publishing stronghold. In 1953 the *Verenigde Protestantse Uitgewers* (VPU) was floated as a joint venture of the NGKU, the publishing department of the *Christelike Studente Vereniging* (CSV), and the *Hollands Afrikaanse Uitgevers Maatschappij*.⁸² The Function of the VPU was to consolidate resources in the interest of publishing standardised works such as Biblical encyclopaedias and family bibles.⁸³ The oversight of the VPU, however, mirrored that of the NGKU as publications produced by both organisations stood under the directorship of Johannes Norval Geldenhuys.⁸⁴ NGKU dominance continued until in 1966 the VPU was entirely absorbed by the NGKU as the sole stakeholder.⁸⁵ This came two years after the NGKU had acquired the publication department of the CSV which crowned it the largest Christian publisher and bookstore in South Africa.⁸⁶ A development which attested to the agenda in NGKU operations of bring all religious publishers under its ideological control which had been vocalised as early as 1929.⁸⁷

The NGKU's onslaught on the media industry was accelerated during the 1960s as the DRC found itself increasingly at the centre of public debate and particularly concerned with controlling the flow of information.⁸⁸

80 Meeting of the ZABV Head Management, 20 October 1950, DRC Archives, Stellenbosch, KS 1608.

81 Oberholster, *Nie van brood alleen*, 71–74; van der Watt, *Die Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk 1905–1975: deel vier*, 223.

82 Director's meeting of the V.P.U., February 10, 1952, DRC Archives, Stellenbosch, AS 764.

83 Director's meeting of the V.P.U., October 12, 1953, DRC Archives, Stellenbosch, AS 764.

84 Director's meeting of the V.P.U., February 10, 1952, DRC Archives, Stellenbosch, AS 764.

85 Director's meeting of the V.P.U., June 20, 1966, DRC Archives, Stellenbosch, AS 764.

86 Synodal report of the ZABV Head Management, 1 April 1964, DRC Archives, Stellenbosch, KS 1608.

87 Meeting of the ZABV Head Management, August 1929, DRC Archives, Stellenbosch, KS 1608.

88 This served the principal premise for the establishment of the DRC Information Bureau in 1957, see: P.B. van der Watt, *Die Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk 1905–1975: deel vier*

In 1965 the executive council of the NGKU considerably expanded the DRC's social influence when it undertook to bail the struggling *Christelike Opvoedkundige Tydskrifte Maatskappy* (COTM), out of the financial deepwater.⁸⁹ COTM was a media holding company established in 1954 by Geldenhuys, the NGKU's director of publications. Included in COTM's portfolio was the magazine *Naweekpos*. A non-denominationally affiliated Christian paper, *Naweekpos* was established as a moral counterweight to the iniquitous and corruptive influences supposedly ravaging Afrikaners by popular media:

“At that time [1953], sensation-seeking and unwanted reading material was rampant in our country... In the said circumstances, the need to publish a beautiful, attractive magazine that would earnestly be devoted to the great calling of honouring and glorifying the Giver of all good gifts and to help overcome evil with good in our *volkslewe* (national life) had become irreversible in us”.⁹⁰

True to form, the COTM's directorship and management structures were systematically made synonymous to that of the NGKU in both name and objective.⁹¹ The consolidation of COTM resources, and *Naweekpos* in particular, into the fold of the DRC's publishing apparatus granted significant access to a new reading market who were not necessarily DRC affiliated. The navigation of *Naweekpos* into the slipstream of the NGKU's vision for social engineering was not an unforeseen outcome. At the founding of the paper Geldenhuys posited to the publisher's head management that “a level of control may be extended over the content of the magazine [*Naweekpos*],” and “so that it would not infringe on the Kerkbode”.⁹² The COTM acquisition simultaneously spearheaded the

(Pretoria: N.G. Kerkboekhandel, 1987), 213–214.

89 Meeting of the Executive Council, 19 August 1965, DRC Archives, Stellenbosch, KS 1610.

90 Johannes Norval Geldenhuys, “So is *Naweekpos* begin,” *Naweekpos*, May 1964, 4. The repository of *Naweekpos*. [Online]. Available: <https://argief.nuuseum.media/naweekpos-1>

91 Combined meeting of the NGKU executive commission, the COTM, and the VPU, September 27, 1965, DRC Archives, Stellenbosch, DRC Archives, Stellenbosch, KS 1610.

92 Meeting of the NGKU Head Management, 20 November 1953, DRC Archives, Stellenbosch, KS 1608.

broadening of the NGKU's social purview as it commandeered its film department. This was augmented in the same year (1965) by Jacobus Daniel Vorster's lobbying for the representation of the NGKU on the directorship of *Christelike Afrikaanse Rolprent Fotografiese Organisasie*⁹³ with the intention of capturing the rising film market for the task of morally shaping Afrikanerdom.⁹⁴

A peculiar silence covered the NGKU take-over of COTM's bookstore and literary service. In the course of negotiations, NGKU management were of the notion that it was not in the public interest to disclose that *Naweekpos* had been assumed by the DRC publisher: "but as far as the wider public is concerned, it will practically be made that they are being served by *Naweekpos-Boekediens*".⁹⁵ By 1970 *Naweekpos* had been absorbed into *Die Voorligter*, the COTM entirely liquidated, and its publication rights transferred to the VPU, now a formal subsidiary of the NGKU. This transferal brought to surface fundamental complications stemming from the covert nature of negotiations five years prior. A certain author, heretofore published through the *Naweekpos*, refused the VPU rights to their works in protest of its association with the DRC's policy of racial discrimination.⁹⁶ The fact that the COTM was already under the directorship of the collective DRC publication platform seems to have been unbeknown to the protester and suggests a somewhat underhanded posture by the NGKU at the behest of its appetite for expanded social influence.⁹⁷

These infrastructural levers of the ZABV were compounded by the vast, unmatched network of the DRC which seeped into every crevice of the country. From its inception as a Synodal enterprise in 1903, the DRC

93 Established in 1947 *Carfo* was a Christian film company which endeavoured to produce good Christian films with the determined intent of guarding Afrikaner society against morally corrupting films and simultaneously serving to shape Afrikaner moral consciousness See: van der Watt, *Die Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk 1905–1975*, 217.

94 Meeting of the NGKU Head Management, 30 August 1965, DRC Archives, Stellenbosch, KS 1608.

95 Meeting of the NGKU Head Management, 30 August 1965, DRC Archives, Stellenbosch, KS 1608.

96 Annual report of the V.P.U., February 28, 1971, DRC Archives, Stellenbosch, AS 764.

97 In the NGKU head management meeting of 26 November 1965 the management of COTM and VPU were elected and consisted of the same individuals with J.D. Vorster as chairman of VPU, COTM and NGKU.

immediately incorporated each congregation as distributary stake holders in the success of the ZABV.⁹⁸ Meeting its defensive agenda to psychologically insulate Afrikaners in DRC pews, particularly those most socially vulnerable, the NGKU commandeered clerics and church council members across the country to act as peddlers of literature. Supplementary to this prefabricated network was a colporteur program which employed select individuals to “spread healthy religious literature amongst our people, especially in the congregations where good books and tracts are not easy to come by”.⁹⁹ These colporteurs operated under the strict supervision of the ZABV and were deployed as DRC foot soldiers against any propagation of alternative religiosity. In 1939 the ZABV reported that it had at that time two active colporteurs forming a significant bulwark against propaganda distributed by religious sects. The countermeasures of these ZABV agents included the collection and destruction of the taboo material, and the reciprocal flooding of the community with DRC literature.¹⁰⁰ In a similar vein, organisations such as the *Vroue Sending Bond* proved influential offset functionaries of ZABV material.¹⁰¹

Throughout the trajectory of the ZABV – which unequivocally mimed, and in certain avenues directed, the broader Afrikaner nationalist movement – poor Afrikaners remained the target demographic of its socio-moral preoccupation. Therefore, at the core of the organisation’s identity was the elemental prerogative of nation building through subjecting moral education and elevation. This was the governing motive for the ZABV’s 1940 collaboration with the DRC’s *Armesorg kommissie* (charitable commission) to publish more Christian books specifically to influence “our needy religious and national compatriots (volksgenote)”.¹⁰² Out of this materialised a book series entitled *Kerk en Volk*, with editions

98 Handelingen der twintigste vergadering van de Synode der Ned. Geref. Kerk in Zuid Afrika, Kaapstad, October 15, 1903, 39–40, DRC Archives, Stellenbosch.

99 ZABV Synodal report, Publication Commission, October 1936, DRC Archives, Stellenbosch, KS 1612.

100 Meeting of the NGKU Head Management, 2 August 1939, DRC Archives, Stellenbosch, KS 1608.

101 Meeting of the NGKU Head Management, 21 June 1921, DRC Archives, Stellenbosch, KS 1608.

102 Meeting of the NGKU Head Management, 29 November 1940, DRC Archives, Stellenbosch, KS 1608.

therein derivative of the ZABV's agenda to both insulate DRC readership and code Afrikaner society.¹⁰³ In 1955 Vorster reiterated this guiding principle of the NGKU when concluding the organisation's fundamental focus to be the distribution of morally sound literature which was "within the buying power of the largest possible sum of the volk... to bring our books more within the purchasing capacity of the *mindergegoede volksdeel* (less wealthy class of society)".¹⁰⁴ Notably through its affiliation with the *Verenigde Boekhandelaars van Suidelike Afrika*,¹⁰⁵ the NGKU had a hand in the broader nationalist agenda to capture blue collar Afrikaner minds by stimulating a reading lust and concurrently supplying appropriate books to meet this manufactured market.¹⁰⁶ Further suggesting the NGKU's motive to capture and shape working-class Afrikaners was the actualisation in 1950 of a favourable credit agreement extended to the railways; the sole agreement of its sort enacted by the NGKU.¹⁰⁷

Beyond class considerations, the NGKU's aggressive program of nation building along religious lines was shaped by the idea of capturing the imagination of the family. Nestled in the work of Afrikaans language engineers of the twentieth century was the assumption that an intact traditional nuclear family structure was the lifeblood of a healthy nation. This indubitably placed mothers within the crosshairs of nationalist literature production as the primary socialisers of future Afrikaner compatriots.¹⁰⁸ This meticulously reflected the orientation of NGKU publications. The DRC's self-assertion into the intimate familial space of Afrikanerdom was notable in publications such as an instructive guideline for fathers to

103 To name only two; Christiaan Kotzé's contribution *Verdwaalde Vroomheid* engaged with the DRC's constant battle with alternative religious sects, while Tobias Hanekom's *Kerk en Volk* perpetuated the Afrikaner nationalist Volksplanting myth of a divinely ordained chosen nation.

104 Meeting of the NGKU Head Management, 13 September 1955, DRC Archives, Stellenbosch, KS 1608.

105 Meeting of the Executive Council, 27 November 1950, DRC Archives, Stellenbosch, KS 1610.

106 Annual meeting of the Verenigde Boekhandelaars van Suidelike Afrika, October 18–20, 1948, DRC Archives, Stellenbosch, K-DIV 2600.

107 Meeting of the Executive Council, 27 November 1950, DRC Archives, Stellenbosch, KS 1610.

108 Hofmeyr, "Building a nation from words: Afrikaans language, literature and ethnic identity, 1902–1924," 100.

lead daily religious devotionals with their family (*huisgodsdiens*) which was released alongside a small book entitled “Preek in die Kombuis” (preach in the kitchen).¹⁰⁹ Similarly, following the reorganisation of 1950 was a concerted drive to engage Afrikaner children.¹¹⁰ Interestingly, and indicative of the NGKU’s high regard for its supposed moral influence, biography was amalgamated in this task as the DRC missionary, Stephanus Hofmeyr¹¹¹ became the subject of a children’s book in 1967.¹¹²

Through its publication apparatus a more continuous connection with young people was also facilitated for the DRC in the form of several periodicals. In 1952 the NGKU collaborated with the CSV to produce and distribute a magazine for high school children called *Ons Bou*. Within the deed of this agreement, the motive which permeated the magazine, and others of kind under NGKU administration, was discernible. It was stipulated that no material contradicting the DRC would be considered, that the intention was to channel distribution to as many schools as possible despite the existence of a CSV branch, and that the absolute focus of the magazine would rest on white Afrikaans pupils.¹¹³ *Ons Bou*, along with other youth magazines such as *Ons Jeug*, served the church’s agenda of capturing and directing the consciousness of young people into ‘good’ Afrikaners with an understanding of their role towards the church and consequently the *volk*. This formed part of the DRC’s wider use of ecclesial newspapers and periodicals to inform opinion throughout social strata.¹¹⁴

Finally, the NGKU made use of its extensive dissemination network to extend its reach beyond DRC quarters and well into the public reading

109 Gustav Bernhard Augustus Gerdener, *Elke dag met God: ’n poging om ’n leidraad vir die huisgodsdiens en die binnekamer deur die hele Bybel te gee* (Kaapstad: Suid-Afrikaanse Bybelvereniging, 1940); Meeting of the Publication Commission, 14 August 1940, DRC Archives, Stellenbosch, KS 1612.

110 Meeting of the Executive Council, 8 April 1952, DRC Archives, Stellenbosch, KS 1610.

111 Stephanus Hofmeyr (1839–1905) was a DRC missionary who ministered in the region of modern day Limpopo.

112 Gabriëlle Malan, *Held van die Soutpansberg*. (Kaapstad: NG Kerk uitgewers, 1967).

113 Meeting of the Executive Council, 12 October 1951, DRC Archives, Stellenbosch, KS 1610.

114 For an extensive analysis of DRC papers see: Hendrik Stephanus Grobler, “Die Raad van die Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerke,” (PhD diss., Universiteit van Pretoria, 1983), 112–142.

realm. In 1963 the NGKU expressed its concern that “provincial and other libraries in our country are purchasing large quantities of non-Christian and even anti-Christian books from overseas while only a small amount of our church approved books is being bought in”.¹¹⁵ A concern which was proactively addressed by the NGKU as a dedicated sub-commission was convened to facilitate the efficient stockpiling of public libraries. This coincided with the NGKU’s attempt to diversify its catalogue by increasing its productivity of Christian novels with the program of providing the leisure reading consumer with morally corrective material.¹¹⁶ As a subsidiary of the NGKU, the VPU emulated this preoccupation with socio-moral influence. When it was commissioned to publish an annotated Bible, emulated by the NGKU’s concurrent task of publishing a Bible commentary “for the *volk*,”¹¹⁷ it stated as its highest priority “that it must be in the language of the mass – understandable by the entire *volk*”.¹¹⁸

Conclusion

While the missionary agenda of distributing Christian literature to other ethnic groups was assumed by other ecclesial affiliates,¹¹⁹ the NGKU remained principally an ethno-centric publishing entity preoccupied with directing the moral character of Afrikaner society. Within the broad diversity of literature which fashioned the subject matter of the Afrikaans language movement, defined within the boundaries of nationalism,¹²⁰ the material published by the ZABV served an agenda of directing the adjoined nation building project along an engineered idea of a Christian-National society. An agenda which contributed to the creation of an indoctrinated

115 Meeting of the NGKU Head Management, 9 November 1963, DRC Archives, Stellenbosch, KS 1608

116 ZABV Publication Commission, 14 June 1950, DRC Archives, Stellenbosch, KS 1612.

117 ZABV Publication Commission, 8 March 1939, DRC Archives, Stellenbosch, KS 1612.

118 Director’s meeting of the V.P.U., June 8, 1953, DRC Archives, Stellenbosch, AS 764.

119 Gustav Bernhard Augustus Gerdener, “Enkele basiese beginsels van die literatuur hulpdiens in die Christelike sending,” chairman address at the *Konferensie oor christelike literatuur vir die Bantoe van Suidelike Afrika*, August 7–10, 1956, DRC Archives, Stellenbosch, AS 1125.

120 Hofmeyr, “Building a nation from words: Afrikaans language, literature and ethnic identity, 1902–1924,” 96.

and self-concealed Afrikaner bloc which would serve the plight of legitimising National Party rule based on an unquestioned and divinely affirmed national uniqueness.¹²¹

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121 Floris Albertus van Jaarsveld, *Wie en wat is die Afrikaner?* (Kaapstad: Tafelberg, 1981), 3.

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