Reaching Out and Seizing Thorns: Suffering, Christianity, and the Creation of Apartheid

by

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Map

Introduction

Apartheid was an ideology and a political system that aimed to permanently separate the different “races” of South Africa politically, economically, socially, and culturally. The word “apartheid” means separateness in Afrikaans, the Dutch-descended language that originated in South Africa among the Afrikaners, a group of white settlers, especially of Dutch, Huguenot, or Scottish descent. The system of apartheid was also called “separate development”, as it called for each of the four “races” or “nations” of South Africa – generally the whites, Coloureds (mixed-race people), Indians, and black Africans, although later distinctions were also drawn between specific African “tribes” or ethnicities - to completely separate from each other and develop along their own lines, at least in theory.

Established in 1948 at the dawn of the age of decolonization, this disastrous policy resulted in the widespread international condemnation and ostracism of the Afrikaners, who dominated South African politics and originated apartheid. This institution would become known as one of the major human rights abuses of the twentieth century. The creation of a policy that systematically oppressed the vast majority of South Africa’s population has impelled the creation of an entire sub-section of the historical scholarship of South Africa to explain how and why the system began in the first place. The point of this thesis is to show that the primary motivation for the creation of apartheid was the Afrikaners’ desire for self-preservation, which was rooted in
an evolving Reformed Christian framework for rationalizing the suffering and oppression they had experienced.

The question I am answering about the impetus to create apartheid is not new; scholars have spent decades debating what drove the creation of apartheid. However, the approach that I take is new, different from how every scholar before me has explored the creation of apartheid.

In *The Rise of Afrikanerdom* (1975), T. Dunbar Moodie focuses on the concept of civil religion, which he defines as the religious dimensions of the state, and the Afrikaners’ justification for obtaining and maintaining the power that came with the implementation of apartheid. Moodie argues that this civil religion was rooted in the Afrikaners’ desire for an independent republic, which came from the “Afrikaner doctrine of election [that] grew out of the Calvinism of Paul Kruger, a prominent politician at the end of the nineteenth century, and the experience of the Boer War.” Essentially, this means that Afrikaners believed that they were God’s chosen people, and therefore wished to obtain control over their own government and affairs. For Moodie, Calvinism, a Christian theology, had been integral to Afrikaner culture and religion since permanent settlement began, and was cemented in the twentieth century with the arrival of a neo-Calvinist philosophy from the Netherlands. It was further solidified with the rituals surrounding Afrikaner history, especially the annual celebration of the

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2 Ibid., ix.
Day of the Covenant, on which the Afrikaners honored God for the work he had done to save them throughout their history.³

Irving Hexham in *The Irony of Apartheid: The Struggle of National Independence of Afrikaner Calvinism Against British Imperialism* (1981) focuses on the influence of the “Dopper” community on Afrikaner politics in the first half of the twentieth century. The “Doppers”, officially known as the *Gereformeerdes*, were a small group of staunch Calvinist Afrikaners who, for Hexham, wielded considerable cultural and political influence in the Afrikaner nationalist community due to their unwavering support of two Afrikaner nationalist leaders, Paul Kruger, president of the South African Republic, an independent Boer republic in the late nineteenth century, and J.B.M. Hertzog, the founder of the Nationalist Party in 1914.⁴ For Hexham, the root cause of apartheid was the Dopper community's influence on politicians.

Charles Bloomberg’s work, *Christian-Nationalism and the Rise of the Afrikaner Broederbond in South Africa, 1918-1948* (1990) also deals with the Doppers, but only in respect to their position within the Afrikaner Broederbond, a secret all-male Afrikaner nationalist organization founded in 1918. This organization was Christian-Nationalist, meaning it followed an ideology which “incorporates a) the idea of the ‘chosen-people-with-a-sacred-mission’, and b) the Right’s stress on authority, hierarchy, discipline, privilege, and elitist leadership, as well as glorification of God, nation, family, blood and the cult of

³ Ibid., 21.
force” into a single theological defense used to justify Afrikaner domination of South African politics.⁵ For Bloomberg, Christian-Nationalism was a neo-Calvinist concept that viewed the nation as a natural entity delineated by God that must be protected, and thus it “regard[ed] any subversion of nationality to be a subversion of God.”⁶ The Broederbond, following its Christian-Nationalist philosophy, thus worked within South African government and culture to preserve the nation, resulting in the eventual creation and implementation of apartheid.

André du Toit scoffs at the idea of a Calvinist paradigm in Afrikaner history; that is, he disagrees with the notion that Calvinism came to South Africa in the seventeenth century, was passed down through several generations of Afrikaners intact, only to emerge in the twentieth century as the impetus to create apartheid.⁷ He states that Afrikaners only articulated Calvinistic viewpoints at the end of the nineteenth century with the arrival of neo-Calvinism from Holland, if then, and thus the idea of generations of Afrikaner Calvinists, as Moodie, and later, Bloomberg, propose, is “obviously untenable as a historical

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⁶ Ibid., 17.
⁷ André du Toit has several different works on this matter: three articles, “No Chosen People: The Myth of the Calvinist origins of Afrikaner nationalism and racial ideology” (1983); “Captive to the Nationalist Paradigm: Prof. FA van Jaarsveld and the Historical Evidence for the Afrikaner’s Ideas on His Calling and Mission” (1984); and “Puritans in Africa? Afrikaner ‘Calvinism’ and Kuyperian Neo-Calvinist in Late Nineteenth-Century South Africa” (1985).
explanation of contemporary Afrikaner ideologies and political practices.” He goes on to state that Moodie’s idea of Afrikaners as the chosen people, putting themselves into a Calvinist formulation of the communal elect, makes too many assumptions. He writes that many contemporary observers of nineteenth-century Afrikaners, including the famed Dr. Livingstone, reported their backward intellectual state, resulting in what du Toit calls the “degeneracy paradigm”, the idea that, in the nineteenth century, those who would become the Afrikaners were immoral and often not Christian. Thus, any idea of pre-twentieth century Afrikaners acting as a result of some sort of Christian ideology, let alone one they brought over from seventeenth-century Holland, is wrong. Du Toit believes it is therefore impossible to argue that a chosen people ideology or any sort of Calvinist ideology of the Afrikaner elect resulted in the creation of apartheid.

Richard Elphick in *The Equality of Believers: Protestant Missionaries and the Racial Politics of South Africa* (2012), proposes that it was instead the missionaries of the Afrikaners’ Dutch Reformed Church (DRC) whose influence and methods built up over the centuries to eventually culminate in the creation of apartheid. He agrees with du Toit’s assessment of Calvinism, although Elphick does go on to say that, while they contributed nothing to the formulation of apartheid, “South African neo-Calvinists nonetheless provided Afrikaner

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nationalist thinkers with a broad philosophical basis from which to oppose Western notions of racial equality.”

According to Elphick, DRC missionaries faced a contradiction in their work. Afrikaners felt that their church was a sacred space for their own nation to exist while simultaneously sponsoring a good number of missions to black Africans. Thus, they faced a conflict between the needs of their white and black followers. The theologians and missionaries were left with resolving this conflict, which they did by justifying separately developing churches that were equal in the eyes of God, which eventually led to the creation of apartheid for the entire country.

Finally, Hermann Giliomee focuses on the more secular causes of apartheid in The Afrikaners: Biography of a People (2003). He believes that the entire point of apartheid was to ensure the survival of the Afrikaner people, who felt that their existence was being threatened by the Coloured, Indian, and black African masses. While he agrees with Elphick’s belief that the DRC’s missionary complex played a part in the formation of apartheid, he also believes that the actual institution of apartheid came more from the double-minded segregationists, those whites who wished to not mix different races but also did not want to perpetuate the oppression seen in other segregated countries, and

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thus concluded that separate development was the proper course, for both religious and secular reasons.\textsuperscript{12}

My own thesis on the impetus to create apartheid agrees with Giliomee’s emphasis on the importance of survivalism, although I use the term “self-preservation” to note the idea that Afrikaner nationalists wanted their culture not just to survive, but to survive unchanged. However, I disagree with him on the extent that religion influenced the drive for this self-preservation, and propose that Christianity played a rather large role in the formulation of apartheid. I do this by focusing on the Afrikaners’ Christian interpretation of their own oppression and suffering throughout their history. I show how first, there was the establishment of a combination of a chosen people ideology and a belief in redemptive suffering, and then, how this evolved over time to result in a drive for self-preservation against the encroaching threat of black Africans. The Afrikaners’ interpretation of their own suffering and hardships has been an area not thoroughly examined by any existing historical scholarship, and by exploring this new area, I hope to shed new light on Afrikaner motivations for creating apartheid.

The first chapter will detail South African history through the end of the nineteenth century, when the people who would make up the majority of the Afrikaners were known as the Boers, ending just before the start of the Anglo-Boer War (1899-1902). It will also explain the rise of the Boers’ belief in their

\textsuperscript{12} Ibid., 464-474.
nature as the chosen people, which became important both for their personal nation-building and their Christian interpretation of suffering.

The second chapter speaks of the Anglo-Boer War, the war between the British and the two Boer republics at the beginning of the twentieth century. This was a major turning point of South African history, which, for the purposes of this thesis, also provided a turning point in how Boers viewed their own suffering. The Boers, who had been so sure that God would help them win their battles on earth because of their status as God’s chosen people, were defeated in a bitter war. They then had to find an explanation for why God had let them lose. They concluded that, as God’s chosen Christians, they were called to emulate Christ in all things, including the suffering he endured and the redemption he achieved for humanity as a result. They lost the war because suffering the loss humbled them, and brought them closer to God.

The third chapter continues this theme, and shows that after the war, the Boers – now Afrikaners – began to use this framework in popular Afrikaner thought. These ideas were solidified for the majority of Afrikaner nationalists in the rhetoric around Jopie Fourie, the last great Afrikaner martyr, and the foundation stone of the newly-started Afrikaner Nationalist Party in 1914.

The fourth chapter chronicles the history from the aftermath of World War I through the Nationalist Party victory in the election of 1948 and implementation of apartheid. It shows how Afrikaner nationalism grew, often by speaking of the trials Afrikaners had faced in the past. The articulation of the redemptive suffering paradigm shifted during this time, with the instigation of
Afrikaner suffering moved from the British to the non-white population of South Africa, particularly the black Africans, to suit contemporary political needs. Along with this shift emerged the concept of the preservation of a nation as a Christian objective, which, when combined with the way Afrikaners shaped the black population into the enemies and possible oppressors of the whites, created the basis for apartheid.

The fifth chapter follows the subsequent Christian justification of apartheid through two theological defenses of apartheid (one against world opinion in 1959 and the other against the American Christians, in particular, in 1968) until the defenses faded away in the late 1960s, when local and international theological criticism of apartheid had forced even Afrikaner churchmen to start to avoid justifying apartheid with Christianity.
Chapter One: Wandering with the Israelites
The Mythology of a Chosen People

"Unbelievers say God does not do signs and wonders as in the days of the old Covenant, but I can show you from our own history that the dear Lord does everything to give a good time to those that are the people of the Lord."13

These words were spoken by Paul Kruger, four-time president of the South African Republic in the late nineteenth century, in a speech given in honor of Dingane’s Day in 1890. Dingane’s Day (or the Day of the Covenant, or the Day of the Vow)14 was a national holiday commemorating The Battle of Blood River, in which trekking Boers (the white settlers who would become part of the Afrikaners) defeated a Zulu (a black African nation) army that vastly outnumbered them. The Boers had sworn an oath that they would celebrate the day of the battle – December 16, 1838 – on its anniversary each year in the Lord’s name if they won, and after victory, they honored their promise.15

In this quotation, Kruger characterized God in the typical Afrikaner understanding of him at the time. He believed that God had a direct, active presence on earth, and used this presence to intervene in the lives of those who believed in him. "People of the Lord" referred to the Boers, a group of people, at the time of his speech, in the midst of their rise as a nation. This rise was

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14 In a post-Apartheid South Africa, this has been renamed the Day of Reconciliation to make it a South African holiday, and not one meant for a specific ethnic group. It is on December 16.
characterized, in part, by a slowly growing belief that the Boers were God’s chosen people. This conclusion was not reached primarily because of the relationship of the Boers with the Coloured and black African populations in South Africa, as has been supposed by previous scholars; it was the result of the Boers’ desire to understand their perceived oppression by the British and justify their own subsequent actions in a biblical context.

Colonial Roots

On April 6, 1652, Jan van Riebeeck led three ships to land on the shores of Table Bay, where Cape Town would later be located.16 His purpose was to establish a "refreshment station" - essentially, a rest stop for the ships traveling from Holland to Batavia, the capital of the Dutch holdings in South and Southeast Asia - for the Dutch East India Company.17 A very religious man, he attributed his safe journey to God’s intervention: "[The ship’s crew] had grave fears of her capsizing. From this, the almighty has preserved us on this occasion; but we were very much exposed to this danger as the storm continued..."; "We thus sailed in great anxiety, and if Almighty God had not favoured us with a fair wind... we should of necessity have had to seek a harbour"; "the Lord God made the rough weather subside..."18 From the very beginning, God was thought to be

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16 Templin, Frontier, 16.
on the side of the Dutch colonists and their descendants and actively intervening in their lives.

Although there were women and a few children born in the Cape,\textsuperscript{19} it was still mostly an outpost for the Dutch East India Company's other colonies for the first few years, with no sanctioned permanent settlers. Then, in April 1657, the Company released twelve of its workers, dubbed Free Burghers, from their contracts and gave them land to farm.\textsuperscript{20} This small, slowly growing population of men was not meant to be a group of permanent settlers, but they became to be the seeds for a future colony, and would eventually be known as the beginning of the Afrikaner nation.\textsuperscript{21} Less than a year later, on March 26, 1658, the first slaves arrived in South Africa on board the \textit{Amersfoort}, taken from a Portuguese slaver from Angola.\textsuperscript{22} These slaves would go on to both help the Company take the place of the Free Burghers, and help the Free Burghers farm their land and maintain their status.

At the end of the century a group of French Huguenots, expelled from France, integrated themselves into the Dutch population at the Cape,\textsuperscript{23} and in 1707 the farmers began was called "The First Great Trek," when they were finally granted permission to move east of the mountains surrounding the

\textsuperscript{19} Notably, on October 17, 1653, van Riebeeck's son, Abraham van Riebeeck, who would later be Governor General of East India, was the second child born in the Cape. Ibid., 79.
\textsuperscript{20} Gordon and Talbot, \textit{Dias to Vorster}, 20.
\textsuperscript{22} Van Riebeeck, \textit{Journal}, 251 in Gordon and Talbot, \textit{Dias to Vorster}, 28.
Cape. Over this time, they also adopted the name "Boer" for themselves, which means "farmer" in Dutch.

In 1806, the British began their occupation of the Cape Colony, and in 1814, they officially annexed it, bought from the Prince of Orange for six million pounds. While Boers would later characterize the annexation as unwanted, there is not much evidence that Boers as a whole – as small of a population as they were at the time – thought so, apart from a few rebels.

The first Boer rebellion against British rule consisted of a small insurrection of frontier farmers who protested the shooting of a Boer farmer after he resisted arrest for beating one of his servants. After a lengthy trial, on March 9, 1816, six of the Boer rebels were publically hanged. As the story goes, the ropes of four of the men broke, and as they were led to the gallows for a second time, they repeatedly and fruitlessly pled for mercy. Although this rebellion and execution, known cumulatively as Slagtersnek (Butcher’s Pass), was not, at the time, an expression or cause of nationalism, it would later become a rallying point for Boers who wished to fight against British rule. It was the supposed start of the suffering the Afrikaners experienced at the hands of the British, the first of many on a list of grievances that Afrikaners would give to explain their hatred of the British.

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24 Ibid., 10.
25 Ibid., 11.
28 Van Jaarsveld, Awakening, 33.
Land for farms was expensive and expensively taxed. The frontiers were perpetually uncontrolled, both because of the unwillingness of the Dutch East India Company and the ineffectualness of the British efforts to actively protect the borders, and the borderland farmers were unable to retaliate against raids – mostly by black Africans – on their own, and were prohibited from doing so under British law. The British government was seen as favoring the black and Coloured Africans over the Boers.29

Ordinance 50 in 1828 put the Khoikhoi (a group within the Coloured population) on an equal legal footing with the white settlers of South Africa, removing all legal restrictions on their movement, employment eligibility, and ability to own property. It also prohibited the indentured servitude of Khoikhoi children and outlawed the physical punishment of the Khoikhoi by their employers.30 As a result, many Boers farms on the frontier, which had been staffed by mostly Khoikhoi, were abandoned. The Khoikhoi had largely taken all they had earned under their previous employers’ care and left to start their own farms, or attend missionary schools, rejecting all offers from the Boers to stay.31 This combined with the abolition of slavery on December 1, 1834,32 to worsen a labor shortage that had already existed on the frontier farms, and, in the eyes of the Boers, also increased cattle raids and general vagrancy. Both Ordinance 50 and the abolition of slavery were British policies and, thus, the Boers claimed to suffer loss of land, workers, and lives under British rule. The Great Trek

29 Templin, Frontier, 100.
30 Giliomee, The Afrikaners, 104-5.
31 Ibid., 146.
32 Ibid., 115.
followed, an event that S.J. du Toit, one of the first major nationalists and advocate of Afrikaans-language establishment and education, claimed, "is regarded by the Afrikaner as the point on which the whole history of South Africa pivots."\(^{33}\)

*The Great Trek*

*Die Groot Trek* (The Great Trek) officially began when trekkers in parties led by Louis Trigardt and Johannes H.J van Rensberg left the Cape Colony in 1835. The goal of these parties, and the many that would follow, was to establish a new colony in the northeast, far beyond the bounds of British control.\(^{34}\)

For S.J. du Toit, “republicanism must have infected the blood” of the trekkers; they were descendants of the republican Dutch, and the American and French Revolutions were not that far in the past.\(^{35}\) This is true, to an extent; the Boers, like the American and French revolutionaries, saw themselves as suffering under the tyranny of a foreign power.

In 1837, two years after the beginning of the Trek, Piet Retief, the elected leader of the trekkers, published a manifesto on behalf of the emigrant farmers in the *Grahamstown Journal*.\(^{36}\) He stated, “we [Boers] despair of saving the colony from these evils which threaten it by the turbulent and dishonest conduct of vagrants who are allowed to infest the country in every part; nor do we see any prospect of peace or happiness for our children in any country this

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\(^{34}\) Giliomee, *Afrikaners*, 162.
\(^{36}\) Gordon and Talbot, *Diaz to Vorster*, 173.
distracted by internal commotions.” These vagrants, he believed, were the Africans and the Khoisan who threatened the Boer way of life in the Cape Colony. It was these people, who were one of the sources of Afrikaner suffering on earth, and these groups only succeeded because of the British policies involving them and disallowing Boer retribution. This mistreatment combined with years of other grievances, including Slagtersnek, to compel the Boers to sever “that sacred tie which binds a Christian to his native soil” and begin their trek, “quitting the fruitful land of our birth, in which we have suffered enormous losses and continual vexation, and... entering a wild and dangerous territory; but we go with a firm reliance on the all-seeing, just, and merciful Being, whom it will be our endeavour to fear and humbly to obey.”37 [emphasis mine] Under the British, the Boers had suffered loss of property and potential loss of life; as a result, they chose to flee for territory ruled only by God. The Boers relied on God and believed that, because of their devotion and obedience, God would be on their side and justify their leaving the Cape Colony and British rule.

J.H. Hatting, Snr., a member of the Potgieter party, illustrated this belief in his recounting of how women crossed the Orange River, the boundary of British territory in 1835. Each woman held a book of Psalms in her hand and sang Psalm 20, sometimes known as the Prayer for Victory, both as a prayer to God for protection and a celebration of the victory achieved by crossing the river and,

in the trekkers’ minds, leaving the British behind for good.\textsuperscript{38} Therefore, for both Retief and this trekker party, it was by the will of God that they succeeded in escaping their suffering under British rule. God was on their side.

In his acceptance speech after his election as leader for the Boers in 1837, Retief stated

\begin{quote}
I, Pieter Retief by the voice of the people (\textit{Volkstem}) lawfully chosen to be their Governor and Commander in Chief of the United Laager, hereby solemnly swear before Almighty God that I, as governor chosen by the people... shall protect and defend the Christian Creed... with adherence to the same, to the catechism and the liturgies of the Netherlands Reformed Church; and that in my government I shall not permit any official to act as such in the administration of Church and Civil Government, except such as are members of the aforesaid Reformed Church and are provided with due testimonials. So help me, God.\textsuperscript{39}
\end{quote}

Retief declared his people to be Christians, and as such they could only be ruled by Christians, such as himself. He set the precedent for the close relationship of Dutch Reformed Church (DRC) with the Boer government, a relationship that would only strengthen with time. By putting his government in the hands of Christians and stating its existence before God, he followed popular thought at the time by putting the fate of his people was squarely in the hands of God.

Over the course of the next few decades, this position was expanded on and reformulated so that the Great Trek was situated firmly within the history presented in the Bible, specifically the Old Testament history of the Israelites. The Boers, as a people with their trust in God fleeing an oppressive government,

\textsuperscript{38} Gustav S. Preller, \textit{Voortrekker Mense, Vol. 1} (Kaapstad, South Africa: De Nationale pers, bpkt., 1918), 118-120, in Gordon and Talbot, \textit{Dias to Vorster}, 175.

saw themselves as kin to the Israelites fleeing Egypt in the Book of Exodus, while the British represented Egypt and its Pharaoh.\(^{40}\)

In March 1849, reflecting on the struggles the British faced during and in the aftermath of The Great Trek, Andries Pretorius, Commandant-General of the Boer commandos, wrote that “we would rather wander with the Israelites for forty years than to be subject to a government which had dealt with us such as this English government.”\(^{41}\) Like the Israelites, the Boers chose a journey of trials rather than suffer their oppression by the British anymore. Pretorius would also go on to call the English “Pharoanic,”\(^{42}\) further framing the Great Trek in biblical terms.

This framing would become an integral part of the recounting of the Great Trek in Boer historical rhetoric, repeated throughout the coming decades. For example, in 1900, during the war between the Boers and the British, the Dutch Christian philosopher and follower of Calvin, Abraham Kuyper, would declare that, during the Great Trek, “the Boer families in their thousands resolved to fly from their Egypt and its Pharaonic terrors and take their chance in the wide wilderness.”\(^{43}\)

Such claims are not uncommon in Christian historical myth-making. This motif of God leading his people to the Promised Land like the Israelites in Exodus is often repeated whenever an at least ostensibly Christian group is

\(^{42}\) Templin, *Frontier*, 145.
oppressed and must eventually move in order to escape their oppression, such as the Mormons in their early days and the northern migration of African Americans after the Civil War.\textsuperscript{44} The point of the Afrikaners identifying with the Israelites was twofold. First, it emphasized the supremacy of God’s direct action in the lives of men; God was thought to have directly intervened in the Boers’ lives to ensure their survival on the frontier. This is essential to understanding the Boer’s actions, because they truly believed that God controlled everything on earth, and it was their job to live by his will. For the Boers, the sovereignty of God was supreme above all other things. Second, it placed this supreme God firmly on the side of the Afrikaners and made them his modern-day Chosen People. The Afrikaners, as the people whose situation was very like that of the Israelites, wanted to also endure their fate: centuries of earthly suffering, followed by eventual prosperity and eternal glory under God. And this entire idea was formulated in reference to the British.

\textit{Trouble on the Frontier}

This, however, was not the end of the Boer’s suffering.\textsuperscript{45} They had fled their oppression, their Pharaoh, but were yet to face an enemy that had directly threatened their lives. This enemy was found in the black Africans – particularly the Zulu - in the northeast, in or near the Boers’ intended areas of settlement.

\textsuperscript{44} Templin, \textit{Frontier}, 3.
\textsuperscript{45} Moodie, \textit{Rise of Afrikanerdom}, 93.
By 1837, two thousand trekkers had crossed the Orange River, split into five or six camps spread around the area between the Orange and Vaal rivers.46 Along the way, these trekker parties spoke with the black African groups they encountered and, through verbal agreement or formal treaty, made deals to keep order between the communities.47 Starting around winter 1836, though, these agreements began to fall apart.

The Van Rensberg party went north and was “never to be heard of again, for all record of them is as absolutely lost to the world as that of the ten tribes of Israel.”48 In August, an Ndebele group attacked the Liebenberg family, part of the Potgieter trek, killing fourteen. Small killings and cattle raids increased until, in October, a Boer commando led by Potgieter and another party leader, Pieter Uys, forced the Ndebele leader Mzilikazi to flee, leaving the Highveld (a large plateau in the interior of South Africa) clear for Boer trekking.49 At Thaba Nchu, in the Orange Free State (or OFS, one of the republics the Boers established in the north) the Potgieter and Maritz parties joined together and created an interim government, which Retief was elected the governor of when he arrived a few months later.

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46 Giliomee, Afrikaners, 162.
47 Ibid., 163.
49 Giliomee, Afrikaners, 163.
During his time as governor, Retief first met with Dingane, the Zulu chief, in October 1837,\textsuperscript{50} seven months after the cession of Natal (a third Boer republic, albeit only briefly) to the trekkers.\textsuperscript{51} They would correspond by letter throughout the next few months, making deals that were mostly about cattle, and Retief would fail in an attempt to impress the chief with “the solemn truth, that all, whether white or black, who will not hear and believe God’s word, shall be unhappy.”\textsuperscript{52} On February 6, 1838, Dingane persuaded Retief and his men to enter his village unarmed, at which point Retief and all his men were beaten to death on Dingane’s orders.\textsuperscript{53} Retief joined the growing list of Boer martyrs, becoming one of the most prominent names.

This massacre was only the beginning of the conflict between the Boers and the Zulus. Thousands of Zulu warriors were sent to attack trekkers unawares, and hundreds of Boers died. The Reverend Erasmus Smit’s laager (encampment) was among those attacked. In his journal, he asked “God prevent their attack on our lagers [sic]! And should the Almighty allow the enemy to triumph over us, we acknowledge God’s punishing, chastising hand to be doubly deserved, for our sins are great and many.”\textsuperscript{54} Again, here is presented the idea that God determines events on earth, for he is the only one who could “allow” Smit’s enemy to triumph. To do so would be to “punish” or “chastise”, the latter

\textsuperscript{50} Ibid., 164.
\textsuperscript{53} Giliomee, \textit{Afrikaners}, 165.
\textsuperscript{54} Preller, \textit{Voortrekkermense Vol. II} (Cape Town: 1920), 279, in Gordon and Talbot, \textit{From Dias to Vorster}, 179.
a word used to signify punishment like that a parent gives to children for misbehaving, so that the children may learn from their mistakes.\textsuperscript{55} This again signifies the Boers as God’s chosen people, for chastisement is the purpose of the suffering of those whom God loves.

In December 1838, Andries Pretorius arrived in Natal with sixty men and a cannon. He was named commandant-general, and encouraged the commando to make a covenant with God.\textsuperscript{56} Sarel Celliers, one of the few original party leaders still alive at this point, continued this idea on December 7. He led the trekkers into making a covenant with God that if they were to win their next battle, in which they knew they would be severely outnumbered, they would thank God yearly on that day.\textsuperscript{57} The Battle of Blood River was won with only three wounded on the side of the Boers, and Cilliers declared “the word of our Lord was fulfilled: ‘By one way shall your enemies come, but by the blessing of the Lord shall they fly in your face.’”\textsuperscript{58} Pretorius agreed, saying “it pleased the Almighty to give us this victory.”\textsuperscript{59} This day was, indeed, celebrated in the years to come, and Dingane’s Day was a national holiday until the 1990s. The Afrikaners made a Covenant with God, and with his response he proved once again to be on the side of the Boers.

What this battle means has been subject of hot debate in the study of Afrikaner history, particularly since such a long-lasting holiday derived from it.

\textsuperscript{55} Calvin, \textit{Institutes}, 63.
\textsuperscript{56} Giliomee, \textit{Afrikaners}, 165.
\textsuperscript{57} Templin, \textit{Frontier}, 111.
\textsuperscript{59} Templin, \textit{Frontier}, 111.
T. Dunbar Moodie believes that this covenant was central to the civil religion of the Boers, as to have a direct covenant with God proved their status as his chosen people, outside of the Bible and their obligations as Christians.\(^{60}\) Hermann Giliomee, on the other hand, disavows this, and believes that the conflicts on the frontier were not won in Natal, but the Transvaal Highveld, and the battle did not mean much in the end.\(^{61}\) However, whether or not the battle brought the Boers practical gains, it became important to them. The Covenant fit into the Israelite motif they were already building for themselves in respect to their relationship with the British, and showed an attempt to bargain with God as an implicit recognition of God’s ability to choose whether or not to grant the Boers victory. The Boers put their fate in the hands of God, and he chose to give them their victory, for they were his chosen people.

*The Road to War*

The end of the Great Trek and Boer resettlement in the OFS and the Transvaal\(^{62}\) by no means provided the permanent separation from the British that the trekkers had envisioned. Instead, it was only the beginning of intensified tensions, ones that would grow through intermittent conflicts and

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\(^{60}\) Moodie, *Rise of Afrikanerdom*, 27.
\(^{62}\) The Boers had attempted to settle in Natal, as well, but that area lacked a strong leader, and the British government was afraid that the trekkers in Natal stood the most danger of disrupting African communities in the interior (as they were near the Zulu) and sent troops to hold Port Natal. The Volksraad (the government in Natal) invited Henry Kloete, an Anglicized Afrikaner, to work out an agreement with the British, and although a protesting crowd was gathered outside of their meeting hall in Pietermaritzburg, the Volksraad agreed to submit to British authority, and Natal became a British colony. Giliomee, *Afrikaners*, 167-8.
treaties made and broken until their culmination in a three-year war that would result in many thousands of dead and, eventually, the creation of the Union of South Africa in 1910.

Ignorant of what their future held, the trekkers went east in droves. By 1840, around 6,000 Boers had crossed the Orange River, and by 1845, this number increased to 15,000. A booklet written by CP Bezuidenhout in 1876 anchored Afrikaner history in the Old Testament. He found the origin of Psalm 80 verses 8-16 and in Isaiah 27 verses 1-3: “Thou has brought a vine out of Egypt: thou has cast out the heathen and planted it. Thou preparedst the land.” He paralleled this with the Jews of Egypt and Canaan: “It is the wish and prayer of the author that this nation may be convinced that, just as Israel of old in Egypt was planted as a vine in Canaan and protected, so also our nation, this people who came from Holland, France, and Germany and were by God’s providence planted in Africa, may be preserved.” Bezuidenhout wished for God to protect the Boers just as he had protected the Israelites, still furthering the idea of the Boers as God’s chosen people.

On January 17, 1852, the Sand River Convention established the land beyond the Vaal River – the Transvaal – as independent of Britain. One year later, this land officially gained the name of the South African Republic (ZAR), an independent, self-governing nation. The 1854 Bloemfontein Convention did the

63 Giliomee, Afrikaners, 161.
64 Boere-Voormanne (Boer Leaders) 13, J.F. Viviers to Triumvirate, April 3, 1881, quoted in Van Jaarsveld, Awakening, 192.
same for the OFS. However, from the very beginning, there was distrust of the British and their motivations, with Potgieter a notable, outspoken believer in a secret clause by the British to still retain control over the Republic.

Less than twenty years later, this distrust blossomed in the whole of Afrikaner society after the discovery of diamonds in Kimberley, at which point the land that the Boers inhabited became too valuable for the British to let go of so easily. On October 27, 1871, the British reclaimed the diamond fields in Kimberley from the OFS and sent police to the city to maintain order. On December 4, 1871, Bloemfontein (the capital of the OFS) issued a formal protest, concluding with a belief “that the Most High controls the destinies of nations, and protects the weak, the people of the OFS humbly but confidently commits its right and future well-being to the supreme ruler, feeling assured that such reliance can never be disappointed.” The Afrikaners expressed a full reliance on God and his will for their victory on earth. In 1886, gold was discovered on the Witwatersrand, a river in the ZAR, and by the end of the century, the mines there would produce a quarter of the world’s gold. In the meantime, the Reverend F. Lion Cachet, a notable Afrikaner speaker at the time, asked “Why must our states be destroyed, our language murdered, our Church Anglicized,

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65 Giliomee, Afrikaners, 175.
66 Templin, Frontier, 138.
67 Templin, Frontier, 157.
69 Giliomee, Afrikaners, 236.
our national existence sacrificed?” To the Boers at the time, the fault would lie with the British.

Presented here is an interesting paradox regarding Afrikaner suffering in relation to the British. It was the British who were generally seen to persecute and oppress the Afrikaners, the source of their earthly suffering. However, many Afrikaners evidently believed that the fate of the Afrikaner was in the hands of God alone. In a speech delivered on December 16, 1891, President Kruger of the Z.A.R. said “I feel that I would be under a curse if the independence and freedom should ever be diminished by me. As a valuable gem these basic rights of all the people must be preserved. If we do not protect these basic rights; if we commit acts as Esau who wasted his rights, so shall God take His blessings from us.” In the Afrikaner’s fight against the British a hatred of the oppressor combined and warred with recognition of God’s omnipotence, a problem that only became further complicated with the coming of war.

Around this time, there was a minor Afrikaans language movement, led by S.J. du Toit. He worked to implement Afrikaans, the language that many of the Boers spoke, as a respected language. However, it was still considered a bastertaal (mongrel language) by many, and thus was not adopted by the educated Boers, who favored Dutch. Thus, although du Toit attempted to bolster Afrikaans by the printing of over 81,000 Afrikaans books, he died partway

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through translating the Bible into Afrikaans as a basis for a full written language, and his movement died along with him.\textsuperscript{72}

By 1895, due in large part to its diamond and gold mines, the economy of the Z.A.R. was beginning to outstrip that of the Cape Colony. Cecil Rhodes, the mining magnate who by then had been Prime Minister of the Cape Colony for five years, began to grow increasingly frustrated with the disparity. As a result, he conspired with several other British officials to create a plan to incite the Witwatersrand \textit{uitlanders}, miners from outside of South Africa, to overthrow the Z.A.R. government.\textsuperscript{73} Leander Starr Jameson was called to lead his five hundred troops from Bechuanaland (now Botswana) to the ZAR, which he invaded on December 29, 1895.\textsuperscript{74} On January 2, 1896, Jameson and all his men surrendered to three Boer commandants – Cronje, Malan, and Potgieter - at Doornkop, near Johannesburg, and the conspiracy unraveled.\textsuperscript{75} Rhodes refused to apologize and left office in disgrace, disavowed by his countrymen, even those who had conspired with him.\textsuperscript{76}

This event, dubbed the Jameson Raid, shocked the Afrikaans-speaking community in all four colonies. Previously, they had held Rhodes in high regard in common discourse because he openly admired them.\textsuperscript{77} The Jameson Raid was seen as a betrayal, and quickly became known as the third treacherous attack on

\textsuperscript{72} Giliomee, \textit{Afrikaners}, 222-224.
\textsuperscript{73} Ibid., 242.
\textsuperscript{74} Ibid., 242 and Templin, \textit{Frontier}, 238.
\textsuperscript{75} Templin, \textit{Frontier}, 238 and Elizabeth Longford, \textit{Jameson’s Raid: The Prelude to the Boer War} (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1982), 76.
\textsuperscript{76} Giliomee, \textit{Afrikaners}, 243.
\textsuperscript{77} Gordon and Talbot, \textit{Dias to Vorster}, 359.
the Boers, joining the likes of Mzilikazi’s cattle raids and Dingane’s murder of Retief.78 Instead of destroying Boer power in southern Africa, the Jameson Raid united them against what they viewed as the injustice served to them by the British.79 As F.S. Malan would write in an angry editorial in *Ons Land* [Our Land], “Once again one writes our history with blood. The monster of jingoism [extreme British nationalism] has again shown its abhorrent face. The affairs of South Africa are again arranged from Downing Street.”80 A new sentiment was rising against the British, uniting the Afrikaans-speakers, and the Boers in particular, like they had never been before.81

The same publication soon after also published an editorial reflecting on the theology of the matter. “Has not Providence over-ruled and guided the painful course of events in South Africa since the beginning of this year (1896)? Who can doubt it? The stab which was intended to paralyze Afrikanderdom once and for all in the Republics has sent an electric thrill to the national heart.”82 God was again on the side of the Boers, his chosen people, and this sentiment, combined with the hatred of the British arising from the Jameson Raid, would form a “major foundation stone” of the Boer cause the upcoming Anglo-Boer War.83

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78 Templin, *Frontier*, 239.
79 Gordon and Talbot, *From Dias to Vorster*, 360.
83 Templin, *Frontier*, 238.
Chapter Two: “Thy Will Be Done”  
*The Anglo-Boer War and the Redemptive Suffering Paradigm*

The Anglo-Boer War has been considered a turning point in South African history, mostly due to its level of devastation and effect on the relationship between the British and Boer inhabitants of Southern Africa. Prior to the war, the land that would become the Union of South Africa was split into four colonies, run separately. A few years after the peace agreement in 1902, these four separate entities - the Cape Colony, Natal, the ZAR, and the OFS - began negotiating to unite into one country, which was officially formed in 1910 as the Union of South Africa. This was done in spite of the resentment many Boers still had for the British, who had ravaged their land and people during the war. Some historians, such as J. Alton Templin and T. Dunbar Moodie, have thought of the experiences of the Boers during the war as the reason the Afrikaner people either started forming their united identity or solidified it. Many Afrikaner historical myths were created in response to the actions of the British in the war, and the interaction between the Afrikaners’ suffering and their faith that God is on their side produced, by the end of the war, the idea of the redemptive suffering of the chosen people.

However, the immediate aftermath of the Jameson Raid was not war, but an inquiry. Rhodes was forced to resign as Cape Prime Minister over his role in the raid.  

Joseph Chamberlain, a popular statesman and British colonial secretary responsible for the Cape Colony, was suspected of co-conspiracy but

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was defended both by fellow politicians and by Rudyard Kipling in his poem “If.”

Chamberlain was found not guilty of involvement in the conspiracy, which angered the Boers, who would later be proven correct by historians’ examination of his communication records.

Preparations for war began in 1898, when Sir Alfred Milner returned from England to the Cape Colony to be High Commissioner of the British colonies in South Africa. He envisioned a South Africa united under the British flag, and as such, he endeavored to bring the Z.A.R. under the sovereignty of the British crown. That same year, Kruger was reelected to the presidency of the Z.A.R. for the third time at the age of seventy-three, and his election created unrest among the goldmine owners and many of their uitlanders. Kruger’s policies tended to favor Boers and the republic over business or immigrant interests; for example, he passed laws that ensured the employment of Boers over other populations, angering both the owners because they could not find cheaper labor and the uitlanders because it was more difficult to get employed. These two events combined to create an environment filled with rising tensions and murmurs of a coming war.

Some tried to stave off the war. Milner and Kruger met in Bloemfontein, but they could agree on terms of peace. In September of 1899, the British government in South Africa approved – at the behest of Milner – a request from

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85 Giliomee, Afrikaners, 243.
86 Ibid., 245.
87 Ibid., 246.
88 Ibid., 237.
89 Ibid., 247.
90 Ibid., 247.
Natal for some ten thousand troops to be stationed in the colony. The Boers knew that their best bet at victory was to start the war before these reinforcements arrived; at the time they outnumbered the British roughly two to one. Therefore, on October 9, the ZAR gave Britain an ultimatum. It focused on four main points: the need for friendly arbitration to resolve their conflicts, the removal of British troops from the borders of the Transvaal, the removal of all troop reinforcements at the coast from the whole of South Africa, and the prohibition of the arrival of further reinforcements. The British failed to reply. The Anglo-Boer War, or the Second Boer War, began on October 12, 1899 when a group of Boers captured a British train in Bechuanaland.

During the War

The war lasted for almost three years, leaving many thousands of dead. On the winning side were the British. Great Britain had help from many of its settlers in the Cape Colony and Natal, and also received significant help from black Africans, Coloureds, uitlanders, and the British Empire as a whole. They outnumbered the Boers and had vast resources, as the might of the entire British Empire was on their side.

They fought against the Boers of the ZAR and the OFS, who received small but significant help from the Afrikaans-speaking people of the Cape Colony. The ZAR, led by President Kruger, and the OFS, led by President Martinus Steyn, had a treaty of mutual protection reaffirmed in 1897, and thus when the Z.A.R. went

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91 Ibid., 248.
92 Ibid., 248.
93 Templin, Frontier, 253.
to war the OFS soon followed, although a bit more reluctantly. Soon after the war began, President Steyn stated the reason the OFS fought a war it believed to be inevitable.

We declare solemnly and as if in the presence of the Almighty, that we are compelled to take this course through the injustice done to our kith and kin... Let us look forward with confidence to a successful issue of the struggle, trusting to that Higher Power without Whose assistance human weapons avail nothing. To the God of our fathers we humbly commend the justice of our cause. May He defend the right and may He bless our weapons. Under His banner we proceed to battle for freedom and for fatherland.

The Boers had, to their regret, been forced to start the war. However, they believed in their God, and believed he would help them win, outnumbered and under-resourced as they were. God was on the side of the chosen people.

Therefore, from the very beginning, Christianity played a rather large part in the war. In times of crisis, the Church was of central importance to the Boers. “Theological terminology was used... to instill loyalty and a sense of common purpose among the faithful followers.” Christianity was used as a unifying force for the distanced and divided Boer people, God entering the discussion just when Boers felt they needed him the most. “As Afrikaans nationalism emerged... during the Anglo-Boer War, the DRC stood out as the only cultural organization that united Afrikaners, now living in four jurisdictions

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94 Ibid., 242.
95 Oberholster and van Schoor, President Steyn aan die Woord: openbare geskrifte en toesprake van Marthinus Theunis Steyn, vertaal, byeengebring en van aantekeninge voorsien (Bloemfontein: Sacum, 1953), quoted in Templin, Frontier, 253-4.
96 Templin, Frontier, 8.
and bitterly divided on numerous political questions. The church was a mold in
which a national identity could be shaped and hardened.” By this point, there
were four Afrikaner churches: the Gereformeerde Kerk (GK), the Nederduitsch
Hervormde Kerk van Afrika (NHK), the United Church, and the DRC, which was by
far the largest. They each had different theologies – although the small GK,
notably, was explicitly rooted in Calvinism, while the larger DRC was not – and
different audiences, but all of them spoke the same language.97

At first, the Boers were optimistic. They firmly believed that God would
not betray their covenant. A manifesto issued by the republics at the dawn of the
war stated, “To the God of our fathers we humbly entrust the justness of our
cause. He protects justice; He bless our arms; under His banner we march to
battle for Freedom and for Fatherland!”98 President Kruger said in a speech
before the war that “God would not allow his church to be destroyed” and
therefore the Boers could not lose the war.99 All of the political rhetoric
surrounding the war declared firmly that God was on the side of the Boers, and
the people believed. The Boers won some early battles at Magersfontein, OFS,

97 Elphick, Equality of Believers, 47.
98 J.H. Breytenbach, Die Geskiedenis van die Tweede Vryheidsoorlog in Suid-Afrika,
Commando,” in the South-African War: The Anglo-Boer War 1899-1902, ed. by
Peter Warwick (Burnt Mill, Harlow, Essex, UK: Longman Group Limited,
quoted in Moodie, Rise of Afrikanerdom, 32.
and Colenso, Natal, and General Louis Botha made a name for himself as a winning general in several key battles.

After their few initial victories, the Boers began to lose key battles, starting with the end of their prolonged siege of the British garrison at Ladysmith. On May 13, 1900, the British army marched through Bloemfontein, the capital of the OFS. By the end of the month, the entire OFS was claimed by the British and renamed the Orange River Colony. In October, the British Empire claimed sovereignty over both the OFS and the Transvaal, and President Kruger had fled the country to exile in Europe. Desperate Boer soldiers were left behind to start a guerrilla war in territory that they could no longer officially call their own.

The already outnumbered Boers were losing men quickly, not to death, but to capture and desertion. The British offered captured soldiers two alternatives to prisoner of war camps: they could take an oath of neutrality, which meant they would not have to fight for anyone and could simply return to their farms, or they could join the British as spies and scouts against the Boers’ guerrilla tactics in the latter half of the war. The Boer troops that were left would travel around in small commandos that provided for themselves either by living off the land or receiving help from nearby farms, mostly run by Boer women and children, and attacking isolated British soldiers and depots as

102 Ibid., 250.
103 Templin, *Frontier*, 257.
stealthily as possible. Many isolated British convoys were captured, and trains were looted and sabotaged.\footnote{Emanoel Lee, \textit{To the Bitter End: A Photographic History of the Boer War 1899-1902} (New York: Viking Penguins Inc., 1985), 125.} These commandos consisted of the true believers in the war, called the \textit{bittereinders}, or “bitter enders”, those who will fight to the bitter end and scorned all who left the cause other than by way of death.\footnote{Giliomee, \textit{Afrikaners}, 252.} Several Boer leaders decided that their best move to counter the numbers of the British Empire would be to reach out to the rest of the world and make the British lose the war of public opinion. \textit{Een Eeuw van Onrecht (A Century of Wrong)}, believed to be written by lawyer J. de Villers Roos, ghostwriting for General Jan Smuts, a prominent Boer general, was a propaganda piece meant to convince the outside world, particularly the United States, Germany, Holland, and pro-Boers in Britain, to join the Boers’ cause in South Africa.\footnote{Giliomee, \textit{Afrikaners}, 249.} It recounted every major grievance that the Boers had with the British since the early nineteenth century, as well as the nobility of the Boers in facing oppression.

While Roos’s efforts to gain global support were ineffective, the widespread dissemination of his document and the historical myths it contained contributed to the growing sense of a united Afrikaans-speaking identity. The grievances enumerated included such events as \textit{Slagtersnek}, the causes of the Great Trek, and the arguments over the mining industry, eventually culminating in the current war. While constructing Boer history, it refers frequently to God and his place in Boer society. The Boers are often referred to as “God-fearing” and their devoutness is emphasized for the intended audience.
[If God proves to be on our side in this war] by the grace of God the last stone will now be built into the edifice which our fathers began with so much toil and so much sorrow... [Then we shall know for sure] whether the sacrifices which both our fathers and we ourselves have made in the cause of freedom have been offered in vain, whether the blood of our race, with which every part of South Africa has been, as it were, consecrated, has been shed in vain.\textsuperscript{109}

The sacrifices of history and of the present would be redeemed by enabling victory over the British. The suffering would be relieved by the grace of God, but the Boers could only win if God was on their side. In fact, for many, only winning would have meant that God was on their side and they had attained his grace. God blessed his good followers with victory and sinners with defeat, so those with God on their side would inevitably win. The guerillas were strengthened by this faith in God, their convictions solidified by a belief that if they just kept fighting, they would eventually win, and all the sacrifice of the past and the present would be worth it. Deneys Reitz wrote in his journal about the gathering of his commando on a nearby hill on Dingane’s Day (December 16). Although he himself did not attend, as he was not religious, the ministers “invited all to join in piling a cairn of stones,” and, as far as he knew, “the beacon is still standing in testimony of vain hopes.”\textsuperscript{110} Many soldiers still clearly put their faith in God, even though Reitz did not.

Because of the prolonged guerrilla warfare from the dwindling numbers of remaining Boer soldiers, the British were fighting a war that was already more costly than any they had fought since the Napoleonic Wars. As a result,

\textsuperscript{109} Smuts, \textit{A Century of Wrong}.
instead of methodically weeding out each Boer commando, they opted instead for a scorched earth policy, destroying farms as both a punishment to the Boers near sites of sabotage and as a way to prevent the fighters from gathering more supplies and finding safe hideouts.\textsuperscript{111} The women and children left at home were taken from their farms and put into concentration camps, meant to both demoralize the Boer fighters and to keep the families from bringing supplies to the men.\textsuperscript{112} The women suffered under extraordinarily poor conditions, with little food and little protection from the elements, resulting in a community rife with disease and starvation.\textsuperscript{113} By the end of the war, over twenty-six thousand women and children had died in the camps.\textsuperscript{114} According to Alie Badenhorst, one of the residents of the British concentration camps, “it seemed in truth as if God’s hand were too heavy upon us, both man and beast. O God, dost Thou strive with us in Thine anger and chastise us in Thy wrath. Be merciful and wipe us not from the face of the earth.”\textsuperscript{115}

In their discouragement, and now admitting that they were headed for defeat, many Boers turned to the Bible to question why they had lost so badly when they believed their cause was righteous. By early 1902, there were just under twenty thousand Boers still fighting, the majority of them from the Transvaal but a scattered few were from the OFS or defectors from the Cape.\textsuperscript{116}

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{111} Giliomee, \textit{Afrikaners}, 253-4.
  \item \textsuperscript{112} Templin, \textit{Frontier}, 258.
  \item \textsuperscript{113} Giliomee, \textit{Afrikaners}, 255.
  \item \textsuperscript{114} Moodie, \textit{Rise of Afrikanerdom}, 10.
  \item \textsuperscript{116} Giliomee, \textit{Afrikaners}, 259.
\end{itemize}
The people who had put such faith in God, who had so thoroughly believed that God was on their side, had lost the war, their homes, and many lives. Why had this happened to them and their cause?

*Suffering on the Cross*

There were definitive material reasons for the Boers’ loss. The Anglo-Boer War pitted two small republics against the largest empire in the world; by the time the British reinforcements had arrived, the Boers were outnumbered at least four to one. The British tallied the Boers at around 87,000 troops while the Boers claimed only about 60,000, against 400,000 soldiers from various parts of the Great Britain and the British Commonwealth.¹¹⁷ British policies diminished Boer numbers even further, and decimated their already scant resources. The equipment of the British was modern, they possessed a multitude of machine guns, and they were funded by a vast empire.¹¹⁸ At the beginning of the war the Boers were provided for by their government, but after the republics fell, they had to scavenge for all their own supplies.¹¹⁹

Many Boers knew these material reasons, though, at least on some level; the question for them was not material but intangible, spiritual. They needed to know why God had allowed them to suffer, why God had let his people down – or, since God would not abandon his chosen people, why he decided that it was in their best interests to lose. Many came to the latter conclusion, that their loss was better than their victory in the eyes of God and occurred for their benefit.

¹¹⁹ Ibid., 38-9.
Thus began the redemptive suffering paradigm of Afrikaner history. Redemptive suffering is the idea that the suffering a person undergoes will eventually result in his or her redemption, whether that redemption is earthly prosperity or heavenly salvation, or both. Boers after the Anglo-Boer War expanded on this notion, making their particular redemptive suffering paradigm have two parts: first, all suffering occurs because God willed it, and second, God willed the Boers to suffer because it brought them closer to him, which redeemed them.

The will of God was very important to the Boers. They believed that his will determined everything, and therefore faith in and knowledge of his sovereignty were the utmost duties of any Christian. Nearing the end of the war and knowing that his side would be defeated, one Boer general asked, “What is faith? Faith is: ‘Lord, thy will be done – not my will be the victor. I must kill my will, and must act and think as He directs and leads me. That is what I understand by the faith in which God’s children must live.” This general understood that, though loss was not his will, it was the will of God, and as a Christian it was his duty to accept that. Another general agreed, stating “If the Lord God wills it then, however bitter, we must come to terms.”

Some of the Boer women involved in the war had an even stronger insistence on having faith in God’s will. In her published book on the war, a Russian nurse working for the Red Cross, Sophia Izedinova, wrote about much of

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the suffering she witnessed. Once, while recounting her time in Pretoria, she talked about the Boer widows and wives she grew to know because they joined the Red Cross ambulance crews after their husbands and sons left home. She stated that “in spite of the atmosphere of despondency, [the widows] never complain about their fate. ‘It is as God wills.’ I heard from many who had lost friends and relatives in this war.” The women would endure the loss of their husbands and livelihoods if God so willed it.

Such strong belief in the sovereignty of the will of God was typical of the Reformed faith. John Calvin, one of the major founders of the movement, stated in his *Institutes* that “true religion must be conformable to the will of God as its unerring standard; he is... no spectra or phantom, to be metamorphosed at each individual’s caprice.” This belief rang true in the words of the generals, who recognized that they could not wish for God to change his will in order to suit their needs, but they must instead change their wills in order to better suit God’s. It was not their place to determine the will of God, but God’s alone.

In the end, even Kruger stated that “I resign myself to the Will of the Lord. I know that He will not allow the afflicted people to perish. He is the Lord and all hearts are in His hand, and He turneth them whithersoever He will.” Kruger, who had so fiercely believed that God would will the Boers their victory, was forced in their defeat to reconsider his stance. He therefore, recognized the will

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122 Calvin, *Institutes*, 54.
of the Lord and knew that his fate was in the hands of God. However, with the
notion that God would “not allow the afflicted people to perish,” he still affirmed
the belief that God did not wish for the genocide of the Boers. Therefore, there
was the belief that God still had plans for the Boers because he would allow them
a future, a belief that would be helpful when it came time for the Boers to
determine why they were in danger of perishing in the first place, the second
half of the paradigm.

In late 1900, at the Battle of Nooitgedacht, during which an English
concentration camp holding Boer prisoners of war was liberated, many Boers
saw for the first time the full extent of the suffering at the concentration
camps. After the battle, two thousand people gathered to celebrate the Day of
the Covenant on December 16 and recognize the sin of the Boers. In their
opinion, the Boers had been “unfaithful to the true Covenant” they had received
in 1838 and those gathered intended to repent their own sins and those of their
people. Since God would not forsake the Boers, the Boers must have forsaken
God somehow; hence they gathered to pray and repent. God was chastising
them for their sins, and the Boers had to repent to have any chance at mercy.

However, if sin led to suffering, then what of the British? The British had
sinned greatly in the eyes of the Boers, as the oppressive Egyptians to the
Afrikaners’ Israelites, and thus they should have been punished as the Egyptians
were with the plagues. If greater sins led to greater punishments, then the
British should have lost the war. However, that was not the outcome; the British

\(^{124}\) Reitz, Commando, 122.

\(^{125}\) Moodie, The Rise of the Afrikaner, 33.
won, after both sides lost many people. The answer for why God had willed the Boers to lose then could not, therefore, come down to sins alone.

After the end of the war, Kruger stated “We [the Boers] see that God’s arm is stretched out; he is chastising us; and we shall find that everywhere we are breaking God’s commandments,” thus continuing the thoughts of those who had repented at Nooitgedacht. However, he continued, “we often ask ‘Why does the Lord chastise us so?’ Is that not in order that we may return to him?” Here, Kruger proposed that the Boers had left God, and God willed their return to the fold. God therefore made them suffer so they might find redemption by coming back to him.

As T. Dunbar Moodie said, “in the Christian tradition... suffering is not always seen as a sign of God’s chastisement and rejection. God tests His innocent servants, and righteous suffering may be taken as assurance of God’s favor. The Cross is, of course, the prototype of such innocent suffering, and Christians are called to bear their crosses in imitation of Christ.” Thus, this redemptive suffering likened the Boers to Christ, making them Christians. Just as Christ suffered to redeem humanity, the Boers suffered to redeem themselves.

This system of redemptive suffering was also present in Reformed theology. The concept had been expressed in Christian works earlier than those of the early Reformed theologians. For example, St. Augustine, who, according to Calvin, said “the suffering at which you cry, is medicine, not punishment;

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chastisement, not condemnation. Do not drive away the rod, if you would not be driven away from the inheritance. Know, brethren, that the whole of that misery of the human race, under which the world groans, is a medicinal pain, not a penal sentence." However, Calvin thoroughly elucidated this perspective on Christian suffering, drawing from multiple previous traditions to enhance his understanding of suffering on earth and its relationship to Christ. He believed that “the only purpose of God in punishing his church is to subdue her to repentance.”\textsuperscript{128} That is, God onlypunishes his people, those who specifically belong to him, in order to urge them to repent and be redeemed. The punishment of his believers is not a condemnation of their existence or a smiting, but rather a chastisement, as from a father to a child.

Christ so honors us as to regard and count our afflictions as his own. By the additional words—for the Church, Paul means not for the redemptions or reconciliations or satisfaction of the Church, but for edification and progress. As he elsewhere says, “I endure all things for the elect’s sakes, that they may also obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory” (2 Tim. 2:10). He also writes to the Corinthians: "Whether we be afflicted, it is for your consolation and salvation, which is effectual in the enduring of the same sufferings which we also suffer," (2 Cor. 1:6).\textsuperscript{129}

The Boers concurred. God specially chose them to be punished to fulfill their Christian duties. In this paradigm, as God’s chosen true Christians, the Boers needed to be punished, but only so that they could be brought back to God.

\textsuperscript{128} Calvin, \textit{Institutes}, 531.
\textsuperscript{129} Calvin, \textit{Institutes}, 540.
After the War

The war ended on May 31, 1902, when the Afrikaners surrendered to the British at Vereeniging, despite Kruger’s protests from abroad.\textsuperscript{130} The deaths in concentration camps, the ruination of the countryside, and the possibility of a black African uprising were far too much for the Boers to overcome and still fight in the war. By the end of the war, military casualties amounted to 6,000 for the Boers and 22,000 for the British, with many thousands more among civilians and non-belligerent black Africans.\textsuperscript{131}

In the peace treaty, the British agreed to allow the Boers their independent republics with a later option for union, and the right to determine whether or not Africans could be enfranchised within those republics.\textsuperscript{132} This would eventually result in the Union of South Africa in 1910, when the conquered republics and the two British colonies of the Cape Colony and Natal would form the Union that embraces the same territory as the Republic of South Africa today.

Lessons were learned, but struggles continued. The Boers, now armed with a history and a recent trial of suffering that some fought against to the bitter end, were reluctantly starting to cooperate with the British in order to form a united South Africa. Boer leadership was in transition after the war, with Kruger dying in 1904 and Steyn seriously ill, and the Boers were struggling to

\textsuperscript{130} Moodie, \textit{The Rise of Afrikanerdom}, 10.
\textsuperscript{131} Templin, \textit{Frontier}, 258.
\textsuperscript{132} Giliomee, \textit{Afrikaners}, 263.
recover from burned farms and the loss of a tenth of their population in three years time. Many generals and politicians from the war, including Smuts and Botha, would become prominent politicians to start a new era in Boer history. The Union of South Africa would be part of the British Commonwealth, putting the Boers under the British rule they thought they had escaped seventy years earlier, and forcing the new leaders to navigate a newly-combined territory.
Chapter Three: “Still Expectant Faith”
Adjusting After the Anglo-Boer War

After sixty-five years of trekking, republics, and warfare, the Boers found themselves under British rule once again. They fought the English-speakers and their Anglicization on British soil with words, not with weapons. While this was not an easy task, it was helped along by the steady creation of the new nation.
The end of the Boer republics created what they never could in their heyday: the unification of Afrikaners. When the main Afrikaans-speaking white South African population was split among disparate states – two independent republics and a minority in the British Cape Colony – the individual entities’ political interests would often conflict, dividing Boer loyalties. However, the destruction of the Boer republics and the suffering incurred in the process united the Afrikaans-speaking population – now referred to as Afrikaners – in a way that could not have been foreseen. They had a common foe that had caused them, in their eyes, undue pain and destruction. Afrikaners began to build a new vision of their nation and society in South Africa, the memory of suffering during the Anglo-Boer War fresh in their minds, and God leading the way.

In addition to building a coalition within their own country, the Afrikaner nationalists also began getting involved, at least tangentially, with countries outside of South Africa. They had particularly strong relationships with the Dutch and the Germans, whom they saw as their cultural brethren. These relationships were not one-sided, either. Throughout their political intrigues in the first half of the century, the Germans had certainly kept in mind that they
had good friends in South Africa. Many Dutch, too, took the side of Afrikaners in regard to the British question. One noted Dutchman who cared a great deal about South African affairs was Abraham Kuyper.

Born in Holland in 1837, Kuyper attended the University of Leiden to study theology starting in 1855, and published his first pamphlet in 1867. In 1885, Kuyper was dispelled from the Reformed Church for what would become known as his neo-Calvinist theology, and was followed by not just his congregation, but also roughly ten percent of the Reformed Church as a whole. Seven years later, this group joined other secessionist congregations to form the *Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland* (GKN, or Reformed Church of the Netherlands), which would be known as simply the GK in South Africa. Kuyper founded a university based on his theology, the Free University of Amsterdam, in 1880. Kuyper also helped to found the Anti-Revolutionary Party, or ARP, and represented it in the Dutch parliament, even gaining the position of Prime Minister from 1901 to 1905. Throughout his life, Kuyper would carve out a place for himself in Dutch history as a noted religious philosopher and statesman.

During the Anglo-Boer War and just before his run as Prime Minister, Kuyper published an essay in the February 1900 edition of the French

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135 Ibid., 11.

136 Ibid., 13.
publication *Revue des Deux Mondes* addressing what, in the English title, was “The South African Crisis.”

Previously an outspoken Anglophile, Kuyper changed his attitude towards the British as he censured them for their “arrogant presumption” and “criminality” in their dealings with the Boers. He, like Kruger and several other Boer politicians before him, believed that in the Great Trek “the Boer families in their thousands resolved to fly from their Egypt and its Pharaonic terrors and take their chances in the wide wilderness. Better to die in the struggle against the fates and the savages than to be further disgraced by such ignominy!” He praised the Boers for being a very Christian people who follow a “thoroughly Calvinistic” tradition, especially in their battles with the British. He blamed the British wholly for the war and the Boers’ suffering, believing that the Boers appealed to the God of justice while the British worshiped at the altars of Imperialism. He made the political and moral case in favor of the Boers, and the Boers alone.

Although his appeal to Europe to support the Boers was fruitless, it strengthened the ties between the Dutch and those of Dutch descent, like the Afrikaners. A few years after the war ended, more and more Afrikaners began travelling to the Netherlands to study at Kuyper’s Free University. Through this scholarship, and several other methods of international communication, Kuyper’s neo-Calvinism slowly but surely entered the discussion in South Africa.

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137 Ibid., 324.
139 Ibid., 335.
140 Ibid., 331.
141 Ibid., 342.
Neo-Calvinism

Neo-Calvinism originated in the Netherlands near the end of the nineteenth century. It came from the orthodoxy of several secessionist Dutch churches, but would ultimately find its leadership in one man: Abraham Kuyper. Frustrated with what he regarded as the sanctimony, false emotionality, and unsound intellectualism of contemporary revival movements, Kuyper was moved to seek out a more intellectually stimulating, comprehensive worldview that defended what he saw as the morality and orthodoxy of the church. He would find it in Calvinism, and would join the movement to adapt it to nineteenth-century living and problems. In the end, he would join the neo-Calvinist movement, becoming one of its most important formulators and proponents.

The central tenet of neo-Calvinism is the idea of the absolute sovereignty of God. God rules over everything and every event occurs because God wills it. In practical terms, this means that there is no dividing line between the sacred and the secular; all that occurs is under God’s providence. Thus, when certain Dutch people decided to claim the title of “Calvinist” again, “they could no longer dismiss certain fields (scholarship, art, and politics) as inherently ‘worldly,’ they had instead to recognize these and all occupations as Christian callings, and more generally they had to make engagement rather than withdrawal their paradigm of the Christian life.”142 Not only did every aspect – or “sphere” – of society fall under God’s sovereignty, but every sphere also could be treated with

142 Bratt, Dutch Neo-Calvinism, 16.
a Christian approach. Thus, followers viewed Neo-Calvinism not just as a
theology, but as a life philosophy, a worldview with which they could understand
the world God had created. Thus, because of this neo-Calvinist philosophy,
Kuyper was able to found his Anti-Revolutionary Party. Christians were now
able to get involved in politics because political thought now belonged to God
just as much as theology did.

Kuyper believed that Christ and all his biblical followers had “invariably
[spoken] against those who were powerful and living in luxury, and for the
suffering and oppressed.”143 Like Calvin, Kuyper believed that Christians
suffered because they were to become like Christ, were to be cross-bearers like
him and suffer so that they could be brought closer to God. However, while
Calvin used this to explain the suffering of the Christian, Kuyper took it a step
further to propose that redemptive suffering was the Christian’s normal state.
To prove their endurance, Christians must “take up [their] cross daily, taking
such burdens as God lays upon us, and bear the cross upon the way where He
leads.”144 A Christian willingly suffered daily because it was God’s will. The
cross of a Christian

May be the weakness of the body; it may be a thorn in the flesh.
It may also be the scorn you bear because of the church of God. 
It may be the miscarriage of plans you thought were very good, 
and the frustration of your highest hopes. Assuredly, it also 
includes the sins which beset you from without, from fellow-
men. And, worst of all, the sins which dwell within your own 
heart, which pain you and trouble you.

143 Ibid., 25.
144 Abraham Kuyper, The Practice of Godliness, (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B.
The cross takes many forms, and the Christian must always bear it. The reason is unknowable to a Christian, for “we cannot fathom the wisdom of God.”\textsuperscript{145} No matter the reason, a Christian must endure, and through endurance, Christians strengthen their faith because the only true way to endure is to ask for God’s help. To rely on “only [oneself] will result in poison to [one’s] soul”; thus no one can do it alone.\textsuperscript{146} Therefore, through endurance, “through all trials and temptations you \textit{keep the faith}; you are \textit{upheld by faith}; when the way is difficult and wearisome, you are found walking in the path of God’s will \textit{by faith}.”\textsuperscript{147} The Christian is therefore redeemed, bearing the cross and getting over Satan’s stumbling blocks daily, to stay faithful to God and God’s will.\textsuperscript{148}

In the early 1900s, the suffering of the Boers’ past was a main motivation for their actions in the present. The time for the endurance of most of their painful history had past, and the time for evolution had begun. With warfare ended and the Union of South Africa slowly coming into fruition, the Afrikaners now had time to develop as a people, developing their ideas of suffering along the way.

\textit{Creating a Union}

Immediately after the war, the Afrikaners were left to wrestle with the problem of their defeat. Widespread grief over the deaths of the war, especially

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{145} Ibid., 82.
\textsuperscript{146} Ibid., 83.
\textsuperscript{147} Ibid., 84.
\textsuperscript{148} Ibid., 85.
\end{flushleft}
those in the concentration camps, caused a sense of despair among the people. Non-Christian Afrikaners were affirmed in their belief that life is meaningless.\textsuperscript{149} Christians, however, had to reconcile the idea of a God on their side with the pain and death of war. Some – mostly the \textit{bittereinders} – were still bitter. Others wallowed in depression, believing that the time of the Afrikaner was over and they became resigned to what they felt was their second-class fate. The most prominent group, however, were optimistic, determined to continue expressing their faith in God and recovering from the war’s devastation to fight once again for Afrikaner interests. An editor of \textit{Het Kerkblad} (The Church Bulletin) wrote

\begin{quote}
At the beginning of the war, Afrikaners had placed their trust in God. Now that the war was over they must continue to affirm that trust. Defeat was bitter and had brought with it much suffering but this should not be an occasion for uncontrollable grief. We must ask ourselves: do we really believe that God reigns? Is He truly almighty? Can He still save?\textsuperscript{150}
\end{quote}

For many Afrikaners, the answer to these questions was yes. These Afrikaners believed that the Boers were saved from complete destruction owing to God’s will, so that they could rise up again as a proud nation, resisting the Anglicization of the British who ruled over them and the English-speakers with whom they had to cooperate.

Politically, the Transvaal became a battlefield. While the Afrikaners were the majority there, the British worked very hard to win them over. They passed the Transvaal Ordinance of 1904, which barred the importation of any more \textit{uitlanders} for the mines, a transparent bid for the support of the Transvaal

\textsuperscript{149} Hexham, \textit{Irony}, 23.
\textsuperscript{150} Ibid., 69.
Afrikaners.\textsuperscript{151} The first general election took place in the Transvaal on February 27, 1907, with \textit{Het Volk} (The People), an Afrikaner party, winning with thirty-seven seats, followed by the Progressives with twenty-one, the Nationalists six, Labour three, and the Independents two. \textit{Het Volk} named General Botha as their prime minister, and thus five years after his defeat in the Anglo-Boer War, Botha led the colony he had fought to protect.\textsuperscript{152}

In the Orange River Colony, a constitution had been drafted and it was granted self-government. In its election in November 1907, the Afrikaner party, \textit{Orange Unie}, swept the election with thirty out of the thirty-eight parliamentary seats.\textsuperscript{153} Although run by the Prime Minister Abraham Fischer in name, its policies were truly decided by former President Steyn and former Judge J.B.M. Hertzog.\textsuperscript{154} Afrikaners were running both of their old republics, albeit this time as colonies under British control.

It was these growing political victories, and the fact that Milner had left the Cape Colony permanently in 1905, that convinced many Afrikaners that a united South Africa would not necessarily ruin them. The first prominent Afrikaner to publically support such an idea was F.S. Malan, a Cape reporter who had been jailed by the British during the war because of his reports on British attacks on Afrikaner homesteads. He said he could accept a South Africa united under the Union Jack if it meant white unity. This unity, he continued, could only

\textsuperscript{152} Ibid., 29.
\textsuperscript{153} Ibid., 29.
\textsuperscript{154} Ibid., 34.
really be achieved if both white races – the Afrikaners and the British – were treated as equals, able to keep their religion, morals, habits, and language.\footnote{Giliomee, \textit{Afrikaners}, 275.}
The Afrikaners had seen these aspects of themselves threatened too much in the past to want to endanger them again. By 1908, the eminent Afrikaners Smuts and Steyn would come to agree with this formulation of union – maximum independence, minimum interference from the British, and equality for all whites. In May, Smuts proposed at an intercolonial conference that the colonies send delegates to a national convention to draft a constitution for their union, and those present unanimously agreed.\footnote{Giliomee, \textit{Afrikaners}, 275.}

However, the Afrikaners desired complete equality with the British, and thus could not settle for South African autonomy alone; the culture of South Africa had to be equally English and Afrikaner, and the touchstone of such an idea rested on language. Contemporary educational policy in the colonies insisted that, while Dutch could be taught in schools if the district so desired, English had to be the medium of instruction. Afrikaans was barely even a written language at this point, only spoken, and thus could not be used in schools.\footnote{Thompson, \textit{Unification}, 19.}

Hertzog was perhaps the biggest proponent of language equality, proven by his work in the Orange River Colony. He drafted his Education Bill, which required that both English and Dutch be the languages of instruction in public schools. The bill was published on April 21, 1908, and passed by both Houses by
August 24. That same year, Hertzog agreed to take part in the national
convention for union.\footnote{Ibid., 135.}

The convention began on October 12, 1908, at the Durban Town Hall.\footnote{Ibid., 172.}
Sir Henry de Villiers, President of the Convention, read the opening remarks of
the Convention in English, then in Dutch.\footnote{Ibid., 172, 173.}
Thus, he would set the stage for one
of the most decisive aspect of constitutional negotiation: the place and function
of the colonies’ two languages.

Hertzog, with his long history of Dutch language activism, was
unsurprisingly one of the most outspoken delegates on this issue. He believed
that if Dutch were not required for certain functions in South African society –
notably, if fluency in both English and Dutch were not required for employment
in the civil service – then Dutch would inevitably fade from use.\footnote{Ibid., 193.}
Such anxiety
was understandable, as, most recently, Milner had crafted educational and
language laws in a way to make English the dominant language of South Africa
and wipe out Dutch entirely. The Afrikaners resisted this Anglicization,
believing that their separate language was integral to their culture and status as
Afrikaners. To strip Afrikaners of their language would be to strip them of their

\footnote{\footnote{He only agreed after he gained assurances from the men who approached
him, Botha and John Merriman, that they would work with him against the
British politicians to ensure that English did not become the dominant language
of South Africa. Hertzog was too nationalistic and protective of Afrikaner culture
to allow any sort of British dominance. The two men agreed, and Hertzog
accepted their invitation to the convention. Ibid., 137.}}
status as a people. With their people so recently threatened in the Anglo-Boer War, such resistance was inevitable.

Thus, compulsory bilingualism was what Hertzog proposed at the convention. While many Afrikaners supported it, the English-speakers felt that employment conditional on language capabilities in both languages would do nothing but hinder English-speakers, who often did not know Dutch, and help the Afrikaners, whose children had already been learning English in school because of Milner’s education acts.  

The proposal threatened to stop the convention in its tracks.

However, Steyn gave a moving speech, agreeing with Hertzog’s sentiments but framing them in a more universal manner. For him, the Anglo-Boer War ruined South Africa, and created a ubiquitous “devil of race hatred” – that is, hatred between the Afrikaners and the British – that caused both to suffer in their everyday lives. “Once the races are assured that whoever gains control of affairs, there will be no danger of either race as such being menaced,” neither race would be subject to general suffering and all could be assured of security.

This speech moved Afrikaans and English-speaker alike, resulting in much needed support for Hertzog’s amendment. The only condition the English gave to their approval was that any language of compulsion be removed, as they

163 Ibid., 194.
didn’t want bilingualism to be a firm requirement.\textsuperscript{165} The language was carefully changed, resulting in the following, Section 137 of the South Africa Act:

Both the English and Dutch languages shall be official languages of the Union, and shall be treated on a footing of equality, and possess and enjoy equal freedom, rights and privileges; all records, journals and proceedings of the Union Parliament shall be kept in both languages, and all Bills, Acts and notices of general public importance or interest issued by the Union government shall be in both languages.\textsuperscript{166}

Although the requirements for compulsory bilingualism were removed, the Afrikaners counted this section as a victory, as their language would be seen as equal to English in the eyes of the state. This means that they would escape the suffering of second-class citizenry, as their language and input would be included no matter who was in charge. The Afrikaners would not allow themselves to be subject to undue force again.

The language debate was not the only major debate of the convention. The powers of the central and provincial governments, the divisions and workings of parliament, and the placement of the capital were major issues, as well. Notably, the controversial Cape franchise - the enfranchisement of non-Europeans, particularly Coloureds, who met certain qualifications in the Cape Colony – was hotly debated, and eventually addressed by allowing each province to decide its own voting qualifications.\textsuperscript{167}

The delegates finalized the constitution on February 3, 1909, and on May 31, 1910, the four colonies – the Transvaal, the OFS, Natal, and the Cape Colony –

\textsuperscript{165} Thompson, \textit{Unification}, 197.
\textsuperscript{166} The South Africa Act 1909 sec. 137.
\textsuperscript{167} Thompson \textit{Unification}, 341.
officially became the Union of South Africa.\textsuperscript{168} In a speech of celebration, Steyn said:

\begin{quote}
We see how all works together in God's hand to lead our folk along His way, how he uses all that happens to further His will. We see clearly from our own viewpoint; but God reveals to us the other side. True, his thoughts are not our thoughts, and his way is not our way. As we look back on the suffering of our people, and our own personal hardships, we see thorns, thistles, and precipices, and it is as though we have gone through the valley of the shadow of death [Psalm 23]. Then we are in a mood of doubt and feel like crying 'Oh God, why all this suffering?' And the echo of our voice answers, 'Why?' But now that we see that this was not the chastening hand but the great Almighty Love, then we can not help but cry 'Praise the Lord, O My Soul, and all within me Praise his Holy Name.' [Psalm 103:1]\textsuperscript{169}
\end{quote}

For Steyn, God favored these compromises and this union, although the majority of Afrikaners did not. Therefore, the Afrikaners must accept the state of things because it was what God willed for them for his own mysterious reasons. Ultimately, however, Steyn concluded that God brings suffering to his people not to chasten them but to love them, meaning that the suffering the Afrikaners endured before union was in the name of God's love. Thus, the results of this union were God's love, as well, because the suffering of the Afrikaners in their past brought them to this particular point. Afrikaners should praise God for their successful union. This was only the beginning of the inclusion of the redemptive suffering paradigm in Afrikaner political rhetoric.

\textsuperscript{168} Hexham, \textit{Irony}, 171.
**Poetry and Language**

During this time, the Afrikaners, encouraged by the strides they had made politically in promoting Dutch, began to think of establishing their own vernacular, Afrikaans, as a respected language. J.D. du Toit, the son of the noted Calvinist and language activist S.J. du Toit, was one of the most prominent contributors to this Second Language Movement. He was a military chaplain during the Anglo-Boer War, and afterwards completed his postgraduate studies in theology at Kuyper’s Free University. Soon after his return to South Africa, he continued his father’s unfinished work of translating the Bible into Afrikaans. He also began writing poetry under the pseudonym Totius, producing hundreds of poems that would become wildly popular and have a deep impact on the Afrikaner community.

Irving Hexham spends a chapter of his *Irony of Apartheid* on Totius’s poetry and impact. His point in doing so is to show that “clearly it is Totius’ poetry, not some form of sixteenth century Calvinism nor Calvinism in general, which originates the myth of apartheid.” However, in his desire to prove this, he forgets that S.J. du Toit was one of South Africa’s first neo-Calvinists, and that Totius was an ardent neo-Calvinist, as well. In spite of this, his book effectively shows its contributions to the popular Afrikaner perspective on their suffering.

Totius concentrated most of his early efforts on the Anglo-Boer War and its aftermath. He took tales of Afrikaner suffering, both fact and fiction, and

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placed them in explicitly biblical contexts through both metaphor and simile. As Hexham describes Totius’s poem “Ragel” (Rachel), the women in the concentration camps are likened to Rachel, “the mother of Israel,” and their loss is compared to that of the many Israelite mothers who lost their children.\textsuperscript{172}

Then, there was “The Old Willow”, a poem inspired by the willow tree near Napoleon’s tomb. A small group of Boer prisoners of war had been imprisoned on St. Helena, where Napoleon died in exile, and after the war’s end, had taken a few of the branches from the tree and back with them to South Africa. In this poem, Totius describes the willow as “faded” and “destitute”. He then personifies the willow as not just a man, but a fallen monk “who for / his sins must wear/ a penitential dress.” In this, the willow becomes the Afrikaner, who fell from greatness through his own sin and was thus forced to undergo the devastation of losing the Anglo-Boer War. He continues to describe the willow’s branches as “oustretched arms flung bare” towards the heavens, and yet still devastated, much as the Afrikaner felt. They had stayed resolute in their faith in God, but had yet to reap the rewards, as they were still forced to compromise with the English-speakers. Finally,

\begin{quote}
O willow,
image of my sin,
so naked and disgraced
my soul is thus
impoverished
and utterly abased.
\end{quote}

\begin{quote}
But you are still,
though you appear
a grey and beggared wraith,
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{172} Totius, “Ragel”, trans. by Irving Hexham, quoted in Hexham, \textit{Irony}, 40.
the likeness of
a quiet trust
and still expectant faith:

Your tatters,
the ascetic robe
of men of God’s election,
which, with repentance,
brings us to
the pledge of resurrection.173

Here, the metaphor for the Afrikaner becomes clearer, when Totius explicitly states that the image of the willow tree is the image of the state of his own beaten soul. In spite of this decrepit state, Totius and the Afrikaners still have a strong trust and faith in God. In fact, Totius remarks that the state of the Afrikaners is their mark of being God’s chosen people, and their subsequent repentance would bring them glory in the future.

For Hexham, by placing themselves in the context of the redemptive suffering of the Bible, in both testaments, the Afrikaners were forced to remember all that God had done for them. In accepting God’s covenant, obedience to his commandments was demanded from them. For Afrikaners, if their history was truly driven by God’s will, then it was a source of divine revelation, and thus it was their duty to remember their past and teach it to their children.174 Totius, then, brought Afrikaners to task. They had to remember their history, they had to remember their suffering, and it had to help them in

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shaping their future. Although this would not become part of popular Afrikaner thought for a few decades, Totius was the first to articulate it through his work.

Totius shaped Afrikaner suffering in the past into a form easily consumable by those who had not been first-hand witnesses to the pain they brought. This caused a particular articulation of Afrikaner history to be easily transferable along generations, the basis of a thoroughly Afrikaner understanding of history, the world, and the *volk*. Because of Totius’s status as a cultural figure, his purpose and mythmaking were not adjusted or disregarded in the decades of Afrikaner political wrangling that followed the publication of these works and other poems that dealt with the Anglo-Boer War during the 1910s.

Totius also showed the importance of language in the Afrikaner community and a major reason why the Afrikaners had fought so hard for their language at the national convention. Through Afrikaans, a means of communication primarily controlled by the Afrikaners, he articulated their suffering and hope for redemption, placed their history in a biblical context, and cemented in their culture what was only previously being said in their politics. The Afrikaners were people of God, and as such, suffered and were redeemed at his will. Afrikaners put their faith in God’s will for their own destiny.

*Rebellion and Martyrdom*

Right around the time of many of these publications, South African agriculture was hit by an immense drought, causing many Afrikaner farmers to

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lose everything. Strikes on the Witwatersrand in 1913 and 1914 were brutally repressed, causing strife among Afrikaner workers. Others, mostly bittereinders, still held a grudge from the Anglo-Boer War. Along these lines, General de la Rey stated that “Union was never intended to deprive people of their rights and liberty,” implying that Afrikaners still suffered as much under union as they had beforehand, if not more.\textsuperscript{176}

It was for this reason, among others, that Hertzog elected to leave the South African Party (SAP) and form his own National Party (NP).\textsuperscript{177} He felt as if his colleagues in the SAP, especially Smuts and Botha, had become too close to the English-speakers of South Africa and had started to compromise with them at the expense of the Afrikaner cause. Hertzog became increasingly aggressive with his stance, and after he was fired from Botha’s cabinet in 1912, began to speak up about the language issue once again. In January 1914, Hertzog founded the NP in Bloemfontein, and Hertzog – an unreligious man – found himself in a strange alliance with the Doppers, a small group of explicitly Calvinist Afrikaners.

World War I began on July 28, 1914, when Austria-Hungary invaded Serbia after the assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand, propelling the rest of the continent into war through a complicated series of international agreements. As a British colony, the Union of South Africa was expected to fight on the side of Great Britain, and many English-speaking South Africans desired


\textsuperscript{177} Hexham, \textit{Irony}, 22.
this outcome. However, the sympathies of the majority of Afrikaners lay with the Germans. The biggest exceptions to this were Prime Minister Botha and General Smuts, who were persistent in the idea that the South Africans owed a debt of gratitude to the British, and to refuse to honor this debt would merit disgrace.178 On September 4, 1914, just over a month after the start of the war in Europe, the Union parliament voted to join the fighting on the side of the British.179

Because of this decision, thousands of Afrikaner troops were sent to Europe to fight in the war. Botha also made the decision to invade the German colony of South West Africa (now Namibia) as part of the British war effort. Many Afrikaners were incensed; they were already fighting in an undesirable war, and they felt that bringing this unwanted fighting to African soil was an offense to their community. This invasion, combined with conscription of soldiers in the war, and added to “resentment over the unequal distribution of status, wealth, and political control, as well as the fear of cultural absorption into an English-oriented binational society” that was supposed to be solved with the union but was not in the transition period, compelled several thousand Afrikaners to take part in a final insurrection against British rule in what would be known as the Rebellion of 1914.180

A total of around 11,472 Afrikaners rebelled, with the majority coming from the OFS, some from the Transvaal, and even fewer from the Cape. The

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178 Giliomee, Afrikaners, 380.
179 Moodie, Rise of Afrikanerdom, 82.
180 Bloomberg, Christian-Nationalism, xx.
rebels were poorly organized and under-resourced, and often forced to steal to feed themselves. In what was largely a war between two different sections of Afrikaners – those loyal to the British and the colony’s English-speakers and those who were not - 190 rebels and 132 government troops died.\footnote{Giliomee, Afrikaners, 383.}

Most of the surviving rebels, if they were subject to any sort of legal ramifications, were given small sentences. The government recognized how unpopular the decision to invade South West Africa was and there had been comparatively little bloodshed, so the government was lenient. The exception was Jopie Fourie. He had been an army official and had not resigned his commission before he rebelled, and was thus tried for treason. He was shot on a Sunday without a blindfold at his own request.

According to Ds. Neethling, the man who attended Fourie in his last moments, “the wistful longing of Jopie Fourie [was] that his blood might awaken the Afrikaner people” and Neethling was sure that Fourie’s blood would become a foundation stone of the National Party.\footnote{Wellington National party branch, minutes, October 2, 1915, quoted in Moodie, Rise of Afrikanerdom, 83.} Indeed, Jopie Fourie’s blood would awaken the faith and strength of the Afrikaner people, just as Jesus’s spilt blood had done for the Christians. He was correct on this account: Jopie Fourie would become the final martyr of Afrikanerdom, his death recounted along with the likes of Slagtersnek and the concentration camps as one of the great moments of Afrikaner suffering. Perhaps due to the now widespread idea of the biblical contextualization of Afrikaner suffering, Jopie Fourie was placed in a biblical
context immediately, just days after his death. A few years later, the Afrikaners would “come to declare that we as Afrikaners would remain true to the ideal for which Jopie Fourie struggled and died, namely the freedom and self-determination of the Boer nation.”

A decade after Fourie’s death, Piet Joubert, a general during the Anglo-Boer War, would say that the NP “owes its growth to the blood of Jopie Fourie and the suffering of his comrades, the heroes of that time.” The spilling of his – and others’ – blood allowed for the growth of Afrikaner nationalism. Even at the end of the twentieth century, right-wing Afrikaners would know the name of Jopie Fourie, stating that “the rebellion imprinted a great truth into the consciousness of the Afrikaner, namely that the nation’s honour is often saved by small groups of men and women who face great odds against them” or, in this case, one man who willingly die for the Afrikaner cause, not as an indirect casualty of war, but through execution. Fourie died because he loved his people and wished to save them from a terrible fate. While he was not Christ, he was Christ-like, a Christian, and a bearer of the cross.

It is in this Christological context, this redemptive suffering of the Cross, that the myth of Jopie Fourie is based. He chose to rebel, and thus willingly suffered. He also chose to be killed without a blindfold, fully conscious of the pain he would undergo and his own impending death.

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and willing to endure them both in the name of his people. He stayed true to his people to the end, deriving strength from his faith in them and sadness at their plight, and was in turn rewarded with monuments and the role as the last great Afrikaner martyr. This is similar to the neo-Calvinist formulation of suffering explained at the beginning of this chapter: he willingly and knowingly endured his suffering, sustained only by faith.

The DRC took a stronger stand on all things Afrikaner after Jopie Fourie’s death. When Botha asked the Transvaal DRC to condemn the rebels, the church refused. This was partially due to the work of D.F. Malan, a DRC minister and future prime minister, who proposed that the DRC had a special calling not just as a church, but also as an institution of the Afrikaner people. For Malan, the church had to be “national in character and... watch over our particular national interests, to teach the people to see in their history and origin the hand of God, and furthermore to cultivate among the Afrikaner people the awareness of a national calling and destiny.”\textsuperscript{186} This was a role that the DRC adopted in the decades to come, in part at Malan’s urging, albeit with quite a few bumps along the way.

\textit{The Generals’ Betrayal}

The political climate of South Africa rapidly changed over the course of the first two decades of the twentieth century. Four colonies became a Union, and a subset of Afrikaners mounted their final rebellion against the British,\textsuperscript{186} \textit{De Kerkbode}, 11 February 1915, quoted in Giliomee, \textit{Afrikaners}, 385.
resulting in their last martyr. The final instance of pain for the hardline nationalists of the Afrikaner community would be the seeming betrayal of two heroes of the Anglo-Boer War, Generals Botha and Smuts, that would unravel during the second decade of the twentieth century.

It was Botha, in his job as prime minister, who would have the Afrikaners join the side of the British during World War I. It was Botha, too, who suppressed the Rebellion of 1914, and Botha and Smuts together who would ask the Afrikaners’ church to condemn this rebellion. Jopie Fourie was executed on Smuts’ orders, in defiance of the church’s plea for mercy.\textsuperscript{187} Then, in 1922, after Smuts had succeeded Botha as prime minister, white miners on the Witwatersrand held a general strike, both protesting their low wages and showing their lingering animosity towards their English-speaking bosses. They were suppressed through violent means by the South African army and air force, and several died, all on Smuts’ orders.\textsuperscript{188} Through this suppression of what would become known as the Rand Rebellion of 1922, Smuts permanently demoted himself in the eyes of many Afrikaners.

The men who had been the Afrikaners’ saviors in the past betrayed them. The National Party published a pamphlet that stated “it was clear as midday that Botha and Smuts and their clique [were] now in the same kraal with the Unionists [those, both Afrikaner and English, who desired a wider white unity], the millionaires, mine magnates, and capitalists.”\textsuperscript{189} Botha and Smuts had lost

\textsuperscript{187} Moodie, \textit{Rise of Afrikanerdom}, 11.
\textsuperscript{188} Bloomsberg, \textit{Christian-Nationalism}, 71-72.
touch with their people and, in their efforts to truly unite with the English-speaking South Africans and side with those who controlled the economy of South Africa over the good of poor white workers, had taken part in the oppression of their fellow Afrikaners. The suppression of the Rand Rebellion made many Afrikaners believe that, despite all efforts, Afrikaners had not achieve true equality with the English-speaking South Africans. The government and the elite English mine owners had worked together to put down the white workers’ rebellion, even going as far as to employ black Africans to undermine the Afrikaners’ strike. With this betrayal, and the new NP in place, the Afrikaner people began to turn to a new way of doing South African politics, with God firmly on their side.

190 Barbara Villet, Blood River: The Passionate Saga of South Africa’s Afrikaners and of Life in their Embattled Land (New York: Everest House Publishers, 1982), 204.
Chapter Four: “Back to Your God”
Historical Revivalism and the Creation of Apartheid

The alleged betrayal of Smuts and Botha would have strong political consequences. Their SAP lost the election of 1924 to Hertzog’s NP, making Hertzog prime minister. From this electoral victory, the Afrikaner nationalists steadily gained steam over the next few decades, becoming uncompromising to the point that even Hertzog was considered too soft on nation-mixing to be considered a true Afrikaner nationalist anymore.

During this consolidation of Afrikaner nationalism in South Africa, Afrikaans strengthened as a language, eventually replacing Dutch as the second official language of South Africa. The Great Depression hit miners and farmers especially hard, causing economic problems that would stir up intra-Afrikaner tensions. The centenary celebrations of the Great Trek in 1938 would become larger than its masterminds could have possibly anticipated, reawakening a spirit of nationalism to the point of creating a militant, grassroots movement. And then, with resentment toward the English-speakers recurring during South Africa’s participation in the Second World War, the election of 1948 resulted in a slender margin of victory for the National Party, headed by D.F. Malan and determined to implement its policy of apartheid.

Integral to all of these events was the resurgence of popular interest in Afrikaner history that occurred over the course of the 1930s and 1940s. This acted as a fulfillment of the redemptive suffering paradigm the Afrikaners had wrestled with since their theological justification of their defeat in the Anglo-
Boer War. Afrikaners came to the conclusion that it was their duty to remember the pain and suffering of their past in order to unite and gain power and redemption in the present and the future. The consequent devotion to remembering and preserving their history and culture as a people amounted to a single-minded dedication to historical memory and self-preservation, which was to have dire political consequences for South Africa in the decades to come.

Afrikaners Nationalists Gaining Power

The term “Christian-National” began appearing in both popular and elite Afrikaner discourse in the 1930s. This particular formulation was not shaped by Kuyper and his neo-Calvinists in Holland, but was mostly a South African adaptation of his views by the Afrikaner neo-Calvinists at the South African branch of the Free University, the University at Potchefstroom. Their Christian-Nationalism is the idea that the government is solely responsible to God. This does not mean however, that the Church should run the government – Christian-Nationalists believe that the Church as an institution should stay out of politics altogether. Instead, the state should be, in essence, a Christocracy, with the political-economic-social structure of the state all determined and run by Christians. If Christians ran the government, they would shape society in a Christian way. For Afrikaners, this meant that it was the duty of the government to avoid anything that could cause the degeneracy of

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191 Elphick *Equality of Believers*, 240.
193 Ibid., 25-6.
the nation, such as denationalization, assimilation, and Anglicization, and instead work towards national purity as God so ordained.

An essential (and concrete) aspect of Christian-Nationalism was Christian-Nationalist Education. This educational philosophy proposed that schools should be founded on the Bible and “promote the national principle”, i.e. love for the nation’s history, culture, and people. Thus, it was important that the medium of instruction be the national language, which for the Afrikaners meant Afrikaans. Therefore, the idea of Christian-Nationalism put the struggle for Afrikaans language recognition from the years since the Anglo-Boer War into a larger Christian context while also helping to further shape the Afrikaner Christian worldview.

After the Rand Rebellion, many Afrikaners became disenchanted with Smuts’s leadership. Thus, when the election of 1924 came around, Hertzog and his National Party won, starting a new era of politics in South Africa with nationalist Afrikaners winning, in alliance with the English-speaking workers represented by the Labour Party. However, Hertzog was in charge, and determined to bring Afrikaner issues to the forefront and instill the promised equality on a governmental level. He proposed bills to help workers in predominantly Afrikaner industries, especially agriculture and mining, and legislation to deal with drought relief, irrigation, and diamond cutting. He also attended to the special interests of unskilled and semi-skilled laborers, which

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194 Giliomee, Afrikaners, 468.
mostly meant poor Afrikaners.196 While Hertzog could not directly affect the fact that English speakers controlled most industries, he did try to rebalance the power to give Afrikaner workers the ability to fight more effectively against their bosses.

In 1925, D.F. Malan, then the Minister of the Interior, introduced a bill that would create a national flag for South Africa. At the time, the only flag the country had was the Union Jack, which many Afrikaners resented, feeling that, as an autonomous member of the British Commonwealth, South Africa should be able to display its own flag. At Smuts’s insistence, this bill was held back and reintroduced the next year at the 1926 parliamentary session.197

In the ensuing debate, the English-speakers were adamant that the Union Jack be prominently displayed on the flag as a tribute to their membership in the British Commonwealth. The Afrikaans-speakers, on the other hand, wished to do away completely with the Union Jack and allow South Africa to have its own design independent of its Commonwealth association. Eventually, a compromise was reached, giving South Africa two official flags. The first and most prominent was the national flag, which consisted of three horizontal stripes - orange, white, and blue – with small versions of the Union Jack and the two republican flags – the Transvaal’s and the OFS’s – across the middle white stripe. The other main flag was the Union Jack, which was never flown alone, and only in the more

important government buildings. The national flag was flown for the first time on May 31, 1928, exactly eighteen years after Union.198

The debate around the flag brought up questions that had not emerged since the start of World War I, with the Afrikaners asking themselves how much autonomy they really had as a member of the British Commonwealth. At an Imperial Conference in London in 1926, Hertzog was determined to achieve full, guaranteed autonomy for South Africa. He worked with the Canadian Prime Minister, William Lyon Mackenzie King, to secure the Balfour Declaration of 1926.199 It stated that all members of the Commonwealth were “autonomous Communities within the British Empire, equal in status, in no way subordinate one to another in any aspect of their domestic or external affairs, though united by a common allegiance to the Crown, and freely associated as members of the British Commonwealth of Nations.”200 This formulation satisfied both men with the notion that their states were equal to Great Britain. However, although the Balfour Declaration stated this, it was not the entire legal truth, as these Commonwealth states would know well just over a decade later.

Further reforms were made domestically, mostly led by Malan, who inserted a clause into the Constitution acknowledging God’s guidance in the destinies of countries, and helped to abolish Dutch as an official language of South Africa and replace it with Afrikaans.201 With all of these pro-Afrikaner accomplishments in South African politics, Afrikaner nationalists gained

198 Ibid., 422.
199 Giliomee, Afrikaners, 398.
200 Balfour Declaration 1926 art. 2.
201 Bloomberg, Christian-Nationalism, 93.
confidence in their government. By the time of the parliamentary election of 1929, the NP had made quite a name for itself, although opposition from the SAP was strong. The NP, however, invoked the slogan *Swart Gevaar* (Black Danger) to imply that the SAP would not do enough against the growing non-European masses.\(^{202}\) Hertzog even proposed that the self-preservation and self-defense of the “civilized” (i.e. Europeans) against the “uncivilized” (Coloureds, Indians, and black Africans) were Christian principles. An NP victory was the only way “by which humanity itself and Christianity itself will ever be able to protect itself.”\(^{203}\) At the time, this was a novel concept, and the seed was planted for further elaboration of this idea in the coming years. Ultimately, both of these parties gained seats (the NP fifteen and the SAP eight) while smaller parties either lost seats or were eliminated from parliament completely.\(^{204}\)

However, the Great Depression hit South Africa, and the rest of the world, very hard. Mines were forced to lay off thousands of workers as diamonds and gold became less affordable globally. The farms, the Afrikaner mainstay, suffered even more, because South Africa experienced a severe drought in 1932 and 1933, more intense than any drought in the past several decades. Food and jobs were scarce, forcing the government’s undivided attention to be on the economy, not on ideology.\(^{205}\) As a result, Hertzog negotiated with Smuts to form a coalition strong enough to pass and enforce whatever measures were needed.

\(^{202}\) Loubser, *Apartheid Bible*, 27.


\(^{205}\) Giliomee, *Afrikaners*, 419.
necessary to revive the South African economy.\textsuperscript{206} This began with the removal of South African money from the gold standard, which led to a period of high economic growth, as the price of gold – a staple of the South African economy – rose sharply.\textsuperscript{207} This began talks to fuse the two parties – the NP and the SAP – into one United Party (UP). These talks were successful, and fusion occurred in 1934. The time for ideological squabbles had passed for these two leaders, at least while the people as a whole were suffering economic troubles.

However, Malan, now very powerful within the NP, disagreed with Hertzog on fusion which, he believed, meant “an adulteration of the party’s ethnic purity,” as the SAP had a majority of English speakers and the UP would be combining those who spoke both English and Afrikaans. Therefore, Malan and his followers split from Hertzog to form the “Purified” National Party (GNP), which would consist exclusively of Afrikaner nationalists.\textsuperscript{208} In the eyes of the Afrikaners nationalists, Hertzog had fallen from grace in his coalition with Smuts. They thus heralded Malan as their new leader, who would embody their ambitions for many years after the split, especially with his election as prime minister just over a decade later.\textsuperscript{209}

\textit{The Free State Mission Policy}

However, Hertzog’s dominance of parliament lasted for another few years after the creation of the UP, and during that time, he implemented several

\textsuperscript{206} Liebenberg, “Hertzog in Power,” 423.
\textsuperscript{207} Giliomee, \textit{Afrikaners}, 349.
\textsuperscript{208} Villet, \textit{Blood River}, 206.
\textsuperscript{209} Liebenberg, “Hertzog in Power,” 435.
changes to South African race law. In 1935, Hertzog introduced a bundle of four laws meant to enhance segregation and get rid of the Cape franchise for good: the Representation of Natives in Parliament Bill, which wanted to move enfranchised Cape black Africans to a separate voter’s roll; the Union Native Council Bill, which would create a council with legislative power over the black population; the Native Lands Act (Amendment) Bill, which made provisions to increase the land allotted to the black population; and the Coloured Persons Rights Bill, which would extend the Cape Coloured franchise to all four provinces.210 While only two were enacted, the Native Land Act (Amendment) Bill and the Representation of Natives in Parliament Bill, such a change helped to plant the seeds for apartheid in the secular realm.

With the Free State Mission Policy implemented in 1935, apartheid-like policies were being formulated in the Church, as well. Missions had been established in the OFS for decades. By 1910, the DRC had fourteen missionaries in the OFS, had founded forty congregations, and converted a total of 6,839 people.211 In the following two decades, these numbers had increased substantially. Although it had been policy from 1857 to have separate churches for the different racial groups of the DRC, many of the white members of the DRC were nervous about the place of others in their church. Thus, at the Free State Synod of 1931, the Kroonstad conference presented a draft of what would become the Free State Mission

211 Giliomee, Afrikaners, 455.
The draft rejected *gelykstelling*, or racial equalization, because it was “psychologically unsound for persons of different races to have intimate association with one another on the same terrain and footing,” due to the denationalizing influences that went against God’s teachings. Instead, it promoted racial equity, meaning that the mission churches would be self-sustaining, and the black Africans would develop “on their own terrain, separated and apart.”

This was later expanded upon, with the statement that “these equal rights and equal opportunities have to be exercised by the Bantu in his own community,” and the report was accepted by the Free State Synod.

Four years later, the Free State Mission Policy was adopted by the Federal Council of the DRC and implemented in all DRC churches in South Africa, albeit with a few significant modifications. The Federal Council emphasized education, aligning itself with the Christian-National education policy, which stated that education must be “nationalized” and based on a group’s specific culture, language, and history. It wished for the different churches in the DRC established by the mission policy to help form their communities into “self-respecting Christian nations.” There are two interpretations of this wording. It could have meant that the Coloureds were asked to establish themselves as a nation, splitting the South African people into three groups: the whites, the

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212 Ibid., 459.
blacks, and the Coloureds.\textsuperscript{215} It also could have indicated a shift in policy
towards dividing up the black Africans into separate nations, such as the Zulu
and Xhosa nations.\textsuperscript{216} Thus, the DRC's mission policy put forth ideas that would
later become part of the country's apartheid policy a full thirteen years before
the election that would begin apartheid's implementation, also allowing for a
Christian justification for what would become a government program.

\textit{The Centenary of the Great Trek}

In addition to the oscillating political relationship with the English-
speaking South Africans and the increasing legal and theological separation from
the Black Africans, Coloureds, and Indians, the Afrikaners underwent a
multitude of internal changes in the 1930s and 1940s. New nationalist
organizations and divisions were founded. But perhaps most importantly,
Afrikaners acquired a renewed popular interest in their own history, which, in
turn, accompanied the rise of grassroots-based Afrikaner nationalism.

This increased interest was in no small part due to the centenary of the
Great Trek in 1938. The Federation of Afrikaner Cultural Associations (FAK)
formed a sub-committee to organize efforts and planned to build a monument to
the Voortrekkers (what the Boers of the Great Trek were now called).\textsuperscript{217} Then,
Henning Klopper, who had started the \textit{Spoorbond} railway union to protect the
interests of Afrikaner rail-workers, along with other pro-worker organizations,

\textsuperscript{215} Giliomee, \textit{Afrikaners}, 459.
\textsuperscript{216} Elphick, \textit{Equality of Believers}, 230.
\textsuperscript{217} Andrew Crampton, "The Voortrekker Monument, the birth of apartheid, and
beyond," \textit{Political Geography} 20 (February 2011), 222.
originated the idea of completely re-enacting the Great Trek.\textsuperscript{218} Other members of the Afrikaner elite agreed, and the Afrikaans Language and Culture Association organized the event, which would be an ox wagon procession from Cape Town to Pretoria.\textsuperscript{219} The date for arrival in Pretoria was set for December 16, 1938, when the cornerstone of the monument to the Voortrekkers would be laid, although the monument itself would not be completed for another eleven years.\textsuperscript{220} This was exactly one hundred years after the Battle of Blood River had occurred. Setting the capstone celebration on Dingane’s Day, the Day of the Covenant, indicated the major themes of the centenary celebration: commemoration of the past, recollection of martyrs, and faith in God.

These themes could be seen in the plan of this new “trek” itself. It began on August 8, 1938, when nine ox wagons departed from Cape Town on two different routes. The first headed towards the main celebration in Pretoria, while the second headed further south to the scene of the Battle of Blood River itself in northern Natal.\textsuperscript{221} Five of the wagons were named after Voortrekker heroes: “Louis Trichardt”, “Hendrik Potgieter”, and “Piet Retief”, three of the trek leaders; “Andries Pretorius”, the Voortrekker leader at the Battle of Blood River; and “Sarel Cilliers”, the architect of the Covenant Vow. The other four wagons celebrated Voortrekker women and children: “Vrou en Moeder,” or wife and mother; “Dirkie Uys”, a fourteen-year-old killed by the Zulu; and “Johanna van der Merwe” and “Magrieta Prinsloo”, two girls who survived a massacre because

\textsuperscript{218} Bloomberg, \textit{Christian-Nationalism}, 57, 120.
\textsuperscript{219} Liebenberg, “Hertzog in Power,” 438.
\textsuperscript{220} Giliomee, \textit{Afrikaners}, 432 and Crampton, \textit{Voortrekker Monument}, 224.
\textsuperscript{221} Giliomee, \textit{Afrikaners}, 432.
their mothers had hidden the children beneath their own bodies.222 Of these nine wagons, two were associated with the Battle of Blood River and the exact day the centenary was commemorating, two were general Voortrekker leaders, one was a vague commemoration of women, and four (the three children and Piet Retief, who died at the hands of the Zulu king Dingane during a negotiation) were directly associated with martyrdom. Such depiction of trekkers as martyrs stressed the narrative the Afrikaner elite seemed to be promoting, as the martyrs both represented the sacrifice of the past and aligned themselves with the important Christian concept of suffering for faith, in this case, faith in a people.

As the ox wagons passed through, ceremonies were held in nearly every town along the way. Wreaths were laid at the graves of famous Voortrekker and Afrikaner leaders and streets were renamed for them. Afrikaners lined up along the roads to watch the passing wagons, dressing up in Voortrekker period clothing and singing songs in Afrikaans, mainly “Die Stem van Suid-Afrika” (“The Call of South Africa”), which was the Afrikaans national anthem for South Africa.223 As the ox wagons moved further along their routes, they found more and more Afrikaners lining the streets to meet them. When the main wagons arrived in Pretoria, the culminating event of the centenary on December 16 was attended by over 100,000 people,224 who all watched as the cornerstone of the Voortrekker monument was laid.

222 Moodie, Rise of Afrikanerdom, 178.
223 Giliomee, Afrikaners, 432.
224 Ibid., 433.
Monuments to the past had become more important to Afrikaner leaders as a way of preserving their identity and commemorating their fallen. They noted that the Israelites of the Old Testament had used monuments to remind themselves of how God had saved them in the past. The Afrikaners followed their example to remind their children that God had saved the Afrikaners and ensured the existence of a separate Afrikaner nation. Thus, as Ds. Bruwer said at the ceremony, “[Afrikaners] erect memorial stones and consider the gallows at Slagtersnek, which symbolize for us a triumphal arch; we consider the Golgotha of Dingaan and the cairns at Weenen, Blood River, and Paardekraal. Here, too, now we have built an altar. May it mean for us a renewed dedication to volk and fatherland.”

Many politicians and other prominent Afrikaners, both newcomers and the old guard, decided to use this mass gathering of Afrikaners to advance their own agendas. Speeches were given at nearly every town along the routes, by both local and national figures, each aiming to glorify and inspire the Afrikaner people. Klopper, for example, gave a speech reflecting on God’s role in the Afrikaner past. “Return to God, who will honor us,” he urged the crowd. “The continued existence of our People is a miracle. Our People is like the thornbush at Horeb – it burns and burns but is never consumed. Our people were frequently in deep grief and divided, but always became united again.”

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225 Hexham, Irony, 181.
226 Dirk Mostert, Die Gedenkboek van die Ossewaens op die Pad van Suid-Afrika (Cape Town: Nasionale, Pers., 1940), 483, quoted in Moodie, Rise of Afrikanerdom, 181.
227 Ibid., 458, quoted in Moodie, Rise of Afrikanerdom, 181.
burning thornbush was also a reiteration of the ideas about suffering present in
the preceding few decades, as it spoke to the idea that suffering as the natural
state of the Afrikaners, though they would never be destroyed completely. The
Afrikaner people had undergone trials in their past, but were never destroyed;
Afrikaners suffered, but were always redeemed in the end.

Malan gave the key speech of the occasion, recounting the time of the
Voortrekkers, telling the people listening that the groaning of the ox wagons as
they entered Pretoria had evoked “the star of freedom” that the Voortrekkers
followed northeast to what would become the Boer republics, and which the
Afrikaners now must follow, as well. The freedom the Voortrekkers sought was
not “simply the freedom to rule themselves and live out their nationhood fully,”
but also the freedom to “preserve themselves as a white race.” The self-
preservation of the Voortrekkers lent itself to the existence of the Afrikaners in
Malan’s time. “Their task to make South Africa a white man’s land is ten times
more your task” he told the crowd, and it is important that the Afrikaners listen
to the “power which is strong enough to lead us to our destination along the path
of South Africa – the power Above which creates nations and fixes their lot.” The
Afrikaners must listen to God in order to preserve themselves as a people.

Ultimately,

It is through the Will of God that the Afrikaner people exists at all.
In His Wisdom He determined that on the southern point of Africa,
the dark continent, people should be born who would be the
bearers of Christian culture and civilization. In His Wisdom, He
surrounded this People by great dangers. He set the People down
on unfruitful soil so that they had to toil and sweat to exist upon
the soil. From time to time He visited them with droughts and
other plagues. But this was only one of the problems. God also
willed that the Afrikaans People should be continually threatened by other Peoples. There was the ferocious barbarian who resisted the intruding Christian civilization and caused the Afrikaners’ blood to flow in streams. There were times as a result of this that the Afrikaner was deeply despairing, but God at the same time prevented the swamping of the young Afrikaner people into a sea of barbarism.\textsuperscript{228}

God’s will and wisdom brought suffering to the Afrikaners, and then saved them from it. God made it so the Afrikaner would undergo both natural and manmade suffering, allowed their nation to be wounded, but not killed. God, in his wisdom, granted this perpetual cycle of suffering and redemption to the Afrikaners to help them fulfill their lot as the creators of a white country in Africa. This redemptive suffering formulation of the existence of a nation with a specific, God-given lot is similar to that which existed during the Anglo-Boer War and before, and thus this speech and general event was not just recognition of past thinking but a revival of it among the contemporary Afrikaner masses.

Yet this formulation did differ in one important aspect from that of the past. While Malan was at political odds with the British at this time, he did not point to them as the enemy who brought suffering in his speech. In the past, the suffering of the redemptive suffering paradigm was brought about by the British, who were seen as forcing the Boers to trek and continually oppressing the Afrikaner people through war and colonization. In this speech, and in the centenary at large, however, the enemy was not the white English-speakers, but the non-whites, specifically the black Africans. It was black Africans who caused the suffering of the Voortrekkers. In light of this speech, it can be understood

\textsuperscript{228} Villet, \textit{Blood River}, 207.
why the Afrikaner elite chose centenary of the Battle of Blood River, specifically, for the celebration of the Great Trek as a whole. By choosing the date of a battle between Voortrekker and black Africans from which the Voortrekkers emerged triumphant, instead of estimating a date of the beginning of the Trek, the Afrikaner leadership hoped to reframe their battles of the past as metaphors to the battles of their present through a theological and ideological formulation present in both periods. The Afrikaners, like the Voortrekkers, would find salvation after all of their suffering, and it was this centenary celebration that would be the pivotal turning point for their nation.

Malan, who had already been the de facto leader of Afrikaner nationalism, cemented this position with his speech, and his party gained prestige through its involvement with the re-enactment. It was established for the Afrikaners they could only rely on themselves through constantly reminding them of those who had been and often still were their enemies, and thus showing that Afrikaners had to work for their self-preservation as a nation. Hertzog’s criticism that Malan and the GNP would “soil the youthful innocence” of Afrikaner culture by dragging its important events, such as the Great Trek, into the day’s tumultuous political scene went unheard by many Afrikaner nationalists. The centenary caused a huge increase in the capital raised by the GNP, especially for the cause of the poor white Afrikaners, who stood the most chance of losing their unique Afrikaner spirit at the time, or so it was believed. The people established a reddingsdaad (rescue act) to improve the Afrikaner economic situation, an act

229 Giliomee, Afrikaners, 432.
aimed at redeeming the Afrikaner poor and, thus, the Afrikaner people as a whole. While all of this was meant to be above party politics, the GNP was a huge beneficiary.  

After these celebrations, interest in Afrikaner history increased. Between 1906 and 1931, only nine books about the Anglo-Boer War had been published in either Dutch or Afrikaans, as the desire to remember the trials of the past had been very low among the Afrikaner people, particularly when it came to the concentration camps. During and after the centenary, however, a new generation wished to “rediscover themselves through acknowledging both the heroism and the suffering of the war”. Books on the history of the Afrikaners, especially their side of the Anglo-Boer War, began to appear. They glorified the Voortrekker just as the speeches at the centenary celebrations had, and decried the deplorable conditions of the concentration camps. Another set of books appeared about the Voortrekkers, and instead of focusing on interactions with the British, which were a primary concern of the Voortrekkers themselves, the books were about the interactions between the Voortrekkers and the black South Africans they encountered, concentrating on working out the Voortrekkers’ color policies. The end result was an Afrikaner nationalist school of South African historians, which focused mostly on the suffering and

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230 Ibid., 433 and Villet, 205.
triumphs of the Afrikaner past, creating what some historians, such as Moodie, have called the “sacred history” of Afrikanerdom.234

This history was sacred because, for many Afrikaner nationalists, the hand of God was present in it. For C.R. Kotze, “the Afrikaner’s church is his strength.” However, in order to maintain this strong church, the Afrikaners had to find the strength that God provided them with in the past. “God calls to us: regard the history of the people... Regard the hand of God in history: the suffering and struggle of the Voortrekkers, the Kaffir wars, the two English wars, the droughts, the pests, all the vices. Think about the acquisition of our own language, the national awakening in 1938.”235 The key to gaining strength in the present was to recall the strength and struggles of the past. Afrikaners had to remember the suffering of the past in order to be redeemed in their present. Therefore, the Afrikaners had a duty as a people to remember their history. History was essential to the national identity of the Afrikaners, helping the people to identify the lot cast for them by God. As such, it was their duty as Christians to remember the history of suffering brought on them by God, and not avoid thinking about it as they had previously.

This attitude towards suffering was very Kuyperian. For Kuyper,

The mystery of Christian suffering is not a dulling of sensitivity, nor a shrinking from pain, nor a wearing of complete armor about the flesh and heart so that no arrow can penetrate and no sword can pierce the inner recesses. But for Jesus’ sake the Christian is willing to suffer, willing even to bear the added burden which will

234 See Moodie, Bloomberg.
be his because he confesses Christ, knowing that just because he is a child of God he must endure the chastisement of a father.\textsuperscript{236}

Christians suffer due to God’s will, and he gives them the strength to endure it. This does not mean that he gives Christians the strength to cast it aside, to escape the pain of their suffering; on the contrary, the duty of a Christian is to willingly feel all the pain that suffering brings. It is God who gives Christians the strength to undergo suffering and emerge from it with their souls intact. This is what the Afrikaners must do with their history – they must feel all the pain of their past and, with the strength of God, use it to form a stronger nation.

The story of a nation suffering and struggling to keep its faith in God is present in the Bible with the Israelites, with whom Afrikaners strongly identified throughout their history. Like the Israelites, the Afrikaners suffered in order to learn how to better glorify God on Earth.\textsuperscript{237} For Malan, Afrikaner history was, like the Israelites’, “the greatest masterpiece of the centuries.” Afrikaner nationhood was given to them by God, “the architect of the universe.” The Afrikaners’ past, particularly “the last hundred years, have witnessed a miracle behind which must lie a divine plan. Indeed, the history of the Afrikaner reveals a will and a determination which makes one feel that Afrikanerdom is not the work of men but the creation of God.”\textsuperscript{238} Therefore, since God was an architect of history, and Christians desired to submit to the will of God, Christians should

\textsuperscript{236} Kuyper, \textit{Practice of Godliness}, 62-3.
\textsuperscript{237} Hexham, \textit{Irony}, 70.
look at history to discern the will of God and fulfill their faithful obligations to him.

For the Afrikaners, through history God revealed his will for the existence of the Afrikaner people through the previously-established idea that they suffered but were never destroyed. Therefore, Afrikaner saw it as their duty to not only preserve the history that God revealed himself in by writing books about it and teaching it to their children through the Christian Nationalist Education policy, but it was also the job of the Christian to fulfill what God had obviously willed; that is, the preservation of the Afrikaner nation. Protecting Afrikaner history helped to protect Afrikaner nationhood, and since this was the will of God, Afrikaner nationalists had to protect themselves and their own national identity. And thus, in the course of the 1930s, self-preservation became a Christian principle, just as Hertzog had proposed in the fight against Smuts in 1929.

World War II

Less than a year after the centenary, World War II broke out in Europe. Great Britain and Germany, the two countries the English-speaking and Afrikaans-speaking South Africans respectively identified with the most, were fighting each other once again. Hertzog, believing that South African autonomy was assured through the Balfour Declaration, urged his cabinet and Parliament as a whole to take a firmly neutral stance in the war. Although he, like most of

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239 Giliomee, Afrikaners, 468.
240 Ibid., 439.
the Afrikaner leadership, did not agree with Nazism as a philosophy, Hertzog felt that Britain and France had brought the war upon themselves when they forced Germany to accept the humiliating requirements of the Treaty of Versailles in 1919, much as the Boers were humiliated by the terms of the Treaty of Vereeniging in 1902.241

However, Parliament was dominated by an alliance of English-speakers and Afrikaners who were committed to a broader white South African camaraderie, and both groups were on Great Britain’s side. Thus, Hertzog’s motion was voted down, with votes largely along language lines. Hertzog, desperate to avoid a repeat of World War I, tried to convince the Governor-General to dissolve parliament and call an election. The Governor-General, the representative of the King and an Englishman, denied the request, and Hertzog resigned.242 Smuts, then the deputy of the fused United Party, believed that South Africa had a duty to Great Britain to be its ally in war and was asked by the Governor-General to form a government, and thus he became South Africa’s prime minister again after a fifteen-year absence.243

The Afrikaners once again found themselves fighting in a war many abhorred and on the side with which they did not sympathize. Due to conscription, Afrikaners made up their fair share of the armed forces, and fought alongside English-speaking South Africans and the Allied forces in Abyssinia (Ethiopia), Madagascar, and North Africa, albeit with the promise that no

Afrikaner would be forced to leave the African continent. However, once the war theater changed in 1943 and the Allied Forces had a firm hold on Africa, Smuts revoked this promise, and on January 27, 1943, asked for Parliament’s approval to send South African soldiers to Europe.

South Africa’s participation in the war brought it both prestige and prosperity. It was praised by the Allies for its role in liberating Ethiopia and Madagascar. The economy was rejuvenated by the war effort, dragged out of the depression by the needs of a wartime nation. Smuts himself was named a British field marshal and was invited to participate both in peace talks at the end of the war and in the creation of a new international organization, the United Nations, for which he wrote the preamble to its charter.

However, while South Africa was conquering abroad, it almost fell apart at home. Upon entering the war, the Smuts-Hertzog alliance broke up and the UP was thrown into disarray. Most Afrikaner workers believed that South Africa’s participation in the war was evidence of the country’s continued subservience to Great Britain. There was even a group, albeit a small one, that sympathized with Nazi Germany and actively fought against South Africa’s involvement in the war. This was the Ossewabrandwag (OB), which was founded after the 1938 centenary to perpetuate the “ox wagon” spirit of the event. Their

247 Ibid., 21.
paramilitary branch, called the *Stormjaers* (storm riders), sabotaged some war operations and assassinated a few minor officials.\(^{250}\)

Some Afrikaners simply refused to participate in the war, and their leaders, including Malan, Hendrik Verwoerd, and J.G. Strijdom – three future prime ministers – spoke out against South Africa’s participation in the war while rejecting National Socialism and endorsing parliamentary democracy.\(^{251}\) Situations indirectly related to the fighting itself also worsened relations between the Afrikaners and the English-speaking South Africans. Large numbers of civil service workers joined the war effort, and because of the shortage of workers, the government stopped strictly adhering to the bilingual requirements, and many people who only spoke English were not only hired but also promoted within the government. “Security requirements” also limited the number of Afrikaners who were employed, as they were suspected of involvement in the OB.\(^{252}\) Measures against suspect Afrikaners went beyond government positions, as well; in 1944, Strijdom expressed his outrage that Afrikaner nationalists were being put in internment camps in spite of the fact that they were not OB members, asking “what right have [they] to call for racial peace and co-operation if every time England is at war the Afrikaans-speakers are humiliated and crushed?”\(^{253}\)

The power of Malan’s party was increasing, both because of the rise of Afrikaner nationalism during the Great Trek celebrations and the war

\(^{250}\) Ibid., 442.
\(^{251}\) Ibid., 444.
\(^{252}\) Ibid., 443.
opposition, and the white population was polarized politically, again, after a few
decades of attempts at union. With this, the white South African population
headed into the parliamentary election of 1948.

The Election of 1948

The major parties going into the election were the UP, lead by Smuts, and
the HNP, lead by Malan. During the 1940s, Malan gained power and shored up
support for the HNP and its policies, often calling it the “mother” of the Afrikaner
people. The main HNP policy that Malan supported, especially in the time
immediately before the election, was the policy of apartheid.

The term ‘apartheid’ was first uttered in a speech by the Reverend Jan
Christoffel du Plessis, addressing the “apartheid” that had always been part of
the DRC’s conduct, but it was not until the war years that the concept became
fully formulated. Based in part on the DRC Mission Policy, it was developed as a
political system by a select group within the Afrikaner nationalist elite, both
religious and not, who wished both to preserve Afrikaner nationhood and to
assuage their consciences by not simply casting aside and oppressing the
Indians, Coloureds, and black Africans. Thus apartheid, or separate
development, emerged as a concept in which self-determination would be given

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254 In 1940, after Hertzog broke away from the UP, he and his supporters joined
Malan’s GNP to form the Herstigte (Reconstituted) National Party (HNP), with
Hertzog as the elected leader. However, the nationalists revived by the Great
Trek Centenary, mostly in the north, preferred Malan. Malan would eventually
replace Hertzog as the party leader, and the HNP would become the NP again
when Hertzog left, after apartheid was implemented. Giliomee, Afrikaners, 441.
255 Ibid., 444.
256 Ibid., 454.
to all communities so that they could each work to preserve their own nations and peoples.\textsuperscript{257} The exact laws and regulations associated with this policy would not be fully formed until its implementation, but this basic notion existed for quite a few years before. As a result of its push for apartheid, though, the HNP campaign strategy involved not only promoting the concept of apartheid, but also criticizing the UP for its supposed policy of integration, which was really just the fact that the UP considered allowing the black African population to grow in urban areas, something that was already happening despite a lack of governmental approval. Just before the election, the HNP claimed that integration would lead to national suicide.\textsuperscript{258}

The general election took place on May 26, 1948.\textsuperscript{259} The alliance of the NP and the much smaller Afrikaner Party won only forty percent of the popular vote, but won the election itself by five seats due to uneven districting and the heavy weight granted to the rural vote, which was dominated by Afrikaner nationalists.\textsuperscript{260} Malan became prime minister, and the HNP began developing and implementing its policy of apartheid. The HNP would hold power for forty-six years, years that would be marked by violence and international censure.

Before the era of apartheid fully began, however, Malan gave a victory speech at the 300\textsuperscript{th} anniversary celebration of the landing of van Riebeeck in 1952, four years after his official election. He said

\textsuperscript{257} Ibid., 460.
\textsuperscript{258} Ibid., 453.
\textsuperscript{259} O’Meara, \textit{Forty Lost Years}, 22.
\textsuperscript{260} Giliomee, \textit{Afrikaners}, 482.
Back to your people; back to the highest ideals of your people; back to the pledge which has been entrusted to you for safekeeping; back to the altar of the people on which you must lay your sacrifice and, if it is demanded of you, also yourself as a sacrifice; back to the sanctity and inviolability of family life; back to the Christian way of life; back to the Christian faith; back to your Church; back to your God.261

For those present, the message was clear: if the Afrikaners followed Malan, followed the HNP, followed the new policy of apartheid, they would redeem the sacrifices of their ancestors and redeem themselves, returning to a true faith in God. In the end, the election of 1948 was a seeming culmination of the Afrikaner nationalist framework of Afrikaner suffering and redemption. Afrikaner nationalists had suffered for years, and then with their new policy and the man billed as their true leader finally in power, they would get the earthly redemption for which they had suffered so patiently.

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Chapter Five: “Extreme Distortions of Truth”

Theological Defenses of Apartheid

Apartheid was not a singular, unchanging entity; it evolved over time, due to both criticism and obstacles within the developing framework. However, from the very beginning, South Africa received criticism from the international community. It began to implement apartheid just as the decolonization of Africa was starting to be realized, and when human rights abuses particularly shocked the world because of the horrors of the Holocaust.

Therefore, from the beginning, some members of the Afrikaner nationalist community sought to defend themselves and their policy. Many defenses were published and many speeches were given, but here will be reviewed perhaps the two most important defenses published by the Dutch Reformed Church of South Africa: Inside the South African Crucible (1959) by A.B. du Preez and A Plea for Understanding (1968) by W.A. Landman. They both built upon arguments from the past and shaped the Afrikaner understanding and reasoning for apartheid into a version they hoped would be accepted by the world at large.

Inside the South African Crucible

A.B. du Preez, the author of Inside the South African Crucible, was a professor of theology, and the book itself was published and distributed by the Information Service of South Africa. It was a response to the criticism South Africa was receiving abroad and worked to justify the apartheid policy through theological reasoning about Christian morality and the nature of equality.
Du Preez began with his justification for involving the Church in South African political affairs, when he normally felt that the Church and politics should be confined to their own spheres. He believed that “it is the duty of the Church to bear witness by word and deed to the Law and Justice of God and champion the dignity of man.”262 That is, the Church could allow itself to be involved in South African politics if and when it felt it must defend God’s laws and defend Christians. Thus, in the face of the criticism Afrikaner nationalists were receiving abroad, the church (and he himself) could step in to defend what were, in his sight, the very Christian policies of the Afrikaners from the “extreme distortions of truth” told by of those abroad.263

For du Preez, apartheid – separate development – was “based on two principles which [were] clearly distinguished: A) self-defence and self-preservation on the part of the Whites and B) the recognition and protection of the autogenous elements of the Bantu culture, their needs, interests, and rights.”264 The second part spoke to du Preez’s ideas about the origins of nations. The word autogenous meant produced from within, or self-generating, and thus the “autogenous elements of Bantu culture” were the natural traits of black African culture, originating from within it. Since nations had natural aspects, nations themselves were natural.

A common destiny was also important to the formation of a nation. For du Preez, therefore, even though he believed that both the black Africans and the

263 Ibid., 31.
264 Ibid., 40.
Afrikaners were peoples whose nations originated in southern Africa, they were different because “the aboriginal races had no share in the destiny of the Afrikaner who immigrated from Europe and formed a new nation here. They did not combine in the long struggle against the English conqueror. When the Afrikaners fought for their very existence at Blood River, the aboriginals were the enemy.” They were different nations because they had different instances of suffering, which built different histories, which resulted in different destinies. The idea of the destinies of nations was kin to the Reformed concept of predestination, where God ordained certain destinies to individual people from birth. In applying this concept to nations as a whole, du Preez proposed that God also determined the fates and lots of nations.

These differences, the different autogenous elements arising from separate histories and destinies, came from God himself. Du Preez, like other Afrikaner contemporaries, traced the division of nations back to the story of the tower of Babel. God was angry that people who were building a tower up to heaven and decided to give them all different languages so that they could no longer combine forces. For Kuyper, whom du Preez quotes, “the real meaning of the confusion of tongues is that God himself thus brought about the division of humanity into peoples, nations and states. God Almighty intervened in our lives to bring about this division. The idea and the realization of the idea does not come from sinful man, but from Him.” God divided the people into different languages and nations, therefore it was not a sin to uphold this idea, but, in fact,

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265 Ibid., 55.
266 Ibid., 95.
the duty of Christians to do so. “To accept God’s natural gifts to one’s own people, to cherish and appreciate these gifts is an expression of man’s gratefulness to his creator.” As each nation had its own autogenous, God-given, natural traits, to embrace these traits and preserve them was in itself an appreciation of God’s will. Therefore, each nation had to work to preserve itself, and self-preservation was the right of all Christian peoples.

Thus, the first part of du Preez’s basis for apartheid, the “self-defence and self-preservation on the part of Whites,” became justified. Because it was the duty of nations to preserve their characteristics, du Preez believed that foreign criticisms of the “selfish” aspects of apartheid, those designed to preserve the whites, were unfounded.

As surely as the Afrikaner people have a duty to his country, as surely as the Christian is called to establish Christianity in place of barbarism, as surely as a mother must protect herself for the sake of the education and care of her child, so surely the Afrikaner’s desire for self-preservation is not for himself but because he is bound to defend his God-given calling. As each people is called to maintain itself for the sake of the calling God had given them, so the Afrikaner people also have a right to self-preservation in this country, provided it is done in responsibility and obedience to God and the other people are treated justly and with love.”

As Christians, by respecting the national characteristics of both themselves and the other nations in the land they occupied, the Afrikaners were complying with God’s will through the policy of apartheid.

He ended his book with an excerpt from a prayer: “May God grant that the Divine Word may be preached faithfully amongst you; with it you will preserve

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267 Ibid., 85.
268 Ibid., 141.
your fatherland, even if it should grieve the devil; for where there is piety, there is the help of God." The Afrikaners' Christianity and faith in God had been their path to preserving their nation, as it was this very faith that both helped them arrive at the idea of apartheid, and gain God’s help to enact the policy on the governmental level, fulfilling God’s will of a separate Afrikaner nation.

**A Plea for Understanding**

Another major defense of apartheid, *A Plea for Understanding*, was published in 1968 by the Dutch Reformed Church in South Africa. It was written by W.A. Landman, the Director of the Information Bureau of the DRC, in response to a private letter and public statement from the Reformed Church in America. The American Church stated, among other things, that “the Reformed Church in America ... [disapproves of] the policies within South Africa which deny basic rights and freedoms to the vast majority of people in that country.”

In his response, Landman did not construct any sort of elaborate theological argument justifying apartheid, as did du Preez. In fact, among the 140 pages of *A Plea for Understanding*, God was only mentioned just over a dozen times. Instead, Landman focused his efforts on the differing understandings of the Reformed Churches of the United States and South Africa of what apartheid was, what it did, and what it should have been. His “plea for understanding” was not that the Americans (and the world at large) understand

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269 Ibid., 210.
why the DRC of South Africa stood for the oppression of so many, but, instead, he argued that oppression was not occurring in South Africa in the first place.

“The truth is, I regret to say, that you have allowed yourselves to be grievously misinformed," he said, directly addressing those who had criticized South African policies.\textsuperscript{271} The standard of living for all non-white persons in South Africa was higher than that in any non-white country, and they were fairly paid.\textsuperscript{272} In fact, he argued, South Africa was perhaps the most virtuous of the white-governed countries because it did not allow for the oppression of non-whites in the slightest. “The policy of separate development is not based on a concept of superiority or inferiority, but merely on the fact of people being different.”\textsuperscript{273} It was these differences that necessitated the separation of the races and that called for their separate development, because it was important that one culture or group not swallow up the other. Separation allowed for the non-domination of one group over the other, allowed for each group to develop in its own due time and along the lines it chose, instead of being told what to do, how to live, or how to speak by a more dominant group. “Separate development is not a policy of domination, but the very antithesis thereof – it contemplates evolutionary termination of guardianship in a manner calculated to lead to peaceful co-existence.”\textsuperscript{274}

Landman believed this was important particularly in light of racial relationships in other countries. In many cases – including that of the United

\textsuperscript{271} Ibid., 20.
\textsuperscript{272} Ibid., 25.
\textsuperscript{273} Ibid., 82.
\textsuperscript{274} Ibid., 121.
States – any integration resulted in the attempted domination of one group over another, and often involved violence. Separation, however, brought peace, as one could see in India and Pakistan (Landman, of course, did not understand that after sixty-odd years after separation, India and Pakistan would still engage in various levels of conflict). In the name of peace, South Africa wished to follow the example of the partition, as “[they] want to build up a South Africa in which Bantu and Whites can live next to one another like good neighbours and not like people who continually struggle for domination,” as blacks and whites did in the United States and elsewhere.

Landman proposed that this desire and the subsequent policy of separate development resulted from the Afrikaners’ history with struggling to ensure their own national identity. He believed that this experience of Afrikaners allowed them to be uniquely situated to understand the perspective of every nation while creating separate development. “Separate development avoids the deleterious results of ignoring ethnic differences, loyalties and reactions which manifest themselves strongly when one people feels its existence or basic interests threatened by another. Such results... have often included tension, unrest, hostilities and bloodshed,” as the Afrikaners well knew, given their own history of rebellion against the British. This desire for Afrikaner self-preservation was also present in du Preez’s book.

275 Ibid., 85.
276 Ibid., 135.
277 Ibid., 121-2.
Finally, at the very end of his long statement, Landman concentrated on God. He included a letter written by the Reverend Sol Solepe of Lady Grey, a prominent black African Christian, about the necessity for all segments of society to reside in their own separate spheres. Finally, Solepe stated:

It is most certainly part of the church’s calling to see to it that justice and righteousness are done. It has to champion the cause of justice and right. Is [sic] has to be clear-eyed and see where basic rights are tampered with. It can only be and do all of this by continued listening to and obeying God’s word and by intercessory prayer for all, for the Whites as well as the Coloured races. If we fail to listen and obey, we shall do more harm than ordinary saboteurs, for then we shall be doing our own will and sabotaging the will and the Kingdom of God. God expects us Christians to give an answer to this all important matter of racial relationships. Will it be a really Christian answer?”

Yes, it would be, Landman argued, but only if that answer was apartheid.

Both du Preez and Landman relied on the idea that Afrikaner self-preservation was necessary and just, and both believed that separate development actually benefited all segments of the South African populace, despite mounting evidence that this was not the case. However, Landman’s work relied less on theology and more on statistics about South Africa and *ad hominem* attacks on its critics, such as snide comments about the violent fallout of the American Civil Rights Movement. Perhaps it was the changing international political climate – between the publication of the two books, most of the world was decolonized and the United States, which Landman criticized in particular, underwent the bulk of its Civil Rights Movement. Or, perhaps it was

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278 Ibid., 144.
the increasing violence within and subsequent international attention to South Africa.

Perhaps, even, it was because of the Sharpville Massacre (1960) when sixty-nine black Africans were shot by policemen for protesting pass laws that restricted their movement within South Africa. At the Cottesloe Consultation, a conference organized by the World Council of Churches in the aftermath of Sharpville, the DRC delegations accepted a resolution that said, in essence, there was no grounding whatsoever in scripture for apartheid, although the policy could be justified, possibly, on practical grounds. Although the DRC Synods rejected the resolution, there emerged several outspoken Afrikaner critics of apartheid, including Beyers Naudé, who had previously been a “golden boy” of Afrikaner nationalism.\(^\text{279}\) No matter the reason, though, Landman’s de-emphasis of theology in his work does suggest increasing doubts inside the DRC about the true morality of apartheid that were beginning around the time of the publication of his defense. Over time, the separate development policy founded upon the theological reasoning of various Christians and a policy from the DRC itself would lose moral ground, and the redemption and salvation on earth that Afrikaners wanted so badly after all of their struggles came to nothing.

Conclusion

In the end, the secular defenses for the perpetuation of apartheid faded, as well, until the Afrikaners were left with nothing but an authoritarian regime that had lost its reasons for existence and a massive civil resistance to white dominance. After the 1976 murder of Steven Biko, a young anti-apartheid activist, by prison guards, both the regime and the resistance had begun to clash more and more violently, resulting in a country on the brink of civil war by the middle of the 1980s.

Internationally, the regime was subject to popular, governmental, and ecclesiastical censure. Mass protests around the globe urged governments and economic institutions to sanction the South African government and disinvest from its economy. The United Nations declared apartheid a crime against humanity in 1973.280 The U.S. Congress banned all new investments and loans to the South African government in 1985, and several multinational banks refused to extend South African loans, resulting in South Africa defaulting on its short-term debt.281 The World Alliance of Reformed Churches expelled the DRC in 1982.282

Internally, the ideological support for apartheid, based in the DRC, failed. In 1982, the Dutch Reformed Sendingkerk, the Coloured branch of the DRC, drafted the Belhar Confession, which was accepted in 1986. It states that “unity is... both a gift and an obligation for the church of Jesus Christ” and “separation,

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281 Ibid., 614.
282 Ibid., 620.
enmity and hatred between people and groups is sin which Christ has already conquered, and accordingly that anything which threatens this unity may have no place in the church.” This branch of the DRC, the result of the church’s policy of self-government for all national groups – in this case, the Coloureds – publically condemned the entire system of apartheid.283 The DRC stopped supporting apartheid during its Synods of 1986 and 1990. It refused to make a declaration that the church had sinned when it helped to create apartheid, but did admit that it should have recognized that apartheid was not justifiable by the Bible earlier than it had. In November 1990, however, at a conference in Rustenburg, Willie Jonker, a DRC minister and noted apartheid critic, accepted responsibility for himself and the DRC for the oppression it had afflicted under apartheid.284

As violence increased and international sanctions were at their peak, the NP began to dismantle apartheid. Pieces of legislation upholding various aspects of the system, including pass and miscegenation laws, were slowly repealed.285 Nelson Mandela, an important anti-apartheid leader who had been imprisoned by the apartheid regime in 1963, was released to international acclaim in 1990. He entered into negotiations with Prime Minister Willem De Klerk soon after his release (and after having conducted several negotiations in secret while still imprisoned).286

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283 Confession of Belhar.
285 Ibid., 623.
286 Ibid., 630.
Apartheid officially ended in 1994, with the African National Congress victory at the polls and the election of Mandela as President. Thousands were dead, thousands permanently injured, thousands missing, millions displaced, and all the people of South Africa had to learn how to co-exist peacefully. In light of all these consequences, it is no wonder that scholars have spent decades questioning why apartheid happened in the first place. The answer of this thesis is that Afrikaners, over decades of ideological development, were able to convince themselves that apartheid was the only morally correct policy for a diverse society.

This convincing began in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries with the relationship between the Boers and the British. The Boers created the redemptive suffering paradigm as a coping mechanism for the oppression they felt they were subject to at the hands of the British. They believed themselves to be God’s chosen people, the Israelites to the British Egyptians, and, as a result, rationalized that they suffered because of how much God loved them. Over the years, this redemptive suffering paradigm began to entrench itself in Afrikaner thought through both political rhetoric and popular poetry; simultaneously, Afrikaners were solidifying themselves as a nation, primarily through their struggle to protect their language. Eventually, as Afrikaner Nationalists gained more political power, the redemptive suffering paradigm changed in nature and collided with this increasing nationalism to establish national self-preservation as a morally sound Christian objective. Thus, the redemptive suffering paradigm
created the drive for self-preservation that ended up as the central reason for
the creation of apartheid.

My formulation is new to the scholarship regarding the origins of
apartheid. Suffering, particularly how Afrikaners viewed their own, has been a
subject touched on by only a few scholars, mostly in passing. However, it is my
opinion that the examination of the evolution of the self-interpretation of
Afrikaner suffering, particularly of those claiming to be Afrikaner nationalists,
allows for a new perspective on how they could convince themselves to cause so
much pain to others. Afrikaner nationalists needed a conviction that would
compel them to withstand years of international censure. That conviction was a
belief in national self-preservation at all costs, rooted in how they rationalized
the injustices committed against them, even though this conviction failed them
in the end. Therefore, this thesis proposes a new way of understanding the
situation in South Africa, one that shows how the morality of the Afrikaners
evolved to the point that they could accept the theory of apartheid and the
disastrous results it had when put into practice.

The wider implications of this thesis are difficult to discern. I could say
that the Afrikaners viewing themselves as oppressed, and then turning around
and oppressing others, is a tale meant to warn future generations. However, this
is not new; half of history consists of repeated cycles of abuse. What is
important, though, is how it happened. The Afrikaners felt threatened, and in an
attempt to deal with the fear they felt, ended up believing that their suffering
made them special. They therefore exalted what they felt was the source of this
specialness – their culture – and expected everyone else to follow them and exalt their own cultures, as well. The problem is, however, that cultures change. The Afrikaners in the aftermath of the Anglo-Boer War were not the same Afrikaners on the eve of the election of 1948; each version of Afrikaners had differences in central enemies, leaders, and martyrs, and even had different written languages. Thus, the mistake of the Afrikaners was not just that they were able to convince themselves to oppress in the name of liberation, but also that, while they were willing to allow other cultures and peoples to develop on their own, they denied those cultures their full dynamism, a culture’s ability to merge, split, radically change, or even fade. They believed something was permanent when it never would be, and based their entire political system on it.

In all their scheming, the Afrikaners would follow the trajectory unconsciously laid out in the following poem by Totius, entitled “The Will of God”, one in which they worked to achieve what they believed to be the will of God, and in their sins, only accomplished harm. They reached out to God and seized only thorns.

Above all your somber trees, O Lord,  
there grows one giant tree for me -  
it is the wait-a-little bush  
of your decree.  
From far so lovely, green and bright,  
but how involved  
if I probe deeper than is right  
for any sinful man.  
If at such times I stretch out hands≤  
to your commands
I seize, and snare myself in, thorns.\textsuperscript{287}

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Abstract

During the apartheid era, the creators, enforcers, and supporters of apartheid withstood decades of international and internal pressure to uphold their oppressive system of government. This thesis proposes a new perspective on what drove the creation of apartheid in the first place, one that examines how the creators’ perspectives on their own experiences of suffering and oppression impacted the creation of a system that did the same to others. The purpose is to show that the primary motivation for the creation of apartheid was the creators’ concern for the preservation of their own nation of people, the Afrikaners, which was rooted in an evolving Christian framework for rationalizing the suffering and oppression that the Afrikaners felt they had experienced throughout their history.

In order to show this, the thesis traces the historical record from the founding of the first European colony in South Africa through the creation of apartheid. It begins by examining the idea of the Afrikaners as God’s chosen people. Then, it shows how this idea combined with defeat in a war to create the belief that the Afrikaners suffered because God loved them. This belief became popular and evolved over time as the power of the Afrikaner nationalists grew. Eventually, they believed that, because God loved them and wanted the Afrikaner nation to be formed and survive, it was the duty of the Afrikaners, as Christians, to work towards their own self-preservation. This became the primary motivation for the creation of apartheid. Significantly, this narrative
gives both a new approach and a new answer to the field of scholarship that examines the question of why apartheid was ever created.