

CHAPTER 2

THE LIFE OF BEN MARAIS

1. INTRODUCTION

It is hardly ever that people end up where they expect, or are expected, when they have a life's ambition. Parents look upon their babies and imagine their futures. Young children dream. Some people who were expected to become miners on the gold fields ended up as professors at universities. Also, some princes have turned away from their destinies. On the one hand, how different did the life of a son of a distressed farmer turn out? And on the other, to what extent were the qualities that later distinguished the farmer's son from his peers inherent in his character?

In my translated words of Ben Marais (*Wit Huise van Herinnering* 1964c:93):

“The history registers of the world are full of illustrious names. In hours of quiet when our spirit is at rest, we bow our heads and thank God for them. Their lives rise high on the horizon of time like huge trees in the early evening. But, when we read their names and recall their glorious deeds, we often do not realise how many of them tread on roads different to those they originally intended. God and the life intervened and sent their feet on unexpected and sometimes unwelcome roads ... Think of St Paul. We read in Acts that he intended to go to Bethany. But God did not allow him and thus he sailed to Troas ... And thus Paul ... was lead to Europe by no one else but God ... And we remember Paul today because of his exceptional labour in Europe, and we can thank God for this great apostle who carried the gospel of the cross to the ancient countries of the West and so to us.”

How different could Ben Marais' life have been had he succumbed and entered a life of politics, or become a journalist for a leading newspaper? Ben Marais firmly believed that God called him to walk the particular roads he followed, even though they were sometimes unpleasant, and caused him much anguish. Rather than siding with anybody, whether a left-wing activist or a right-wing conservative, he argued for the just cause.

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In this chapter the lonely but fruitful road Ben Marais trod will be traced.¹⁸ Thus, a biographic relation of his life is presented. Special emphasis is placed on his childhood, which would have determined how he walked the way that he was determined to walk. His correspondence with the general secretaries of the World Council of Churches contains compact formulations of his life's work and attitudes towards the current issues (Meiring 1979:86). While they might reveal him to be naïve concerning certain bodies, they do express his wholehearted concern for corrective actions being taken. The biographic relation is set within particular climates – road conditions and scenery – experienced during the 20th century, which are explored in Chapter 3.

Ben Marais' life could be considered in accordance to climaxes and low points that he experienced during his life (Meiring 1979:78-91), or according to a chronological periodisation, as is done. The chronological orientation is preferred above a thematic approach at this point in the argument, because his life is related to the greater 20th century through means of hermeneutical keys (thus thematic) and a chronological/periodised orientation provides a helpful framework.

2. A KEY TO BEN MARAIS

How would it be best to approach the life of Ben Marais? Are there any central moments around which his life could be orientated? How would it be best to organise and relate the vast amount of information and sources in digestible format? Or, to regard the road imagery used, to enable a single lane perspective on his life and not a multi-national, dual-highway network? Though he travelled such roads, it would require several studies to unravel them in detail.

This thesis wishes to work through a window, or a key. While this is restrictive in itself, it helps to focus the attention on particular details. Different options present themselves

¹⁸ In an undated essay titled "An Enchanted World" (Pretoria Archives), Ben Marais writes: "I have often walked along the great highways of the world, – Broadway and Times Square, Piccadilly, Unter den Linden, La Place De La Concorde, Rome, Cairo, New Delhi or the Ouvidor in Rio. I have so often followed the lonely trails in the far away corners of Africa and the Americas...."

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as keys. It could be either a significant document, such as his D.Phil.,¹⁹ a letter he had written,²⁰ a book he had read or written, one of the countless newspaper or popular magazine articles, or it could be found in one of his public pronouncements, for example when he denied that Apartheid could be based on Scripture. Alternatively it could be found in a particular relationship or friendship, for example with Beyers Naudé, or with his old students – especially those who were at the Sonop residence, his wife or adversaries, as for example Dr J.D. Vorster or E.P. Groenewald. The petition of the 13 professors,²¹ signed on 16 May and released on 17 May 1955 could well have served as key, since it signified a particular response to the policies of segregation. However, the petition is more general, political in nature, and does not place Ben Marais in an immediate ecclesiastic or ecumenical context. The protest is important, though, since it states quite clearly that the undersigned are either members of the National Party or are nationalists.²² The petition is also significant since it binds 13 prominent academics from the mid 1950s, in a single voice of protest against the policies of the government in power.²³ Furthermore, it indicates that Ben Marais was not a solitary voice while exemplifying his pertinence to protesting where he saw fit. Also, it indicates that Ben Marais was active in circles other than the church and theological training. The death threats Ben Marais received consequent to the release of the petition are also noteworthy since they express the anxiety and distress the Marais family had to endure as a result of Ben Marais' political and theological stance.²⁴

For the particular angle of inquiry formulated in the Introduction of this thesis, the correspondence between Ben Marais and three secretaries of the World Council of

¹⁹ Ben Marais considers this possibility in Meiring (1979:78): In reference to the Wiehahn and Riekert reports as key reports – “dreams of many years that have become real ... finally it appears that we are opening our windows and doors. Then it seems as if everything one has said and done over the past 40 years was worth the while” (my translation).

²⁰ Ben Marais exchanged numerous letters with Alan Paton and Roland Bainton (Pretoria Archives).

²¹ The petition, based on moral and constitutional grounds was drawn up by the 13 professors to protests against the reconstitution of the Senate on pseudo-legalistic aspects. Seven substantiating reasons for the protest were given (*Star* 17 May 1955).

²² *Nationaalgesindes*. Ben Marais was apparently a member of the South African Party.

²³ In order of signatures: W.A. Kleynhans, P.V. Pistorius, J.J.N. Cloete, J.A. Louw, B.J. Schlebusch, E.F.W. Geyvan Pittius, W.J. de Kock, S.P. Engelbrecht, A.S. Geysers, D.J. Swiegers, B.J. Marais, D. Pont, C. Jacobsz.

²⁴ Specific reference is made to a hand written death threat (Archives, Pretoria Collection), made during May 1955 and addressed to Prof Ben Marais.

Churches, Visser't Hooft,²⁵ Eugene Carson Blake²⁶ and Dr Potter²⁷ is insightful. It appears that Ben Marais had a habit of formulating his concerns with the World Council of Churches in letters. Particular questions that could be asked are: Who was the person (Ben Marais) behind the letters? What are the particular issues in the letters? Why did he take the positions he took? Why was it that he received detailed and reasonable responses?

a. Correspondence with the World Council of Churches

Ben Marais was a prolific letter writer, and received as many or more letters in return. Each of the letters could tell a story. The available correspondence could be grouped according to subject (personal; academic; political; religious), or according to recipients and senders (political leaders; church and ecumenical leaders; friends; press; old students; adversaries; colleagues), or according to temporal considerations (chronologically – earliest to latest; periods of his career), or according to correspondence published in the press.

i. From Dr W.A. Visser't Hooft, 17 October 1956

In this letter, written in Dutch, there is internal evidence substantiating a continued correspondence between Visser't Hooft and Ben Marais. This letter concerns the person of Du Preez (A.B.) who had visited Europe and had held discussions with theologians on the biblical justification of Apartheid:²⁸ “bijbelse fundering van de Apartheidspolitik”. Du Preez had also written an article on the theological foundation of

²⁵ Visser't Hooft was General Secretary of the World Council of Churches from its inception until he retired in 1966.

²⁶ Carson Blake followed Visser't Hooft as the second General Secretary, serving from 1966 to 1972. He was Presbyterian, and was a respected ecumenical leader in the United States.

²⁷ Philip Potter, a Methodist minister from the West Indies, served as General Secretary of the World Council of Churches from 1972b to 1984.

²⁸ Prof A.B. du Preez undertook a European academic tour in the mid 1950s. During this tour he held theological discussions with European academics. The tour had an impact on the situation in South Africa, where he was nominated to head a research committee, which had to study race relations and the church. Ben Marais and B.B. Keet were part of this committee. The letter indicates that Du Preez's visit also had a profound effect abroad, albeit not positive. On 11 December 1958, D. Otto Weber responded to an enquiry by Ben Marais on allegations made by A.B. du Preez (Pretoria Archives). Du Preez alleged emphatically that Weber (then rector of Georg-August-Universität, Göttingen), approved of Apartheid. In the letter Weber mentions, “I am surprised to be known as a supporter of racial segregation even in the church. It only is true that in the course of winter 1955 to 1956 I met here one of your colleagues of Pretoria....”

Apartheid, calling for a justification based on practical considerations. Visser't Hooft thinks Du Preez unscientific and inappropriate, and mentions the need for a relevant historical analysis along the lines of the situational analysis of Barth and Bonhoeffer.²⁹ Visser't Hooft writes, “Men krijgt van buiten af dikwijls de indruk, dat velen in Zuid-Afrika de situatie van 1956 pogen te beantwoorden met een houding die wellicht in 1856 (sic) de juiste geweest is,”³⁰ indicating at once the complexity of the race relations debate in South Africa and the need for a sympathetic historical understanding of the situation (1956).

The crux of the letter is Visser't Hooft asking Ben Marais' point of view on Du Preez concerning the biblical justification of Apartheid:

“Wat ik in verband met Dupreez niet goed begrijp, is dat het bekende rapport van de kerken over het rassen-vraagstuk toch niet meer vasthoudt aan de bijbelse fundering en dat Dupreez dus toch eigenlijk polemiseert tegen dat rapport. Is dit juist gezien?”³¹

A subtle argument could be suggested that such visits by NG Kerk theologians abroad contributed towards the international church community, for example the World Council of Churches, loosing patience with the NG Kerk for its recurrent abstinence, and rather supporting the alternative parties, whose arguments were well formulated, and through whom it was deemed most probable that the race-imbalance-debate would be resolved. The NG Kerk's self afflicted isolation during the 1960s and 1970s did not contribute to the discussions either. Ben Marais, himself, always remained a proponent of resolving the race tensions in South Africa through debate and discussion.

Unfortunately Ben Marais' reply to this letter has not been traced. It is known that relations between the two colleagues, A.B. du Preez and Ben Marais were not always good (S. Marais Interview 2000).

²⁹ Barth and Bonhoeffer: World War II Nazi Germany, the church and nationalism.

³⁰ “From the side one often gets the impression that many attempt to answer the situation in 1956 with the attitude that was prevalent in 1856 (sic).” In 1857 the NG Kerk synod determined that the Lord's Supper could be served separately to white and coloured church members “for the sake of the weaker brothers”.

³¹ “What I do not understand about Dupreez is that the church's well known report on race relations is not substantiated by biblical justification and that Dupreez is arguing against that report. Would that be your impression?”

ii. To the Secretary, World Council of Churches, 25 September 1964

This letter, a copy of a hand-written draft,³² unfortunately had its addressee removed in a photocopying accident. It is, however, certain that the intended recipient was associated with the World Council of Churches. Compared to the other letters Ben Marais wrote, this letter has a sense of urgency reflected in its style and aggressive handwriting.

Ben Marais expresses concern in the letter. He is reacting to a report and states that:

“40,000 dollar (or Rand) has been spent by your committee on refugees etc. to aid refugees from South Africa”

The “etc” is developed in the letter where he asks that distinction be drawn “between refugees and sabotage, violence and communist infiltration”. He wrote the letter to secure clarification – and to protest – against the World Council of Churches apparent indiscriminate aid to refugees (exiles?) from South Africa. Ben Marais’ point is that the World Council of Churches is being accused of “subsidising sabotage in South Africa”. He asks what form the aid took and “who were these refugees?” His concern is that they might be communists, and could well be guilty of acts of violence or sabotage. These concerns are not founded or substantiated in the letter, giving the impression that this is an early draft, written in haste and not well thought through, possibly in a sense of panic or anger. It is most probable that the letter was sent, but no supporting communications have been traced. They are particularly relevant, though, to understanding Ben Marais’ concern for communism, which differed on technical points from the concerns of the proponents of Apartheid.

iii. To Dr Potter, World Council of Churches, 1978(?)

This letter, unfortunately undated, was written on a University of South Africa letterhead, implying a post 1975 date. The most probable date is 1978, since it refers to events that took place in the then Rhodesia, when 20 missionaries were massacred during the civil war. Ben Marais is reacting to allegations that the World Council of

³² It could be established that the letter was addressed to the Secretary of the World Council of Churches, when the original letter was traced (Pretoria Archives).

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Churches “has become ‘Marxist’ and even Godless or ‘diabolical’....” because it was supporting the “liberation movements” in Southern Africa. He states that he understands the World Council of Churches’ “concern for justice and liberation in Africa and elsewhere”, but he seriously questions the wisdom of some of the council’s actions in this regard. It appears that Ben Marais is concerned, in light of the massacre of the 20 missionaries by the freedom fighters (argument substantiated), that the World Council of Churches, which had a missionary orientation in its founding, is contradicting itself and is being self defeatist. The letter is concluded on a personal and, rightfully or wrongfully, on a prophetic tone:

“In conclusion: I hear someone out of your corner say: This is a typical reaction of a white South African. No! You are wrong. I have consistently – all my life, been a critic of much of what is happening in Southern Africa, and of our systems. I have, as a result, often been treated as the filth of the earth and experienced extreme forms of ostracism, organised boycott and loneliness. I could not wish that to happen to my greatest enemy. But, that is life in our sort of world and I have no regrets. A man can only stand up for what he believes. Faced by the same issues I will make the same decisions once again. Freedom for human groups means much to me. But that does not mean that I support or condone any sort of action in the name of freedom. How your support under the circumstances mentioned above, can in any way further the interests of the Gospel in Africa, I fail to see!

I have a feeling that in your legitimate attempt at solidarity with the oppressed and the poor, you run great danger of ending up in an uncritical identification with contemporary movements over which you have little control as to the methods used and the ultimate aims.

Is it not possible that you could in this way, in your crusade for justice, commit a new injustice?”

In retrospect, the letter is written by a white middle class male who held a particular perspective on the political movements representing the poor and oppressed and their ideologies, methods and actions. Media formed this perspective as much as peers and his understanding of the situation. A further consideration is Ben Marais’ deliberate avoidance of taking action against the perpetrators who were causing poverty and oppression in Southern Africa. Regardless, Ben Marais spoke out for what he believed to be right.

Unfortunately the response to the above letter is not available for commentary, unlike the following letter, written much earlier (1970),³³ to which Eugene Carson Blake reacted personally.

iv. To Dr E.C. Blake, World Council of Churches, 3 September 1970

The letter is quoted in full. It is possible to detect certain stylistic conventions in his formulations, which compared to his monographs and other writings, reveal Afrikaans language structures and syntax. Though there appears to be a lack of embellishment, his thoughts appear to be contemplative and sincere. The fear of communism is a recurrent theme in his writings, depicting him also a child of his times. There is a sense of warmth in his writing, while the tone of urgency could be ascribed to the letters being “kairos” or particular opportunity letters:

“UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA.
3 September, 1970.
Dear Dr. Blake,

I write as one who in years gone by was closely associated with the World Council of Churches and fondly remember many wonderful Christian men and women I met and worked with in different areas of the work of the World Council of Churches as men and women of deep Christian conviction and concern for the Kingdom of God.

Though my close associations have as a result of circumstances been broken almost a decade ago I still follow the deliberations and work of the W.C.C. with great interest and not without hope that this great organization may yet be an instrument in the hands of God to revitalise the life of the churches and further the great cause of the unity of the church which is God’s will.

It was with profound shock therefore that I read the announcement that the W.C.C. has been led to decide on financial support to “liberation” or “Terrorist” movements in Africa.³⁴ I still cannot believe what I read and have not given up hope that the report that reached us does not reflect the true picture. This decision is so completely out of character if seen in the light of the responsible statements of the W.C.C. on social or political questions in the past that I wish to disassociate myself from it completely. You make it virtually impossible for a responsible Christian in this part of the world – whatever his race or colour to defend the W.C.C. or its actions.

³³ See also *Pro Veritate*, 1 October 1970.

³⁴ Ben Marais is referring to the fund of the Programme to Combat Racism, which was launched in 1970. US\$ 10.9 million was given to groups involved in efforts to combat racism (See Kinnamon 1997:220-221).

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You played directly into the hands of people in this country and elsewhere who claim that the W.C.C. is moving towards Communism or is already deeply infiltrated. It was not true of the W.C.C. I co-operated with up to 1960. I am very reluctant to believe that it is true now.

The decision to support the so-called “liberation movements” of Africa will alienate responsible Christian leaders. Though these movements may spring from nationalist aspirations they have historically become closely associated with the communist world and its material support. I know that you will claim that it is the Christian church’s duty to be identified with the cause of social justice and to prove its solidarity with groups who suffer some form of political oppression or discrimination especially on grounds of race or colour and that if the church keeps quiet the peoples of Africa may turn to the Communist world in the false belief that only they have any concern for justice and freedom.

In this concern I am with you. The church has a duty and must be willing to take up unpopular causes. Many of us in S.A. have risked our reputations and everything we had in the church or the state to further the cause of justice as we see it and we are willing to do so again if our consciences so dictate.

But by giving your support to movements dedicated to revolution and bloodshed if necessary, you have as I see it betrayed the Christian way in social and political reform. If you had seen some acts of violence perpetrated on innocent people by some of these groups under the banner of “freedom”, you would not have taken this decision. I predict that you will lose much of your support among churches and churchmen in Southern Africa – among them many black church leaders from different denominations.

Fight for justice, stress the full gospel in all its vertical and horizontal aspects, but in God’s name do not give grounds for the church of Christ to be branded as a “subsidiser of terrorism and violence”.

In the long run it could not benefit the progress of the Gospel among the people of Africa. This is a cry from my heart. I hope it is not too late to rescind this fatal decision.

Yours in Christ,
Ben Marais”

It is possible to follow his thoughts carefully, as he constructed it in the quietness of his study. It is important to mention that Ben Marais reacted in similar calm and brotherly fashion towards his colleagues in the faculty and church with whom he disagreed (See for example, his open letter to Beyers Naudé 1986). The above letter received the following response.

v. From Dr E.C. Blake, World Council of Churches, 24 September 1970

The response to Ben Marais' letter is short and well articulated to the point. It indicates, quite crudely, the different attitudes to the problem of race relations in South Africa, where Blake states:

“It is my own judgement that without clear commitment to the cause of racial equality the churches will find themselves under the judgement of God.”

Fear of the judgement of God must surely be far greater than any communist threat? The letter also displaces Ben Marais' argument about the Black churchmen being against the World Council of Churches' decision to support the liberation movements when Blake states:

“There are indications that black Christians in the whole continent of Africa including many who are silent in South Africa itself are heartened in their Christian faith by our action.”

The purpose of Carson Blake's letter is:

“... written in the hope that this whole affair may have the effect of widening Christian understanding of the importance of racism as an attitude which must be combated and overcome.”

Blake's response puts the race debate in the church on a different level. The question is not race-relations but racism, indicating a one-sided attitude of one race group towards another. There is thus no opportunity for negotiations and discussions as Ben Marais seeks. The irony would appear that Ben Marais was outdated in his thinking as far as the World Council of Churches was concerned, but was revolutionary compared to peers and fellow churchmen in the NG Kerk.

b. Further Correspondence

The following letters are also significant in that they emphasise aspects of Ben Marais' life and work not necessarily covered in the above letters.

i. From H.E. Pressley, 2 September 1981

In this informal letter, Henry E. Pressley, an old university friend from Princeton (Meiring 1979:81), wrote a letter expressing his concern over the events in Angola and about Ben Marais' research on racial affairs. Apart from reminiscences on the past and personal matters, the following paragraph appears, expressing the author's paranoia and also the high regard he held for Ben Marais' opinion and insight:

“Ben, when you were doing your research on the racial issues you came to America a number of times and you honored us with a visit also. I have a hazy idea that you told me something about our U.S. situation to the effect that if America should have a major crisis a certain segment of our society would go with the enemy. Did I get your slant on this situation? If that is the case, if that segment would go with the enemy in the event of a major war, please set me straight on the matter ... Please let me know what the facts are in this matter when you write....”

The Cold War between the United States and the Soviet block must be seen as background to this letter, and the enemy would surely be communism, the “Rooi gevaar”, one of Ben Marais' interests. Further background to this letter could be Ben Marais' visit to the United States from September 1968 to January 1969 as part of the leadership exchange programme between United States and South Africa. In his report Ben Marais makes the following observation on the United States (Marais 1969b:3):

“This is a troubled land. I have little doubt that this country faces perilous times and quite possibly a decade of great tension. It is part of the growing process of this people and this civilization and as such natural and normal. But I think a very critical stage in this development has undoubtedly been reached, a sort of watershed. Tensions are going up, especially on the race front and that includes not only the Negroes, or black people of this country, but also minority groups like the Mexicans and Indians. They are all becoming more self conscious and aware of their identities....”

Further comment will not be made on this extract, since the main focus of this thesis wishes to fall on South Africa, though, it becomes pertinently clear that Ben Marais' wisdom was not only of value to South Africa.

ii. From L.C. Malan, 10 April 1989

This informal letter, originally in Afrikaans, expresses an appreciation for Ben Marais not being drawn into joining the left wing liberals and thereby finding protection for his points of view. The consideration of viewing Coloureds as “fellow Afrikaners” is also mentioned in the letter. The letter lauds Ben Marais for being a prophet for his times, and for remaining dedicated to his calling despite the threats of isolation.

iii. From Eddie Brown, 21 September 1992

In an Afrikaans letter on a University of Stellenbosch letterhead, addressed to Ben Marais, Eddie Brown congratulates Ben Marais on the honorary doctorate he received from the University of Stellenbosch, and expresses his gratitude for the hospitality he received as the Marais’ guest two weeks earlier. The former student of Ben Marais also says:³⁵

“Thank you for your ‘being a brother’ towards the NG Kerk and your students.”³⁶

The reference is to Ben Marais being a Christian Brother, and relates to the theme of Ben as a prophet of the church.

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Contrary to the overwhelming image created in the biographic material available on Ben Marais, he did not merely emerge at University. He had a childhood. This childhood is often brushed over in a few references to his date of birth, his completing school, and his love for playing rugby. However, in *Wit Huise van Herinneringe* (1964c) a collection of 31 devotional essays, he gives unusual glimpses into his youth. Two of these recollections are significant.

³⁵ My translation.

³⁶ “...Baie dankie vir u ‘broederskap’ teenoor die NGK en u studente....”

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In the first pastoral recollection (1964c:28) he recalls:³⁷

“I was a shepherd early in my life – or was I? Maybe I just looked after sheep. That at least I did day after day for a few months during the years of the flu when I was only eight years old. I used to herd the sheep out to the field along with my elder brother, care for them and bring them back to the kraal at night. I learned many things about animals and the veld in those months – things I will never forget....”

In the second recollection (1964c:30-32) he recalls:³⁸

“I got to know death when I was a small child. It all happened so quietly that death lost most of its intimidation. My young brother Danie had been sick for some time. He became paler as the days drew out. Then, one morning, my mother called while I was playing with ‘bitterappels’ and ‘dolossies’ to come and say good bye to Danie, ‘because he is going to heaven’. And there I stood in the great enveloping silence and saw how a person dies....

On one sunny morning, many years later, I returned to the old farm graveyard where Danie lies buried. While standing there, reading his name on the small grave stone, I looked up to see the rippling of the white grassland, and it was as if the West wind was chanting from the rite: ‘Thus we let the body rest in the bosom of the earth, but the soul returns to God who gave it’³⁹....”

Daniel Marais, Ben Marais’ baby brother who died a few days after his baptism on 3 May 1914 (born on 7 January 1914), lies buried next to their mother. There is no evidential substantiation of the influence of Daniel Marais’ untimely death on the life of Ben Marais, but as is argued from circumstantial evidence, these deaths, along with that of another baby sibling and an elder brother, Pieter Abraham, and their mother, had a profound influence on his life.

Ben Marais makes a further, indirect reflection on his life in *Die Kerk deur die Eeue* (1959a). In this thematic treatment of the history of the church,⁴⁰ Ben Marais pays particular and interesting attention to Bernardino Ochino (1488-1564) alongside Martin Luther and John Calvin. In *Die Kerk deur die Eeue*, Bernardino Ochino appears to be

³⁷ My translation.

³⁸ My translation.

³⁹ “So lê ons nou die liggaam weg in die skoot van die aarde, maar die siel keer terug tot God wat dit gegee het.”

⁴⁰ The contents are “Die stryd na buite” – The outward battle, “Inwendige stryd” the inward battle, “Rondom die kerkhervorming: enkele hoofmomente in die stryd” – On the Reformation: a few key moments, “Nuwe bane” – New routes, indicating an orientation to battles.

struggling with similar issues to Ben Marais, which had a profound effect on his life. It could be said that Ben Marais found a role model in Bernardino Ochino. The life of loneliness and disappointment Bernardino Ochino experienced is comparable, to an extent, to the life of Ben Marais, as also expressed in the communications with Dr Potter, 1978. Bernardino Ochino found himself suspended between the old world of Rome, comparable to Ben Marais' world of Apartheid, and the new world of the reformation in which he never settled, like Ben Marais who never became an active and aggressive opponent of Apartheid. Ben Marais, though, did not die along a lonely road in Moravia, but in his home in Pretoria, and considering a full church attending his funeral, many mourned his death.

a. A Sketch of Ben Marais' Life

Evidence from the correspondence, and the allusions to the clouds hanging over his youth, indicates that this was not merely another professor of Church History. It is noteworthy that Ben Marais avoided talking about his youth. Thus, when Meiring (1979:79) asked him about his years as a young boy,⁴¹ he mentioned his place of birth, and the fact that the Karoo, where he grew up, was in his blood⁴² and where he felt at home, but then he continued talking about the weather and how soothing it was – one of the reasons for referring to the particular themes in the country under the heading “climates” (Chapter 3).

In this section chronologically organised background information on Ben Marais is provided, which contributes towards a better understanding of him within the scope of this study.

i. From Farm to Town Boy

On 26 April 1909, far from the worlds of the World Council of Churches, universities, synods, the Broederbond and international mission conferences, on a small farm called Frisgewaagd in the Klein Suurberg – in the Steynsburg district – Barend Jacobus Marais was born. He was named after his uncle on mother's side, Barend Jacobus Lombard

⁴¹ Kinderjare – youth – the term is elaborated to emphasise the point that Ben Marais avoids the topic.

⁴² “Dit sal ek nooit uit my bloed kry nie” (Meiring 1979:79).

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Botha, who was one of the witnesses at his baptism on 13 June 1909 in the Steynsburg NG Kerk. His mother was Elizabeth Magdalena Botha (Tant' Lizzie) and his father Willem Frederick Marais (Oom Willie).

13 children were born to Tant' Lizzie and Oom Willie. The oldest, Herculina Johanna (Johanna) was born on 2 November 1898, and the youngest, Mara, was born on 13 February 1917. Tant' Lizzie died shortly after the birth of Mara. Tragedy struck the family the next year when Pieter (Pieter Abraham – born on 26 April 1900) died during the Swart Griep (Black Influenza). The two youngest, Mara and Melvina (Elizabeth Melvina – born on 14 February 1915) went to stay with relatives until their early teens. The other siblings of Ben Marais were: Johan (Johan Samuel Frederick – born 28 November 1901); Martiens (Martinus Prinsloo – born 26 September 1905); Willie (Willem Frederick – born in 1906);⁴³ Nellie (Petronella Christina Susanna – born 17 September 1907); Charles (Charel Francois⁴⁴ – born 9 September 1910); and Jurie (Philippus Jurgens – born 16 April 1912). Ben Marais was just older than Charles. Two more babies were born, one being Daniel⁴⁵ and a second one, of whom nothing is either recorded or known. Tant' Lizzie was buried next to Daniel on the farm Mooihoek.

In 1910, Ben Marais' father, Oom Willie, left Frisgewaagd⁴⁶ and moved to the farm Mooihoek in the Venterstad district.⁴⁷ Ben Marais would then have been just more than a year old, still unable to speak but quite mobile. Mooihoek is now partially covered by the waters of the Gariep Dam. The farm was previously part of the Vaalbank farm, where Paul Kruger spent part of his youth (Paul Kruger was born on the farm Bulhoek, which falls in the Steynsburg district).

⁴³ Willie was not baptised in Steynsburg, where his parents were members and thus a more accurate date could not be confirmed. Interestingly, Mara was not baptised at Venterstad, in which congregation the family were members at the time of her birth.

⁴⁴ According to the Baptism register, NG Kerk Archives, Cape Town.

⁴⁵ Daniel was named after Daniel Petrus de Bruin, Ben Marais' step grandfather.

⁴⁶ Ben Marais' grandmother had remarried after her first husband's death (Pieter Abraham Marais – the family name is traced to 1790 – P.A. Marais Interview 20 October 2002). He died from appendicitis. Her new husband, Daniel de Bruin, bought the family farm in the Tarkastad district from her four sons in exchange for his farm, Frisgewaagd, in the Venterstad district.

⁴⁷ Oom Willie's membership was transferred to Venterstad from Steynsburg on 9 November 1910. He had been in the congregation of Steynsburg since 6 June 1887.

The young Ben Marais first attended the farm school on Mooihoek, where his father was the teacher. He then attended the Venterstad School until standard 5. He matriculated at the High School in Middelburg, Cape, in 1927 with a second class matric – having failed mathematics. He was mischievous at school, mostly because he was easily bored in class. He thus surprised his school friends, while in Standard 9 (1926), by announcing that he wanted to study Theology, to become a minister. The only ministers Ben Marais would have known would have been the local ministers of the congregations in the North Eastern Cape – one who was Ds Louis J. Fourie.⁴⁸ This is an important consideration for the theme “What have you done with your Troas?”⁴⁹

Not much is known about the years in Middelburg. The Marais family lived on a property that had a large garden. They sold flowers, grapes, and vegetables from the garden and brooms the boys made at the Saturday markets. The children all had to work in the garden on Saturday afternoons, except for Charles – who was excused to practice on the piano. In the evenings they held family worship.

ii. Student Years: Balancing Acts

Ben Marais enrolled at the University of Stellenbosch (Maties) in 1928 to become a minister, under sponsorship of his uncle, Oom Pieter (Pieter Abraham). Thus began his involvement with student life, something that he was to remain involved with, in various capacities until shortly before his death in 1999.

The faculty photos, adorning the walls of the Seminary in Stellenbosch, are quite revealing. One significant photo dates to 1934, and contains some interesting faces carrying significant names. There are eight rows of relatively tightly packed students and lecturers. Ben Marais can be seen standing on the left end of the sixth row, he is holding his body half separate and is looking slightly outwards. He is standing next to H.E. du Toit. J.D. (Koot) Vorster is seated at the far left end of the second row, and can

⁴⁸ Ds Louis J. Fourie was inaugurated on 16 April 1921 and remained in service of the NG Kerk in Middelburg until his death in 1938. He studied in Princeton and the Free University of Amsterdam on completing his initial studies at Stellenbosch (Vermeulen 1952:45).

⁴⁹ Ben Marais would have modelled his concept of the ministry in the NG Kerk on their ministries. Compare also to Nicol (1958), who structures his autobiography around the question posed to him when he was a student with Prof. N.J. Hofmeyr: “Why do you want to become a minister?”

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be seen to be facing inwards. Further students include: A.M.H. Koornhof (1st row); H.J.C. Reyneke (2nd row); in the third row T.N. Hanekom and W.A. Landman are prominent; J.T.M. de Jong van Arkel (5th row); J.J. Lubbe, W.J.G. Lubbe and F.J.M. Potgieter (6th row); and J.S. Gericke, M.S. Daneel and E.A. Venter (7th row). Even though Stellenbosch was the only institution where prospective ministers of the NG Kerk could study, and thus it could be taken for granted that these people would be in the photo, the divergent points of view and opinions and schools of thought followed by the students in their later careers and positions, emphasises the fact that the training at Stellenbosch seminary created the opportunity for personal, theological and ideological development in different directions. Interestingly, the renowned Du Plessis Case (November-December 1931) was still fresh in the memory of the lecturers and senior students.

Ben Marais obtained all his degrees with distinction; his B.A. in 1930, his M.A. in Afrikaans in 1931, and his M.A. in Philosophy in 1935. He completed his M.Th. (Princeton) in 1936. The title of his M.A. dissertation in Afrikaans was *Stylvernuwing by Arthur van Schendel*, while – quite significantly, the title of his M.A. dissertation in Philosophy was *Probleme van die Ontwikkeling van die Onsterflikheid in die Griekse Filosofie*. The title of the M.Th. was along similar lines, *Die Godsidee by die Grieke: Probleme van die Ontwikkeling in die Onsterflikheid van die Griekse Filosofie*. Ben Marais completed his candidate's examination⁵⁰ in October/November 1936 at Stellenbosch, after his return from abroad (September 1936). He became a candidate minister (proponent) at the end of the year.

An interesting anecdote is told (S. Marais 2000) about an oral examination which he had to do for his degree in Philosophy. He was under pressure to complete quickly so that he could be off to Princeton. They needed an external examiner, and the person who was asked to fulfil this duty was non other than the famous sociologist, Dr H.F. Verwoerd. Apparently Verwoerd was not happy with one of the answers Ben Marais gave, and thus gave an exposition of what he thought, working within and expounding his theories. Once Verwoerd had said what he wished to say, the examiner turned to him

⁵⁰ Proponents-eksamen.

and said: “I must agree with the student.”⁵¹ Verwoerd was snubbed. The animosity Verwoerd felt towards Ben Marais in later years could be traced to this event.

Ben Marais’ leadership qualities were apparent at university. He was chairman of Wilgenhof men’s residence for 3 years. He was elected for a fourth term, but did not serve it due to his hastened departure to Princeton. His good friend, Danie Craven, thus served as chairman in his stead. Apart from being chairman of the university Student Representative Council in 1933, he also had interests in the Afrikaanse Kultuurvereniging, the cultural society of the Afrikaner students of the university. He was also quite active, physically, playing for Maties under 19 rugby team, and captaining the university’s third team for 3 years. He played in the front row, prop.⁵² He was also a member of the Berg en Toerklub, the Mountain and Touring Club.

Student politics were very intense during the 1930s. Ben Marais was chairperson of the Student Representative Council of Stellenbosch University. He was actively involved in attempting to retain the English-speaking students within the structures of NUSAS (National Union of South African Students).

His love for writing also manifested itself at the University of Stellenbosch. He was university correspondent of the daily Cape newspaper, *Die Burger*, and served as editor of the student newspaper, the *Stellenbosse Student*, for two years. His interest in journalism was thus developed early. Interestingly, he was twice offered employment at the newspaper, but turned the offers down.

His professors at seminary were: E.E. van Rooyen (Old Testament); B.B. Keet (Doctrine and Ethics); D. Lategan (Mission and Church History); and D. Malan (New Testament). Ben Marais had very good relations with B.B. Keet, under whose guidance he later completed his D.Phil., the theme of which was inspired by his visit to Madras in 1938, where he attended the Tambaram International Mission Conference.

⁵¹ “Ek moet aan die student gelyk gee”.

⁵² Several of his brothers also played rugby in Middelburg. They can be seen in various team photographs in the Middelburg museum.

Most interesting is Ben Marais' assertion (Hofmeyr 1985:32) that he did not enjoy Church History at seminary. In answer to Hofmeyr's question posed to him during a 1985 interview (Ibid), he asserted that his interest in Church History developed later. He had enjoyed history at school, but it did not go well with Church History as a subject at seminary. Reasons proposed for this pertained primarily to the Du Plessis Case (1931).

iii. The Fashionable Minister: Years in the Ministry

Ben Marais spent several years, 1937 to 1953, in the ministry of the church – in different capacities. These years represent his most active years: travelling; conferences; synods; publications; and ministry to students and members of congregations. Ben Marais was a minister of a congregation from 1949-1953. This would have been the vision of his calling, to be a minister of a congregation, when he notified his friends and family that he wished to study Theology. Thus, also in Ben Marais' life, the theme of his sermon, "What have you done with your Troas?" is quite true. Ben Marais ended up travelling other roads from those he expected to travel upon, but also, he did "visit" his original destination.

The University Chaplain/The Policy Protestor

During his 12 years as university chaplain⁵³ of the Ned. Herv. or Geref. Kerk⁵⁴ students, Ben Marais could be seen walking in the streets of Brooklyn, Pretoria, wearing an English blazer and coloured tie – not black suit and white tie, as was the customary dress of reformed clergy. An interesting comparison could be made to Ghandi, who rejected English fashions for traditional Indian attire.

Ben Marais' first responsibility, though, early in 1937, came when he relieved Ds Malan, minister of the new church in Graaff Reinet for two months. He would have had to fulfil all the ministerial responsibilities except for baptism and serving Eucharist, and raising his hands when saying the benediction at the end of the service. He spent a further two months of the same year in Riversdal, after Ds Hugo had retired from the

⁵³ See Landman (1984:117-128) for an overview and general evaluation of Ben Marais' ministry to the students of the University of Pretoria.

⁵⁴ Nederduitse Hervormde or Gereformeerde Kerk.

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ministry in that congregation. Later, still the same year, Dr Willem Nicol, minister of the Johannesburg East congregation (old Irene church) of the Ned. Herv. or Geref. Kerk, travelled down to Stellenbosch to find a suitable candidate minister to relieve him for six months, because he had been appointed as chairman of the Education Commission of the Synod. He asked Ben Marais to relieve him. Thus a friendship developed between the elder Dr W. Nicol and Ben Marais. Ben Marais started his relief work in the old Irene church in September 1937. Only six days after he had started he was called by the synod of Transvaal to minister the students in the province of Transvaal. Before accepting his new responsibility he completed his obligatory six months relief work in Johannesburg.

Thus, in March 1938, Ben Marais returned to the world of students, now as a chaplain, after only short periods of service in various congregations. He was responsible for ministering to students of all the universities and colleges in Transvaal. He worked from the Pretoria East congregation, spending much time on the road – Heidelberg, University of Witwatersrand, Potchefstroom – while also attending to the students in Pretoria, whom, he was told, were the most difficult (Marais 1955[?]).

Two further events in 1938 were to leave a remarkable impression on his life. The first was when he was elected to serve on the Sonop Council. Sonop was a men's residence of the Ned. Herv. or Geref. Kerk. Thus started a life-long relation between Ben Marais and the hostel residents, a relationship that was upheld even though there might have been different political or nationalistic points of view.

The second event in 1938 that left an impression on his life, was when the Transvaal synod of the Ned. Herv. or Geref. Kerk nominated him to attend the Tambaram International Mission Conference. The conference was held in January 1939. He left, just before Christmas in 1938 for the conference. After the conference he went on a tour, which had as lasting an effect on him as did some other incidents, directly associated with the conference. Other delegates from South Africa were Revs John du Toit, A.F. Louw, and Prof. H.P. Cruse. Most significant was that Albert Luthuli was also aboard the same boat. It was summer, and hot. Ben Marais and the other white

delegates were allowed on the deck, but Albert Luthuli was not.

An interesting choice that Ben Marais made, which he was to regret later in life, was to travel to the Taj Mahal after the conference, and miss an opportunity to meet Mahatma Ghandi.

The young dominee (reverend) was on the road for extended periods of time. This afforded him much time to think and ponder on life. On 29 April 1939 he married Sibs (Sebastina) Botha. She taught Afrikaans at a girls' school in Worcester. Her father, S.J. Botha from Kuruman, was the founder of the former Seodin Farm School, which so impressed Dr H.F. Verwoerd. Ben Marais was blessed with a daughter on 27 May 1940. She was named Augusta after Sibs's mother. Augusta married Koos Marais (Jakobus Martinus – born 26 October 1939) on 28 June 1963.

The distances between the towns were long, the number of tertiary institutions grew, the number of students increased; the work of the students' chaplain necessitated the calling of a second reverend to minister to the students in Transvaal. Ds Johan Bezuidenhout was called in 1940. The work was divided, Johan Bezuidenhout was responsible for Potchefstroom and the University of the Witwatersrand (Wits), while Ben Marais was responsible for the students in Heidelberg and Pretoria. Ben Marais was in service of the synod, as chaplain to the students, until 1941, when he was called to the Pretoria East congregation as a minister. Though he carried the title "ds", he had not been affiliated with any congregation. From 6 March 1941 on, he was. He was responsible for the students in the congregation, and thus his work as chaplain continued, now reporting to the church council of Pretoria East congregation and not the synod of the Transvaal church.

In 1944, Ben Marais, now an ordained delegate at the Ned. Herv. or Geref. Kerk Synod, objected against a report – policy – prepared by the commission for current affairs in April 1942⁵⁵ on the scriptural justification for not issuing weapons to black and coloured soldiers fighting in the Allied forces (World War II). The synodical

⁵⁵ The statement was delivered on 22 April 1942 (Ned Herv. or Geref. Kerk Synod Report 1944:57).

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commission was reacting against the statement by the Prime Minister that under certain conditions – if the country were to be invaded – he would consider issuing weapons to Africans. The relations between church and state are clearly discernible, as is the relations between the races and the justification thereto, in the following extract: (Ned Herv. or Geref. Kerk Synod Report 1944:57).⁵⁶

“The Synodical Commission wishes to indicate in all earnestness that the policy of the church is based on the principles of God’s Word that teaches race apartheid and guardianship of whites over Africans, that these principles form the basis for the laws regarding Africans in the Union and is in accordance with the best tradition of the Afrikaner nation, consequently it was not the policy of the Christian government of South Africa to make use of the services of Africans and coloureds in any organised form except in totally second rated services, when the country was at war ... The church must warn against the issuing of weapons to Africans and Coloureds.”

Certain tendencies in Ben Marais’ behaviour are detectable. It could be said that he loved to speak out, or that he had found a fault in the church and was using it for political gain. However, Ben Marais was never interested in entering politics. This tendency would also accentuate the distress he experienced during his years of isolation. This consideration could explain his directing written protests to the general secretaries of the World Council of Churches, and his mentioning his personal torments. Ben Marais verbalises his sentiment in his letter to Dr Potter (1978):

“I hear someone out of your corner say: This is a typical reaction of a white South African. No! You are wrong. I have consistently – all my life, been a critic of much of what is happening in Southern Africa, and of our systems. I have, as a result, often been treated as the filth of the earth and experienced extreme forms of ostracism, organised boycott and loneliness. I could not wish that to happen to my greatest enemy. But, that is life in our sort of world and I have no regrets. A man can only stand up for what he believes. Faced by the same issues I will make the same decisions once again.”

Ben Marais’ objections to the Scriptural justification of policies which he found unqualified at the synods of 1940, 1944, and especially 1948 are insinuated, as well as the publication of his books, *Colour: Unsolved Problem of the West* (1952a) and *The Two Faces of Africa* (1964b). Also during 1944, Ben Marais enrolled for his D.Phil. in philosophy at the University of Stellenbosch, under Prof. Brunner. He completed it

⁵⁶ My translation.

under Prof. B.B. Keet, because Prof. Brunner had passed away. The title of his thesis was: *Die Christelike Broederskapsleer en sy Toepassing in die Kerk van die Eerste Drie Eeue*. It is not necessarily to be considered a document of outspokenness, but it does represent an indication of major influences on his thought.

Ben Marais was once more outspoken against Apartheid in April 1947. He was invited by the *Curatorium* of the Faculty of Theology of the University of Pretoria, to speak at a conference of ministers. He declared in his speech that there were no scriptural grounds for Apartheid (*Op die Horizon*, June 1947).

In April 1948 Ben Marais questioned the validity of the report on the Scriptural grounds of Apartheid, prepared by the Commission of Current Affairs.⁵⁷ In June the same year, the National Party won the elections.

A new dispensation was starting in the country, but the years Ben Marais had spent as chaplain of the students were drawing to an end, because for the second time in his life he was to follow in the footsteps of Dr W. Nicol. Ben Marais was called to the Pretoria East Congregation, as a minister of the congregation – not students – in April 1949. Dr W. Nicol had left the ministry to become the Administrator of Transvaal. These events illustrate the close affinity Ben Marais had to Afrikaner Nationalism, while illustrating the tensions that must have prevailed because of his probing questions.

Ben Marais placed particular emphasis on room visitations, on personal contact with the students. Apart from initiating Pentecost services on Pretoria campus and a mission week during 1940 at Wits (which was opened by Mr Raikes – a former rector),⁵⁸ he helped with and encouraged the establishment of branches of the Christian student society (C.S.V.) at the various campuses. In his chaplain's report (1955[?]) he relates many happy moments, and reflects on his good relations with students, as well as the difficulties and sorrow of dealing with the families of students who had died. His ministry also had less pleasant aspects. These were the years where Ben Marais had to

⁵⁷ Leer en Aktuele Sake.

⁵⁸ See *Beeld*, 31 July 1940.

find a balance between his personal studies, the synods of the Ned. Herv. or Geref. Kerk and his ministry.

The Minister of a Congregation and a World Traveller

It appears that Ben Marais spent much of his time, while he was a minister of the Pretoria East congregation – 1950 to 1953, on the road. These were thus formative years in which he made extensive contacts abroad.

In June 1953 Ben Marais left for study purposes to Yale University. Enroute he attended the Reformed Ecumenical Synod in Edinburgh, where he addressed the synod on behalf of the South African delegation. Later in August of the same year, 1950, Ben Marais attended the meeting of the World Council of Churches in Toronto as an observer. Due to the numerous motions against the reformed churches in South Africa and the countless questions posed by delegates, Dr Visser't Hooft (General Secretary) requested Ben Marais to answer the questions. This was quite unexpected, but in a 35 minute speech, Ben Marais presented his case. A question session followed, which lasted for two hours. The result was that all the motions against South Africa were withdrawn, and appreciation was expressed for his Christian conduct. He was then requested to serve on the study group for "Church and Race".

Ben Marais did not always travel alone. In October 1950 his wife joined him, and she was thus able to accompany him on his journey through the West Indies, which commenced in July 1951. This study tour was made possible by a scholarship awarded by the Carnegie Corporation of New York. He was to study race relations and the church.

Though Ben Marais was no longer responsible for the ministry to students at the University of Pretoria, the World Federation of the Christian Student Societies invited him in 1951 to visit the various universities in South America to organise the Federation's work at these institutions.

Ben Marais' period as minister of the Pretoria East congregation also saw the publication of the book for which he is most acclaimed: *Colour: Unsolved Problem of the West*, appearing in October 1952. A second book, an inspirational, '*n Groet op die Pad* (1952b), also appeared. The publication of *Colour: Unsolved Problem of the West* was not without controversies. Insight into Ben Marais' character can be gained from his reaction to Dr W. Nicol who recommended he wait another six months before publishing. Ben Marais submitted the manuscript to the National Press the following day for publication. The National Press rejected the manuscript because it did not support Apartheid. Dr W. Nicol wanted him to wait, because he feared that the book could hamper Ben Marais being appointed chair at the University of Pretoria. Indication is given of Ben Marais' not being easily intimidated, his primacy of what was right above personal aspirations, as well as the fact that he was regarded highly by the leaders of the Afrikaner establishment (Dr W. Nicol), despite his troublesome outspokenness about the country's race policies. Ben Marais was thus well capable of distinguishing between personal friendships and political differences, an attribute that served him well as professor.

iv. Whistling in the Faculties of Learning

Ben Marais was a popular professor, indicative of his approach to classes and student affairs. Many students remember him whistling in the hallways of the university (Van Niekerk Interview 2000).

Pretoria:⁵⁹ 1953-1974: Contacts and Isolation

Ben Marais was called to the chair of History of Christianity and Church Polity⁶⁰ to replace Prof. D.J. Keet who had retired. Prof. D.J. Keet had prepared students for the ministry since 1938, after taking demission from the Ned. Herv. or Geref. Congregation, Pretoria East. The close relations between this congregation and the Faculty of Theology – Department of History of Christianity and Church Polity – are thus very evident. Ben Marais was called after the Electoral College voted in his favour by one

⁵⁹ For an overview of the history of the Faculty of Theology and biographic sketches of the lecturers see Van der Watt (1989).

⁶⁰ Geskiedenis van die Christendom en Kerkreg.

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vote. He was appointed on 4 June 1953, accepting his demission from the Ned. Herv. or Geref. Congregation, Pretoria East on 1 November 1953. He started teaching on February 1954, being responsible for Church History, Ecumenism, and Mission History. His inaugural lecture was held in April 1954: “Rondom die Studie van die Kerkgeskiedenis”⁶¹ at the Transvaal synod.

But first, in August 1953, Ben Marais travelled to Geneva in order to attend the World Council of Churches’ study group “Church and Race”, in preparation for the World Council of Churches’ meeting in Evanston the following year. On his way back, he toured Greece and Italy, returning in mid September.

Ben Marais attended the meeting of the World Council of Churches in Evanston during August 1954 as an advisor and a member of the panel of main speakers. He was accompanied by Ds C.B. Brink, and delivered one of the principle reports of the study group “Race and Church”. While in Evanston, he also attended the Conference of Christian Youth of the USA as a speaker. He spoke on “Race Tension in South Africa”. Ben Marais did not only travel to Evanston. En route to the meeting of the World Council of Churches he presented a series of lectures on “Group relations” in Chicago. On his way back, he returned to the McCormack Theology Seminary to present a series of lectures. He returned to a volatile situation in South Africa. The press had been unjust in its report on his speech at the World Council of Churches. Ds C.B. Brink reported on the events at the meeting of the World Council of Churches in Evanston at the synod meeting on 3 November 1954, and attempted to present a correctional version of what actually happened. This storm affected Ben Marais deeply, where many of his friends and acquaintances turned their backs on him.

Ben Marais always worked with students, always getting along – even when opinions differed, as for example during the stormy years of World War II while he was still chaplain of the students and pro German attitudes amongst students – anti English – were strong. He never gave class notes (an influence he ascribed to Bainton, Viljoen Interview 1986) except for a typed “summary”. He preferred free lectures and students

⁶¹ “On the study of Church History”.

had to make their own notes.

His years at the University of Pretoria were associated with rising nationalism and he experienced them as difficult (Hofmeyr 1985). He considered himself an Afrikaner but could not identify with Afrikaner nationalism. He had many questions and doubts on various aspects, and differed from his colleagues on issues relating to colour relations.

Ben Marais was one of the so called “13 heretic lecturers”.⁶² These 13 lecturers signed a petition on 16 May 1955; protesting against the government’s planned legislation on the restructuring of the Senate for political reasons, and against the removal of coloureds from the electoral list. The petition stimulated a thunderous reaction, the signatories receiving serious threats. Ben Marais was informed by *Huisgenoot* that his regular religious column would be terminated due to his association with the protest against government legislation.

In May 1957, a recommendation was made at the Northern Transvaal Synod of the NG Kerk that a ban should be placed on the appointment of freemasons in church positions, because of the secrecy of the organisation. Ben Marais then suggested in a motion of principle that the Synod speak out against all secret societies, as for example also the Broederbond. Ben Marais’ motion was not accepted. This action by Ben Marais led to a further accentuation of his growing isolation. Invitations to talk on the radio ended, as did requests to preach in different congregations. He was ignored by the press. However, in contrast to this growing isolation, Ben Marais became more involved in student activities, and in 1957, he was elected chairperson of the council of Sonop residence.

In 1958 Ben Marais attended the Reformed Ecumenical Council in Potchefstroom as a delegate of the Northern Transvaal Synod of the NG Kerk. Thus, even in his isolation, Ben Marais was still highly esteemed in ecumenical circles within the NG Kerk.

Ben Marais managed to distinguish between social affairs of the country and his

⁶² Dertien dwalende dosente.

lectures on Church and Mission History. Though, in his book, *Die Kerk deur die Eeue*, which was intended to be a thematic orientation to the broader history of the church, Ben Marais considers social – religious – threats that were experienced during the mid 20th century in South Africa; these being, Communism, Modernism, Secularism and Islam.

From 1960 to 1965, commotion against Ben Marais entered the enclosed area of his safety, the university, and equal to the onslaught, his rescue was found in the loyalty of students residing at Sonop Residence. Rightwing groups – including students – made attempts to make Ben Marais suspect, to degrade him and to have him dismissed from his chair. There were two groups of students, one called the “liberals” – who supported Ben Marais, and the other referred to as the “conservatives”, who opposed him. Ben Marais was accused of indoctrination and liberalism. The *Curatorium* received a complaint against him, because *The Two Faces of Africa* was written in English and not in Afrikaans. A propaganda campaign against him, which distributed pamphlets on campus, failed, because students from Sonop Residence rose early in the mornings and removed them from where they had been scattered. A mass march, which was planned, was also unsuccessful. His classes went on, and so did his publications.

In 1962 he published *Kerkgeskiedenis: Beknopte Aantekeninge ter Aanvulling van Klaswerk*.⁶³ In the same year, 1962, *Stimme aus der Ökumene* (1962a), a festschrift commemorating the retirement of Dr W.A. Visser't Hooft as General Secretary of the WCC, appeared, which contained a contribution by Ben Marais, “Eine Stimme aus dem Südliche Afrika”. Thus, Ben Marais was writing for particular readers – his students, for the general public (*The Two Faces of Africa*) and for the broader church community (*Stimme aus der Ökumene*).

On the general public front once more, very often studies on race and nationalism concentrate on only white-black relations. However, the plight of the Indians, Asians, Coloureds and other race groups in South Africa during their years of oppression should not be disregarded. Moreover, often by studying these groups and their experiences, a

⁶³ “Church History: short notes supplementary to class work”.

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more accurate account could be possible. On 28 January 1959, a letter of Ben Marais was published in *Die Kerkbode*, in which he requested the church to formulate a point of view on the forced moving of Indians as part of the execution of the Group Areas legislation. According to Ben Marais, this was unfair and was not defensible according to Christian principles. Determined by the same set of principles, Ben Marais wrote an article, “The church Must Win the Masses”, which appeared in *Rand Daily Mail* on 19 June, 1959. In this article Ben Marais asked whether Christianity was not – for many – secondary to nationalism.

These two instances illustrates why Ben Marais was not popular with the Afrikaner Press, which was pro-Afrikaner nationalism – and almost totally ignored him, but why the more liberal English Press, especially *The Star* and the *Rand Daily Mail*, published his contributions on a variety of topics. The opposition party and liberal movements, though, were unable to canvass Ben Marais’ support. Ben Marais remained true to his principles.

The debate on the justification of Apartheid on Scripture continued, and in 1960 a book, *Delayed Action: an Ecumenical Witness from the Afrikaans Speaking Church*⁶⁴ (Geysler et al 1960), appeared. Ben Marais was one of 11 contributors. The book makes a call to the conscience of the church to reject the scriptural justification of Apartheid. In Ben Marais’ chapter, “The Church in the Contemporary world”, he declares: “Refusal to Pray with Blacks is a Sin”.

The book was well timed, appearing in the same year that the famed Cottesloe Consultation was held, December 1960, during which Christians from different church affiliations and racial orientations prayed together. Ben Marais was invited to attend the Consultation, but could not, because he had already committed himself to a lecture tour in the USA, which commenced in March 1961. He departed from South Africa in December 1960, and first visited a few African states before spending a few days in Amsterdam. He met with students at the Free University in Amsterdam. On his return he passed through Rome, and continued his visits to African countries, visiting

⁶⁴ *Vertraagde Aksie. 'n Ekumeniese Getuienis uit die Afrikaanssprekende Kerk.*

Lebanon, Jordan, Egypt and Ethiopia. In Ethiopia he held lengthy discussions with the grandson of Haile Selassie. Further countries visited includes Kenya, Tanzania and Nyassaland (Malawi), where he met President Banda. He returned to South Africa on 11 July 1961.

Ben Marais was also involved in Mission activities. During August 1961, he was one of the main speakers at the NG Kerk Mission week, held in Pretoria. He spoke on, “The Challenge of the New Africa for Mission”.⁶⁵ “New Africa” was a theme he used in many speeches, echoing the optimism he experienced during his Africa tour. Interestingly, during May 1962, he spoke on “Living in the New Africa”, at the “Joint Conference of Municipal Associations of Northern Rhodesia and Nyassaland”. (He visited Southern Rhodesia [Zimbabwe] in 1965, where he addressed the Local Government Association of Southern Rhodesia, and talked on various actuality topics relating to Africa.) In November 1961, he was invited to a meeting of the “International Missionary Council” as a member of the council’s “Commission for Theological Training”. The meeting was held in Delhi. During the conference, he was nominated to serve on the Committee for Peace, but he turned it down.

For someone to be travelling so extensively, and to have to cope with so much conflict in South Africa, it is not surprising that Ben Marais fell ill during his visit to Bangalore in 1961. He was attending a meeting of the “Christian Students of Asia and Africa”. The visit was not in vain, since he had made contact with students at the university in the days prior to his ailments commencing. Nor was Ben Marais able to attend all the meetings he was invited to. Like the Cottesloe Consultation, he also had to turn down an invitation from the “World Council of Christian Education and Sunday School Association” to attend a “Theological Education Seminar” from 30 June to 7 July 1962. Due to the matter of principles – because he felt he could not accept an invitation if his church was not invited – Ben Marais did not attend the “All Africa Conference”, scheduled for 20-30 April 1963 at Kampala. It was hoped that he would be able to deliver a paper, “The Church in the Bible and the Church in Africa Today”. This is an indication of how Ben Marais isolated himself from the outside world, a world that had

⁶⁵ Die uitdaging van die nuwe Afrika vir sending.

been friendly towards him and where he had experienced widespread acknowledgement while at home he was experiencing increasing hostility.

In 1963, along with Beyers Naudé, Ben Marais was a founding member of the Christian Institute. The Christian Institute was founded, on the one hand as an outflow of the Cottesloe Consultation to continue the dialogue between Christians from different churches, and on the other to facilitate the formulation of alternative statements to the official policy of the NG Kerk. During the South Transvaal Synod of 1963, the synod had determined that no criticism of the church's policies by its members would be allowed, unless made so through the official channels. The Christian Institute did not have any political orientation or aspirations at its founding.

In 1963, Senator McCarthy (USA), made a speech in which he claimed to have a list of names of people in the United States government who were communists. Thus the great witch-hunt for communists started in America.⁶⁶ The threat of communism was very real in South Africa also, however, Ben Marais spoke out against McCarthyism as a method of defeating communism. His opponents interpreted the stance taken by Ben Marais against McCarthyism as an indication that Ben Marais was supporting communism and served as further proof of his liberalism.

In contrast to Ben Marais refusing to attend international church meetings in the mid 1960s, Ben Marais readily went on study and lecturing tours abroad, and maintained correspondence with leaders of the World Council of Churches. On 16 January 1964, Ben Marais departed on a 10 week lecturing tour to the USA. He visited about 10 tertiary institutions and presented lectures on Africa and Southern Africa. His themes – indicative of his primary concerns – included: “Which Road South Africa?”; “The Two Faces of Africa”; “Africa – Battlefield of Religion and Ideology”; “The Christian Church in Africa – Historical Problems and Prospects”; and “Political Loyalty and Christian Practice in a Multi-Racial Society”. The one theme served as a title to his book, which appeared two months after his return, in May 1964, called *The Two Faces*

⁶⁶ See Miller, *The Crucible*, which makes a parody of the hunt for communists in the 1960s and the witch-hunt in New England in the 19th century.

of Africa. As is to be expected, this book received a predominantly negative reaction from the press, contributing to Ben Marais' further local isolation. Due also to his "liberal views", the editors of *Dagbreek en Sondagnuus* terminated his regular column "prediker" (the preacher), which he had managed for many years.

Ben Marais did not keep quiet during his years of isolation: in October 1964 he addressed teachers of Natal in Durban, during the "Conference of the teachers' Association", as he did in May the following year when he addressed The Local Government Association of Southern Rhodesia (Zimbabwe).

It is most interesting, and characteristic of Ben Marais, that in 1965, when interest groups in the church were campaigning in the local press against alleged liberal ministers, Ben Marais protested in earnest. Internationally, in contrast, The Dutch Christian Radio Society (NCRV)⁶⁷ invited Ben Marais to participate in a television programme they were planning on South Africa in conjunction with the Free University of Amsterdam. Though it was not possible for him to attend – he had participated the previous year in a NCRV documentary (6 episodes) on South Africa, the invitation accentuates the differentiated appraisal Ben Marais experienced: conflict and isolation at home; welcome and appreciation abroad.

From about August in 1968, Ben Marais undertook another study tour through Central and East Africa. His costs were covered by a scholarship received from the Ernest Oppenheimer Memorial Trust. He travelled through Kenya, Mozambique, Zambia, Rhodesia (Zimbabwe), Malawi and mission posts in Botswana. Shortly on his return, the same year – 1968 (20 September - 15 November) – he flew to the United States on a ten week lecturing tour. He was invited by the "Arts Program of the Association of American Colleges", sponsored by the Danforth Foundation. The general theme of his lectures was "The African Dream: a Realistic Assessment". Thereafter, from 15 November 1968 to middle February 1969, Ben Marais was invited by USSALEP Exchange Programme, United States South Africa (Leader Exchange Programme Incorporated) on a three month study tour to the United States. He was interested in the

⁶⁷ Nederlandse Christelike Radio Vereeniging.

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role of the American churches in the socio-economic field and their theological motivations and approaches.⁶⁸

The following year, on 3 September 1970, Ben Marais wrote a letter to Dr Carson Blake, General Secretary of the World Council of Churches. Ben Marais protested against the World Council of Churches' financial and moral support for resistance movements in South Africa. In the same month, Ben Marais protested against the policy of detention without trial, and two months later, during the general synod, he expressed his concerns on a report on the relations between mother and daughter churches of the NG Kerk family. According to him the document does not promote community between believers. Also, at the same general synod, he warned the synod that their actions would lead to the severance of ecumenical ties with all reformed churches world wide. Members of the synod expressed strong differences from the Dutch representatives at the synod.

Within the context of Ben's participation in church affairs, his comprehension of international affairs, and his relations with international figures, his correspondence with the general secretaries of the World Council of Churches comes as no surprise. It was in his character to protest. It was also in his character to maintain good relations with people that could be considered to be his adversaries. He did not consider them as such.

In 1972 Ben Marais travelled in the company of Drs J.D. Vorster and J.S. Gericke and Di Beukes and P. Smit to Sydney to attend the Ecumenical Synod as delegates of the NG Kerk. The relations must have been tense, especially because the Ecumenical Synod determined that no person could be denied access to a church based on the colour of the skin. This decision would be presented to the 1974 General Synod of the NG Kerk for consideration.

In October of the same year, 1972, Ben Marais became Dean of the Faculty of Theology of the University of Pretoria. He was then 63 years old.

⁶⁸ See *Dagbreek en Landstem* 16 March 1969.

The year 1973 passed by relatively quietly, almost waiting for the General Synod of 1974, allowing Ben Marais to pay attention to his duties as Dean of the faculty and lecturer in the History of Christianity, and to publish. His book, *Die Verre Horison: Gebede vir Soggens en Saans*,⁶⁹ appeared in 1974.

Midst the sad news of the death of his mentor, Professor B.B. Keet, on 21 June 1974, Ben Marais decided to retire from the chair of Church History and Polity at the University of Pretoria. He stayed on to the end of the year to fulfil his duties as Dean of the Faculty of Theology.

The General Synod of the NG Kerk convened in October 1974. Ben Marais was no longer the young man who stood up at synods and protested against misappropriations of Scripture, he was now the wise and elderly professor, and still he maintained the same points he emphasised in his youth. The world had changed around him, and was in the process of undergoing tremendous changes, and he felt that the NG Kerk was not abreast of these changes, but still, he remained a loyal member of the church. Important decisions by the synod included: a decision to send an ultimatum to the churches in the Netherlands; against strong opposition, it was decided that communal worship between race groups was permissible, but that decisions in this regard remained the fortitude of the congregations. Church halls and buildings could be used by other race groups in accordance to the implicated congregation's discretion.

It could have been assumed that an end of an era had been reached, that at the age of 66, Ben Marais would have withdrawn into the background. This was not the case. He was far too appreciated by his students and like minded colleagues for this to happen. Ben Marais accepted a temporary position in the Department of Church History, Missiology and Religious Science at the University of South Africa (Unisa). Thus started the second leg of his academic career.

⁶⁹ "The Far Horizon: Prayers for Morning and Evening".

University of South Africa: 1975-1986: Years of Joy

Ben Marais experienced his students at the University of South Africa positively, as “a sheer joy” (Hofmeyr 1985). It is interesting that he considered his years at the University of South Africa as an unqualified joy, where his colleagues were, almost all, former students!

He still travelled, but not so far anymore. In September 1975, Ben Marais was invited by the Salisbury South (Harare) congregation of the NG Kerk as guest speaker during a retreat weekend of the congregation. He spoke on “Threats on the Church in Africa”. Slightly closer to home, in April 1976 during a mission camp in Warmbaths, Ben spoke on “The Current State of the Church in Africa”. The theme of threats to Christianity: Islam and Communism, was treated by Ben Marais in a paper delivered at a mission conference of the NG Kerk during May, 1976. And in the same month, he once again travelled across the Limpopo to present a paper at Victoria Falls in a Local Government Association Conference.

Ben Marais was not only active in academic and church circles; in 1976 he helped the Lynwood congregation of the NG Kerk on a temporary basis, conducting home visitations.

The time for reflection had commenced, and while still active in academia and ecclesiastic affairs, he was honoured by colleagues at the University of South Africa with a *Festschrift*, *Scripture and the Use of It* (1979). W.S. Vorster was editor. The *Festschrift* is a compilation of contributions and papers presented at the 2nd symposium of the Institute for Theological Research of Unisa, held on 19 and 20 September 1978 in Pretoria. A second *Festschrift*, edited by A. Viljoen, was presented to Ben Marais on his 70th birthday. The title of this *Festschrift* was *Ekumene Onder die Suiderkruis*.⁷⁰ These two *Festschrifte* indicate the diversity of academic interests Ben Marais maintained, and interestingly, these interests were also heard in ecclesiastic circles, as early as the synod of the Ned. Herv. or Geref. Kerk in 1940.

⁷⁰ Ecumenism under the Southern Cross.

Midst the honorary degrees, D.Th. – Unisa (1979) – which provided him with much pleasure (Meiring 1979:78), L.L.D. – Witwatersrand (1983), D.D. – Pretoria (1988), D.Phil. – Stellenbosch (1992), and further *Festschrifte* in his honour (for example, *New Faces of Africa- 1984*),⁷¹ and honorary memberships (Church History Society of South Africa – 1982), Ben Marais maintained his outspokenness on issues he felt strongly about. In January 1982, Ben Marais' signature was one of 123 signatures of church officials, undersigning an open letter to the Synod. The open letter calls for unity between the mother and daughter churches in the NG Kerk family, and for the rejection of Apartheid.

Ben Marais finally retired from Unisa in 1986. However, he continued to be interested in academic and ecclesiastic affairs, and was often consulted by his former students, who had become leaders in the church. It was also fortunate that he could experience the changes he had advocated for, and for the adherence to basic principles being effected through the diligence of his students. As his students rose to 'greatness' and he remained in the background, so he had lived his life, always humble and never drawing recognition to himself. He was fortunate to hear that the General Synod of 1990, held in Bloemfontein, had accepted the policy document "Kerk en Samelewing".⁷² The ideal of one church body for the NG Kerk family was expressed as well as the structural openness of the NG Kerk.

In August 1993, Ben Marais was asked to participate in the first Ben Marais Memorial Lecture, held at the University of Pretoria. The following month, September 1993, he addressed an audience at the Theological Seminary of Stellenbosch. This was to be his last public performance, because in 1994 he was involved in a car accident and suffered numerous injuries. He suffered a further set back in 1994, and spent his 85th birthday, on 26 April, in the hospital. His leg had to be amputated at the knee due to a thrombosis. Though, *Die Beeld* (26 April 1994) reported: "Prof Ben receives a New South Africa for

⁷¹ Edited by W.S. Vorster and J.W. Hofmeyr.

⁷² Church and Society.

his birthday”!⁷³ And, on 18 October 1994, Ben Marais received a standing ovation at the General Synod of the NG Kerk, when he visited one of the sessions whilst in his wheel chair! Ds Freek Swanepoel, Moderator of the synod, spoke on behalf of the General Synod, honouring him “as a prophet within the walls of the city ... a prophet who remained in [the church] and conducted himself in a Christ-like fashion”.⁷⁴ Ben Marais was officially given an apology, during the session of the General Synod, for the injustices he had suffered.

v. More Time for the Garden and Grandchildren

His years of isolation during which he experienced countless injustices were not without happiness. This was often of a more personal nature. Ben and Sibs Marais were blessed with three grandchildren, and he had the privilege of baptising his eldest great grandson in 1993.

The eldest grandchild to be born was Simon Christofel (17 August 1964), named after his other grandfather. Simon married Corena (Loubser), and to them was born Jacobus Martinus (14 January 1993), whom Ben Marais baptised, Johan Willem (19 October 1994), and Simon Barend (30 August 1994). Sebastina (6 October 1966), also called Sibs, was the second child born to Ben and Augusta. Sibs (Junior) married Pieter Bothma, and they currently (2002) have two children, Hendrik Malan (25 April 1999) and Augusta (15 December 2000). Ben Marais did not know them. Koos and Augusta’s youngest child, Barend Jacobus (28 February 1970) married Karen (Friedmelt). They have two children, Riegert Carl (29 March 2000) and Jakobus Marthinus (29 Mei 2002).

The family spent time together especially at Christmas time, when they all stayed in the family holiday home in Kleinmond. Here many happy hours were spent, stories created and told, and games played. The family is very close. It is important to note that Ben Marais had a very happy family life, and was as much a family man as he was active in his calling.

⁷³ My translation.

⁷⁴ My translation.

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Augusta, Ben Marais' daughter, told of the happy memories working in the garden with her father (Interview 17 December 2002). Clad in matching clothes to her father, Khaki shorts and shirt, they toiled in the garden in the mornings. They would then settle down for breakfast together. Less pleasant, though, was the victimisation she sometimes experienced at school, when she was taunted about her father being a Communist, ironically – considering his concern over them as a threat to Christianity. However, she also learned to deal with such taunting. Her father had taught her how to deal with it.

Away from the halls of learning and troublesome synods and inflicting colleagues, the far off lands he enjoyed travelling to, Ben Marais found peace in his garden. He was especially fond of his aloes (probably from his childhood days in Middelburg) and he was well known for his rose garden. During his retirement, old students, colleagues and friends often came to visit. Then over tea and biscuits or cake, prepared by Maggie (Ben Marais' loyal servant), they would discuss the old days, the issues of the day – ecclesiastic and political, the plight and successes of the national rugby and cricket teams.

Ben Marais died on 27 January 1999, after being bed-bound for several months, and was buried on 1 February 1999. The service was held in the Pretoria East Congregation of the NG Kerk – the church with which much of his adult life was associated.

b. Alternative Courses

Ben Marais mentions in an interview (Viljoen Interview 1986) that there were two opportunities when he could have entered politics, but that each time his calling to be minister of religion was determinant (see also Meiring 1979:86). He was also offered employment in the media while he was a student. He turned down offers to talk at international conferences where his church was not welcome. Ben Marais was loyal to the calling he received to become a minister. Midst his extensive world travels, he always returned home, to Pretoria.

When asked (Viljoen Interview 1986) whether he would have written anything different, or protested differently, Ben Marais replied that he would not have. If he had

his life over, he would have done the same. One particular reason for this is that he came to his particular insights at a particularly young age. But how was he able to withstand the temptations offered to him by the securities in Afrikaner Nationalism, like so many of his contemporaries (e.g. J.D. Vorster)?

It is contended that the particular course Ben Marais set out on has its roots in his youth, the way he was brought up in, and the steadfastness of his character.

c. Ben Marais as Key to His Times

Ben Marais can be seen to be a person who personalised the problems of race relations in South Africa. The problems of race relations are central to the 20th century history of South Africa, though not in its entirety – there are other themes. While this study does not wish to present his life in allegorical terms, in studying the life of Ben Marais, central themes in South African history are touched, directly and indirectly through a consideration of his life.

Midst the focus on the broader country and its socio-political problems and the difficult to disseminate Church-State relations, and midst Ben Marais featuring in international ecumenical circles, he is quoted in a publication *Middelburg Pays Homage* (Pretorius et al 1991:29) where he remembers his youth:

“How often I still see the purple-blue of Renosterberg in the late afternoon ... I have travelled to, seen and experienced the ends of Africa and almost the rest of the world, but in my heart I am and will always remain a son of the Great Karoo. That is where I belong ... Greet Renosterberg for me.”⁷⁵

It can thus be indicated that Ben Marais was neither aloof nor in denial of his roots, thus making him an ideal person, in whose own and family history, much of the history of South Africa is written. By studying the history of Ben Marais, the history of South Africa is also told. In order not to rewrite the history, but to present a calculated perspective, aspects of Ben Marais’ life, works and influences can be presented through the dual experiences in South Africa which during the 20th century can be illustrated.

⁷⁵ My translation.

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While benefiting from the Apartheid system⁷⁶ and remaining within the church he criticised so strongly,⁷⁷ Ben Marais' correspondence with Dr Carson Blake indicates, on the one hand, his insistence on the church (and the W.C.C.) remaining true to its calling of Mission, his concern for the plight of the poor and disadvantaged, but on the other his fear of communism and of the practical involvement of the W.C.C. (and therefore its member churches) in the battle against Apartheid. Ben Marais would not be the only person who fits this profile, but in his person and life, a useful key to the issues and sentiments – religious, cultural and political – current to his times, extending back into the 19th century, are still of concern today.

4. CONCLUSION

This chapter on “the life of Ben Marais” presents biographical information chronologically. It also contains the correspondence with the World Council of Churches, which serves as an orientation to his person and work, and indicates how his personal history is a means to understanding the history of South Africa in the 20th century. The history of South Africa and the pertinent themes are considered within an ecclesiastic framework, since this was Ben Marais' primary framework.

In the following chapter, Chapter 3, the emphasis falls on “the times of Ben Marais”. The issues that occupied the thoughts of Ben Marais, were mentioned, or referred to in Chapter 2 in the short reflection on his life. While the life and times of Ben Marais are impossible to separate, in Chapter 3 biographic allusions are made to his life and thoughts. Once a structure for understanding the issues has been presented in Chapter 4, it will be possible to understand the significance of the influences on Ben Marais, which contributed to the formulation of his point of view, and encouraged him to raise his prophetic voice.

⁷⁶ Criticism against Presbyterian, Anglican and Roman Catholic Churches.

⁷⁷ Comparable to Beyers Naudé and other members of the Christian Institute who left the NG Kerk in their protest against Apartheid.