

A Weberian Analysis of Afrikaner Calvinism and the Spirit of Capitalism

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Abstract

Max Weber's text, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (1904-5), also called "the Weber thesis", has animated debates on the relationship between religion, particularly Calvinism, and capitalism for over a century. Many studies have been done to test the validity of the relationship between religion, particularly Protestantism, and capitalism in different parts of the world. However, the case of the relationship between Calvinism and capitalism in South Africa has received limited scholarly attention. In the view of the political economist Francis Fukuyama, 'the failure of the Calvinist Afrikaners to develop a thriving capitalist system until the last quarter of the [19th] century' is an anomaly that needs explanation. My doctoral thesis takes up this challenge and offers an understanding of the engagement of Boers/Afrikaner Calvinists with trade, later modern industrial capitalism, from 1652 to 1948.

In order to understand the South African case study — Calvinism found roots at the Cape in 1652 and is significant still today — I have employed historical sociology as my methodology. My preference was guided by Weber's use of a form of this methodology. This allows for nuanced understandings of Calvinism and forms of capitalism at different periods in its evolution. I have employed Weberian sociological theory, including his ideal type constructs such as the Protestant ethic, bureaucracy and the spirit of capitalism, to gain greater insight. In my analysis I have also relied on Weber's *Verstehen* (interpretive) frameworks to offer more nuanced results. To add to the conceptual framework, I have used Weber's metaphor of the "switchmen" in order to trace the impact of ideas. Of course, the focus is on Calvin's ideas as they were reintroduced at different periods in South African Calvinist history: often to suit new socio-political conditions and material interests.

I trace the values of the Protestant ethic and the attitudes expressing the spirit of capitalism, following Weber, through an investigation of bureaucratisation of business and government. I show the increased convergence of the Afrikaner Calvinist *volk* with the spirit of modern industrial capitalism in the early 20th century through the call by the elite among the Afrikaners acting as ideological "switchmen" through their ideas and wanting to alleviate poverty amongst the group. Finally, the thesis shows the validity of the Weber thesis and its use for the study of Afrikaner Calvinism, including in period that follows after 1948.

Opsomming

Max Weber se teks, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (1904-5), ook genoem “die Weber tesis”, het debatte oor die verhouding tussen religie, veral Calvinisme, en kapitalisme vir meer as ‘n eeu geanimeer. Daar is vele studies wat poog om die geldigheid van ‘n verband tussen religie, veral Protestantisme en kapitalisme in ander dele van die wêreld te beoordeel. Die verhouding tussen Calvinisme en kapitalisme in Suid Afrika het egter beperkte akademiese ondersoek gekry. Na die siening van die politieke ekonoom Francis Fukuyama is “die onvermoë van die Calvinistiese Afrikaners om ‘n welvarende kapitalistiese stelsel te ontwikkel tot voor die laaste kwart van die [19^{de}] eeu” ‘n anomalie wat verduideliking benodig. My doktorale tesis neem die uitdaging aan en bied insig in die verband tussen Afrikaner Calvinisme en handel, later, moderne industriële kapitalisme, van 1652 tot 1948.

Historiese sosiologie, gelei deur ‘n Weberiaanse benadering, is as metodologie toegepas om insig te kry in die Suid-Afrikaanse gevallestudie – Calvinisme vestig in die Kaap in 1652 en is tans nog betekenisvol. Dit het my in staat gestel om ‘n genuanseerde begrip van Calvinisme en die vorms van kapitalisme in verskillende tydperke in sy evolusie te ontwikkel. Weberiaanse sosiale teorie, insluitend sy ideale tipes konsepte, soos die Protestante etiek, burokrasie en die gees van kapitalisme is toegepas om beter insig te kry. In my analise het ek op Weber se *Verstehen* (interpretatiewe) raamwerke gesteun om meer genuanseerde resultate op te lewer. Weber se metafoor van die “switchmen” is aangewend om die nalatenskap van idees te volg. Die fokus is natuurlik veral op die wyse waarop Calvin se idees herhaaldelik gebruik is gedurende verskillende tydperke in Suid-Afrikaanse Calvinistiese geskiedenis: soms om nuwe sosio-politieke kondisies en materiële belange te bevredig.

Ek het die waardes van die Protestante etiek en houdings wat, volgens Weber, die gees van kapitalisme uitdruk, in die burokratisering van besigheid en regering ondersoek. Ek het toenemende konvergensie tussen die Afrikaner Calvinistiese volk en die gees van moderne industriële kapitalisme in die vroeë 20e eeu, gevoed deur die oproep van die elite onder die Afrikaners wat waarneem as ideologiese “switchmen” deur hulle idees in die poging om armoede onder die groep te verlig, uitgelig. Laastens, die tesis bewys die geldigheid van die Weber tesis en sy toepassing in die studie van Afrikaner Calvinisme, insluitend die tydperk wat volg na 1948.

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Acronyms and Abbreviations

ACVV	: <i>Afrikaanse Christelike Vroue Vereniging</i> (Afrikaner Christian Women's Association)
AHI	: <i>Afrikaanse Handelsinstituut</i>
APO	: African Political Organization
ASB	: <i>Afrikaanse Nasionale Studentebond</i> (Afrikaner National Student's Association)
FAK	: <i>Federasie van Afrikaanse Kultuurvereniginge</i> (Federation of Afrikaner Cultural Associations)
HNP	: <i>Herenigde Nasionale Party</i> (Re-united National Party)
LMS	: London Missionary Society
NGK (DRC)	: <i>Nederduits Gereformeerde Kerk</i> (Dutch Reformed Church)
NP	: <i>Nasionale Party</i> (National Party)
SAMS	: South African Missionary Society
SANLAM	: <i>Suid-Afrikaanse Nasionale Lewens Assuransie Maatskappy</i> (South African Life Assurance Company)
SANTAM	: <i>Suid-Afrikaanse Nasionale Trust en Assuransie Maatskappy</i> (South African National Trust and Assurance Company)
SAP	: South African Party
SAR	: South African Railways
VOC	: <i>Verenigde Oost-Indische Compagnie</i> (Dutch East India Company)
ZAR	: <i>Zuid-Afrikaansche Republiek</i>

Introduction

The International Sociological Association (2011) rates Max Weber's works, *Economy and Society* (1922) and *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (1904-5), numbers one and four in the top ten books of the 20th century.¹ *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* has animated debates on the relationship between religion, particularly Calvinism, and capitalism for over a century. In a nutshell, Weber argued that the psycho-social ethos formed by Calvinism and the *Geist* [spirit] of modern capitalism find synergy when they meet. My study aims to demonstrate the ongoing relevance of Weber's thesis for an understanding of South African history, more specifically for an understanding of the historical unfolding of Afrikaner Calvinism and its meeting with modern industrial capitalism after 1910. While many studies have been undertaken on the relationship between Calvinism and capitalism in other parts of the world, the political economist Francis Fukuyama considers 'the failure of the Calvinist Afrikaners to develop a thriving capitalist system until the last quarter of the [19th] century' an anomaly that needs explanation.² My doctoral thesis takes up this challenge and offers an understanding of the engagement of Afrikaner Calvinists with capitalism.

My fascination with the Weber thesis began during my first year as an undergraduate student at the University of Toronto. Max Weber's famous book *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* was not prescribed as a text for any course I was taking, but the obvious admiration that my professor had for these works prompted me to investigate. As I progressed through these works I became increasingly convinced that the Protestants to

¹ *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* was first published as two separate essays in the *Archiv für Sozialwissenschaft und Sozialpolitik*, Volumes XX and XXI, in 1904-5. It was reprinted in 1920 as the first study in the series *Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Religionssoziologie*.

² Francis Fukuyama, *Trust: The Social Virtues and the Creation of Prosperity* (New York: Free Press, 1995), 44; Quoted in Hermann Giliomee, *The Afrikaners: Biography of a People*. Cape Town: Tafelberg, XV.

whom Weber was referring had strong psycho-social connections with the Afrikaners of South Africa.³ My initial impressions were confirmed as I saw how Weber's essays contributed to an understanding of the Calvinists' doctrine of predestination in southern Africa and the influences of the great 17th century Dutch Reformed Church synods, Dordrecht (1618 and 1619) and Westminster (1640), on the early Calvinist religion. The latter were the very synods whose Reformed dogmas were used in what was to become South Africa, after the establishment of a Dutch settlement at the Cape in 1652. What made me even more interested was the knowledge that through the Dutch East India Company (*Verenigde Oost-Indische Compagnie*, henceforth VOC) and the Reformed Church, the Dutch authorities had insisted on religious and denominational exclusivity at the Cape, and had maintained that religious position among the early European settlers of the region for more than a century, from 1652 to 1774.

The white Afrikaners of South Africa — descended from a variety of European nationalities, including French, Dutch, German and Scandinavian, as well as local Khoisan people and slaves of the Dutch colonies brought to the Cape by the VOC — trace their roots to this period. Despite other influences, including slave and indigenous cultures, they have retained an overwhelmingly Dutch cultural heritage. Part of this cultural commitment is because their language, Afrikaans, borrowed a high percentage of its vocabulary from Dutch, and is essentially a patois form of this language. However, it is the Calvinist religious ties with the churches of the Netherlands that connect Afrikaner culture most intimately with Dutch culture. It was my fascination with this religious nexus, including the intellectual ideas

³ The Afrikaners find their origin in South Africa in the middle of the seventeenth century when the Dutch East India Company (VOC) decided to establish a refreshment station at the Cape of Good Hope. These early settlers, Boers (farmers), belonged to the Reformed Calvinist Church and it was only during the latter half of the nineteenth century that they developed an Afrikaner national conscience, whereafter they became known as Afrikaners.

of John Calvin, which would eventually inspire me to investigate Weber's famous thesis in the South African context for my doctoral research.

The purpose of this research project is to use Weber's thesis to provide an explanation of the Afrikaner version of Protestantism between 1652 and 1948. Weber's thesis is taken largely as a given with important explanatory power which offers a different way of understanding developments in South Africa from, for example, Marxist revisionism. My intention is to show how Weber can be used in the South African context to explain Afrikaner Calvinism and its meeting with modern industrial capitalism in the 20th century. In other words, I am drawing on Weber, both theoretically and methodologically, to investigate the extent to which the people who would later come to be identified as Afrikaners embraced the Protestant ethic — initially as European settlers from the second half of the seventeenth century, then later as a self-identified Afrikaner *volk* (nation) from the early twentieth century. Having established the salience of this ethic, at least for significant segments of this group, I then aim to show the relevance of Weber for understanding how, still later, when Afrikaners were confronted with modern industrial capitalism in its particular South African incarnation, some entrenched religious attitudes of the group were able to find affinity with the underlying *Geist* (spirit) of capitalism. To state my thesis in another way, in terms of its underlying research questions: did the early European settlers of the seventeenth century display Calvinist values like hard work, honesty and frugality? Were these values able to take root and survive, despite countervailing and divergent forces, until a time when a significant segment of Afrikaners as a self-identified *volk* were confronted with modern industrial capitalism? If the answer to these questions is, broadly, yes, does Weber's famous thesis have significant explanatory power when applied to this South African case? I argue that it does, and that the use of a Weberian analysis is particularly relevant since white Afrikaners were

able to dominate not only politically but, increasingly, economically after 1948. In answering these research questions, my intention, then, is to determine with some precision the significance of Calvinist religious ideas for Afrikaner economic attitudes throughout the post 1652 period.

This thesis is an exercise in Weberian historical sociology, which, as is discussed further in the next chapter, includes the use of the ideal type as a critical methodological tool. Three ideal types are deployed extensively through the study – the Protestant ethic, the spirit of capitalism and bureaucracy. Weber’s use of ideal types and the particular meaning to be attached to these three are expanded on in the next chapter. Weber’s metaphor of “switchmen” is also drawn on to understand the role of Calvinist ideas in shaping the South African social reality; he uses this metaphor to argue that “not ideas, but material and ideal interests, directly govern men’s conduct. Yet very frequently the ‘world images’ which have been created by ‘ideas’ have, like switchmen, determined the tracks along which action has been pushed by the dynamic of interests”.⁴ In addition, I work with Weber’s *Verstehen* (interpretive) methodology and the distinctions he draws between instrumental rationality (*Zweckrational*), value-rationality (*Wertrational*), affectual (especially emotional) action, and traditional action. By investigating whether the behaviour of the actors in a given society is motivated by any of these four categories above helps towards an understanding of the *Geist* of capitalism that is engaged. Weber’s use of *Verstehen* is expanded on in the next chapter.

⁴ Max Weber, *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology*. Trans. By H.H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills (New York: Oxford University Press, 1946), 280.

Chapter Outline

My thesis is divided into six chapters. The discussion is organized chronologically, using politico-administrative changes as the markers for organising the discussion of the historical material across chapters 1 to 5. The periodisation of these chapters is thus based on the major political and administrative changes that occurred over 1652 to 1948 in South African history. The first period, 1652 to 1795, marks the period of VOC administration. The second period, 1795 to 1860, marks the period of British administration at the Cape and the development of the Eastern Cape frontier administration. The third period, 1860 to 1910, witnesses the development of the Transvaal and Orange Free State administrations, in parallel to the existing British colonial administrations. The fourth period, 1910 to 1948, marks the start of the Union of South Africa and ends on the eve of apartheid in 1948 when the Afrikaner Nationalist government comes to power.

Chapter 1 introduces Weber's thesis and its relevance for an understanding of South African society. This requires an investigation of Weber's depiction of John Calvin's influences on the Reformed tradition and the development of the Protestant ethic, especially Calvin's ideas of a "chosen people" identity, as well as a discussion of Weber's constructions of the ideal types of "The Protestant ethic" and "the Spirit of Capitalism" and Martin Luther's conception of the "calling" that, Weber argues, was developed further by Calvin. The chapter discusses the Weberian terminology and concepts used in this thesis — forms of capitalism, ideal type, Weber's switchmen metaphor, bureaucracy, and rationalization. The chapter then locates the general argument in the South African context, with a discussion of the reception of Weber's notions of the Protestant ethic and Calvinism in South African scholarship on Afrikaner identity.

Chapter 2 covers the period 1652 to 1795. This period marks the landing of the first VOC settlers in 1652 and ends with the decline and official withdrawal of the VOC in 1795. The entry of the VOC to the Cape in 1652 changed the political and economic structure of the region permanently. In 1795, when the VOC was forced to withdraw, the region experienced significant political and economic structural changes with the arrival of the British administration. In this chapter primary and secondary historical sources are used to understand Cape society, particularly that of the descendants of the original Dutch settlers who became identified as “Boers” (literally, farmers) during this period. The focus of the chapter is on the formation of this white settler community in both urban and rural settings as well as the utility of Weber’s ideal types, the Protestant ethic and the spirit of capitalism, in illuminating developments. The chapter concludes with a discussion of Calvinism and its impact on this community.

Chapter 3 spans the period 1795 to 1860. This period covers the beginning of political instability at the Cape, a change in colonial control and the coming of European Protestant missionaries. On a political-economic level, the period starts with the intrusion of British imperialist capitalism into the region and ends with the emergence of a nascent form of modern industrial capitalism with the discovery of diamonds in 1860. This period ushered in a British bureaucratic order that challenged local Boer patriarchal structures. It is also during this period that approximately 14,000 Boers, identified as “Voortrekkers”, left the British colony in search of political self-determination.⁵ In this chapter I investigate agency in the wine industry with reference to the three ideal types, the Protestant ethic, bureaucracy and the spirit of capitalism. This chapter also explores patrimonialism in Boer society and the degree of willingness to engage bureaucracy and engage a more rational form of organisation. The

⁵ It was also during this period that independent African polities were brought under imperial authority and into the larger political economy. While these developments were of great significance for the people of the region, these developments are not foregrounded in this thesis.

chapter ends with a discussion of Cape Calvinism and the formation of new denominational forms of Calvinism in the two Boer republics that were established in the interior in the 1840s.

Chapter 4 covers the period 1860 to 1910. This chapter addresses the mining revolution in the Voortrekker republics and the Voortrekkers' attitude toward emerging modern industrial capitalism. In this chapter bureaucracy in the Boer republics is analysed in terms of the Weber thesis, in order to gain an understanding of the readiness to engage modern industrial capitalism. This chapter also reviews the emergence of an Afrikaner national consciousness and the socio-political outcomes of the South African wars of 1880 and 1899. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the post-war period and the structures presented the Boers on the eve of the Union of South Africa in 1910.

Chapter 5 covers the final historical period of my study, 1910 to 1948. This period begins with the formation of a political union between Afrikaans-speaking and English-speaking whites. Large sectors of Afrikaans-speaking whites emerged as a "poor white" group after the telling South African War of 1899-1902. Poor whiteism does not conform to images of Weber's "Protestant ethic" or "the spirit of capitalism" as ideal types. However, by the end of the period under discussion, Afrikaners had managed to deal with "poor whiteism" successfully. The investment in dealing with "poor whiteism" came mainly from elite members of Afrikaner society. In reading the comments of these leaders within the cultural, political, religious and economic spheres, the ideal types of the Protestant ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism are used as conceptual tools toward an understanding of Afrikaner Calvinism and the meeting of its adherents with modern industrial capitalism. In the cultural sphere Afrikaners developed many organizations between 1910 and 1948 under the umbrella body of the Broederbond. An investigation is undertaken of both the Broederbond and the

emerging Afrikaner elite while occupational statistics are drawn on to illuminate the forced meeting of Afrikaners with modern industrial capitalism in this period.

Finally, Chapter 6 provides my concluding analysis, in which I revisit the relevance of Weber's thesis for an understanding of Afrikaner Calvinism and capitalism. Here I briefly review the material covered in chapter's 2 to 5, using Weber's famous switchmen metaphor to see traces of Weber's ideal types. Analysing the willingness of Afrikaner people to engage bureaucracy over a protracted period is also important for understanding the historical relationship between South African Calvinism and capitalism. In sum, the final chapter illuminates the South African Calvinist case study and offers insights on the relevance of the global Weber thesis for an understanding of the meeting of religious ideas and capitalism in this region.

Chapter 1: The Weber Thesis

This chapter will focus on the Weber thesis and the critiques of the thesis. The discussion will highlight Weber's methodology and conceptual framework and the application in this study. The chapter concludes with a discussion of other South African studies on Afrikaner Calvinism using the Weber thesis.

1.1. Weber's thesis on Protestantism and its World-Historical Significance

As already indicated, Max Weber's *Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, first published in 1904, continues to serve as a touchstone for larger debates on the rise of modern industrial capitalism⁶ and the role of Protestantism in the shaping of modernity.⁷ In Weber's analysis, modern industrial capitalism began to take shape in Western Europe from the early 19th century and has its roots in the industrial revolution. That is the sense in which the term modern industrial capitalism is used here. For Weber, it was Protestantism, its Calvinist variant most notably, that was instrumental in providing the ideological legitimation of the incipient capitalism that was beginning to taking shape in Western Europe from the 16th century onwards and developed into modern industrial capitalism from the 18th century.⁸ Weber's celebrated thesis has not, however, gone unchallenged. From its first publication to the present, approximately one hundred years, scholars have argued about its merits, both in affirmation and in rejection, and with many reformulations.

⁶ For Weber's distinction between premodern and modern capitalism, see his *General Economic History* (New York, 1961), Part IV

⁷ Modernity, like all epochs, includes distinctive forms of economic and political organization, characteristic cultural institutions, and persistent tensions between antithetical civilizational trends.

⁸ The relationship between theology and sociology is complex. On the one hand, Weber argues that the meaning of the relevant beliefs is what counts. On the other, he is a sociologist and thus interested in the real effect of the beliefs and not the intricacies of the theological arguments for their own sake.

The Protestant ethic thesis has been examined most extensively in reference to Europe and North America. Scholars have, however, also extended the Weber thesis to non-Western countries. S.N. Eisenstadt already noted in the 1960s that the expansion of economic development and modernization in non-Western countries from the mid-twentieth century stirred renewed interest in Weber's thesis.⁹ Over the past five decades more scholars have been returning to the Weber thesis as China has emerged as an economic superpower, especially given Weber's work on the religions of China.¹⁰ Many scholars, especially through the 1960s to 1980s, sought within the Protestant ethic, or some religious equivalent, the key to an understanding of why some non-Western countries have achieved modernization while others have not.¹¹ India is another emerging economic superpower where the Weber thesis has been applied, again further encouraged by Weber's writings on the relationship between religion and capitalism in this region.¹² The Weber thesis has also been used in analyses of India, Japan, and Korea.¹³

But what is this thesis? In *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, Weber's quest is to offer a causal explanation for the spirit (or culture) of modern industrial capitalism

⁹ S.N. Eisenstadt, "The Protestant Ethic Thesis in an Analytical and Comparative Framework." In *The Protestant Ethic and Modernization: A Comparative View*, edited by S.N. Eisenstadt, 3-45 (New York: Basic Books, 1968), 3.

¹⁰ Max Weber, *The religion of China*. Translated by Hans H Gerth. Glencoe: Free Press, 1951.

¹¹ Martin King Whyte, "Bureaucracy and Modernization in China." *American Sociological Review* 38, no. 2 (1973): 149-163.

¹² Max Weber, *The religion of India: the sociology of Hinduism and Buddhism*. Translated by Hans H. Gerth and Don Martindale. Glencoe: Free Press, 1958 and Buchignani, Norman L. "The Weberian Thesis in India." *Archives de sciences sociales des religions* 21, no. 42 (1976): 17-33.

¹³ These works include: Alatas, Syed Hussein. "The Weber Thesis and South Asia." *Archives de sociologie des religions* 8, no. 15 (January 1963): 21-34; Bellah, Robert. *Tokugawa Religion : The Cultural Roots of Modern Japan*. New York: Free Press, 1985; Marshall, Gordon. "The Dark Side of the Weber Thesis." *The British Journal of Sociology* 31, no. 3 (September 1980): 419-440; Ryu, Dae Young. "Understanding Early American Missionaries in Korea (1884-1910): Capitalist Middle-Class Values and the Weber Thesis." *Archives de sciences sociales des religions* 46, no. 113 (January 2001): 93-117.

and how it emerged in Western Europe.¹⁴ This, he says, is to be found in the Protestant ethic. This ethic differs from that adopted by other religious groups in Europe such as the Catholics and Jews in that, rather than embarking on a ruthless pursuit of capital (wealth), the early Protestants had a sober and more calculating approach to the accumulation of capital. According to Weber:

Truly what is here preached is not simply a means of making one's way in the world, but a peculiar ethic. The infraction of its rules is treated not as foolishness but as forgetfulness of duty. That is the essence of the matter. It is not mere business astuteness, that sort of thing is common enough, it is an ethos. This is the quality which interests us.¹⁵

This psycho-social attitude, Weber argued, had its roots in the religious ideas of the Reformation period of sixteenth and seventeenth century Europe, which are briefly reviewed here. The key concepts discussed below are: calling, predestination, election and inner bond (*innere Zusammenhang*).

Foundational to Weber's thesis is the idea of a calling (*Beruf*). This idea finds its origins in the teachings of the religious reformer, Martin Luther (1483-1546). Weber observed that Luther rejected the Roman Catholic Church's ethical dualism between the religious hierarchy and the masses.¹⁶ In the religious ethics that disturbed Luther, the Catholic clergy interceded on behalf of the sinful masses before God. It is this clerical intervention in the ethical domain that Luther found particularly repulsive. In the end, it was the eradication of the distinction between the higher morality of the priestly class and that of the laity that was Luther's lasting contribution to the Protestant Reformation. In other words, secular life was elevated to equal moral significance with that of the priestly classes, and responsibility

¹⁴ Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1962).

¹⁵ Weber, *The Protestant Ethic*, 51.

¹⁶ Weber, *The Protestant Ethic*, 80.

for one's salvation in the afterlife became the domain of all believers. The outcome for Lutheranism, according to Weber, was as follows:

But at least one thing was unquestionably new: the valuation of the fulfilment of duty in worldly affairs as the highest form which the moral activity of the individual could assume. This is which inevitably gave every-day worldly activity a religious significance, and which first created the conception of a calling in this sense. The conception of the calling thus brings out that central dogma of all Protestant denominations which the Catholic division of ethical precepts into *praecepta* and *concilia* discards. The only way of living acceptably to God was not to surpass worldly morality in monastic asceticism, but solely through the fulfilment of the obligations imposed upon the individual by his position in the world. That was his calling.¹⁷

The outcome of this religious calling was, however, not the same for all of Protestantism and was subject to interpretation. Weber points out:

The effect of the Reformation as such was only that, as compared with the Catholic attitude, the moral emphasis on the religious sanction of organized worldly labour in a calling was mightily increased. The way in which the concept of the calling, which expressed this change, should develop further depended upon the religious evolution which now took place in the different Protestant Churches.¹⁸

It should be noted that Luther himself placed no particular emphasis on labour as a calling. In fact, Luther was against the pursuit of profit as he was of the view that it normally came at the expense of other people. Weber's interpretation of Luther's position is as follows:

The individual should remain once and for all in the station and calling in which God had placed him, and should restrain his worldly activity within the limits imposed by his established station in life. While his economic traditionalism was originally the result of Pauline indifference, it later became that of a more and more intense belief in divine providence, which identified absolute obedience to God's will, with absolute acceptance of things as they were. Starting from this

¹⁷ Weber, *The Protestant Ethic*, 80.

¹⁸ Weber, *The Protestant Ethic*, 83.

background, it was impossible for Luther to establish a new or in any way fundamental connection between worldly activity and religious principles.¹⁹

Thus Luther's concept of a calling served merely as an introduction to a religious idea that was further evolved within Calvinism. For Weber, it was John Calvin (1509-1564) whose ideas were responsible for ushering in the new psycho-social impulses among Protestant believers that would come to form an inner bond (*innere Zusammenhang*) with the rise of modern industrial capitalism.²⁰ For Weber the intrinsic affinity between Protestantism — including Calvinism — and modern capitalism promoted a distinctive synergy. The meeting of Protestantism and modern capitalism happens per chance for Weber. It is on this unanticipated accident of history that Weber expounds.²¹

According to Weber, Calvin's version of Protestant ideology, including his notion of predestination, led to certain psycho-social impulses which shaped behavior and, ultimately, resulted in certain economic outcomes for his followers. These forms of behaviour included hard work and careful use of time, combined with an uncompromising faith and trust in God's decree that the Calvinist laity is guaranteed salvation in the afterlife as God's chosen subjects on earth. The idea behind the doctrine of predestination is that the omnipotent and omniscient Protestant God decides the destiny of every human on earth. Weber argues that a consequence of Calvin's doctrine of predestination was that adherents were left in a state of anxiety:

In its extreme inhumanity this doctrine must above all have had one consequence for the life of a generation which surrendered to its magnificent consistency. That

¹⁹ Weber, *The Protestant Ethic*, 85.

²⁰ *Innere Zusammenhang* – literally an “inner hanging together”.

²¹ The “accident of history” is a term used by many Weberian scholars, including Alan Macfarlane to describe Weber's notion that the coming together of events in history is almost miraculous. Weber's multi-causal explanation implies that an event in history is the accident of many contingent phenomena that conflate and collide into a moment in time per chance. Alan Macfarlane, *Lecture on Max Weber*. University of Cambridge, <https://www.dspace.cam.ac.uk/handle/1810/11115>

was a feeling of unprecedented inner loneliness of the single individual. In what was for the man of the age of the Reformation the most important thing in life, his eternal salvation, he was forced to follow his path alone to meet a destiny which had been decreed for him from eternity. No one could help him. No priest...no sacraments...There was not only no magical means of attaining the grace of God for those to whom God had decided to deny it, but no means whatsoever.²²

The uncertainty of election — later Calvinist theologians began to elaborate more concrete means by which the faithful could resolve the question of their unknown and predetermined status — brought with it a sense of anxiety among the faithful, or at least among some.²³ Later Calvinist theologians taught not only the decree of predestination but also that it was the absolute duty of the faithful to believe that they were chosen through “appropriate” everyday conduct.²⁴

This leads to Weber’s central hypothesis. Within the composite title for Weber’s two essays, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, lie the twin elements of his thesis. Unfortunately, scholars have commonly misinterpreted the thesis. Misinterpretation stems from Weber’s initial critics who felt that, as good Protestants or Catholics, they had to defend their religion against Weber’s “slandorous attempt to lay the evils of modernity squarely at its feet (in the case of Protestantism) or to dismiss it as inconsequential in the long history of economic progress in Europe (in the case of Catholicism).”²⁵ What Weber is doing is linking two cultural realms, one religious, the other economic: ethic and spirit (*Geist*). He is not saying that Protestantism is a prerequisite for modern capitalism or that modern capitalism is the requirement for the maintenance of a particular ethos developed within forms of Protestantism. Weber’s critics with regard to the causal relationship above are especially

²² Weber, *The Protestant Ethic*, 104.

²³ Weber, *The Protestant Ethic*, 110-112.

²⁴ Gordon Marshall, *In Search of the Spirit of Capitalism: An Essay on Max Weber’s Protestant Ethic thesis* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982), 74-5.

²⁵ Marshall, *In Search of the Spirit of Capitalism*, 10.

evident among his early German contemporaries, most notably the economic historians H.K. Fischer, Felix Rachfahl, Lujo Brentano and Werner Sombart.²⁶ The question he wants to answer is whether there is a facilitating relationship between a particular religious ethos and the spirit or culture of modern industrial capitalism.²⁷

Weber starts out by offering a description of the phenomenon for which he seeks to provide a causal explanation – the *Geist* or spirit of modern capitalism. As mentioned earlier, he finds this phenomenon to be present in the ascetic Protestantism of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. This explanation is in contrast to the account already developed by his contemporary, Werner Sombart (1863-1941), which was that capitalist phenomena are to be traced to the activities of Jews in the medieval and early modern periods, most notably in commerce and banking.²⁸ By way of evidence for his thesis, Weber offers Benjamin Franklin's aphorisms from *Necessary Hints to Those That Would be Rich* (1736) and *Advice to a Young Tradesman* (1748). For Weber, Franklin's writing epitomizes the attitudes and behaviour that the spirit of modern capitalism embodies, which is very different from the wealth-seeking behaviour of the medieval period. These include: prudence, diligence, cultivating credit-worthiness, disdain for idleness (as time is money), punctuality in payment of loans and debts, frugality and, most notably, an aversion to allowing money to "lie idle", seeing as invested capital brings monetary returns.

²⁶ Marshall, *In Search of the Spirit of Capitalism*, 13.

²⁷ Weber refers to modern capitalism as industrial capitalism or bourgeois capitalism and finds its origins in the European industrial revolution, more specifically, developed from the 1850s in Britain. For the purposes of this thesis the term modern industrial capitalism is used to signal the uniquely modern form of capitalism referred to.

²⁸ Werner Sombart, *The Jews and modern capitalism*. Translated by M. Epstein (New York: Collier, 1962). Werner Sombart (1863-1941) was a contemporary of Max Weber who offered a causal explanation between Judaism and capitalism.

Weber traces the origins of Franklin's world view to four principal forms of ascetic Protestantism in history: (1) Calvinism in the form which it assumed in the main area of its influence in Western Europe, especially in the seventeenth century, (2) Pietism (late 17th century to the mid-18th century), (3) Methodism (mid-18th century), and (4) the sects growing out of the Baptist movement (beginning of the 17th century).²⁹ Common to all these groups is their ascetic and "inner-worldly" attitude, which was nurtured by their religious tenets. The ethical values that they have in common are: diligence in their worldly occupations or "callings" (derived from Luther's *Beruf*), efficient time-management (exemplified in the practical writings of Benjamin Franklin), ascetic conduct with regard to the pragmatic use of material goods, and a renunciatory attitude towards indulgence in sensual and worldly pleasures.

What Weber is constructing out of history is a Protestant-Christian attitude that was very different to that of medieval Catholicism, where the laity was obliged to perform traditional duties in atonement for their sins. Weber argues:

To the Catholic the absolution of his Church was a compensation for his own imperfection. The priest was a magician who performed the miracle of transubstantiation, and who held the key to eternal life in his hand. One could turn to him in grief and penitence. He dispensed atonement, hope of grace, certainty of forgiveness, and thereby granted release from that tremendous tension to which the Calvinist was doomed by an inexorable fate, admitting of no mitigation. For him such friendly and human comforts did not exist. He could not hope to atone for hours of weakness or of thoughtlessness by increased good will at other times, as the Catholic or even the Lutheran could. The God of Calvinism demanded of his believers not single good works, but a life of good works combined into a unified system. There was no place for the very human Catholic cycle of sin, repentance, atonement, release, followed by renewed sin. Nor was there any balance of merit

²⁹ Weber, *The Protestant Ethic*, 95.

for a life as a whole which could be adjusted by temporal punishments or the Churches' means of grace.³⁰

The members of the new Protestant sects were thus more diligent in their calling than the Catholics and more careful with their use of time. The Protestant layperson developed a systematic lifestyle that often included careful planning. In this way the moral conduct of the individual was shaped in mundane activities.

To be sure, Protestant believers and Catholic monks displayed similar attitudes in their life conduct, both groups distancing themselves from the material luxuries of this world. Through their controlled lifestyle the monks steered clear from irrational impulses in the material world, while Protestants developed similar attitudes. The key difference for Weber, however, was that Catholic monks withdrew from the world as ascetics, physically abstaining from many of the routine human actions and pleasures, whereas Protestants practiced a different type of asceticism (this worldly Protestant asceticism) while remaining physically rooted in this world.³¹ Through their rational inner-worldly asceticism all Protestants could prove their election, by restricting their enjoyment of the world whilst participating in it as lay people.

For Weber the Protestants developed a lifestyle that was characterized by careful and restricted participation and enjoyment of worldly material and pleasures. They were also insistent on diligent participation in their callings as predestined by God. It was this combination of diligence in work and frugality in expenditure on both material goods and pleasure that drove capital investment and subsequent reinvestment. Weber points out: "when the limitation of consumption is combined with the release of acquisitive activity, the

³⁰ Weber, *The Protestant Ethic*, 117.

³¹ Weber, *The Protestant Ethic*, 170.

inevitable practical result is obvious: accumulation of capital through ascetic compulsion to save”.³² Thus, through the double injunction of diligence and frugality the spirit of modern industrial capitalism was made possible.

Early Calvinist societies were motivated and encouraged to conduct their daily activities as best they could since their *Beruf* (calling in life) was predestined. The successes of their labour, often in the form of accrued capital reinvested, were testimony to God’s decision to have elected them. It is this psycho-social drive that the Calvinists demonstrated that, according to Weber, boded well for the development of modern industrial capitalism in the 19th and 20th century. Ironically, the calculated quest for material gain was not what Calvin himself had in mind when he wrote his famous *Institutes* (1536).³³ Weber’s insights, at the level of ideas, thus point to two important lessons: (1) religious doctrines can have the opposite or divergent behavioural outcomes to that originally intended, and (2) there are ideas and motivations other than economic, and sometimes stronger than economic, which can have lasting effects on human behaviour and attitudes. Weber’s contribution, that often ideas, and not only material and ideal interests, directly govern human conduct offers the opportunity to engage historiography from another perspective than that proposed by the Marxist materialist analyses which have been so influential in revisionist South African history from the 1970s.

1.2. Weber’s definitions of Capitalism

The “spirit of modern capitalism” is central to Weber’s argument in his text. For the purposes of this dissertation, only Weber’s forms of capitalism that are relevant for this study are defined. C. Wright Mills points out:

³² Weber, *The Protestant Ethic*, 172.

³³ J.T. McNeill, *Calvin: Institutes of the Christian Religion* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1960).

For Weber, a unit, such as capitalism, is not an undifferentiated whole to be equated with ‘an acquisitive instinct’ or with ‘pecuniary society.’ Rather it is seen, as Marx and Sorel saw it, as a scale of types, each of which has peculiar institutional features. The further back Weber goes historically, the more he is willing to see capitalism as one feature of a historical situation; the more he approaches modern industrial capitalism, the more willing he is to see capitalism as a pervasive and unifying affair.³⁴

Historically, Weber makes a distinction between two types of capitalism: “political capitalism” and “modern industrial capitalism”. In “political capitalism” profit-making depends on the exploitation of warfare, conquest and the prerogative power of political administration. Within this type are imperialist, colonial, adventure or booty, and fiscal capitalism.³⁵ According to Mills:

By imperialist capitalism, Weber refers to a situation in which profit interests are either the pacemakers or the beneficiaries of political expansion. The greatest examples are the Roman and the British Empires. Colonial capitalism, intimately connected with political imperialism, refers to those capitalisms which profit from the commercial exploitation of political prerogatives over conquered territories. Such prerogatives include politically guaranteed trading monopolies, shipping privileges, the politically determined acquisition and exploitation of land, as well as compulsory labor....

Furthermore:

These analytical types of capitalism serve to emphasize different aspects of historical situations that are themselves quite fluid. The uniqueness of ‘modern industrial capitalism’ consists in the fact that a specific production establishment emerges and is enlarged at the expense of pre-capitalist production units...It is based on the organization of formally free labor and the fixed plant. The owner of the plant operates at his own risk and produces commodities for anonymous and competitive markets. His operations are usually controlled rationally by a constant

³⁴ Max Weber, *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology*. Translated by C. Wright Mills and H.H. Gerth (New York: Oxford University Press, 1946), 66.

³⁵ Weber, *Essays in Sociology*, 66.

balancing of costs and returns. All elements, including his own entrepreneurial services, are brought to book as items in the balance of his accounts.³⁶

The Weber thesis points to the meeting of a particular religious ethic, Protestantism, with the production techniques of modern industrial capitalism. It needs to be noted that in South Africa “modern industrial capitalism” as defined by Weber became the dominant economic order only after the Union of South Africa was formed in 1910, when industrial development began to increase due to the mining revolution in the Transvaal and Orange Free State. Before 1910 what one sees are forms of “colonial capitalism” and “imperialist capitalism”, in which the region was subjected to British imperial designs that included large-scale ownership of British industry.

1.3. Critiques of the Weber thesis

Weber’s thesis came under critical scrutiny very early on and it is still subject to disputes. For the purposes of this thesis, two areas of criticisms are considered particularly relevant, namely the centrality of the religious ethic of Protestantism and the causal relationship between ethic and *Geist* (spirit).

First, the religious ethic of Protestantism in his thesis has been brought into question. Many of Weber’s critics have argued that the ethical tenets that he refers to were in existence long before the epoch of the Reformation. During his lifetime critics from Germany included the economic historians H.K. Fischer, Felix Rachfahl, Lujo Brentano and Werner Sombart.³⁷ As already noted, the economist Sombart, one of Weber’s earliest critics, argued that a similar ethos to that of Protestantism was to be found in Judaism, mostly due to the marginal status of the Jewish people. On the Catholic side of the debate, the sociologist H.M.

³⁶ Weber, *Essays in Sociology*, 66.

³⁷ Marshall, *In Search of the Spirit of Capitalism*, 13.

Robertson argued that “certain branches of Roman Catholicism were more favourably disposed to the spirit of capitalism than were the Reformed faiths themselves.”³⁸ Non-German scholars such as Amintori Fanfani and R.H. Tawney argued that the quest for profit by actors is as old as humankind itself.³⁹ Weber agrees that avarice is as old as civilization but argues this is not the same thing as the unique capitalist mentality that he is describing. He was adamant that his critics were misunderstanding his thesis and that they were confusing the rational mentality of modern capitalism with that of traditionalism or what he described as “adventurer capitalism.”⁴⁰ Weber’s modern capitalist is honest, a person of credit-worthiness, who pursues capital as an end in itself. It is the duty of the modern capitalist actor to pursue capital gain, and the origins of that mentality, he maintains, are located in ascetic Protestantism.

Second, Weber’s thesis has been criticized for being tautological. In the 1980s Gordon Marshall argued that in Weber’s account the Protestant ethic appears as both a precondition for modern industrial capitalism and the distinguishing characteristic of modern industrial capitalism.⁴¹ The problem with this is that the Protestant ethic thus becomes causally significant for explaining the emergence of modern industrial capitalism, for one could argue that without it, the spirit of modern industrial capitalism could not develop. The questions that then arise are (1) is this peculiarly new spirit of capitalism the necessary start of modern industrial capitalism, and (2) can there be a modern industrial capitalism without the Protestant ethic? According to Randall Collins, also writing in the 1980s, “Weber saw the rise of large-scale capitalism as the result of a series of combinations of conditions which had

³⁸ Marshall, *In Search of the Spirit of Capitalism*, 87.

³⁹ Marshall, *In Search of the Spirit of Capitalism*, 14.

⁴¹ Marshall, *In Search of the Spirit of Capitalism*, 119.

to occur together...in a sense of seeing history as a concatenation of unique events and unrepeatable complexities.”⁴² In other words a Protestant religious ethic as a single phenomenon cannot be the cause of the development of modern industrial capitalism.

Unfortunately this charge of conflating the two phenomena, *Geist* and ethic, still persists. In defence of Weber, his supporters, Randall Collins and Gordon Marshall,⁴³ have argued that Talcott Parsons, the American sociologist who first translated Weber’s works from German into English in 1930, included Weber’s “Introduction” to his series on the Sociology of Religion, written in 1920, as the “Introduction” to Parson’s translated version of Weber’s two essays, “The Protestant Ethic” and “The Spirit of Capitalism”.⁴⁴ Marshall points out that the inclination by authors “to conflate Weber’s separate arguments about the origins of the spirit of capitalism, and of modern capitalistic economic development *per se*, into a unitary thesis about the origins and consequences of the rationalization of life in the West” are in large part due to Parsons as the first translator of the Weber thesis in 1930 and especially due to his introduction of Weber’s “Introduction” earmarked for Weber’s larger corpus. In this thesis Weber’s description of the two phenomena, ethic and *Geist*, are used as two separate conceptual tools towards the understanding of historical events in South Africa with its unique sets of socio-political circumstances.

In addition to these two major debating points, there are also wider questions about the links between Protestantism and phenomena such as modernity, individualism, rationalization, the development of science, the growth of efficient bureaucracies within

⁴² Randall Collins, "Weber's Last Theory of Capitalism: A Systematization." *American Sociological Review* 45, no. 6 (1980): 935.

⁴³ Marshall, *In Search of the Spirit of Capitalism*, 134 and Collins, “Weber’s Last Theory of Capitalism”, 926.

⁴⁴ Weber, *The Protestant Ethic*, ix-x.

Protestant societies, and racism, especially from the beginning of the 19th century when the evolutionary theories of Herbert Spencer and Charles Darwin were embraced in Europe and America. According to Weber, an “accident of history”⁴⁵ — Weber’s multi-causal explanation implies that an event in history is the accident of many contingent phenomena that conflate and collide into a moment in time per chance — ushered in Protestantism at a time when Western European societies were in possession of emerging modern technologies including the printing press and naval engineering. However, the value of using the Weber thesis as a heuristic tool to understand the relationship between Calvinism and capitalism in the South African case will reflect on the significance of these findings for the Weber thesis more generally.

Several questions arise out of these debates. Firstly, is Protestant success with modern industrial capitalism perhaps not due, at least in part, to the material advantages that modern technology brings? Secondly, was it not the development of modern bureaucracies in western Europe from the mid-18th century and through the 19th century that was foundational to modern industrial capitalism, rather than a particular religious ethos? And, thirdly, did Enlightenment thinking — a process of becoming rational in thought and action — discriminate among actors of different religious orientations? These questions highlight the dynamism of social reality and the complexities of the matrices that conflate our historical realities. It is therefore important to investigate and understand a variety of institutional contributions, be it religious, political, educational and economic, in order to understand the role of religious ideas and their influences on existing forms of capitalism.

⁴⁵ The “accident of history” is a term used by many Weberian scholars, including Alan Macfarlane to describe Weber’s notion that the coming together of events in history is almost miraculous. Alan Macfarlane, *Lecture on Max Weber*. University of Cambridge, <https://www.dspace.cam.ac.uk/handle/1810/11115>

1.4. Historical-sociology

Delanty and Isin point out that for both Karl Marx and Max Weber, “historical-sociology was central to an understanding of the present and neither saw a clear disciplinary separation of history and sociology”.⁴⁶ Weber’s contributions to historical-sociology are especially evident in his comparative historical-sociological methodology and it is this particular methodology that has fundamentally contributed to his success as a scholar. Since my thesis is a Weberian analysis of Afrikaner Calvinism and the Spirit of Capitalism, more needs to be said about this methodology and its utility.

Firstly, it is important to understand what is meant by historical-sociology and its relationship to history. This thesis is not a social history of South Africa. Rather, it is an historical-sociological project within the Weberian tradition, in which social theory plays a central role towards the understanding of historical events. Victoria Bonnell reminds us that when “sociologists turn to the study of history, they bring with them a distinctive disciplinary orientation.” She suggests “that the sociologist’s view of history [historical-sociology] is mediated either by theories or by concepts that are applicable to more than one case.”⁴⁷ The historian’s and the sociologist’s method of “identifying problems for study”, says Neil Smelser, “display different though overlapping emphases.”⁴⁸ Working with this overlap between history and sociology Theda Skocpol suggests that “against the abstraction and the timelessness of grand theory, historically minded sociologists have reintroduced the variety,

⁴⁶ G. Delanty, and E.F. Isin. *Handbook of historical sociology* (London: SAGE, 2003), 9.

⁴⁷ V.E. Bonnell, "The Uses of Theory, Concepts and Comparison in Historical Sociology." *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 22, no. 2 (1980): 170.

⁴⁸ Neil Smelzer, *Essays in Sociological Explanation* (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1968), 35.

conflict, and processes of concrete histories into macroscopic accounts of social change”.⁴⁹ In other words, social theory is used to understand changing institutional dynamics and the consequences thereof on societies. Furthermore, says Skocpol, the scholars of historical-sociology have imported historical methods as well as findings into sociology, including the archival methods associated with traditional historiography. In this respect, their methods are often similar to those used by social historians.⁵⁰

Charles Tilly points out in his *Big Structures, Large Processes, Huge Comparisons* that “Historically grounded huge comparisons of big structures and large processes help establish what must be explained, attach the possible explanations to their context in time and space, and sometimes actually improve our understanding of those structures and processes”.⁵¹ Theda Skocpol agrees with Tilly when she argues that “sociologists should not theorize about social change in general but, rather, should recognize specific epochally bounded structural transformations as basic as namely capitalist development and nation state formation” when engaging historical-sociology.⁵² The analytical intent is to view history as a phenomenon with which we may understand human action. In other words, history is incorporated in the analysis in order to fashion historically informed and historically grounded sociological explanations and interpretations.⁵³ For Weber, any one phenomenon or fact is not, by itself, sufficient to understand the actions of actors in history. Thus for him modern industrial capitalism cannot be understood without an understanding of the role of

⁴⁹ Theda Skocpol, "Social History and Historical Sociology: Contrasts and Complementaries." *Social Science History* 11, no. 1 (1987): 20.

⁵⁰ Skocpol, "History and Historical Sociology," 20.

⁵¹ C.Tilly, *Big Structures, Large Processes, Huge Comparisons* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1984), 124.

⁵² Skocpol, "History and Historical Sociology," 23.

⁵³ Larry Griffin, "How is Sociology Informed by History?" *Social Forces* 73, no. 4 (1995): 1247.

religion in influencing decision-making within that society. Furthermore, an understanding of the efficiency of bureaucracies, both in government and in the accumulation of capital, is necessary in order to understand the behaviour of actors in capitalist environments, and modern industrial capitalism is best served if an understanding of a rational legal system (laws) is in place and accepted by the society. Randall Collins notes that “Weber’s constant theme is that the pattern of relations among various things is crucial in determining their affects on the economic rationalization”.⁵⁴ This is why religious ideas, the development of a bureaucracy at the Cape and evidence of rationalization are key themes in my historical narrative in chapters 2 to 5.

In terms of historical-sociology as a methodology, Weber also draws attention to the significance of the specific timing and relative impact of the phenomena under investigation. An example to illustrate this line of argument is that the Dutch settlers that made their home at the Cape from 1652 onwards may have brought the ideas of John Calvin with them, but the patrimonial system of authority of the VOC under which they found themselves was not compatible with the practices of modern industrial capitalism; the consequence of this was that the development of economic processes demonstrating rationality was impeded at the Cape in this early period.⁵⁵ According to Weber the specifically “modern” form of capitalism, which includes industrialization, requires a developed bureaucratic system, rather than patrimonialism, if it is to flourish. Weber’s conceptualisation of rationalization and bureaucracy are discussed in more detail below, after a discussion on ideal type analysis.

⁵⁴ Randall Collins, *Max Weber: a skeleton key* (Newbury Park: Sage, 1986), 36.

⁵⁵ Max Weber’s use of patrimonialism in *Economy and Society* (1922 [trans. 1968]), is a system of rule that is based upon personal-familial, rather than rational-legal relationships. The definition is taken from Turner, *The Cambridge Dictionary of Sociology*, 434.

1.4.1. Weber's ideal type analysis

Another important dimension of Weber's methodology that is employed in this thesis, is his "ideal-type" analysis. For Weber an ideal type is a conceptual construct (*Gedankenbild*) or tool — a model, a benchmark, a thought experiment — to be used to understand human action and human society better. In reality these ideal types do not exist but the sociologist can use them to draw attention to approximations. An ideal type is a product of routine or a product of constructed realities that can be subject to change. It is not an essentialist phenomenon with unchanging characteristics, even though particular ideal types often take on a reified meaning in imprecise attempts at using them. As stated above, it is a tool to understand human behaviour.

Scholars are often at odds as to what Weber really meant by "ideal type". For the purposes of this study Rolf Rogers' explanation is employed:

It is a conceptual construct which is neither historical reality nor even the "true" reality. It has the significance of a purely ideal limiting concept with which the real situation or action is compared and surveyed for the explication of certain of its significant components. Such concepts are constructs in terms of which we formulate relationships by the application of the category of objective possibility. By means of this category, the adequacy of our imagination, oriented and disciplined by reality, is judged. In this function especially, the ideal-type is an attempt to analyze historically unique configurations or their individual components by means of genetic concepts.⁵⁶

Weber's Protestant ethic is undoubtedly the most famous ideal type in western scholarship. Widely used as a construct today, the Protestant ethic conjures up images of an honest, hard-working and frugal individual who comes from a Protestant religious background. In actuality not all Protestants are honest, hard-working and frugal, but what the ideal type provides is a methodological tool for understanding the psycho-

⁵⁶ Rolf Rogers, *Max Weber's Ideal Type Theory* (New York: Philosophical Library, Inc.), 20-21.

social context of actors in a Protestant community more generally. In using the Protestant ethic as an ideal type analytically, the sociologist is concerned to determine whether the group under investigation exhibits significant aspects of the behaviour associated with the ideal type, such as hard work and honesty in business transactions. Do they, for instance, believe that they have been singled out by God to be successful in material acquisition? Is there evidence of careful and restricted participation and enjoyment of worldly material and pleasures? Does the layperson develop a systematic lifestyle that includes careful planning? In answering these questions as scientists and scholars we still need to investigate how close or how far away from the ideal type the actors in a particular Protestant society or community were, as this will offer an understanding of behaviour in its unique historical context.

Another example of a Weberian ideal type is that of authority (*Herrschaft*). Here Weber distinguishes between three forms of authority: traditional, charismatic and rational-legal. Traditional authority “rests on reverence for the past, on the assumption that what has always been the case is sacred and deserves to persist.”⁵⁷ In charismatic authority “commands are issued by a person to whom transcendent forces have imparted a “gift of grace,” enabling that person to perform extraordinary feats that bear witness to the power of those forces and benefit those who follow the person in question.”⁵⁸ Rational-legal authority is defined by “single commands constituting correct instantiations of rules of lesser or greater generality, valid in turn because they have been formed and enacted according to certain procedural rules.”⁵⁹ When an

⁵⁷ Turner, *Cambridge Dictionary of Sociology*, 29.

⁵⁸ Turner, *Cambridge Dictionary of Sociology*, 29.

⁵⁹ Turner, *Cambridge Dictionary of Sociology*, 29.

analysis of authority is made in a particular historical moment these categories are useful for understanding the type of authority we are dealing with. The employment of Weber's "authority" as an ideal type is particularly useful in understanding the significance of the Reformed Church in South Africa after 1814, when the new British administration (with economic and political power) engages a mostly Calvinist socio-political milieu.

1.4.2. Verstehen

Another major dimension of Weber's sociological methodology is his *Verstehen* (interpretive) method, which he offered the social sciences to strengthen the analysis of social action.

In the methodological section of his [1968] book, *Economy and Society*, the basic premise of Weber's interpretive sociology is illuminated:

Sociology is a science concerning itself with the interpretive understanding of social action and thereby with a causal explanation of its course and consequences. We shall speak of action insofar as the acting individual attaches a subjective meaning to his behaviour — be it overt or covert, omission or acquiescence. Action is social insofar as its subjective meaning takes account of the behavior of others and is thereby oriented in its course.⁶⁰

Weber's *Verstehen* method groups the understanding of human action into four categories. These categories are classified in terms of how actions are motivated and how meaningful action is constituted. The first is instrumentally rational (*zweckrational*), that is, determined by expectations as to the behavior of objects in the environment and of other human beings; these expectations are used as "conditions" or "means" for the attainment of the actor's own rationally pursued and calculated ends. The second is value-rationality (*wertrational*), that is,

⁶⁰ Max Weber, *Economy and Society*. Edited by Guenther roth and Claus Wittich. Translated by Ephraim Fischhoff (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1968), 4.

determined by a conscious belief in the value for its own sake of some ethical, aesthetic, religious, or other form of behavior, independently of its prospects of success. The third is affectual action, especially emotional, that is, determined by the actor's specific affects and feeling states. The fourth is traditional action, that is, determined by ingrained habituation.⁶¹

For Weber, the individual (*Einzelindividuum*) is “the sole carrier of meaningful conduct”.⁶² Furthermore says Weber, the meaning of actions must be understood by “placing the act in an intelligible and more inclusive context of meaning”.⁶³ In order to understand individual behaviour Weber's *Verstehen* method places the action in a more meaningful context for analyses. Determining whether the behaviour of the actors in a given society is motivated by any of the four categories of rationality and action described above helps towards an understanding of the *Geist* or the form of capitalism engaged. For example, the actors in modern industrial capitalism routinely engage instrumentally rational motivations, where both means and ends are rationally calculated. In societies where religion is the defining institution, actors are more inclined to follow traditional means as used by their forefathers. In advanced capitalist societies then, actors are more inclined to engage in rationally calculated behaviour as opposed to being motivated by tradition. The routine of traditional means slows the process of rationalization and hampers the productive outputs of modern industrial capitalism where sober calculations and rational decision-making are requisites for more efficiency. Rationalization and bureaucracies in both government and business are foundational to modern society and it is to these two concepts that we now turn to.

⁶¹ Weber, *Economy and Society*, 24-5.

⁶² Max Weber, *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology*. Translated by C. Wright Mills and H.H. Gerth (New York: Oxford University Press, 1946), 55.

⁶³ Weber, *Economy and Society*, 8.

1.4.3. Rationalization

For Weber, tension and balance between certain phenomena need to exist in a given society in order for the *Geist* or spirit of modern industrial capitalism to prosper — for example, affectual decision-making is generally practiced within the religious sphere while rational decision-making is carried out in business. In Weber's multi-causal explanation, the process of rationalization — a theme that is central to Weber's analysis of modern industrial capitalism — is key to the development of this form of capitalism.⁶⁴ The Weberian scholar, Bryan Turner, reminds us that:

Max Weber began his studies of rationalization in *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, in which he shows how the aims of certain Protestant denominations, particularly Calvinism, shifted towards rational means of economic gain as a way of dealing with their anxiety about whether they had been saved. The rational consequences of this doctrine, he argued, soon grew incompatible with its religious roots, and so the latter were eventually discarded.⁶⁵

Turner's definition of rationalization is used for this thesis, and the other types of rationalization discussed above are now left behind. According to him, "rationalization refers to the historical development of institutional orders such as the law, the market, capitalist enterprise, and the bureaucratic state, all of which are organized by impersonal and amoral principles that facilitate the instrumental pursuit of means and ends."⁶⁶ For Weber no one social institution can dominate if rationalization is to exist.⁶⁷ What he means by this is that

⁶⁴ Bryan S. Turner, ed., 2006. *The Cambridge Dictionary of Sociology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 499.

⁶⁵ Turner, *Cambridge Dictionary of Sociology*, 499.

⁶⁶ Turner, *Cambridge Dictionary of Sociology*, 499.

⁶⁷ Collins, *Max Weber*, 36.

political, cultural and economic institutions should operate separately from each other and no one institution — especially not religion — should hold an overarching watch over the other institutions.

1.4.4. Bureaucracy

As already noted, Weber distinguishes “modern industrial capitalism” from earlier forms of capitalism by pointing out its methodical and predictable nature. In this form of capitalism, production and distribution of goods become routine. Randall Collins points out that “this is also Weber’s criterion for calling bureaucracy the most “rational” form of organization.⁶⁸ Efficient bureaucracies are thus inextricably linked to modern industrial capitalism. For Weber, bureaucratic forms of organization have fifteen distinctive characteristics. As summarised by Bryan Turner:

Weber defined bureaucracy in terms of fifteen major characteristics: (1) power belongs to an office and not the officeholder; (2) authority is specified by the rules of the organization; (3) organizational action is impersonal, involving the execution of official policies; (4) disciplinary systems of knowledge frame organizational action; (5) rules are formally codified; (6) precedent and abstract rule serve as standards for organizational action; (7) there is a tendency towards specialization; (8) a sharp boundary between bureaucratic and particularistic action defines the limits of legitimacy; (9) the functional separation of tasks is accompanied by a formal authority structure; (10) powers are precisely delegated in a hierarchy; (11) the delegation of powers is expressed in terms of duties, rights, obligations, and responsibilities, specified in contracts; (12) qualities required for organizational positions are increasingly measured in terms of formal credentials; (13) there is a career structure with promotion by either seniority or merit; (14) different positions in the hierarchy are differentially paid and otherwise stratified; and finally, (15) communication, coordination, and control are centralized in the organization.⁶⁹

⁶⁸ Collins, Randall. "Weber's Last Theory of Capitalism: A Systematization." *American Sociological Review* 45, no. 6 (1980): 927.

⁶⁹ Turner, *Cambridge Dictionary of Sociology*, 47.

The development of bureaucracies in different geographies happens over time: a process of bureaucratisation takes place. By analysing how close or how far organizational forms are to the above characteristics, an indication of the form of capitalism engaged by actors at a given time in history can be made. In other words, there has to be congruency with modern industrial capitalism and bureaucracy in order for Weber's *Geist* or "spirit of capitalism" to exist.

Processes like bureaucratization are often dependant on other phenomena, like being educated for skilled tasks within the organisation. Bureaucratization needs the separation of the political system from the system of kinship or caste in a given society. Weber uses the word "disenchantment" (*Entzauberung*) to drive this point home.⁷⁰ This concept describes the character of modernized, secularized society, where scientific understanding is more highly valued than belief. In other words, kinship and caste systems need emotional distance — for example, employing the best candidate for a position rather than nepotism — from the political system in order for features commensurate with the ideal type bureaucracy to develop.

1.5. Methodology for this Project

Scholars of sociology build a methodology that best fits the key research questions that shape the study. This project employs an historical-sociological methodology as subscribed to by the social scientists Victoria Bonnell, Theda Skocpol, Neil Smelser, Larry J. Griffin, Randall Collins, Gerard Delanty, Engin Isin and Charles Tilly mentioned above. It is Skocpol's insight that sociologists should "recognize specific epochally bounded structural

⁷⁰ The concept, *Entzauberung*, was introduced by Max Weber to describe the character of modernized, secularized society, where scientific understanding is more highly valued than belief.

transformations”⁷¹ that has led to my decision to divide the historical chapters of this dissertation (chapters 2, 3 and 5) in terms of the changes ushered in by major political shifts in South African history from 1652 to 1948, including major political restructuring in the Boer Republics for chapter 4. Under the umbrella of Weber’s historical-sociological methodology, I employ Weber’s ideal types as conceptual tools to better understand Afrikaner Calvinism and its engagement with different forms of capitalism until the encounter with modern capitalism. The three main ideal types used in this thesis are: the Protestant ethic, bureaucracy and the spirit of capitalism. Additional ideal types — in particular, those of power and authority — are used selectively in the different chapters in order to help in the analysis of the Boers, later the Afrikaners.

As already discussed, the “Protestant ethic” ideal type includes behaviour that demonstrates hard work and commitment to one’s “calling” or vocation in life. The “spirit of capitalism” ideal type includes: prudence, diligence, cultivating credit-worthiness, disdain for idleness (as time is money), punctuality in payment of loans and debts, frugality and, most notably, an aversion to allowing money to “lie idle”, seeing as invested capital brings monetary returns. The “bureaucracy” as an ideal type includes; the growth in professionalism in government and business enterprises, an impersonal attitude within a bureaucracy, the need for protection by the state, the need to administer state structures in a public and collective way, technical expediency, and the specifically modern means of communication as pacemakers of bureaucratization. In the chapters that follow I trace the attitude toward emerging bureaucracies.

My analysis is based on a particular reading of the historical sources. In order to improve the analysis, I use Weber’s celebrated “switchmen” metaphor to illuminate attempts

⁷¹ Skocpol, “History and Historical Sociology,” 23.

by Calvinist actors and their ideas within Afrikaner society to encourage the ordinary Afrikaners to behave in a manner that reflects more closely the three ideal types, bureaucracy, the Protestant ethic and the spirit of capitalism.⁷² As already quoted above, Weber says: “Not ideas, but material and ideal interests, directly govern men’s conduct. Yet very frequently the ‘world images’ which have been created by ‘ideas’ have, like switchmen, determined the tracks along which action has been pushed by the dynamic of interests”.⁷³ In the historical narrative that follows, I identify “images” of the Protestant ethic as an “ideal type” in the wine-industry at the Cape, then later, in political administration in the Transvaal and Orange Free State and then analyse these images to ascertain whether they are used to promote individual or group interests.

Weber’s analysis of Protestantism and capitalism — more specifically the synergy between the two phenomena — is built on multi-faceted phenomena, better described as processes in human history that move along particular historical trajectories. These phenomena include the processes of bureaucratization, *Entzauberung* (disenchantment), secularization, rationalization and *Defamilization* (individualization). These processes carry different weightings in comparative studies of societies globally, especially after the Reformation period since it ushered in modern capitalism in western Europe. Added to the complexity of the different weightings to be given to these processes in any one society is the role of contingency and exigency - the processes of bureaucratisation, secularization and rationalization intersect at different times for different societies. These factors never come together in exactly the same way for any two societies in history – after all, the most important tools of analysis (ideal types) do not exist but are imputed in the interpretation. In

⁷² Max Weber, *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology*. Trans. By H.H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills (New York: Oxford University Press, 1946), 280.

⁷³ Weber, *Essays in Sociology*, 280.

the case of Afrikaner Calvinism in South Africa, I examine the period from 1652 to 1910 to understand the development of the processes highlighted above and then examine the post 1910 period: the period that most resembles the approximations of the emergence of the two ideal types — the Protestant ethic and the spirit of capitalism. The examinations of the ideal types thus serve as a heuristic tool, over time, to aid the understanding of Afrikaner Calvinism when it meets an approximation of the specifically modern form of capitalism that Weber describes. In Chapter 6 of this thesis, in my concluding discussion, I summarise my findings to illuminate the significance of this meeting between Weber's the Protestant ethic and the spirit of capitalism in South Africa, and reflect on the significance of these findings for the period to follow: the apartheid years.

The Protestant ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism are central components of Max Weber's contribution to social theory that religion can shape the nature of economic behaviour. What I aim to do in this study is to show how Weber's ideas offer both a powerful methodology and a rich conceptual framework — adding to many different analyses on the subject — for understanding the Afrikaner case study in relation to the Weber thesis in general. In summary, my thesis sets out to show the synergy between Afrikaner Calvinism and modern industrial capitalism, and to understand Afrikaner Calvinism through its unique history of engagement first, with colonial and imperial capitalism and then, after the Union of South Africa was formed in 1910, with modern industrial capitalism.

1.6. Weberian Themes in South African Scholarship

Finally, it is necessary in this framing chapter to locate my study in relation to other studies of Afrikaner Calvinism that have engaged, directly or indirectly, Weber's thesis. The application of Weberian historical sociology to the study of South Africa has yielded several important contributions, in particular the works of Stokes and Loubser which are reviewed

below. Here it should be noted that the important contribution to the debate on “volkskapitalisme” by the political scientist Dan O’Meara, which draws on a neo-Marxist theoretical framework, is acknowledged in chapter 5, in relation to the historical developments covered in that chapter.

Randall G. Stokes’ pioneering 1975 study, “Afrikaner Calvinism and Economic Action: The Weberian Thesis in South Africa,” provides useful insights on the unique development of Afrikaner Calvinism and its encounter with modern industrial capital.⁷⁴ This study involved an historical analysis of Afrikaner Calvinism from the 1690s through to 1975 with an emphasis on the socio-political contributions of history after the 1830s. In an earlier article “The Afrikaner Industrial Entrepreneur and Afrikaner Nationalism,” Stokes considered empirically the relationship between noneconomic value commitments and the development of industrial entrepreneurship within Afrikaner society during the 1960s.⁷⁵ This study was based on research carried out among the Afrikaner population of South Africa during 1968 and 1969.

Stokes’ specific concern was with the role of Afrikaner nationalism in stimulating industrial entrepreneurship. His general thesis was that an adequate explanation of how economically transitional societies produce industrial entrepreneurs must take explicit account of social and cultural values which channel economic action.⁷⁶ Stokes concluded that an important aspect of the rise of Afrikaner industrial entrepreneurship could be found in the value transformations (more specifically, concerns for the Afrikaner collectivity) that were

⁷⁴ Randall G. Stokes, “Afrikaner Calvinism and Economic Action: The Weberian Thesis in South Africa.” *The American Journal of Sociology* 81, no. 1 (1975): 62-81.

⁷⁵ Randall G. Stokes, “The Afrikaner Industrial Entrepreneur and Afrikaner Nationalism.” *Economic Development and Cultural Change* 22, no. 4 (1974): 557-579.

⁷⁶ Summarized from Stokes, “The Afrikaner Industrial Entrepreneur,” 557-579.

brought about by the Afrikaner nationalist movement after 1910. He argued that by redefining economic activity as a service to the collectivity, the nationalist movement provided a new and powerful motivational nexus for the seeking out of entrepreneurial roles by Afrikaners. In Stokes' study it is this collectivity, rather than individualism, that fed the entrepreneurial spirit. He gave credence to the individual will to succeed but maintained that the collectivity "upped the ante" in the case of the Afrikaners.⁷⁷

In Stokes' subsequent study on "Afrikaner Calvinism and Economic Action: The Weberian Thesis in South Africa," published in 1975, he examined the relationship between traditional Afrikaner religion and worldly action. The specific question Stokes addressed was why Afrikaner Calvinism, which he says is theologically identical to European Calvinism of the 18th century, had a highly conservative impact on economic action, which is in marked contrast to the dynamism Calvinism unleashed in Europe. He argued that any analysis of religion's secular impact must be contextual and focus upon what he termed "operant religion."⁷⁸ Stokes was also of the view that traditional religion was the "natural" enemy of modernization⁷⁹.

Stokes concluded that the Calvinism Weber studied in Europe and traditional Afrikaner Calvinism was *theologically* identical. But despite the theological similarities of the two Calvinisms, the secular consequences of Afrikaner Calvinism differed markedly from those of its European counterpart. Rather than being the dynamic secular force it had been in Europe, Afrikaner Calvinism tended to promote conservatism, conformity, and social constraints. Stokes argued that this different outcome was a result of the radically differing

⁷⁷ Randall G. Stokes. "The Afrikaner Industrial Entrepreneur," 579.

⁷⁸ For Stokes "operant religion" means religious belief as it has been actualized within the actor's phenomenal world, rather than the complex of ideas in texts.

⁷⁹ Stokes also suggests that this is not to say that religion cannot have a stimulating effect on modernization in exceptional cases.

historical and social contexts in which the two Calvinisms were embedded. In his view Afrikaner Calvinism failed to provide the motivational nexus which made European Calvinism a revolutionary force in Western economic history. And the main reason for this, according to Stokes, was that the tension and anxiety regarding salvation which underlay the European Calvinist's devotion to labour were nullified by the Afrikaner's conception of collective election. Furthermore, the drive towards individualization and rationalization of mundane activity which was present in European Calvinism was minimized among the Afrikaners, again by their religiously rooted dependence on the collectivity. For the Afrikaner the collectivist orientation found consensus in volkish nationalism.⁸⁰

Thus it is the collectivity, rather than individualism, that feeds the entrepreneurial spirit in Stokes' study. However, against this conclusion it is worth noting that Weber maintained that the unit of analysis for the social scientist should not be society *sui generis* but, rather, the action of actors, i.e. of social individuals. According to Weber, "Action is social in so far as, by virtue of the subjective meaning attached to it by the acting individual, it takes account of the behaviour of others and is thereby oriented in its course".⁸¹ What Weber refers to as the Protestant ethic is not the product of collective action that developed in specific societies, but, rather, the outcome of individual willingness to work hard, be on time, be frugal with the profits generated as a result of business endeavours, etc, all of which gave rise to successful capitalist outcomes when married to the economic processes of modern

⁸⁰ The word *volk* can be translated as people, nation or race and, dependent on how it is used, carry all manner of ideological baggage and essentialist meanings.

⁸¹ Max Weber, *The Theory of Social and Economic Organization* (Toronto: Collier Macmillan, 1964), 11.

industrial capitalism.⁸² Weber views all this as the “social psychology” of the Protestant worldview, not individualism.

According to Weber, an understanding of human social action requires one to consider the subjective forces that lead to the individual carrying out of that action. It is through these subjective forces and an understanding of the social conditions in history that surround the actor that a better understanding of the act can be found. Or, putting it another way, human action is infused by existing attitudes socialized out of the actor’s environment.

Randall Stokes argues for an Afrikaner Calvinism that evolved away from modern industrial capitalism due to the Afrikaner’s giving of “experiential referents to beliefs that creates a new phenomenal region, distinct from the empirical world and the beliefs which together were its raw materials”.⁸³ In other words, the environment that the Afrikaners found themselves in, including the threat by wild animals and the harsh terrain, led to a greater dependence on the group. The argument is not without merit if one accepts the social construction of reality thesis as posited by Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann, but this is not what Weber argued, and it certainly does not challenge the existence of a Protestant ethic among Afrikaners at the level of individual behaviour.⁸⁴ There were many Afrikaners in the period under review, especially after 1910, who were hard-working, honest and frugal. As I show below, individuals such as D.F. Malan and W.A. Hofmeyr as well as many Afrikaner

⁸² Chapter 2 through to and including Chapter 5 will provide evidence of the Protestant ethic or lack thereof in Boer and later Afrikaner societies.

⁸³ Stokes, "Calvinism and Economic Action," 66.

⁸⁴ Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann. *The Social Construction of Reality: A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge*. Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1966.

school teachers and members of SANLAM and SANTAM displayed the Protestant ethic in their quest to improve conditions for the *volk*.⁸⁵

This thesis brings new insights to Stokes' conception of Afrikaner Calvinism as a homogenous entity throughout the historical period, 1652-1948. Rather, I view Afrikaans-speaking whites as encompassing distinctive groups as they migrate to new locations, separate, form new variants of Calvinism, and invent new mythologies in the creation of separate religio-polities over three centuries. I elaborate on Stokes' notion of Afrikaner identity as a collectivity versus individualism. Also, my study investigates the economic outcomes of the interplay between the Protestant ethic of the Boers, later Afrikaners, and the spirit of capitalism over different periods in South African history. However, it was from 1910 onwards that elites among the Afrikaners decided to engage modern industrial capitalism head-on, to address the problem of rising poverty left in the wake of rapid urbanization among many Boers, mostly due to the aftermath of the South African War that ended in 1902. In the epochs before 1910 my search is for traces of the Protestant ethic and corresponding attitudes towards structures such as bureaucracies, in business and state, by actors who were adherents of Calvinism. By assessing the attitudes of these actors towards emerging structures of bureaucracies during the process of mining development, be it rational or affectual, an understanding of the groups of Calvinists under investigation can be presented. As already noted, in this investigation both the Protestant ethic and the spirit of capitalism serve primarily as ideal types, i.e. as conceptual tools for understanding the relationship between Afrikaner Calvinism and capitalism.

Another major work that addresses the Weber thesis is that of the sociologist Jan Loubser. In his 1968 article, "Calvinism, Equality, and Inclusion: The Case of Afrikaner

⁸⁵ The assurance companies SANLAM and SANTAM were started and managed by Afrikaners committed to hard work and careful management of public funds from 1918.

Calvinism”, Loubser describes the phenomena of Calvinism and the existential anxiety associated with its adherents, in order to position Afrikaner Calvinism comprehensively within the South African context.⁸⁶ Before embarking on his analysis of his empirical material, he explicitly lays out what he calls the “primitive concepts and assumptions” related to religious societies. Loubser posits that if religion is defined as that aspect of action relating to problems around the ultimate meaning of existence, he has to then specify as concisely as possible what those problems are in any situation. For Loubser these problem areas can be categorized into four dimensions of meaning.

First is the dimension of what he terms “being” which derives from the condition of man as a symbol-using animal who creates meaning by the use of symbols and can pose the question of the meaning of his or her own being. Second is the dimension of “meaninglessness”; the existential anxiety that might arise in this dimension is the threat of nonbeing. For Loubser, the aspect of religious action that gives meaning to being, in the face of ultimate meaninglessness, is faith and this has to be expressed communally through worship. This communal worship is derived as a condition of man as a symbol-sharing animal; without it the threat of loneliness looms. Third is the dimension of “doing”. Here Loubser refers to the fact that the human animal is not born with a ready set of symbols but has to acquire them through a long process of learning in which he is in a more or less dependent position. However much societies vary in the extent to which they emphasize this dependence, it is a safe assumption that there is no society in which this principle (*doing*) is completely eliminated. In this dimension it is the meaning of “doing” as an aspect of existence that is problematic, insofar as there is always a discrepancy between actual performances on the one hand and conceptions of what one ought to do, and rewards on the

⁸⁶ Loubser, Jan. "Calvinism, Equality, and Inclusion: The Case of Afrikaner Calvinism." In *The Protestant Ethic and Modernization: A Comparative View*, edited by S.N. Eisenstadt, 367-383 (New York: Basic Books, 1968).

other hand. Discrepancies may give rise to guilt feelings which under certain conditions may amount to a generalized anxiety about guilt. The aspect of religious action relating to guilt is ethical or moral action in the service of some religious purpose. This Loubser calls “mission”.

In Loubser’s fourth and final dimension, “mission”, distinction arises from the fact that man as a symbol-using animal is ultimately dependent on the conditions of life as an organism. But the existential problem of living derives from the combination of the relatively short span of the individual and the cross-generational valence of culture or civilization in society. In this dimension death, want, and suffering, all forms of deprivation, ultimately constitute threats to life and may give rise to anxiety about survival, both individually and collectively. The aspect of religious action relevant to this problem Loubser calls therapy. Here Loubser uses a Durkheimian analysis. Where the anxiety is collective, what Durkheim called representative or commemorative rituals may affirm continuity with the past and commitment to posterity. Therapy promises gratification in the face of deprivations or threats of deprivation of the ultimate means of life.⁸⁷ Where these existential problems are not solved in a meaningful manner, the development of a high level of anxiety in some or all dimensions of meaning is likely. Such a situation of high anxiety existed in South Africa, says Loubser; the peculiar characteristics of Afrikaner Calvinism, its failure to develop in a liberal direction, and its special relation to the problems of equality and inclusion in South Africa, cannot be adequately explained without this assumption.⁸⁸

Using the above framework, Loubser concludes that in order to cope with high anxiety over meaninglessness, Afrikaner Calvinism resorted to an extraordinary degree of

⁸⁷ This section is especially indebted to R.N. Bellah, “Some Suggestions for the Systematic Study of Religion,” manuscript, Harvard University; Paul Tillich, *The Courage to Be* (New Haven, Conn., 1952), especially Chs. 2-4; and Kenneth Burke, *The Rhetoric of Religion* (Boston, 1961).

⁸⁸ Loubser, “Calvinism, Equality, and Inclusion,” 370-1.

literalistic fundamentalism and anti-intellectual dogmatism. Anxieties around loneliness gave worship a very special significance in relation to solidarity, so that the worship system became exclusive and restricted to those who belonged to the group, in contexts extraneous to the religious system. In the mission system, high anxiety about guilt increased collective religious utopianism, while in the therapy system anxiety about death and suffering introduced a strong strain of Nativism. In the end, the survival of orthodox Calvinism in South Africa can be related to the peculiar nature of the situation. Loubser then concludes that his study does not disprove the general hypothesis about the main direction of the role of ascetic Protestantism in the modernization of Western institutions, but the special conditions that the South Africans found themselves in offered unique sets of circumstances within which Calvinism had to fit.

Jan Loubser's "primitive concepts and assumptions" as he applies them to Afrikaner Calvinism culminates, sociologically, in a society beset by high levels of anxiety and an inability to develop in a liberal direction. However, as in the case with Stokes, his conclusion fails to engage with the changing histories of first the Boers and later Afrikaners. As is elaborated in Chapter 5, the Afrikaners were politically empowered by the formation of the Union of South Africa after 1910. Their new-found political power brought with it a different set of dynamics that forced Afrikaner Calvinists to engage modern industrial capitalism actively: this time as a more unified Afrikaner community. Chapter 5 explores this theme through an investigation of the willingness and well-thought through economic plans of the Afrikaner elite to remedy the position of an economically ailing *volk* after 1910.

Furthermore, the anxiety generated by the political alienation alluded to by Loubser could, arguably, have actually promoted the Protestant ethic. As I noted earlier, according to Weber, Calvin's doctrines brought about an unintended anxiety that cemented commitment to

the Protestant ethic: this effort, committed to at the level of the individual actor, translated into collective ideal type behaviour. Loubser's obviously Durkheimian sociological lens (society *sui generis*) does not seem to allow for any analysis at the micro-sociological level of the individual. Furthermore, any state of anxiety that the collective Afrikaner group developed away from liberalism does not imply that the Afrikaners diluted their commitment to the Protestant ethic. In fact, the cohesion of the collective might have contributed to a strengthening of the Protestant ethic, albeit to build a future, independent *volk*. Stripped of its essentialist claims, however, Jan Loubser's thesis adds valuable insights as to why Afrikaner Calvinism remained so steadfast in its "chosen people" ideology, at least until the 1960s.

Other social scientists have also addressed the Weber thesis, mostly implicitly. The writer W.A. de Klerk, bases his book, *The Puritans in Africa* (first published in 1975), on the premise that "the key to the Afrikaners is Calvinism". De Klerk insists that the key to understanding the Afrikaners is Calvinism. For de Klerk the motivations behind the actions of 20th century Afrikaner Calvinists of South Africa were the necessary result of a belief in a divine task. For these Calvinists their calling was to create "a separate nation called by God to create a new humanity".⁸⁹

In contrast, the political theorist Andre du Toit, in his 1983 essay, "No Chosen People: The Myth of the Calvinist Origins of Afrikaner Nationalism and Racial Ideology", questions the idea expounded by some scholars that 17th-century Calvinism in South Africa remained fixed as the basis for explaining the motivations of Calvinist actors in the centuries to

⁸⁹ W.A. De Klerk, *The Puritans in Africa* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1975); Andre Du Toit, "The Myth of the Calvinist Origins of Afrikaner Nationalism and Racial Ideology." *American Historical Review* 88 (1983): 20-52.

follow.⁹⁰ He thus questions the idea that the origins of Afrikaner Nationalism and racial ideology can be found in 17th-century Calvinism. In his 1983 essay, Du Toit argues:

In outline, it amounts to the view that the “seventeenth-century Calvinism” which the Afrikaner founding fathers derived from their countries of origin became fixed in the isolated frontier conditions of *trekboer* society and survived for generations in the form of a kind of “primitive Calvinism”; that in the first part of the nineteenth century, this gave rise to a nascent chosen people ideology among early Afrikaners, which provided much of the motivation for, as well as the self-understanding of, that central event in Afrikaner history, the Great Trek, while simultaneously serve to legitimate the conquest and subordination of indigenous peoples; and that, mediated in this way, an authentic tradition of Afrikaner Calvinism thus constitutes the root source of modern Afrikaner nationalism and the ideology of apartheid.⁹¹

The purpose of this dissertation is not to argue that “seventeenth century Calvinism” became fixed in the isolated frontier conditions but, rather, to investigate whether some core religious ideas of Calvinism, for example, predestination and “signs of election,” were present within the different Protestant Calvinist communities in the periods of investigation and if the attitudes and behaviours of these groups lent itself to forms that are expressive of significant aspects of the ascetic Protestantism described by Max Weber. In other words, what I am looking for are “ideal typical” behaviours similar to the ethical tenets that Weber claimed that Benjamin Franklin and Cecil John Rhodes displayed centuries after the original religious ideas had been spawned in Europe.⁹²

⁹⁰ De Klerk, *The Puritans in Africa*, 241.

⁹¹ Du Toit, "Calvinist Origins," 920.

⁹² Max Weber argues in *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, page 42, that entrepreneurs such as Cecil Rhodes have been successful because they “have come from clergymen’s families” and “might be explained as a reaction against their ascetic upbringing.”

Contrary to Du Toit's interpretation that "no one maintains that those who settled at the Cape in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries were, like the Puritans in New England, engaged in a communal enterprise of deliberately founding new societies in accordance with their religious beliefs," I show that a Calvinist Protestant ethic was carried to South Africa in the late 17th century, via the French Huguenots on the insistence of the VOC and the Protestant Reformed church in Holland – even though this was a much less reflective and deliberate process than that attributed by du Toit to the Puritans.⁹³ The role of the VOC was critical here. In chapter 2 entries in van Riebeeck's journal as well as other travel journals provide evidence of the VOC's commitment to a Calvinist work ethic at the Cape, albeit to improve labour efficiency at the settlement. This chapter also identifies the presence of the Protestant ethic amongst a large sector of the farming community in the hinterland, but not among town dwellers. The subsequent history of this ethic was much more varied and complex than the strawman that du Toit sets up.

Weber reminds us that however decisive the economically and politically determined social influences may have been upon a religious ethic in any particular case, this ethic receives its stamp primarily from religious sources, first and foremost from the content of its annunciation [religious announcement] and its promise. Frequently the very next generation reinterprets these annunciations and promises in a fundamentally different fashion. Such reinterpretations adjust the revelations to the contemporary needs of the religious community. If this occurs, then it is usual that religious doctrines get adjusted to religious needs.⁹⁴

In the following chapters, I draw on historical sources to show how a Protestant ethic was brought to the Cape by the French Huguenots and kept alive in a variety of contexts,

⁹³ Du Toit, "Calvinist Origins," 922.

⁹⁴ Weber, *Economy and Society*, 270.

starting with the non-modern environment of colonial capitalism under the VOC administration. Later, with the change to British administration in the early 1800s, the opportunity arose for the descendants of the first European settlers, now identified as Boers, to engage with imperialist capitalism and nascent forms of modern bureaucracy as this was introduced to the region. By investigating the attitude of the wine farmers at the Cape during this period I show both the willingness and the lack thereof of the Boer wine farmers to apply rational methods to improve productivity. The migration of more than ten thousand Boers to lands outside direct British control after 1836, offers a different set of socio-political dynamics in which to assess the attitudes of the two groups of self-governing Boers that emerged in the interior towards engaging bureaucratic processes. In chapter 4 Boer attitudes towards the form of industrial capitalism taking root in the mineral-rich polities of the South African Republic and Orange Free State are also assessed. Thereafter, when the opportunity arose for Boer society to engage with modern industrial capitalism after the Union of South Africa was formed in 1910, I analyse the attempts by elites within this society (known after 1910 as Afrikaners) to encourage the *volk* to accept modern industrial capitalism, by encouraging the development of the image of the hardworking Protestant engaging the *Geist* of the new capitalism. In so doing I show the success of the Afrikaners in eliminating the “poor white” problem that many among the Afrikaners considered a national concern at the time.

Throughout my analysis I use Weber’s methods of *Verstehen* and work in particular with his idea around rationalization in order to illuminate the shifting attitudes of Afrikaner Calvinists to bureaucracy and to modern industrial capitalism in Weber’s sense.

Chapter 2: In Search of the Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism: the case of the *Africanders*, 1652-1795.

The greed of the Chinese Mandarin, the Old Roman aristocrat, or the modern peasant, can stand up to any comparison...The auri sacra fames [the chase for gold] is as old as the history of man. But we shall see that those who submitted to it without reserve as an uncontrolled impulse, such as the Dutch sea-captain who 'would go through hell for gain, even though he scorched his sails', were by no means the representatives of that attitude of mind from which the specifically modern capitalistic spirit as a mass phenomenon is derived....Max Weber.⁹⁵

The Weber thesis applied to South African Calvinism proposes that the ideas of the founder of the Calvinist religious tradition found their way via France and Switzerland around the mid-1530s to Holland during the 16th century and from there on board the ships of the VOC to the Cape of Good Hope in 1652. These ideas would, over the centuries that followed, inform the behavior of some of the actors, including elite members, of the Calvinist faith. The ideas referred to are religious ideas, sacred faith-based statements which serve as ontological foundations for both the religious and secular behaviour of the Calvinist faithful–

⁹⁵ Weber, *The Protestant Ethic*, 56.

even though, of course, the notion that all members of a religious denomination are orthodox in their beliefs is far from the reality. However, a coherent set of beliefs may well remain in circulation and play an important part, if it has the kind of sanction that Calvinism had in the Cape at the time. Why these ideas remained important to the followers of the faith, often over centuries, lies at the root of the argument that the Protestant ethic — a religious attitude born out of ideas — fits well with modern industrial capitalism. Weber's switchmen metaphor reminds us that the "world images" created by ideas may, "like switchmen, determine the tracks along which action has been pushed by the dynamic of interests".⁹⁶ The "world images" that are referred to in this instance are related to a particular work ethic in the daily undertakings of this Cape Calvinist community: hard work, engaging in one's occupation as if it were a religious duty, an aversion to allowing money to "lie idle", the tendency to be frugal rather than engaging in an opulent lifestyle, cultivating credit-worthiness, disdain for idleness (as time is money), punctuality in payment of loans and debts, involvement in somber calculative business undertakings rather than high-risk capital speculation, and honesty.

This chapter presents evidence for the relevance of the Protestant ethic and hence the spirit of capitalism as ideal types within South African colonial history between 1652 and 1795, despite contrary forces. Here it is useful to recall Bryan Turner's commentary on Weber's notion of the development of rationalization out of Protestantism already cited in chapter 1, in which he notes that "the rational consequences of this doctrine soon grew incompatible with its religious roots, and so the latter were eventually discarded"⁹⁷; thus actors within the Calvinist tradition were not necessarily thinking about Calvin's doctrines, but rather, were displaying attitudes in

⁹⁶ Weber, *Essays in Sociology*, 280.

⁹⁷ Turner, *Cambridge Dictionary of Sociology*, 499.

their daily lives that were informed by the example of generations of actors in this tradition before them.

This is the period of VOC administrative control of the Cape. This mercantile company's unyielding support for Calvinism over this period was a very significant factor in the survival of the Protestant ethic in the region in this period. The limitations to capitalist-entrepreneurial growth within the Cape colony, coupled to the economic vision that the VOC had for the region as primarily a self-sufficient refreshment station, mean that this period offers unique insights into the relationship between the religious ethic and capital accumulation in terms of Weber's thesis.

It is also important to restate at the outset of this chapter that Weber located the origins of the Protestant ethic in 17th century Reformed Church communities, while the peculiar "spirit of capitalism" that he refers to only emerged in full force in 19th century Europe and North America, largely as a result of the growth of industrial capitalist roots in 18th century industrial capitalism in these societies. During the late 17th and throughout the 18th century, Cape society was far-removed from the industrial capitalism that was developing in Western Europe, as was true for most of the world. Thus the emphasis of this chapter is on the evidence for the Protestant ethic amongst the members of the Reformed Cape colonial community. The chapter begins with an overview of the economic conditions of the white settler community and then describes key socio-political developments, including the arrival of the French Huguenots in 1688, the attitude of the VOC to labour and material needs, and the expansion of the new settlers into the hinterland. The writings of visitors to the region, of whom O.F. Mentzel is the most significant, are used to probe the attitudes of the settlers, both the city-dwellers and the hinterland farmers who constituted

two-thirds of the Cape Boer community by the 1770s.⁹⁸ The chapter also assesses the authority of Calvinism in this time, given the limited influences the church as an institution had on the community, especially those living on the furthest boundaries of the region.

2.1. Economic Conditions at the Cape

Historians are generally agreed that the economic and political agendas of the VOC prohibited the growth of an entrepreneurial spirit among the early Boer population. C. W. de Kiewiet's seminal work, *A History of South Africa; Social and Economic*, describes the colonial economy of the early settler period as backward and the image of an underdeveloped economy remained the conventional wisdom in early South African historiography.⁹⁹ The historian, F. A. van Jaarsveld, supported this view when he stated: "*Vir 150 jaar lank is 'n selfsugtige ekonomiese beleid van onvryheid en onderdrukking teenoor die burgers gevolg*".¹⁰⁰ [For 150 years a selfish policy of lack of freedom and oppression against the burghers followed]. Pieter van Duin and Robert Ross, in an attempt to challenge this conventional wisdom, noted how "almost all academic writing on the colony's economic history has been permeated by the belief that, due to the mercantilist, monopolistic policy of the Dutch East India Company (VOC) which ruled the Cape Colony until 1795, the colony remained backward and impoverished".¹⁰¹ Shula Marks and Anthony Atmore, who offered a Marxist analysis of the Cape economy during the 18th century, also saw the economy as dominated by the mercantilist Company. According to them, it was the 19th century that was

⁹⁸ Leonard Guelke, *The white settlers, 1652 - 1780*. Edited by Richard Elphick & Hermann Giliomee (Cape Town: Longman Penguin, 1980), 58.

⁹⁹ C.W. de Kiewiet, *A History of South Africa; Social and Economic*. London: Oxford, 1941.

¹⁰⁰ F.A. van Jaarsveld, *Van van Riebeeck tot Vorster 1652-1974* (Johannesburg: Perskor, 1976), 39.

¹⁰¹ P. van Duin and Robert Ross. *The Economy of the Cape Colony in the Eighteenth Century* (Leiden: Intercontinenta, 1987), 1.

important “in terms of the transformation of the Company outpost into a more fully capitalist society”.¹⁰²

1652, the year in which Jan van Riebeeck, the Dutch sea captain, established a refreshment station at the Cape of Good Hope for the VOC, was only four years after the signing of the Treaty of Münster in Europe (in 1648). This Treaty marked the end of more than eight decades of fighting between the Protestant Dutch Republic and Catholic Spain. Eighty-two years of continued battle against the Spanish Inquisition had not only contributed to the commitment of the Dutch people to Calvinism but had also furthered their political unity.¹⁰³ Given that the European settlers who came with van Riebeeck were mostly single male sailors from the Dutch Republic, it is thus fair to argue that Calvinist doctrines firmly underlined the religious attitude of these early settlers.

The people who the first VOC sailors and workers encountered were the Khoisan.¹⁰⁴ The Europeans first made contact with the pastoralist Khoikhoi and only later with the San, who were hunter-gatherers living inland from the coast.¹⁰⁵ In contrast, the Khoikhoi were primarily herders of long-horned cattle and sheep. They were widespread across the southern African flatlands, living in small clans. The Khoikhoi mode of production suited the Dutch East Indian Company’s economic agenda as they could barter European products, including beads, tobacco and brandy, for much-needed fresh meat from these indigenes.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰² Shula Marks and Anthony Atmore, "Introduction." In *Economy and Society in Pre-Industrial South Africa*, edited by S. Marks and A. Atmore (London: Longman, 1980), 20-21.

¹⁰³ The Inquisition was a former Roman Catholic tribunal for the discovery and punishment of heresy, especially amongst the Protestant Reformers during the 16th century.

¹⁰⁴ The term Khoisan is an amalgam of the terms Khoikhoi and San referring to Hottentots and Bushmen respectively.

¹⁰⁵ Van Jaarsveld, *van Riebeeck tot Vorster*, 18.

¹⁰⁶ Monica Wilson, "The Hunters and Herders." In *The Oxford History of South Africa*, edited by M. Wilson and L. Thompson, 40-74 (Cape Town: Oxford University Press, 1969), 65.

The Europeans that arrived at the Cape in 1652 were thus left to develop their religious institutions in isolation from other forms of Christianity. In other words, they could pursue their form of Calvinism with minimal influences from other Christian denominations. The political autonomy and the economic prosperity of the VOC thus favoured the longevity of the ideals that the early, mostly Dutch, immigrants espoused. Calvinism was the unchallenged official religion at the Cape and would remain the only church for most of the century to follow.¹⁰⁷

A few years after the foundation of the refreshment station, Jan van Riebeeck found it prudent to release a number of employees from their contracts to farm independently along the Liesbeeck River.¹⁰⁸ These early “free burghers” were primarily involved with growing wheat and later producing wine.¹⁰⁹ In order to fulfil the VOC’s labour needs, slaves were imported from Dutch colonies in the Malaysian Archipelago and also from the Indian Ocean Basin.¹¹⁰

In the early 18th century, Cape Town remained the only port and the central market for agricultural products. Wine and wheat farms, mostly worked by slaves, lay immediately inland from Cape Town. The ox-wagon was the most-suited mode of transportation given the mountainous terrain inland of Cape Town. Those white farmers who moved further inland, who were mostly pastoralists, had to contend with the limited transport links that this terrain imposed. These white farmers became known as *trekboers* and through the 18th century they

¹⁰⁷ Hermann Giliomee, *The Afrikaners: Biography of a People* (Cape Town: Tafelberg, 2003), 5.

¹⁰⁸ Susan Newton-King, *Masters and Servants on the Cape Eastern Frontier* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 11.

¹⁰⁹ For a more in-depth study of these processes, see Leonard Guelke, *The Early European Settlement of South Africa*. PhD Thesis (Toronto: University of Toronto, 1974) and R. Elphick, *Kraal and Castle: Khoikhoi and the Founding of White South Africa* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1977).

¹¹⁰ Van Duin and Ross, *The Economy*, 2 and Robert C.-H. Shell. *Children of Bondage: A Social History of the Slave Society at the Cape of Good Hope, 1652-1838* (Johannesburg: Witwatersrand University Press, 1997) 42.

came to occupy large areas in the hinterland of the Cape. Throughout the 18th century Cape Town remained the centre of the region's economy while the hinterland served agricultural and pastoral farming needs. The historians P.J. van der Merwe and Coenraad Beyers argue that the limited market provided by Cape Town forced the *trekboers* to adopt a life of subsistence agriculture and stock farming on the periphery.¹¹¹ A similar argument about limited markets is made by T.R.H. Davenport, in his chapter in the *Oxford History of South Africa*, and by Gerrit Schutte in *The Shaping of South African Society, 1652-1820*.¹¹²

Not all scholars agree with this view of a limited market. Notably, the historian Keith Hancock argued that total production in wine and wheat in the hinterland increased the number of slaves owned by these farmers and the total number of farmers engaged in farming in the interior regions grew steadily throughout the 18th century.¹¹³ It is Hancock's argument that these trends would not have been evident if the limited-market-overproduction theory was correct. The historian, S.D. Neumark also critiqued the limited-market-overproduction view, suggesting that the *trekboers* remained dependent on the Cape market, and in fact, kept on producing for it, supplying the Cape market with, sheep, soap, candles, butter, ivory and wax to mention but a few commodities.¹¹⁴

While it is essential to understand the economy of the Cape, including the opportunities and limitations it offered the white settler community, this study is not

¹¹¹ P.J. Van der Merwe, *Die Noordwaartse Beweging van die Boere voor die Groot Trek (1770-1842)* (The Hague: Van Stockum, 1937); C. Beyers, *Die Kaapse Patriotte, 1777-1791*. PhD Thesis (Stellenbosch: University of Stellenbosch, 1930).

¹¹² T.R.H. Davenport, *The Consolidation of a New Society: The Cape Colony*. Vol. 1, in *The Oxford History of South Africa*, edited by M. Wilson and L. Thompson, 272-333 (Cape Town: Oxford, 1969); Gerrit Schutte, "Company and Colonists at the Cape." In *The Shaping of South African Society, 1652-1820*, edited by R. Elphick and H. Giliomee (London: Longman, 1979).

¹¹³ W.K. Hancock, "Trek." *Economic History Review, New series* 10, no. 3 (1958): 331-339.

¹¹⁴ S.D. Neumark, *The South African Frontier: Economic Influences, 1652-1836* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1957).

primarily concerned with the larger economic structures of the colony. Rather, my concern is to find evidence for a particular attitude towards work and life in general within this society. The above description of economic conditions thus provides a necessary backdrop for my interpretation (*Verstehen*) of the actor's social world.

2.2. The Early Settlers

There were three main groups of Europeans that arrived at the Cape from 1652. The first group was comprised of Dutch sailors and the second of German sailors working for the VOC. The third group, the Huguenots (who arrived after 1688), are particularly significant in terms of the Protestant ethic ideal type. This group of Reformed Church followers, who would assimilate with the other European groups at the Cape, brought with them the Protestant work ethic they were noted for in Europe.

2.2.1. The first Dutch settlers

For a little over three decades, from 1652 – 1688, the Europeans at the Cape were mainly sailors of Dutch descent, supplemented by German and Scandinavian sailors who made up approximately 25% of this population. The early cultural influences were thus informed by this sailor milieu. The historical records of the early Cape settlement suggest that many of these seamen were of questionable loyalty to the VOC and dubious social morality. The attitude and behaviour of these early settlers is best captured in the biography of van Riebeeck. The first VOC commander at the Cape was himself indicted by the VOC administration for malpractice and fraud, and was subsequently found guilty and punished.¹¹⁵

¹¹⁵ Jan Van Riebeeck, *Journal of Jan van Riebeeck*. Edited by H.B. Thom. Translated by W.P.L. van Zyl. Vol. 1. 3 vols. (Cape Town: Balkema for the Van Riebeeck Society, 1952-1958), XXIV.

C. Louis Leipoldt alludes to the careless attitude of the early settlers when he says that in 1654, two years after Van Riebeeck's arrival at the Cape, the Commander was concerned about the safety of the people at the fort because of possible attacks by passing English merchant ships. The Cape was especially vulnerable at the time since the building of the fort was still incomplete, and Van Riebeeck was particularly concerned about the commitment and trustworthiness of his men.¹¹⁶

Van Riebeeck's successor, Zacharias Wagenaar, who commanded the colony between 1662 and 1666, was also appalled by the "*slordig leven en bedryff*" (careless mode of life and proceedings) of the free burghers and expressed his dismay by writing to the VOC. According to his biographer, Spohr, he complained that:

there are not above six or eight who are, either in repute or in fact, respectable and industrious men; the rest are depraved from their youth upwards, [*vroeg bedorven*] lazy, drunken fellows, who care as little for their Dutch servants as for their beasts, as proved by the numerous complaints which are made on the subject; and besides their attempts in every manner to undermine the Company in the cattle trade.¹¹⁷

What this indicates is that many of the early Dutch, both those employed by the VOC and the free burghers, lacked a committed work ethic of the sort Weber associated with Protestantism. The earliest population was filled with adventurers from a floating maritime segment of society who were certainly not industrious people. Spohr points out that in order to correct the indolent attitude of these settlers, especially within the servant class, Wagenaar and the VOC officials decided to import slaves from the Far East as a way of addressing the labour problem at the Cape. Wagenaar even suggested that these "*Caepse Boeren*" be

¹¹⁶ C. Louis Leipoldt, *Jan van Riebeeck* (Kaapstad: Nasionale Pers, 1938), 148.

¹¹⁷ O.H. Spohr, *Zacharias Wagenaar*. (Cape Town: Balkema, 1967), 4.

banished to Mauritius.¹¹⁸ In the end, before leaving South Africa, he had three families deported to the island of Mauritius.

The behaviour and attitudes of the early Dutch settlers had long-term consequences for the region. First, the local VOC establishment moved to bring in slave labour from the Far East after 1662, with far-reaching implications for the nature of Cape society. Second, the importation of slave labour had an effect on the numbers of European labourers at the Cape. Imported slave labour kept the cost of the more expensive European labour to a minimum at the Cape outpost for the VOC. The importation of slaves also contributed to the religious diversity, including the growth of Islam, in the region.

2.2.2. The Influx of the Protestant Ethic: the French Huguenots

The French Huguenots who arrived in 1688 constituted only 17% of white society at the Cape at the end of the 17th century. However, their presence at the Cape had a significant impact on the religious and business attitudes that were to emerge in this insular community. They also arrived as family units, often with children, and this supports an argument that they were more inclined toward a stable religious and economic environment than their Dutch or German counterparts, who came mostly as single men. Hermann Giliomee concurs with this assessment when he states that they “did much to stabilize the free burgher population”.¹¹⁹

By the start of the 1700s Holland had been experiencing an era of extraordinary economic prosperity, which had lasted for about a century. The United Provinces of the Netherlands, with Holland leading the way, had become the chief maritime nation of Europe.

¹¹⁸ Spohr, *Zacharias Wagenaar*, 4.

¹¹⁹ Giliomee, *The Afrikaners*, 11.

Warren Scoville writes that the country had developed a special kind of mercantilism which allowed the Dutch almost complete freedom in foreign trade and in the import and export of bullion.¹²⁰ He further points out that although Calvinism had become the official religion, “the Republic had long served as a haven for persecuted minorities such as the Spanish and Portuguese Jews and the Protestants from the Spanish Low Countries”.¹²¹ Given this liberal backdrop it is not surprising that the Dutch welcomed the French Huguenots after Louis XIV intensified his campaign against his Protestant countrymen. Migration to the Netherlands also served the interests of Dutch capital, as many of the immigrants were industrialists, in sectors such as the textile, paper, glass, wine and jewelry industry.¹²² One could argue that the common religion which the Huguenots shared with the Dutch state, Calvinism, had much to do with the preferential treatment afforded them. Scoville talks about Dutch cities that appeared to vie with one another in trying to attract the greatest number of Huguenots by offering them accommodation at minimal rentals, and granting all refugees within the Netherlands bourgeois status, the right to exercise their crafts freely, exemption for three years from import and other charges, no matter how wealthy they were, and interest-free loans for the purpose of acquiring the tools of their trade.¹²³

What is abundantly apparent about the French Huguenot diaspora is that the highest number of refugees moved to Holland, with estimates ranging between 50 000 and 75 000 people, far in excess of the numbers that went to Switzerland, England, Germany and South

¹²⁰ W.C. Scoville, "The Huguenots and the Diffusion of Technology, 2." *The Journal of Political Economy* 60, no. 5 (1952): 392.

¹²¹ Scoville, "The Huguenots 2," 392.

¹²² Scoville, "The Huguenots 2," 410.

¹²³ Scoville, "The Huguenots 2," 393.

Africa.¹²⁴ While Dutch prosperity was undoubtedly a lure, it needs stressing that many of the Huguenot émigrés were poor, indicating that the religious factor was probably central to their choice of destination. As for the minority of economically advanced Huguenots, the nature of Huguenot commerce and industry, mostly in the textile industry, suggests that these immigrants came with industrial skills that would have been welcomed by the Dutch state, especially given the economic rivalry between France and Holland at the time.

The merchants and industrialists who fled from France to other European countries, mostly remained in Europe, because of the abundant economic opportunities that the region offered. This was especially true of the Netherlands. It was thus not merchants or those with industrial skills but mostly Huguenot peasants, who were accustomed to working the soil, who made their way to South Africa. Although constituting a small minority of the vast French peasantry, these peasants were considered among the best and most productive cultivators in France, despite the generally poor and challenging soil that they worked. Scoville quotes the intendant at La Rochelle who grudgingly admitted in 1699 that there was no place in all his province of Saintonge where the soil was better tilled than on the island of Oléron, with its predominantly Protestant population.¹²⁵

The Cape offered these refugees little in comparison to the European cities of the late 1600s. However, the opportunity to cultivate and own farms in Dutch South Africa must have seemed attractive to at least a few French Huguenot peasants, who might not have foreseen similar opportunities in Europe. According to VOC records, approximately 200 Huguenot families arrived at the Cape between 1688 and 1700. If one considers that approximately 200 000 French Huguenots migrated or fled from France after the Revocation of the Edict of

¹²⁴ Scoville, "The Huguenots 2," 394.

¹²⁵ Scoville, "The Huguenots 2," 426.

Nantes on the 18th of October 1685, then the small number that opted to migrate to the Cape speaks to the limited opportunities perceived to lie at the tip of Africa. Besides the limited opportunities there was also the difficulty of travel that the journey to the Cape promised.

On the 3rd of October 1685 the VOC directors, the *Heeren XVII*, decided to send colonists to the Cape to support a refreshment station that was becoming more expensive to run than they had anticipated. Through collaboration with a small, self-sufficient farming community they envisaged a reduction in the provisioning expenses for the company. According to the *plakaat* (decree) drawn up by the VOC *Heeren XVII*, “*hulle moes getuigskrifte van eerbaarheid volgens die getuienis van hul kerkrade toon en hulself beskou as gebore Nederlanders*” [they (immigrants) had to present affidavits attesting honesty as witnessed by their respective church organizations and that they should consider themselves as native Netherlanders].¹²⁶ The first groups of French Huguenots were sent to the Cape under the above *plakaat*.

The content of the *plakaat* supports the argument that the VOC administration at the Cape was intent on improving commitment to labour. The Huguenots had to sign an oath of trust [*eed van getrouheid*]¹²⁷ with the VOC in the Netherlands before they could embark on their journey. In a letter sent on the 16th of November 1687 to Simon van der Stel, the Governor of the Cape, the *Heeren XVII* insisted that “*hierdie Vlugtelinge beroofd was van*

¹²⁶ Taken from Resolusies van die Here Sewentien. Verbatim Afskrif van dié wat van 1685 tot 1688 betrekking het op die Vlugtelinge. Taken from C. Louis Leipoldt, *Die Hugenote* (Kaapstad: Nasionale Pers, 1939).

¹²⁷ Eed van getrouheid – unsigned copy in French in the Cape Archives. Published in C. Spoelstra, *Bouwstoffen voor de geschiedenis der Nederduitsch-Gereformeerde Kerken in Z.A.* Section II (Amsterdam: HAUM, 1906), 644.

alles, maar hardwerkend en gou tevrede gesteld’ [these refugees were robbed of all their possessions but are hardworking and are easily satisfied].¹²⁸

As already noted, the new immigrants differed from the Dutch and German immigrants in that they included a relatively high percentage of family units. Various letters written by the VOC administrators, the Chamber of Amsterdam, and the captain of the ship on which they were transported give details of the names, gender, and place of origin of the Huguenots in France, as well as the number of children that accompanied them.¹²⁹ For example, the first ship carrying French Huguenots to the Cape, the *Voorschooten*, had twenty-two Huguenots on board. Amongst them were Charles Marais, his wife and four children; Philippe Fouché, his wife and three children; Jean le Roux; Gabriel le Roux; Gideon Malherbe, and Jacques Pinard and his wife, Esther Fouché.¹³⁰ Even though the French Huguenots would constitute only 17 percent of the early Cape settler community, the strong family cohesion and order that they brought with them contributed significantly to the cumulative ethic that developed among the early settlers at the Cape, more so than their small numbers would suggest. Furthermore, the relatively high percentage of children that the Huguenots brought with them from Europe before the 1700s – unlike the mainly single immigrants from the Netherlands and Germany – must have added to the cultural contribution that the Huguenots made to the free burgher community after the 1700s.

The Huguenots were also able to secure lasting economic advantages in their new society by being granted arable land relatively close to Cape Town. This geographical

¹²⁸ Taken from a letter sent to Simon van der Stel from the Governors of the VOC on the 16th of November 1687. Published in C. Louis Leipoldt, *Die Hugenote* (Kaapstad: Nasionale Pers, 1939).

¹²⁹ *Voorschooten* was one of the first ships to transport French Huguenot immigrants to the Cape. Others include: *Borssenburg*, *Oosterlandt*, *Berg China*, *Schelde*, *Zuid Beveland* and *'t Wapen van Alkmaar*.

¹³⁰ C. Louis Leipoldt, *Die Hugenote* (Kaapstad: Nasionale Pers, 1939), 158-162.

positioning was especially advantageous when considering the high cost of transportation over rugged terrain for inland farms at the time. At the time Cape Town offered the only market for the hundreds of ships that docked to stock up on meat and other fresh produce for the long voyages between Europe and the East.¹³¹ In comparison to those *freeburghers* who started farming after the first wave of Huguenots, the early French settlers were granted tenure to lands that were often many times more valuable than that accorded the latecomers.¹³² Those free burghers who arrived after the 1700s had to contend with many negative factors, including high transport costs from the new frontier farms, competition from existing farms, the difficulty in accessing slave labour in regions far removed from the Cape, and regulated pricing by the VOC. However, the relative advantages that the Huguenots secured do not in any way diminish the hard work and diligence that historians of the period so liberally report. C. Louis Leipoldt suggests that before the start of the 1700s some of the Huguenots were already respected because of their industry, productivity and the manner in which they decorated their loan farms.¹³³ This attitude contributed to material accumulation and the lasting legacy of the Protestant ethic.

2.2.3. The German Lutherans

The third group of Europeans who contributed significantly to the formation of the early white population came from Germany.¹³⁴ These immigrants, mostly single men, arrived

¹³¹ Between 1716 and 1780 between 314 and 573 VOC and foreign ships arrived at the Cape annually. Supplying the ships with meat and fresh produce remained the primary source of business for the European communities at the Cape throughout the period 1652-1795. Taken from Leonard Guelke, "Frontier Settlement in Early Dutch South Africa." *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 66, no. 1 (March 1976): 25-42.

¹³² The price of a good arable farm near the Cape was of the order of 10,000 guilders; farms on the remote frontier sold for as little as 25 guilders. Taken from Leonard Guelke, "Frontier Settlement in Early Dutch South Africa." *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 66, no. 1 (March 1976): 25-42.

¹³³ Leipoldt, *Die Hugenote*, 202.

¹³⁴ The German population contributed 27% of the early Cape Afrikaner population before 1700. Statistics taken from Van Jaarsveld, *Van Riebeeck tot Vorster*, 1976.

at the Cape as sailors employed by the VOC and were mostly of Lutheran persuasion. Since the VOC's initial intention was to build a supply station at the Cape, and not to invest in the development of a future colony, the religious affiliation of the Germans was not of primary concern to the VOC administration when they initiated their refreshment station project in 1652. The historian Dr. J. Hoge has stated that at the Union of Utrecht, the treaty signed on the 23rd of January 1579 that unified the northern provinces of the Netherlands, it was determined that no other religion besides that of the Reformed tradition would be allowed in public.¹³⁵ However, he notes that while this might have been the case in theory, in practice, over time, tolerance was exercised especially with regards to the Lutheran church.

The religious tolerance found in the Netherlands between the Reformed church and Lutheranism was transplanted to the Cape during the early years. Very soon after landing at the Cape the VOC had to consider the religious needs of the significant percentage of German Lutherans in their employ. Hoge says, "*Reeds die eerste kerkraad onder leiding van die eerste permanente predikant van die Kaap, Johan van Arckel, het in 1665, die jaar van laasgenoemde se aankoms, besluit om Lutherane tot die nagmaal in die Gereformeerde kerk toe te laat, as hulle daarom sou aansoek doen en van 'n onberispelike karakter was*".¹³⁶ [Already at the first church meeting, under the guidance of the first permanent Reformed minister of the Cape, Johan van Arckel in 1665, the year that van Arckel arrived, did the Reformed church decide to allow Lutherans access to the services if they applied provided that they were of sound character]. It is evident that as was the case in the Netherlands, the Reformed church at the Cape was tolerant toward the Lutherans, as long as they were seen to be of good character. However, this tolerance was exercised within the Reformed church and

¹³⁵ J. Hoge, *Die Geskiedenis van die Lutherse Kerk aan die Kaap* (Cape Town: ARG, 1938), 1.

¹³⁶ Hoge, *Lutherse Kerk*, 21.

under the conditions of the authority of the Reformed clergy, as most decisions regarding local religious matters were managed by the presiding ministers at the Cape.

Thus Lutheran settlers and their descendants had opportunity to serve their God, albeit in the Reformed church. They were free to partake in the Eucharist ceremony within the Reformed church, and some did. The historian Hoge points out that some Lutheran fathers allowed their children to be baptized in the Reformed church but maintained a Lutheran identity. However, he is of the opinion that the majority did not take advantage of the opportunities afforded them and in fact speaks of the religious carelessness of the German Lutherans: “*Dit lyk egter asof die Lutherane - die meeste van hulle was Duitsers - van hierdie vergunning maar min gebruik gemaak het*”.¹³⁷ [It seems that these Lutherans - mostly Germans - made little use of the offering to use the Reformed church].¹³⁸

In 1730, roughly 80 years after the first German Lutherans had arrived, the need to have an independent church surfaced openly.¹³⁹ The Reformed church successfully opposed Lutheran requests to have an independent church for another fifty years. It was only in 1780, after many attempts, that the Lutherans were finally granted the right to establish their first church. However, it appears that already before then many settlers had accepted the idea that the Cape was an exclusive Reformed religious public space, including a significant number of those of Lutheran persuasion. In the end most Germans assimilated into the Dutch Reformed Church, either through marriage to women belonging to the Dutch Reformed Church or by having their children baptized in the Dutch Reformed Church.

¹³⁷ Hoge, *Lutherse Kerk*, 21.

¹³⁸ The observation that the German Lutherans at the Cape during the early years at the Cape made little use of the Reformed church was made by two Danish Missionaries visiting in 1706. Taken from Hoge, *Lutherse Kerk*, 21.

¹³⁹ A book published in 1728 by a Danish Lutheran Professor, Hector Godfried Masius, questioned the possibility of reconciliation between the Reformed church and the Lutheran church.

The successful commitment of the authorities to disallow other churches the right of public worship before 1780, even those that were also of Protestant persuasion, thus meant that the Dutch Reformed church had ample time in which to cement its teachings amongst the white settler community at the Cape. Key among these were its ideas on predestination, election and one's calling.

C. Wright Mills and H.H. Gerth point out:

Max Weber incorporated the problem of understanding in his sociological approach, which, as he was prone to emphasize, was one type of sociology among other possibilities. He therefore called his perspective 'interpretative' or 'understanding' sociology....Man can 'understand' or attempt to 'understand' his own intentions through introspection, and he may interpret the motives of other men's conduct in terms of their professed or ascribed intentions.¹⁴⁰

As already discussed, Weber's interpretative categories include rational action, traditional action and affectual action. Affectual action, according to Mills and Gerth, "flows purely from sentiment" and "is a less rational type of conduct".¹⁴¹ From a Weberian interpretive perspective, the actions of the Dutch Reformed elite in maintaining religious exclusivity for such a long period, 130 years, can be explained as "affectual", because their decision to prevent the Lutherans from building their own church, even though they needed satisfied settlers for labour, favours the argument that commitment to religion outweighed rational decision-making where Lutheran communities could have been more productive.

The above discussion makes it clear that the influence of the Dutch Reformed Church reached beyond the French Huguenots and early Dutch settlers. This exclusive religious space was very significant because it fostered a social environment where Calvinist routine, including behaviour related to work and attitudes in general, could cement roots. Any scholarship on Afrikaner history that challenges the relevance of the Dutch Reformed

¹⁴⁰ Weber, *Essays in Sociology*, 56.

¹⁴¹ Weber, *Essays in Sociology*, 56.

Church's doctrines, including those of predestination and election, has to argue away the social significance of the commitment of the Dutch Reformed Church to maintaining its exclusive religious space at the Cape in this formative period.

2.3. Community life at the Cape during the formative years

The discussion below looks at the modes of production and attitudes toward business in communities in the town at the Cape and of those settlers living in the rural areas. The early European settlers started communities in and around Cape Town from the middle of the 17th century. By the middle of the 18th century, however, more than two-thirds of the settlers lived in the hinterland regions.

2.3.1. Town dwellers

Opportunities for making a living differed significantly in the town of Cape Town when compared to the inland farming regions of the Cape. The residents of Cape Town, including those free burghers living in close proximity to the harbour, serviced the economic needs of sailors and soldiers of passing ships for consumables and festivities. Catering to the needs of sailors thus played an important part in the mode of production for those living in and around the town. Free burghers in the hinterland regions however were primarily involved with agricultural pursuits for the market or self-provisioning. Thus very different attitudes toward business unfolded over time.

The analysis of attitudes to business and economic life in general is hampered by the limited historical sources. Karel Schoeman reminds us of the scarcity of personal writings for the entire VOC period, partly because the burgher community at the Cape was small but also

because of the rather low level of literacy amongst this group.¹⁴² According to Schoeman, this means that insights on the life of the colonists are mostly derived from the diaries of Van Riebeeck and Zacharias Wagenaar, resolutions of the Political Council at the Cape, the Council on Justice at the Cape, and the Cape Resolutions (*plakkate*).¹⁴³ Travel accounts become another important source of data and here the writings of O.F. Mentzel remain one of the most informative and descriptive for this period (1652-1795) in South African history. Mentzel, writing towards the end of VOC rule in 1784, offers many insights and descriptions of “the mode of life of the burgher population in the town with the object of showing how they earned their livelihood”.¹⁴⁴ This text offers rich historical-sociological insights into the world of the white residents of Cape Town.

Mentzel’s account paints a picture of economic opportunism and hucksterism. He writes:

The married servant of the Company is seldom content with his pay and emoluments and always tries to add a little to his income by private trading. The possession of a private house of his own is a great advantage because it may be most conveniently utilized for trading purposes. It must be assumed that an official can open a shop or a warehouse...It stands to reason that stock articles cannot be expected, but a varied and miscellaneous assortment of goods is found. These private stores are replenished in many ways: by the purchase of goods from ship’s officers, by ordering directly from merchants in Holland upon a commission basis, or by buying locally at public auction. No matter how acquired, the fact remains that every man in the town, be he free burgher, or official, passenger, or free worker, yea, even a common soldier, is at the same time a huckster and a trader. This characteristic has given the Cape a bad name among travelers. Voyagers to and from the East Indies are sometimes badly “stung” in their dealings with

¹⁴² K. Schoeman, *Armosyn van die Kaap: Die wêreld van ’n Slavin* (Cape Town: Human & Rousseau, 2001), 461.

¹⁴³ Schoeman, *Armosyn van die Kaap*, 461; A.W. Biewenga, *De Kaap de Goede Hoop; een Nederlandse vestingskolonie, 1680-1730* (Amsterdam: Vrije Universiteit, 1999), 16-17.

¹⁴⁴ O.F. Mentzel, *A Geographical and Topographical Description of the Cape of Good Hope*. Translated by H.J. Mandelbrote. Vol. part one (Cape Town: The van Riebeeck Society, originally published in 1787, reprinted in 1925), 75.

rascally sailors and in their annoyance are apt to classify all Cape inhabitants as “schmousen” (hawkers or peddler), or even rogues.¹⁴⁵

Mentzel’s account suggests that by the end of the VOC period there were many settlers who displayed attitudes to business that were far removed from the honest, calculating somber attitudes of Weber’s ideal type Protestant ethic. The business ethic was, rather, reminiscent of Weber’s account of the Dutch sea-captain who “would go through hell for gain, even though he scorched his sails”.¹⁴⁶ Mentzel gives numerous examples of speculative business ventures in late 18th century Cape Town, including the burgher Eckstein who speculated with soap, a soldier named Franz Burg speculating with candles and other examples involving the sale of tobacco.¹⁴⁷ According to him, “no article of merchandise is free from these speculative ventures”.¹⁴⁸ What is evident in Mentzel’s description of the Cape as market is the predominance of petty traders who wanted to operate outside the VOC’s economic structures. These traders had little in common with the careful risk-calculating business person who exemplifies the Weberian Protestant ideal type.

According to Mentzel, “another lucrative form of occupation is board-house keeping”.¹⁴⁹ In this occupation the legitimate charges for board and lodging – normally to farmers who come into town - were supplemented by the sale of tea, coffee, tobacco, cheese, *Klontges* (candy-sugar), and second-hand clothing for slaves.¹⁵⁰ Other sojourners to these hostelries included soldiers and sailors who, Mentzel suggests, were often forced to sell their

¹⁴⁵ Mentzel, *Geographical and Topographical Description 1*, 75.

¹⁴⁶ Weber, *The Protestant Ethic*, 57.

¹⁴⁷ Mentzel, *Geographical and Topographical Description 1*, 76-77.

¹⁴⁸ Mentzel, *Geographical and Topographical Description 1*, 78.

¹⁴⁹ Mentzel, *Geographical and Topographical Description 1*, 80.

¹⁵⁰ Mentzel, *Geographical and Topographical Description 1*, 80.

personal belongings once all their cash had been spent after visiting “merry houses of entertainment”.¹⁵¹ Mentzel describes the host of these hostelries as “a ready purchaser; he gets the articles for the proverbial song and often enough as part payment for the board and lodging”.¹⁵² Boarding-house operators were able to benefit further through profiteering in the resale of wine to their guests, often at a rate of 300% profit per bottle of wine.¹⁵³

This form of trading behaviour was not only displayed by the lower status-groups within society. Mentzel says, “What has been said above of humble townsmen applies even more forcibly to prominent wealthy burghers at whose houses captains, superior officers and distinguished visitors sojourn temporarily. The charges and consequently the profits are higher but the methods are very much the same.”¹⁵⁴

Mentzel’s account of life in the town also shows some evidence of Weber’s Protestant ideal-type. After a lengthy description of the roguish business activities at these hostelries, Mentzel carefully qualifies his account: “I do not for a moment suggest that every guest-house keeper is a knave and a rogue. Nay! On the contrary the majority of them are upright and honourable men who deal justly with their patrons and do not overcharge for the amenities offered – but, there are black sheep in every fold.”¹⁵⁵

What we learn from Mentzel is that a significant number of the white settler community of Cape Town was involved in speculative and petty trading endeavours. The fact that, according to Mentzel, many visitors to the Cape saw the inhabitants as “schmouzen” and

¹⁵¹ Mentzel, *Geographical and Topographical Description 1*, 81.

¹⁵² Mentzel, *Geographical and Topographical Description 1*, 81.

¹⁵³ Mentzel, *Geographical and Topographical Description 1*, 81.

¹⁵⁴ Mentzel, *Geographical and Topographical Description 1*, 81.

¹⁵⁵ Mentzel, *Geographical and Topographical Description 1*, 82.

“rogues” says much about the persistence of the values displayed by the first sailors to settle here and the sea-captain ethic that Weber alludes to. The limited opportunities afforded would-be entrepreneurs by the VOC must also have had an influence.

2.3.2. The People of the Hinterland

What is important to note is that the attitudes toward work and life in general of the Boers living inland differed significantly from those of the average town-dweller.¹⁵⁶ In his description of the white settlers in the interior for the 1969 *Oxford History of South Africa*, the historian M.F. Katzen writes:

The eighteenth-century Cape burgher community received its most distinctive features from the fact that most whites were farmers (*boers*). Apart from a few hamlets in the south-west Cape, Cape Town was the only urban centre, and its white inhabitants were almost all small retailers or boarding-house keepers, who indulged in feverish petty smuggling and speculation when ships arrived. Otherwise the Cape white settlers were a rural community in which virtues such as hospitality, frugality, candour, and simplicity of dress and manners developed side by side with an ignorant complacency and insularity, a positive enjoyment of quarrels with neighbours, and an overwhelming individualism.¹⁵⁷

Katzen’s description of early Cape urban society is in line with Mentzel. However, his description of rural society, with its virtues of frugality and “overwhelming individualism”, invokes images of the Protestant ethic of Weber’s ideal type, which is explored further below.

The numbers of farms in the interior districts of the Cape increased steadily during the 1700s, and by 1770 this group represented two thirds of all independent farmers.¹⁵⁸ The distance from Cape Town, coupled to the difficult terrain, meant that this group was forced to

¹⁵⁶ The term Boers literally means farmers and is the term used for the white settler farming population.

¹⁵⁷ M.F. Katzen, *White Settlers and the origin of a New Society, 1652-1778*. Edited by L. Thompson & M. Wilson. Vol. 1. 2 vols. (London: Oxford University Press, 1969), 232.

¹⁵⁸ Guelke, *The white settlers*, 58.

develop in relative isolation. Anders Sparrman, a Swedish scientist who visited the region in the 1770s, commented on the challenges of travelling to Cape Town from the interior:

Every peasant for such a journey as this has two or three Hottentots, one to lead the oxen, and either one or two to drive the spare team; besides which his wife often goes with him, either for the purpose of having her children baptized at the Cape, or else for fear of being attacked by Hottentots in her husband's absence. Thus, taking it at the lowest, and reckoning only persons and twenty oxen for thirty days, it stands a great many farmers in ninety days of work of themselves and men, and six hundred of their cattle, in order to make one turn with their butter to the market, and so in proportion for such as are less distant. Hence it is evident, that many thousand days work are unnecessarily lost and thrown away every year.¹⁵⁹

Sparrman points out that because of the difficulties of travel the Boers furthest removed from Cape Town only visited it once every second, third or even fourth year.¹⁶⁰ The historian P.J. van der Merwe suggests that many Boers only visited Cape Town once in a lifetime, most commonly to get married.¹⁶¹ The result of this forced isolation was a hinterland community that differed in many ways from the town dweller.

Isolation from the urban community in the port city of Cape Town had consequences in all institutional spheres for the Boers. It was especially telling in the religious and educational fields, as writers who visited the Cape during the 18th century make clear. The historian Leonard Guelke, writing during the 20th century, remarks that “the frontier trekboers had to put up with severe social isolation”. Furthermore, “isolation from the outside world tended to blunt the trekboers’ intellectual development” while “extreme individualism was

¹⁵⁹ Anders Sparrman, *Voyage to the Cape, I*. (New York: Johnson Reprint Corporation, 1971), 264.

¹⁶⁰ Sparrman, *Voyage I*, 271.

¹⁶¹ P.J. Van der Merwe, *Die Noordwaartse Beweging van die Boere voor die Groot Trek 1770-1842* (The Hague: Van Stockum, 1937), 198.

further fostered by the absence of a non-farm rural population dependent on the farming community”.¹⁶²

Mentzel’s famous text, *A Geographical and Topographical Description of the Cape of Good Hope* which was published in German in 1787, divided the “African”¹⁶³ (Boer) farmers into four categories or classes. In the first class were those “free burghers who live in the City and have considerable fortune and are comfortably off; and who, besides, also possess one or more farms in the country”.¹⁶⁴ This group of farmers corresponds with the landed gentry that scholars like Robert Ross, Leonard Guelke and Robert Shell write about.¹⁶⁵ Leonard Guelke reminds us that “in the period from 1705-1731 the ownership of freehold land was increasingly concentrated in the hands of a small elite.”¹⁶⁶ In 1731, each member of the minimal majority [economic elite] had on average, three freehold farm properties.” These farmers, according to Mentzel, employed able workers from the VOC, called a “*knecht*” to manage their farms on a day-to-day basis; the actual landowners supervised the running of all their estates.¹⁶⁷ However, this class made up a very small percentage of the total Boer population during the second half of the 18th century. As pointed out above, the hinterland Boers made up two-thirds of the white population at the time.

¹⁶² Guelke, *The white settlers*, 63.

¹⁶³ Mentzel refers to the Boers as Africans.

¹⁶⁴ O.F. Mentzel, *A Geographical and Topographical Description of the Cape of Good Hope*. Translated by G.V. Marais and J. Hoge. Vol. part three (Cape Town: The van Riebeeck Society [originally published in 1787], 1944), 98.

¹⁶⁵ Robert Ross, "The Rise of the Cape Gentry." *Journal of Southern African Studies* 9, no. 2 (1983): 193-217, and Guelke, Leonard and Robert Shell. "An early colonial landed gentry: land and wealth in the Cape Colony 1682-1731." *Journal of Historical Geography* 9, no. 3 (1983): 265-286.

¹⁶⁶ Leonard Guelke, "An early colonial landed gentry", 277.

¹⁶⁷ Mentzel, *Geographical and Topographical Description* 3, 98.

The second group of “African” farmers [Boers] Mentzel describes were those “who possess excellent farms, paid for and lucrative, who live on these farms themselves and produce more than they can consume.... But of those who actually belong to this second class, it may truly be said that they live like gentry and many of them even better; especially if they do not live too far from the City, that is not further than 20 or 30 hours...”.¹⁶⁸ Farmers belonging to this group were relatively wealthy, keeping “knechte for their own convenience, and school-masters for their small children” and could “obtain everything they want for their money”.¹⁶⁹ As far as the work ethic of this group is concerned, Mentzel comments, “now although such well-to-do farmers do not put a shoulder to the wheel themselves, they are nevertheless good overseers and give daily orders as to what work must be done and cared for by the knecht.”¹⁷⁰ The proximity to the Cape market afforded this group access to trade and church that groups three and four in Mentzel’s typology were largely denied.

The majority of Boers fell into Mentzel’s third and fourth groups. Mentzel’s third group constituted a significant percentage of 18th century Boers, considering that the frontier Boers made up two-thirds of all farmers at the Cape by the 1770s. Mentzel gives a lengthy and careful description of this group and its behavior in the second half of the 18th century. It is fitting to quote him here at length:

The third type of African farmers may rightly be called the industrious class. Among them there are no slovenly owners, drunkards, or such as find the weather too cold and wet during the ploughing and sowing season and too warm and windy during harvest time and who neglect and diminish their sources of income by leaving all work to a few slaves. Industrious farmers let no hour pass unused. Even in the season between sowing and harvesting, when the countryman could sometimes have an easy time, they keep themselves and their servants busy; and

¹⁶⁸ Mentzel, *Geographical and Topographical Description* 3, 100.

¹⁶⁹ Mentzel, *Geographical and Topographical Description* 3, 100-1.

¹⁷⁰ Mentzel, *Geographical and Topographical Description* 3, 102.

when the weather is so inclement that nothing can be done outside, the slaves under roof, in the barn or in their dwellings, will at least make ropes and cords out of old anchor cables, for tying oxen and knee-haltering horses...They are both master and knecht. They are always busy. At sowing time they are their own sowers. In the harvest season their own binders...Their wives and grown-up children or the female slaves put the plants into the soil. In the spring they mostly prune the vines themselves or direct the slaves how to do the pruning...With these unremitting workers, the hours for meals are not fixed throughout the year as with the wealthy...the farmer and his men rise every morning at dawn, that is at half-past four in summer and at six o'clock in the winter...At these farmers' homes, as soon as definite order has been established, everything goes like clock-work.¹⁷¹

Mentzel's descriptions of these farmers as hardworking, committed and industrious are strongly evocative of Weber's account of the Protestant ethic. Weber quotes Proverbs (xxii: 29) in support of this peculiar Protestant ethic and its significance in developing the psycho-social tendencies associated with his "spirit of capitalism": "Seest thou a man diligent in his business? He shall stand before kings".¹⁷² The hard work and commitment of this group must also have made an impression on the ruling VOC. Robert Ross points out that "by the late 18th century, government officials were increasingly drawn from the rural farming community," suggesting that the VOC was able to trust individuals in this group with administrative duties on its behalf in the remote regions of the Cape.¹⁷³ The diligence of the Boers on the frontier region was also noted by the historian J.D. du Toit, who argued in his 1939 account of the Huguenots that "*die Calvinistiese deug van vlyt hulle daarin egter goed te pas gekom*".¹⁷⁴ [The Calvinistic virtue of diligence suited their context well.]

¹⁷¹ Mentzel, *Geographical and Topographical Description* 3, 105-9.

¹⁷² Weber, *The Protestant Ethic*, 53.

¹⁷³ Robert Ross, "The Rise of the Cape Gentry." *Journal of Southern African Studies* 9, no. 2 (1983): 195-6.

¹⁷⁴ J.D. du Toit, "Die Hugenote." *Die Veteraan* 4 (1939): 1.

Finally, the fourth group of Boers were those who, according to Mentzel, “should rather be called cattle-herdsmen than farmers.”¹⁷⁵ Without using Mentzel’s categorisation, F.A. van Jaarsveld has, described the socialization of this group thus:

*Die veeboere sou op die spore van die jagters, veeruilers en toggangers – padvindere van die beskawing – volg en as pioniers van die Blanke beskawing met geweer, perd en ossewa die grense uitbrei, soos dit ook die geval in die weswaartse uitbreiding in die Verenigde State was. Die veeboer het spoedig verander in die trekboer, ’n nuwe sort nomadiese mens wat die oop grense liefgekry en agter wild, water, weiveld en vry grond aangetrek het byna soos Hottentotte vroeër. Hulle was pioniers wat op ’n bewegende grens al verder van die sentrum van die kolonie die wildernis vir die beskawing gaan tem het.*¹⁷⁶ [The frontiers were expanded by livestock farmers who would have followed in the footprints of the hunters, transport-riders, pathfinders of the civilization and of the pioneers of the White civilization with rifle, horse and ox wagon, similar to the westward expansion in the United States. The livestock farmers quickly morphed into the trekboer, a new kind of nomadic person who endeared the open frontiers, while in search of game, water pastures and unoccupied land almost like the Hottentots previously. They were pioneers who moved ever further from the centre of the colony in order to civilize the wilderness.]

Mentzel also described the status differences that existed among the richer and poorer members of this fourth group.¹⁷⁷ At the same time, he pointed to the spirit of social equality that prevailed, because of the lack of opportunity that all within this group experienced: “Among [them] there are also rich and poor; but the former, with all their super-abundance of cattle, have to eke out a miserable existence just like the poor, and are very badly off for the amenities of human life.”¹⁷⁸

Here it needs to be noted that for Weber the attitude toward material acquisition of those who possess the Protestant ethic is not that of a miser; his account of the Protestant

¹⁷⁵ Mentzel, *Geographical and Topographical Description* 3, 110.

¹⁷⁶ Van Jaarsveld, *van Riebeeck tot Vorster*, 49.

¹⁷⁷ The view of a classless society is also held by P.J. van der Merwe in his text, *Die Trekboer in die Geskiedenis van die Kaapkolonie*, page 2.

¹⁷⁸ Mentzel, *Geographical and Topographical Description* 3, 110.

ethic suggests that those who demonstrate it need to show the “outward signs of election”, while at the same time being careful in their spending.¹⁷⁹ On the frontier Boer frugality was not a sign of miserliness, but, rather, a matter of having few opportunities to purchase necessities. Mentzel supports this point when he describes how the relatively wealthy among this fourth group “form a striking contrast to the miser. The miser possesses plenty and begrudges himself the enjoyment of it, being like the lock that hangs in front of his chest; but these, who have plenty of cattle, would gladly give up a part of it to obtain other necessities and comforts.”¹⁸⁰ Many who belonged to this group were the unfortunate sons of Boers belonging to group three, who did not inherit farms from their parents and were thus forced to trek further inland to establish new farms for themselves.¹⁸¹

It is evident from the above discussion that by the late 18th century, a century or more after the arrival of the first Calvinists at the Cape, many of their descendants displayed values and forms of behaviour that corresponded to Weber’s descriptions of the Protestant ethic, even though they were far-removed from Europe where the ideas behind their attitudes had been born. But if Weber’s thesis is to hold for this group, it is also necessary to establish if there was a Calvinist doctrine that ran parallel to the attitudes toward work and life in general that were displayed by this community.

2.4. Calvinism: Doctrine and Action

As already noted, Calvinism was the official religion of the VOC administration and remained so for the entire period under discussion in this chapter, 1652-1795. Hopkins reminds us that when van Riebeeck and his crew arrived at the Cape in 1652, they were too

¹⁷⁹ See chapter 1 on Weber’s explanation on ‘signs of election’.

¹⁸⁰ Mentzel, *Geographical and Topographical Description* 3, 110.

¹⁸¹ Mentzel, *Geographical and Topographical Description* 3, 111.

few to warrant a minister for the refreshment station although a *sieketrooster* (lay-preacher) accompanied the group.¹⁸² The first permanent minister, J. Van Arckel, only arrived a few years later, in 1665.¹⁸³ In the history of Calvinism in the VOC period, a shortage of ordained Calvinist priests posed a dilemma for the settlers, and especially so for those in the hinterland. In 1778 the residents of Graaff-Reinet the furthest district from the Cape, requested a minister for their community, but were only awarded a *sieketrooster* in 1786, with their first minister arriving in 1792.¹⁸⁴ By 1742, almost a century after the first VOC settlers had arrived at the Cape, there were only five Reformed churches in the entire region.¹⁸⁵

Regular access to church services was particularly difficult for those living in outlying regions, due to the difficulty of travel. Nevertheless, despite their isolation, the Boers on the frontier remained committed to the Reformed faith. Van Jaarsveld emphasizes the importance of the Bible for retaining this commitment among those with limited access to both formal religious institutions and schools, when he says that in their isolation, “*huisgodsdienst*” (home church) around the Bible – especially the Old Testament - compensated for their lack in development.¹⁸⁶ It was “the Bible and the visiting school teacher that freed him the frontier

¹⁸² H.C. Hopkins, *Die Moeder van ons almal; Geskiedenis van die Gemeente Kaapstad, 1665-1965* (Cape Town: NG Kerkuitgewers, 1965), 14.

¹⁸³ P.J. Van der Merwe, *Die Trekboer in die Geskiedenis van die Kaapkolonie* (Cape Town: Nasionale Pers, 1938), 21.

¹⁸⁴ Potgieter, F.M.J. "Ons Kerk in Kaapland, in Hanekom." In *Ons Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk; gedenkboek by ons derde eeufees 1952*, edited by T.N. Hanekom, 24-90. (Kaapstad: NG Keerkuitgewers, 1952), 42.

¹⁸⁵ Kempff, D. *Gewortel en Gegroei 1652-1806* (Potchefstroom: Potchefstroomse Universiteit, 1981), 25.

¹⁸⁶ Van Jaarsveld, *Van Riebeeck tot Vorster*, 50.

farmer from barbarism and decline".¹⁸⁷ Loubser confirms the primacy of the Bible for the frontier Boers when he writes:

Under frontier conditions the symbolic resources of their religious system were reduced to the bare essentials given in the Bible. There was no educational system beyond the most rudimentary beginnings, with almost no differentiations in the cultural content. As a result the Afrikaners' definition of their situation, their conceptions of themselves, of others, and of the world, were derived from symbolism and mythology of the Bible, especially the Old Testament. The meaning of their being in the new land found expression in the symbolism of the Chosen People, the Promised Land, the Children of Ham, and the Philistines. They were called and led by Jehovah, their King, Ruler, and Judge, to glorify him by establishing his kingdom on the dark continent among the heathen. The Calvinist doctrines of predestination and election provided justification of their position as defined by these constitutive symbols.¹⁸⁸

Further support for this continued commitment to Calvinist doctrines comes from the historian Kruger who notes: "*sekere teologiese aksente mag by hulle anders gelê het, maar hulle was uit die Nederlandse Gereformeerde dampkring.*"¹⁸⁹ [While some theological accents might have been perceived differently, they were from the Dutch Reformed orientation.] Keyter also emphasises the centrality of Calvinist influences when he claims: "*Die gesin en familie was die eintlike of oorheersende samelewingsverband, want kerk en staat se bande en orde was flou. Die heerskappy van die Bybel in hierdie groep is bekend, en die Gereformeerde beskouing is daagliks byna kinderlik volgens die Skrif uitgeleef.*"¹⁹⁰ [Family and kin were the actual or overarching societal institution because the connection between church and state was weak. In this group, the authority of the Bible is well-known

¹⁸⁷ Van Jaarsveld, *Van Riebeeck tot Vorster*, 50.

¹⁸⁸ J.A. Loubser, *The Apartheid Bible: A Critical Review of Racial Theology in South Africa* (Cape Town: Maskew Miller Longman, 1987), 371; D. Kempff, *Gewortel en Gegroei 1652-1806* (Potchefstroom: Potchefstroomse Universiteit, 1981), 16.

¹⁸⁹ Kruger, D.W. "Die Gereformeerde leesstof van ons Kaapse voorouers." *Standpunte* 20, no. 72 (1967): 27.

¹⁹⁰ De W. Keyter, J. "Die Opvoedingsideaal en strewe van die Afrikaner." In *Kultuurgeskiedenis van die Afrikaner*, edited by P. de V. Pienaar, 214-232 (Kaapstad: Nasionale Boekhandel, 1968), 215.

and the Reformed worldview was practiced according to the Scripture in a nearly child-like fashion.]

The Bible, the Heidelberg Catechism and the Psalm Book remained core resources for all four groups of Calvinists throughout the 18th century. However, many elites also read the sermons of Protestant theologians. In showing the similarity between the religious ideas of the Boers and the Calvinism described by Weber, Randall Stokes states:

Another indication of the identity between the Calvinism studied by Weber and Afrikaner Calvinism is the similarity in popularly read religious works. The Afrikaners avidly read the works of Baxter and Ryle, and the sermons of Spurgeon. They were also exposed to the exemplary “lives” of Henry Martyn and Hedley Vicars: several of these being the very works Max Weber used in his analysis of the Protestant ethic.¹⁹¹

In their isolation, Boer patriarchs who were unable to access church services on a regular basis became the religious leaders of their families, often extending their domestic group to include their servants and slaves. Jan Loubser points out that “the family used to gather in the morning and evening “around the home altar,” as it is expressed in Afrikaans, where the father would officiate in Bible reading and prayer”.¹⁹² The centrality of the figure of the father, as patriarch and preacher of Calvinist doctrine, is better understood when one considers that the Boer family was, according to Loubser, the only socializing agency; it “remained the most significant larger collectivity throughout adult life” and it was “the

¹⁹¹ Randall Stokes, "Afrikaner Calvinism and Economic Action: The Weberian Thesis in South Africa." *The American Journal of Sociology* 81, no. 1 (1975): 72.

¹⁹² Jan Loubser, "Calvinism, Equality, and Inclusion: The Case of Afrikaner Calvinism." In *The Protestant Ethic and Modernization: A Comparative View*, edited by S.N. Eisenstadt, 367-383 (New York: Basic Books, 1968), 373.

religious role of the patriarchal father as the manipulator and dispenser of the commands of the Calvinist God” that members of this society internalized.¹⁹³

The underlying religious influences were strongly Calvinist and notions of being members of the elect and predestination underpinned the psycho-social attitude of this group. Van Jaarsveld describes the influence of these ideas on the Boers living in the hinterland in the following way: “*Sy Calvinistiese godsdiens het hom geroepe laat voel*”.¹⁹⁴ [His Calvinist religion made him feel called]. In his comprehensive 1969 study of Calvinism and race, Gerhard Becker concludes that isolation on the frontier fostered unique social attitudes in a very similar fashion to how Calvinism facilitated industrial capitalism, by encouraging both thrift and frugality.¹⁹⁵

2.5. Conclusion

The focus of this chapter has been on the orientation or attitudes displayed by the Boers as actors, in Weber’s sense, in their social world. Here it is worth being reminded that Weber viewed the behaviour of all four Protestant groups that he studied in relation to modern industrial capitalism, including Calvinists, as shaped by a very similar ethos, which he referred to as “worldly asceticism”.¹⁹⁶ Three principal ethical tenets were common to these groups: diligence in worldly callings; strict asceticism with regards to material goods and the indulgence of worldly pleasures; and a systematic use of time.¹⁹⁷

¹⁹³ Loubser, “Calvinism, Equality,” 373; Dr. D. Kempff (1981:33) supports Jan Loubser’s argument that the institution of the family was the primary socializing institution in the hinterland Boer’s construction of reality.

¹⁹⁴ Van Jaarsveld, *Van Riebeeck tot Vorster*, 50.

¹⁹⁵ G. Becker, *Religiöse Faktoren in der Entwicklung der Südafrikanischen Rassenfrage. Ein Beitrag zur Rolle des Calvinismus in Kolonialen Situationen* (Munich: Wilhelm Fink, 1969).

¹⁹⁶ Weber, *The Protestant Ethic*, 120.

¹⁹⁷ Weber, *The Protestant Ethic*, 157.

However, as important for Weber's thesis as the ethos described above was his interpretation of social action. Gerth and Mills remind us of Weber's "interpretative" sociology. They state:

Weber distinguishes different 'types' of motivated actions. Characteristically he rated as the most 'understandable' type those actions which are in the nature of rational expediencies, and of which the conduct of the 'economic man' is a prime example. Less 'rational' actions are typed by Weber in terms of the pursuit of 'absolute ends,' as flowing from affectual sentiments, or as 'traditional.' Since absolute ends are to be taken as 'given' data by the sociologist, an action may be rational with reference to the means employed, but 'irrational' with respect to the ends pursued. 'Affectual' action, which flows purely from sentiment, is a less rational type of conduct: unreflective and habitual, this type is sanctified because it 'has always been done' and is therefore deemed appropriate. These types of 'actions' are construed operationally in terms of the scale of rationality and irrationality. A typological device rather than a 'psychology' of motivation is thus described. This nominalist approach, with its emphasis upon the rational relations of ends and means as the most "understandable" type of conduct, distinguishes Weber's work from conservative thought and its documentary 'understanding' by assimilating the singularity of an object into a spiritualized whole.¹⁹⁸

Although Weber was primarily concerned with modern Western society, in which behaviour is increasingly dominated by what he described as goal-orientated rationality, he distinguished four different forms of motivation driving social action: rational action, as already noted; value-oriented rational action; affective action and traditional action.¹⁹⁹ During the 18th century, the Boers at the Cape were mostly guided by affective and traditional action in their worldviews (*Weltanschauungen*). As was the case with most people in the world at the time, the social action of both urban and frontier Boers reflected behaviour that was very strongly supported by their religious socialization. In Weberian language, both groups were guided by traditional action, in a world where rational motivation for action was trumped by tradition. In other words, both groups followed the examples of their forebears. This was especially the case for those Boers living far from the city, for whom the family and the

¹⁹⁸ Weber, *Essays in Sociology*, 56-7.

¹⁹⁹ The definitions of Weber's social action model are described in chapter 1.

Bible, both shaped by a dominant Calvinist orientation, were often the only socializing institutions. In this environment, traditional and affective motivations for social action were primary influences on people's way of life. Isolation from the city for the frontier Boers encouraged the acceptance of a life of unremitting work in which people was always busy, and this was an attitude that got passed from one generation to another.

The generally poor level of education, especially in rural Boer society, raises a question about the significance of religious texts as agents of socialization. Were there, furthermore, factors apart from these texts that could also carry the specific ideas contained within the texts, even though written many centuries before, and thus propagate the ideas they contain?

There are many cases in the history of world religions where non-literate societies demonstrate very similar responses to "holy" textual injunctions as societies that have varying degrees of literacy. Islam offers one such global example, where most Muslims of the world are not able to understand Arabic, yet behave in thought and action in a manner that is very similar to Arabic-literate Muslims.²⁰⁰ In the case of both *Sunni* and *Shi'i* Islam, the ideas that inform the laity globally are said to be those of the prophet of the religion that was spawned fourteen hundred years ago. Islam was born within an oral culture and in many parts of the contemporary Islamic world it is still practiced within an oral tradition. Similar examples exist within Buddhism where the first written forms of scripture were reported to have been written roughly 400 years after the death of Siddhartha Guatama Sakyamuni (The Buddha), as "the *samgha* (monks) were content to recite the teachings from memory".²⁰¹ Yet

²⁰⁰J. Coffman, "Does the Arabic Language Encourage Radical Islam?" *The Middle east Quarterly* (<http://www.meforum.org/276/does-the-arabic-language-encourage-radical-islam>. [2010, June 1].), 1995.

²⁰¹ R.C. Amore and J. Ching. "The Buddhist Tradition." In *World Religions: Eastern Traditions*, edited by W. Oxtoby, 198-315 (Toronto: Oxford, 2002), 220.

despite the absence of written texts in south-Asian Buddhist societies, especially those in the *Theravada* tradition, the laity in Sri-Lanka and parts of India display very similar orientations and attitudes toward life. In India Hinduism, with its *Vedas*, *Upaniṣads*, the *Rāmāyaṇa*, the *Bhagavad Gītā* and the *Mahābhārata* (to name some of the most important historical texts in the tradition), boasts a large following of believers who do not read these sacred texts; nevertheless, millions belonging to the faith hold very similar ideas about key precepts such as compassion, *karma*, *dharma* and *nirvana*. The point is that in most histories of religions, the mode of knowing for most believers is through the tradition of the ancestors: it is how my father or mother behaved and his father or mother before. This is also true of 18th century Boer society, where the only form of Christianity available for almost all of the period of VOC rule was that of Calvinism. Here the laity, who had limited access to education, was socialized within Calvinist doctrine.

In my analysis of Cape Boer settler society during the 18th century, Weber's "affectual" and "traditional" action can be seen to permeate the conduct of the actors of this society. Evidence for this can be found in the "*huisgodsdienst*" (home church) around the Bible – especially the Old Testament, the Heidelberg Catechism and the Book of Psalms. Further support for the strong Calvinist orientation of this society comes from the insistence on religious exclusivity by the Church administration in Amsterdam at the level of synod decision making throughout VOC-rule.²⁰² As Keyter points out, the authority of the Bible was supreme and the Reformed worldview was practiced according to the Scriptures in a child-like fashion.²⁰³ In other words, the conduct of these Calvinists was "unreflective and

²⁰² C. Spoelstra, *Bouwstoffen voor de geschiedenis der Nederduitsch-Gereformeerde Kerken in Z.A.* (Amsterdam: HAUM, 1906), 219.

²⁰³ Keyter, "Die Opvoedingsideaal," 215.

habitual” - this type of behaviour was sanctified and deemed appropriate because it had “always” been done.²⁰⁴

In conclusion, this chapter has shown that Calvinism was a central coherent feature, at least as the religious orientation of the majority of the white settler society at the Cape, throughout the period under discussion. The region offered very different historical contingencies from other areas where Calvinism was practiced at the time. However, what I have sought and found are key elements of the peculiar Protestant ethic in major sectors of society, especially the Boer communities living in the hinterland regions. Here again, the descriptions of this ethic derive from the deployment of Weber’s ideal types to trace phenomena like hard work, frugality and honesty, especially within a calling. The way of life of the Boers of the hinterland regions, also points toward the development of an individualism that was central to the relationship between Calvinists and their Calvinist God. The extreme isolation experienced by the Boers on the frontier found a comfortable fit with John Calvin’s original doctrines, where salvation is individual.

²⁰⁴ Weber, *Essays in Sociology*, 56.

Chapter 3: The Cape Afrikaners and the Voortrekkers, 1795 – 1860.

The period between 1795 and 1860 delineates a time of major economic and socio-political change in the region. Great Britain established itself as the dominant colonial power in southern Africa, taking over the Cape as a colony from the VOC for the first time in 1795 and later establishing a further colonial outpost in Natal, on the east coast. The period covered by this chapter ends with the momentous discovery of diamonds in the inland region around what was to become Kimberley. As described in the chapter that follows, the diamond discoveries around Kimberley, followed by the discovery of gold in the Transvaal, would transform economic relations in the region. But equally important for my thesis, this chapter covers the period in which Afrikaners divided into two distinct groups: those who migrated inland in search of political independence, who were known as the “Voortrekkers” (literally, those who moved first), and those who remained at the Cape under British rule and became known as the Cape Afrikaners. The continued existence and nature of the Protestant ethic is thus investigated in both groups.

By the end of this period, around 1860, approximately two-thirds (66%) of the white population living in the Cape Colony were Afrikaners and about one-fifth (20%) of the total citizenry were of British descent.²⁰⁵ The numbers of people of colour living both at the Cape and in the Boer republics are not known, although Leonard Thompson points out that the “Voortrekkers were the dominant minority and their African and coloured servants were the subject majority”.²⁰⁶ In the two Boer republics established by the Voortrekkers, roughly 90% of the whites were Afrikaners while the remaining 10% were people of British or other

²⁰⁵ Van Jaarsveld, *van Riebeeck tot Vorster*, 88.

²⁰⁶ Leonard Thompson, *Co-operation and Conflict: The High Veld*. Vol. I, in *The Oxford History of South Africa*, edited by Monica Wilson and Leonard Thompson, 391-446 (Cape Town: Oxford University Press, 1969), 408.

European descent.²⁰⁷ Important for the analysis of the Protestant ethic is that the Voortrekkers moved away from both the material advantages that a ready market presented and the administrative structures that the Cape under British administration offered. In other words, by migrating inland the Voortrekkers slowed their engagement with formal administrative structures in government and business and also delayed their engagement with formal institutions of education and law.

An analysis of the events of this period lays the foundations for the interpretation (*Verstehen*) of the relationship between Afrikaner Calvinism and modern industrial capitalism in the late 19th and early 20th century. In order to achieve this, this chapter looks first at the impact of imperialist capitalism (in the Weberian sense) on the economy of the region and the introduction of new forms of bureaucratic administration by the British. For Weber, an efficient bureaucracy is congruous with modern capitalism. This is followed by a discussion of the issue of agency in the Cape wine industry, which looks at the attitude of the Cape wine farmers toward wine as a product for the local and international market. By assessing the farmers' behaviour toward the quality of the products they produce and their willingness to engage improved technologies to improve their products, will contribute toward an understanding of where these actors lie in relation to the Protestant ethic ideal type. I will also look at the developments in religion for the region. This is particularly important since the British administration needed to govern a region in which the population paid religious allegiance to the Dutch and in the north, the Voortrekkers developed new religious denominations within the Reformed tradition. Finally, the chapter looks at the Great Trek and the socio-economic conditions in the Boer republics in order to better understand the actors of

²⁰⁷ G.D. Scholtz, *Die ontwikkeling van die politieke denke van die Afrikaner*. Vol. 1 (Johannesburg: Voortrekkerspers, 1967), 22-23.

the Calvinist tradition and their behaviour in relation to the Protestant ethic and the spirit of capitalism ideal types.

The historian Andrew Bank reminds us that the Cape produced no historical studies before the 1820s and that the travel narratives of the 17th, 18th and early 19th centuries form the chief repository of historical data for latter-day historians.²⁰⁸ My main sources for this chapter are thus travel narratives, supplemented by other secondary sources, including biographies for this period. It is also essential to bear in mind that although my focus is on developments among the white, Dutch-speaking community, the great majority of the population was black; black people were further divided along ethno-political lines. The arrival of Britain as the dominant colonial power and the establishment of the two Boer republics in the interior were momentous events for the subsequent history of these societies, although in this time many were able to retain a degree of relative autonomy.

3.1. Economic and Political Changes and Opportunities

In September 1795 the British occupied the Cape, in order to prevent the French from taking possession of the region as a consequence of France defeating the Netherlands, so ending close on 150 years of VOC rule.²⁰⁹ However, this occurred at a particularly tumultuous time in the history of Europe, and this British administration only lasted as an interlude until 1803, when Dutch rule in the form of the Batavian government — the Netherlands became known as the Batavian Republic after being defeated by France — was

²⁰⁸ Andrew Bank, "The Great Debate and the Origins of South African Historiography." *The Journal of African History* 38, no. 2 (1997): 262.

²⁰⁹ William M. Freund, "The Cape under the transitional governments, 1795-1814." In *The Shaping of South African Society 1652-1820*, edited by R. Elphick & H. Giliomee, 211-240 (Cape Town: Longman Penguin, 1980), 211.

re-imposed. The period of Batavian rule also turned out to be an interlude and in 1806 British rule was re-established at the Cape.

At the time of the first British occupation, relationships between the free burghers (particularly those in the frontier regions of the Cape), and the VOC administration were not without conflict. For years before the British arrival, the VOC administration had been unable to impose its will on the frontier farmers due to a lack of manpower, the distance between Cape Town and the inland districts, and the difficulty of traveling to outlying areas because of the harsh terrain. The British arrived at a time when the colony was also experiencing conflict with both the Khoi and Xhosa tribes living within and on the borders of the Dutch colony. Historian Hermann Giliomee refers to the uprising of the Khoikhoi in conjunction with the Xhosa in 1799 and 1802.²¹⁰ He also notes that the frontier settlers were already in revolt against the authority of the central administration before the British arrived and would do so again during British rule.²¹¹ These tensions were further fuelled by considerable hostility to British occupation from those settlers living in the west of the colony. In this context the Cape was negotiated back to the Dutch by means of the Treaty of Amiens in 1803.²¹²

The Batavian government appointed commissioner-general, J.A. de Mist, to implement a memorandum that promised to make the Cape more governable and financially

²¹⁰ Hermann Giliomee, "The Eastern Frontier, 1770-1812." In *The Shaping of South African Society 1652-1820*, edited by R. Elphick and H. Giliomee, 291-337 (Cape Town: Longman Penguin, 1980), 310-11.

²¹¹ Hermann Giliomee, "The burgher rebellions on the Eastern Frontier, 1795-1815." In *The Shaping of South African Society*, edited by R. Elphick and H. Giliomee, 340-356 (Cape Town: Longman Penguin, 1980), 339-340.

²¹² Freund, "The Cape", 213.

viable.²¹³ However, most historians agree that the Batavians were unsuccessful in bringing about the changes that they had originally espoused. Theal points out that they were hampered by their lack of financial resources as well as the unwillingness of the local white population to conform to the radical changes in the running of their schools and the church that the administration attempted to impose.²¹⁴ Not being able to impose “radical changes” in the church at the Cape supports the notion that the Cape Reformed Church was strongly committed in their ideas and traditions. Freund supports this view and adds that both de Mist and Janssens, the Batavian governor who followed him, became disillusioned by the poor economic prospects at the Cape. Neither of them predicted economic recovery by the time the Cape fell yet again to the British in 1806.²¹⁵

The second British occupation in 1806 marked the third change of administration at the Cape between 1795 and 1814. As Freund points out, while the period between 1806 and 1814 was politically more stable, the British introduced few administrative and structural institutional changes at this time.²¹⁶ This lack of change was largely due to the uncertainty of the British as to the future control of the Cape, while the Napoleonic wars remained unresolved. More importantly, this was, according to Freund, “a period of consolidation of white control over the black population in the countryside”:

In the master-servant relationship the British and the Batavians intervened with increasing decisiveness on the side of the masters. Social control was also served

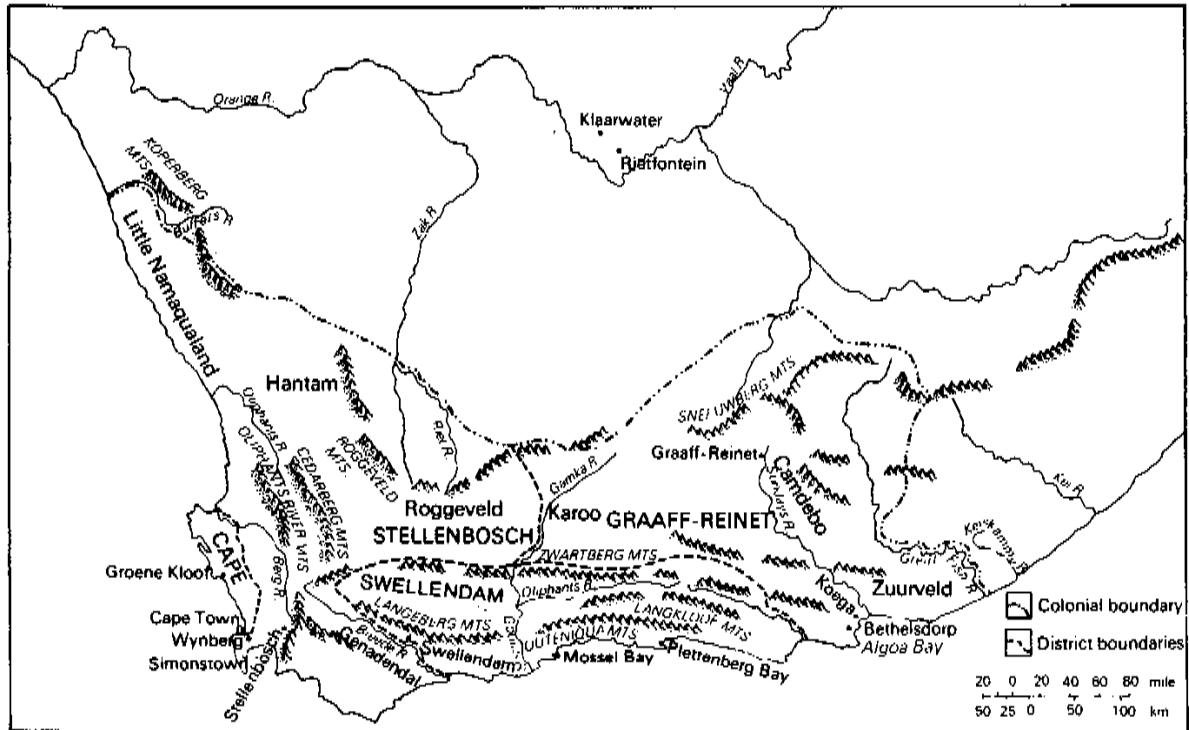
²¹³ J.A. De Mist, "The Memorandum of Commissary J.A. de Mist." Translated by K.M. Jeffreys. Cape Town, 1920

²¹⁴ G.M. Theal, *A History of South Africa since September 1795*. 2 vols. (London: Sonnenschein, 1906), 121.

²¹⁵ Freund, “The Cape”, 213.

²¹⁶ Freund, “The Cape”, 214.

by increased bureaucratization of an administration, the basic structure of which, however, was only gradually altered.²¹⁷



Map 1: The Cape Colony in 1803

Source: Hermann Giliomee, *Die Kaap tydens die Eerste Britse Bewind. 1795-1803* (HAUM, 1975)

On 13 August 1814 the Dutch finally ceded the Cape permanently to the British at the London Convention.²¹⁸ While the local economy had, in spite of the misgivings of the Batavian governors, already begun to show positive trends in the transitional period between 1803 and 1806, the permanence of Britain in the region became the catalyst for significant economic growth. This was due to increased demand for products by the British military that was garrisoned at the Cape as well as an influx of British immigrants to the Cape. This economic upturn continued after Britain decided to settle some 5 000 British immigrants

²¹⁷ Freund, "The Cape", 214.

²¹⁸ Freund, "The Cape", 213.

along the eastern frontier in 1820.²¹⁹ The increased presence of British subjects at the Cape also brought with it a British commitment to cement British ties and institutions within the new colony. Between 1795 and 1860, the most significant influences on the South African economy were British, especially at the Cape, and it is to these influences that I now turn.

3.2. British Imperial Capitalism and Free trade

As already noted, before 1795 the economic opportunities available to the local population at the Cape were limited due to the VOC policy of restricting individual trade.²²⁰ The fact that not a single product of local whites' commercial endeavours made it to a reputable market in the Netherlands during the century and a half of VOC-rule is testimony to the VOC's commitment to keeping the local population out of international commerce.²²¹ In this time, Britain had become the leading industrial nation in the world. By the turn of the 18th century, its move away from an agriculture-based economy had stimulated a growing demand for raw materials, including from British-controlled colonies.²²² It is with this in mind that G.D. Scholtz has argued that after 1806 opportunities abounded for the Cape population, especially in relation to the British textile industry where Cape wool could be used.²²³ Furthermore, the influx of British soldiers and settlers to the Cape encouraged production in the local market.²²⁴

²¹⁹ J. Boas and Michael Weiskopf. "The Activities of the London Missionary Society in South Africa, 1806-1836: An Assessment." *African Studies Review* 16, no. 3 (1973): 431.

²²⁰ Van Jaarsveld, *van Riebeeck tot Vorster*, 39.

²²¹ Scholtz, *Die ontwikkeling Vol. 1*, 41.

²²² Scholtz, *Die ontwikkeling Vol. 1*, 41.

²²³ Scholtz, *Die ontwikkeling Vol. 1*, 41.

²²⁴ Scholtz, *Die ontwikkeling Vol. 1*, 41.

Another consideration was that until the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869, the Cape sea route remained central to Britain's maritime industry and its regular trade with India.²²⁵ During the last decade of the VOC era, at most a few dozen ships stopped at the Cape on an annual basis. However, from 1806 – 1825 the average was 134 ships per year. In the following ten years until 1835 this annual average increased to 225.²²⁶ By 1854 the total number of ships visiting Cape Town in that one year numbered 824; 704 of these were British and 122 were ships from other countries.²²⁷

Besides the growing market for the local population under British rule, Cape products also enjoyed preferential status for a period in Britain.²²⁸ These factors contributed to continued growth in the Cape export market over the entire period 1795 – 1860. The rise in annual exports is reflected in the table below:

Table 1: Average Exports (1807 – 1855)

Years	Average value of exports
1807 – 1810	£36, 500
1811 – 1815	£93, 600
1821 – 1825	£191, 400
1831 – 1835	£234, 500
1841 – 1845	£298, 100
1851 – 1855	£684, 400

Source: C.G.W. Schuman, *Structural Changes and Business Cycles in South Africa 1806-1936* (New York: Staples Press, 1938), 44.

²²⁵ Scholtz, *Die ontwikkeling Vol. 1*, 42.

²²⁶ G.M. Theal, *Records of the Cape Colony: copied for the Cape government, from the manuscript documents in the Public Record Office, London*. Vol. II. (London: Clowes, 1897-1905), 43.

²²⁷ G.M. Theal, *Records of the Cape Colony: copied for the Cape government, from the manuscript documents in the Public Record Office, London*. Vol. III. (London: Clowes, 1897-1905), 142-143.

²²⁸ Scholtz, *Die ontwikkeling Vol. 1*, 42.

Clearly, compared to the stagnation of the economy under the VOC administration, the British take-over of the Cape offered the local population significant opportunities for economic growth.

There was also a shift in British economic ideology over the same period. Initially, like most of its European counterparts at the end of the 18th century, Britain strongly promoted imperialist capitalism and, like the Dutch, it invested in its colonies' economies in order to guide local economic outcomes. At the beginning of the period under review, this approach was evident in the importance Britain attached to maintaining its large shipping infrastructure. However, after the Napoleonic wars, Britain increasingly shifted its imperialist trade policy towards free trade, and by 1860, imperialist capitalist tendencies in British colonial policy strongly accommodated free trade.²²⁹ A. J. Bruwer, the economist, describes the early restrictions as “safeguarding British interests” until “reciprocal preferential treatment between the Colony and the mother country was stopped”.²³⁰

The British administration's initial strong commitment to making the local economy serve British interests within an imperialist capitalist system began with its large naval fleet. Almost all the products produced at the Cape had a ready market in Britain and the transportation of these products, both to and from Britain, was at first handled by the naval fleet.²³¹ In this way, the Cape economy became inextricably linked to that of Britain. For the first time since the establishment of the VOC settlement, many local farmers and merchants at the Cape now had an opportunity for independent economic growth outside the borders of South Africa, because of this economic relationship with Britain. This continued into the era

²²⁹ Scholtz, *Die ontwikkeling Vol. 1*, 43.

²³⁰ A.J. Bruwer, *Protection in South Africa* (Stellenbosch: Pro Ecclesia, 1923), 54-55.

²³¹ Scholtz, *Die ontwikkeling Vol. 1*, 45.

of free trade. For the British, a free trade environment became simply a matter of levying taxes on goods imported into the Cape and taxation on foreign ships carting goods away from the Cape.²³²

3.3. The Beginnings of a Modern Bureaucracy at the Cape

The British occupation of the Cape marked the rudimentary formation of modern bureaucratic institutions in the region. As already mentioned, during the first British occupation, British official opinion was divided on the question of retaining the region and there was little interest in transforming the colony.²³³ Without permanency, the decision to invest fully in the human capital necessary for the effective operation of bureaucratic institutions was stalled. However, after the short-lived Batavian interlude was over in 1806, the majority of the townspeople at the Cape were much more accepting of British rule. This ushered in a relatively stable era which allowed Britain to implement policies and institutions that were better suited to the ideals of the Second British Empire, which were primarily concerned with enlarging Britain's maritime and commercial power so that Britain had the luxury of selling her products around the world.²³⁴ However, it was not until 1814, when the Cape was finally ceded to Britain on a permanent basis, that the new colonial power embarked on cementing its culture of laws and bureaucracy in the region.

As already noted, economic growth at the Cape from 1814 onwards manifested itself in significant investment in Cape business by British entrepreneurs. But more importantly for my thesis, the economic impetus that these increased capital investments brought, promoted

²³² Theal, *Records Vol. 2*, 35-36.

²³³ Freund, "The Cape", 213.

²³⁴ By the First British Empire was meant the 13 American colonies as an integral part of the mother country. Even though the colonies had a certain measure of local autonomy they were dependent on the British in matters of defence and foreign policy. The Second British Empire included the regions colonized after the early 1800s when Britain sought to enlarge their commercial markets for the sale of their goods and services.

the development of bureaucratic institutions both inside and outside the government.

According to Max Weber:

The development of the *money economy*, in so far as a pecuniary compensation of the officials is concerned, is a pre-supposition of bureaucracy. Today, it not only prevails but is predominant. This fact is of very great importance for the whole bearing of bureaucracy, yet by itself it is by no means decisive for the existence of bureaucracy.²³⁵

A paper currency was already in circulation at the Cape, introduced during the last years of the VOC administration.²³⁶ However, a new British currency was introduced on January 1, 1826²³⁷ (the delay attributable to Britain's preoccupation with the aftermath of the Napoleonic wars).²³⁸ Weber's money economy as the necessary prerequisite for bureaucracy was thus put in place.

The significant increase in capital investment after Britain's arrival required a culture of modern bureaucracy at the Cape, a culture that both British and Batavian officials were more familiar with than their colonial counterparts. Consequently, observes William Freund, the spread of British capitalism in the region, was initially in the hands of traders such as Michael Hogan, John Murray and Alexander Tennant.²³⁹ They were British entrepreneurs who settled at the Cape after 1795 and rapidly gained ascendancy over the foreign trade, so that by the early 1820s Cape traders were mainly agents for British firms.²⁴⁰

²³⁵ Weber, *Essays in Sociology*, 204.

²³⁶ Scholtz, *Die ontwikkeling Vol. 1*, 45.

²³⁷ Scholtz, *Die ontwikkeling Vol. 1*, 46.

²³⁸ Scholtz, *Die ontwikkeling Vol. 1*, 45.

²³⁹ Freund, "The Cape", 215.

²⁴⁰ Freund, "The Cape", 215.

For Weber, modern bureaucracies have a number of characteristic features. He states that modern officialdom functions in the following manner:

(1) There is the principle of official *jurisdictional areas*, which are generally ordered by rules, that is, by laws or administrative regulations; (2) the principles of *office hierarchy* and of channels of appeal (*Instanzenzug*) stipulate a clearly established system of super- and sub-ordination in which there is a supervision of the lower offices by the higher ones; (3) the management of the modern office is based upon written documents (the files), which are preserved in their original or draft form, and upon a staff of subaltern officials and scribes of all sorts; (4) office management, at least all specialized office management – and such management is distinctly modern – usually presupposes thorough training in a field of specialization; (5) when the office (*Kantoor*) is fully developed, official activity demands the *full working capacity* of the official, irrespective of the fact that the length of his obligatory working hours in the bureau may be limited; and finally, (6) the management of the office follows *general rules*, which are more or less stable, more or less exhaustive, and which can be learned.²⁴¹

It would seem that the bureaucratic order described by Weber was already visible at the Cape from 1795 onwards. In his account of the Cape between 1795 and 1814, Freund describes key features of British and Batavian rule that signaled a move towards Weberian-type bureaucracy. Amongst these were the growth in professionalism in government, the increase in official salaries, and the introduction of salaries for certain categories of work where none had existed before. In fact, says Freund, official salaries became by far the largest item in government expenditure.²⁴² A similar bureaucratic drive had been displayed by the Batavian commissioner de Mist, who promised further advances in professionalism and greater inclusion of the colonists in administration. De Mist also introduced several Dutch graduate lawyers into the Council of Justice in Cape Town and created an accounting office, the *Rekenkamer*.²⁴³ Overall, the number of civil servants grew steadily under both governments

²⁴¹ Weber, *Economy and Society*, 956-58.

²⁴² Freund, “The Cape”, 230.

²⁴³ Freund, “The Cape”, 230.

while Cape economic, political and religious institutions were slowly transformed along European models of bureaucracy.

Local whites formed the majority of the officials in this nascent modern bureaucracy, leading to a demand for proficiency in the Dutch language as a requirement for key positions. Willem Stephanus van Ryneveld is perhaps the best example of a local official within the British South African bureaucracy from 1795 onwards. In a brief biography of him, H.B. Thom observed that:

Hy was inderdaad Kompanjiesdienaar by uitnemendheid: ruimskoots bedeel met dié bekwaamhede wat hom as 'n suksesvolle beampte bekend laat staan het, maar tewens besiel met die enge amptenaarsgees wat naas die diens van sy owerheid ook eie stoflike belange voorop laat gaan het. Hierdie atmosfeer het ook sy huis deurdring, waar Willem Stephanus dus onder die invloed daarvan opgegroeï het. [He was indeed an outstanding company official: endowed with the faculties that led to the perception of him as a successful official but also equipped with the bureaucratic spirit that led to growth in his personal interests. This atmosphere also permeated his household where Willem Stephanus was raised under its influence.]²⁴⁴

This source confirms that the bureaucratic spirit displayed by van Ryneveld was recognized and utilized by both the British and the Batavians in their endeavours to establish a modern administration. It is of significance for this thesis that at the start of the 19th century many local Dutch-speaking whites were employed in bureaucratic roles at the Cape. This lends support for the argument that the descendants of the first Dutch settlers either already carried the culture of the *Kantoor* (office) with them, or were able to learn these ways.²⁴⁵

²⁴⁴ H.B. Thom, *Willem Stephanus van Ryneveld se Aanmerkingen over de Verbetering van het Vee aan de Kaap de Goede Hoop 1804*. Translated by I.A. Murray & J.L.M. Franken (Kaapstad: Nasionale Pers, 1942), 7.

²⁴⁵ Local officials continued to monopolise government offices even though many economic positions were usurped by British merchants – see Freund, “*The Cape*”, 230.

Along with the increasing mobilization of a modern bureaucracy in the region came an increased demand for the protection by the state of its citizens. Weber argues that there is a close relationship between the demand for order and bureaucratization:

Among purely political factors, the increasing demand of a society, accustomed to absolute pacification, for order and protection ('police') in all fields exerts an especially persevering influence in the direction of bureaucratization. A steady road leads from modifications of the blood feud, sacerdotally, or by means of arbitration, to the present position of the policeman as the 'representative of God on earth.' The former means placed the guarantees for the individual's rights and security squarely upon the members of his sib, who are obligated to assist him with oath and vengeance. Among other factors, primarily the manifold tasks of the so-called 'policy of social welfare' operate in the direction of bureaucratization, for these tasks are, in part, saddled upon the state by interest groups and, in part, the state usurps them, either for reasons of power policy or for ideological motives. Of course, these tasks are to a large extent economically determined.²⁴⁶

In the Cape Colony the demand for state protection was heightened by the on-going conflict with the Xhosa-speaking chieftaincies on the Eastern Frontier, as white settlers pushed to expand their ownership of and control over land.²⁴⁷ This brought them into increased conflict with the new administration in Cape Town. After 1814 the British administration increased their efforts to negotiate with the African chieftaincies in the frontier regions. However, while the fact of these negotiations were known to the Boers around the Cape they suited those whites living furthest from the conflict zones the best. Whites living close to Cape Town, who were by then beginning to enjoy the comforts of an impersonal bureaucracy, felt safe in the knowledge of British efforts to secure a negotiated peace. Most regarded protection by the state against insurgent black tribes people, not the vigilante-like action of Commando groups, as their right as citizens in a modern bureaucracy. Arguably, they were being socialized along

²⁴⁶ Weber, *Essays in Sociology*, 213.

²⁴⁷ The indigenous tribes included Xhosa-speaking tribes that were migrating south-west along the coastal regions of South Africa.

the path of modern bureaucracy faster than those whites living on the frontier regions, who did not expect protection from the state. Instead, they were involved in physical confrontation with the Xhosa chieftaincies on a regular basis and also saw first-hand the ineptness of the British state in dealing with these matters.²⁴⁸

The British agenda of being the primary negotiators with the Xhosa in order to promote stability in the region remained central for the ruling administration. According to Monica Wilson, successive British governors negotiated with the Xhosa chiefs in order to set boundaries “as well as reiterating the demand that interaction with whites other than government officials should ease.”²⁴⁹ Furthermore, they tried to maintain order between the white frontiersmen and the Xhosa who were both competing for hunting and grazing lands, and to stop the raiding of cattle from both sides.²⁵⁰ These diverging developments within Cape society go some way to explain why many Boers in the western regions of the colony did not support the dissident whites of the frontier region when they embarked in 1836 on their exodus in search of new land and political self-determination, in what became known as the Great Trek, discussed further below.

Increased dependence on state protection is one of the signs of a bureaucracy in the making, but other factors also secure a society in the structures of bureaucracy. In the words of Max Weber:

Among essentially technical factors, the specifically modern means of communication enter the picture as pacemakers of bureaucratization. Public land and water-ways, railroads, the telegraph, etc. – they must, in part, necessarily be

²⁴⁸ Giliomee, "The Eastern Frontier, 1770-1812," 314.

²⁴⁹ Monica Wilson, *Co-Operation and Conflict: The Eastern Cape Frontier*. Vol. I, in *The Oxford History of South Africa*, edited by Monica Wilson and Leonard Thompson, 233-271 (Cape Town: Oxford University Press, 1971), 240.

²⁵⁰ Wilson, *Co-Operation and Conflict*, 240.

administered in a public and collective way; in part, such administration is technically expedient. In this respect, the contemporary means of communication frequently play a role similar to that of the canals of Mesopotamia and the regulation of the Nile in the ancient Orient.²⁵¹

In the Cape the coming of the British administration, saw increased efforts to implement European technologies that sped up the processes of bureaucratization. As discussed further below, missionaries played an important part in this. By way of example, Wilson highlights the missionary input in the development of irrigation furrows that every mission station adopted.²⁵² Quoting a paper read by the Protestant missionary J. Stewart at the General Missionary Conference in London in 1878, Wilson notes: “They are engaged in making roads, cutting water-courses, constructing dams, or at work in the fields and gardens about the place. The object is not the value of their labour but the principle that Christianity and idleness are not compatible”.²⁵³ This quote is revealing of the commitment to the values associated with Weber’s Protestant ethic that the missionaries displayed. At the same time the missionaries supported the construction of a bureaucratic society with common modes of communication that required the attention of a central government.²⁵⁴

Improved technologies were soon accompanied by the centralization of military authority under the British army. As already noted, the protection of the citizenry against the hostile forces arrayed against them on the Eastern Frontier called for a bureaucratic force. During the time of the VOC, farmers and free burghers had protected their farms and personal interests in small groups of informally organised commandos. However, from 1814,

²⁵¹ Weber, *Essays in Sociology*, 213.

²⁵² Wilson, *Co-Operation and Conflict*, 240.

²⁵³ Wilson, *Co-Operation and Conflict*, 239.

²⁵⁴ See Comaroff, Jean, and John Comaroff. *Of Revelation and Revolution: Christianity, Colonialism, and Consciousness in South Africa*. Vol. One. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991 on the proletarianisation and the industrialisation of work during this epoch.

and especially after 1820 when waves of British immigrants began to arrive, British naval forces and an increased infantry on the ground supplemented the British administration presence.

In sum, by the end of the first quarter of the 19th century the British were well on their way to establishing the key components of a Weberian bureaucracy as well as laying the foundations of modern industrial capitalism in the region.

In the next section I examine the attitudes of Cape wine farmers to understand what the implementation of a new bureaucratic order and its rationale meant for them. Since wine farming was second only to maize production at the Cape, insights can be drawn from this group of individuals, many of whom had already shown an entrepreneurial spirit in the wine business in the century before British occupation.

3.4. Agency in the Wine Farming Industry

When the British arrived in 1795, wine farming at the Cape was almost a century and a half old.²⁵⁵ As a result of good local and international markets for most of the 18th century, wine farming was, as noted above, second only to grain farming in terms of its importance in the Cape economy.²⁵⁶ Most wines were produced in the Stellenbosch region with the Cape Town district being the second biggest producer.²⁵⁷ The outlying districts of Graaff-Reinet and Swellendam also produced wine, but mostly for personal consumption.²⁵⁸ By 1860 the

²⁵⁵ D.J. van Zyl, *Kaapse wyn en brandewyn, 1795-1860* (Kaapstad: Haum, 1975), 7.

²⁵⁶ J.I.J. Van Rensburg, *Die geskiedenis van die wingerdkultuur in Suid-Afrika tydens die eerste eeu, 1652-1752*. M.A. Thesis (Elsiesrivier: Nasionale Handelsdrukkery, 1954), I.

²⁵⁷ Van Zyl, *Kaapse wyn en brandewyn*, 7.

²⁵⁸ John Barrow, *Travels into the Interior of Southern Africa II*. Vol. 2 (London: Cadell and Davies, 1806), 65, 72 and 83.

districts of Paarl and Stellenbosch contributed 77% of the total wine production in the Cape.²⁵⁹

However, while the Cape had become known for its wine farming, the wine that it produced was of poor quality. In 1824 the *South African Chronicle, and Mercantile Advertiser* commented: “With regard to Cape Madeira, and the Wines in General of this Colony, it is a fact which is acknowledged by everybody, that nothing is so bad in England as the Wines of the Cape ...”²⁶⁰ Many shared this sentiment, including the travellers John Barrow and G. Thompson.²⁶¹ The reasons given for the poor quality and taste of Cape wines included the harvesting of grapes when they were not ripe enough, but the main problem was that most farmers had a careless attitude towards wine-making. According to van Zyl, in his 1975 study of the wine industry between 1795 and 1860, either too much brandy was added to the wine, or the brandy was of a poor quality, or production took place at higher than required temperatures.²⁶² The *South African Chronicle, and Mercantile Advertiser* also noted that as the wine wholesalers and distributors paid the same price for both good and poor quality wines, wine farmers had little reason to improve their farming methods.²⁶³ Finally, what also contributed to the poor quality of Cape wines was that, with the move to free trade, the British administration put in place a licensing system where anybody, even those of

²⁵⁹ Van Zyl, *Kaapse wyn en brandewyn*, 10.

²⁶⁰ *South African Chronicle, and Mercantile Advertiser*, “Foreign Wines,” December 15, 1824.

²⁶¹ Barrow, *Travels Vol 2*, 156; G. Thompson, *Travels and adventures in Southern Africa*. Edited by Vernon S. Forbes. (Cape Town: Van Riebeeck Society), 392.

²⁶² Van Zyl, *Kaapse wyn en brandewyn*, 47.

²⁶³ *The South African Commercial Advertiser*, Stellenbosch, February 7, 1824.

questionable character, were allowed to sell wine: leaving a sense that at the time the quality of the wine business was open to carelessness in production and sales.²⁶⁴

The dismal quality of Cape wine at the time is indicative of the attitude of the farmers towards their product. In accordance with their initial drive to bring the Cape within the fold of imperial capitalism, the British administration employed the services of experts like British immigrant William Caldwell a supposed expert on wine farming and production.²⁶⁵ In December 1811 and in January 1812 he tabled two reports to the Colonial Office stating that Cape farmers were reluctant to adapt to new wine farming methods due to their orientation to traditional ways and their resistance to modern technologies. He added that: “The Inhabitants of this Colony are more wedded to their Prejudices, the Customs and Habits of their Forefathers, than any set of People, I ever knew”.²⁶⁶ There was also a wine distributor who cared less about the quality of wines so long as an enormous profit could be made.²⁶⁷ At the same time, there were exceptions to the general condition. Paul Roux and Pieter van der Byl of the Stellenbosch district were wine farmers who had already adopted better farming methods and technologies.²⁶⁸

On June 23, 1800 an effort was made by Governor George Yonge to improve the situation in the industry, with the establishment of The Society for the Encouragement of

²⁶⁴ Cape State Archives, First British Occupation, 85 Sketches of the Political and Commercial History of the Cape of Good Hope, 1795, 62-66.

²⁶⁵ Van Zyl, *Kaapse wyn en brandewyn*, 53.

²⁶⁶ Cape State Archives, Colonial Office, 37 Letters received from ...Sundry Civil Officers, No. 60: W. Caldwell – H. Alexander, December 1811.

²⁶⁷ Cape State Archives, Colonial Office, 38 Letters received from ...Private Individuals, No. 22: Rusticus – Alexander, 4.3.1812, No. 28: P.A. Myburgh – J.F. Cradock, March 1812.

²⁶⁸ Van Zyl, *Kaapse wyn en brandewyn*, 54.

Agriculture, Arts and Science in the Colony.²⁶⁹ With this initiative came the first incentives for farmers, in the form of prizes for those who presented the most improved wines²⁷⁰ although Van Zyl points out that no prizes were immediately awarded though advertised.²⁷¹ When the recommendations proposed by British experts were taken up by some farmers the quality of their wines improved significantly. Other attempts by private organizations and individuals throughout the first half of the 19th century seem, however, to have been less successful. This is borne out by the negative comments made in 1860 by a Legal Committee chosen to investigate the Cape wine industry, which pointed out: “The wine merchants make no distinction in price between one wine and another – they pay the same price; and that is the simple reason why the wine is not improved”.²⁷²

This says much about the continued commitment of most Cape farmers’ to traditional ways and their resistance to rationalizing their wine-making methods. There are also hints of a spirit of ruthless capitalism - the pursuit of maximum profit with minimal inputs - in some farmers, which stands in contrast to the sober capitalism that Weber associates with the Protestant ethic. At the same time, there is also evidence of some Cape farmers’ using more rational production methods than the majority of farmers exposed to improved farming methods during the first few decades of the 19th century. It is apparent that the British authorities were trying to move the colony further along the rationalization process, by promoting more advanced means of farming among the locals. It is also important to remember that throughout this period the wine farmers of the Cape were financially the most

²⁶⁹ Cape State Archives, First British Occupation, 20 Agricultural Society: Minutes, 23.6.1800, 39.

²⁷⁰ Cape State Archives, First British Occupation, 20 Agricultural Society: Proposal for establishing a Society for the Encouragement of Agriculture, Arts and Science in the Colony of the Cape of Good Hope, 43-45.

²⁷¹ Van Zyl, *Kaapse wyn en brandewyn*, 68.

²⁷² Report of the Select Committee appointed by the House of Assembly on the 23rd May, 1860.

successful group among the white population and could trace their ancestry back to the 17th century Cape settlers. Even though the quality of wine was considered poor by the British, wine sales showed continued growth throughout the period. Van Zyl reminds us that when all contributions to the economy are taken into account, the wine industry and wine trade remained one of the most important industries in the economy of the Cape Colony.²⁷³

Many wine farmers had inherited their farms from their parents and were in a position of wealth through inheritance rather than entrepreneurial spirit. In some cases wealth had been accumulated through the monopoly system under the VOC, whereby certain individuals were able to secure sole rights in the meat, wine and beer industry. With the changes in political administration from the end of the 18th century, these monopolies were abolished, thus placing many of these privileged individuals and families in a more competitive market. Here the case of Dirk Gysbert van Reenen, who came from a successful family living in an architecturally designed home in Newlands, is revealing. In the late 1700s he owned a meat and wine monopoly contract and also the only beer production rights in the colony.²⁷⁴ To stock the wine and meat industry, the family also owned or rented a number of feeder farms in the interior of the Cape.²⁷⁵ With the abolition of the monopoly system by the Batavian administration after 1803, van Reenen's commercial empire was badly hit.²⁷⁶ He tabled many complaints to both the British and the Batavian administrations,²⁷⁷ but in the end, he had to

²⁷³ Van Zyl, *Kaapse wyn en brandewyn*, 236.

²⁷⁴ Van Reenen, Dirk Gysbert. *Die joernaal van Dirk Gysbert van Reenen 1803*. Translated by J.L.M. Franken and Ian M. Murray (Kaapstad: Van Riebeeck-Vereniging, 1937), 2-3.

²⁷⁵ Van Reenen, *Dirk Gysbert van Reenen*, 3.

²⁷⁶ Van Reenen, *Dirk Gysbert van Reenen*, 7.

²⁷⁷ Van Reenen, *Dirk Gysbert van Reenen*, 6 – 8.

sell off his farms and after his death his estate was declared “notoriously insolvent”.²⁷⁸

Dirk Gysbert van Reenen was part of the economic elite, that Giliomee says, formed the upper strata of Cape economy.²⁷⁹ The majority of the local white population living in Cape Town and those living in the winelands in relatively close proximity to the town, however, made a living through harvesting, renting out wagons and slaves or trade at the harbour.²⁸⁰ Giliomee points out that before the British takeover the Cape had only 10 or 12 people who could be considered wealthy. Hence, as pointed out earlier, the Boers found themselves having to compete with a very different economic order under British rule, especially from the 1860s with the coming of the mining era.

3.5. Challenges to the Reformed Church

In this section I first look at some significant developments in the relationship between church and state in this period, and then describe the migration of thousands of Boers in search of independence outside British-controlled lands (this event became known as the Great Trek and those who migrated as Voortrekkers). The discussion on the events above are followed by a discussion on the material conditions in the Boer republics of the Orange Free State and Transvaal followed by a discussion on the religious isolation and the consequences thereof for the Boers in their new republics.

The impact of religion on political decision-making during the VOC period is well documented. It has been pointed out in the previous chapter that the VOC insisted on the exclusivity of Calvinism for most of its period of administration; the Lutherans were the only

²⁷⁸ Van Reenen, *Dirk Gysbert van Reenen*, 8.

²⁷⁹ Hermann Giliomee, *Die Kaap tydens die Eerste Britse Bewind 1795-1803* (Kaapstad: Hollandsch Afrikaansche Uitgevers Maatschappij, 1975), 26 - 7.

²⁸⁰ Giliomee, *Eerste Britse Bewind*, 26.

tolerated outside the Reformed tradition, and then only at the end of the VOC period.²⁸¹ After the British takeover, however, the relationship between church and state began to shift.

At first, the policy of the British was to afford the Reformed Church the same rights and protection it had enjoyed under VOC rule, and not to allow the propagation of religious ideologies which went against the official doctrines of the local Reformed community.²⁸² In the transitional negotiations with the VOC, the British assured the local Reformed Church that its religious authority would be allowed to continue without interference.²⁸³ And so the British administration continued to appoint officials and clergy of the Reformed Church as their predecessors had done.²⁸⁴ As had been the case with the VOC administration before them, they also remained in control of church funds.²⁸⁵

Amidst all the challenges taking place at the Cape, was the growth of missionary societies in Europe with their sights set on the non-Christian world. Missionary work grew significantly as a result of the philosophical humanism during the period of the French Revolution.²⁸⁶ The Cape was not denied this missionary zeal. Of the first missionaries to come to the Cape were those of the Moravian mission in Baviaanskloof in 1792. Other missionary movements of importance to the region included the London Missionary Society (LMS) in 1799 and the Rhenish Missionary Society in 1828. On arrival at the Cape, Dr.

²⁸¹ Giliomee, *Eerste Britse Bewind*, 222.

²⁸² First British Occupation, 53 Letters Despatched: F. Dundas – Kerkraad van Stellenbosch, 21/7/1799. No. 25; Giliomee, *Eerste Britse Bewind*, 222.

²⁸³ Giliomee, *Eerste Britse Bewind*, 223.

²⁸⁴ Giliomee, *Eerste Britse Bewind*, 222.

²⁸⁵ Giliomee, *Eerste Britse Bewind*, 224.

²⁸⁶ Rodney Davenport. "Settlement, Conquest and Theological Controversy: The Churches of Nineteenth-century European Immigrants." In *Christianity in South Africa: A Political, Social & Cultural History*, edited by Richard Elphick and Rodney Davenport (Cape Town and Oxford: David Philip and James Currey, 1997), 51-67.

Johannes Van der Kemp of the LMS and Ds. Michiel Vos, a Dutch Reformed Church minister, along with others established the South African Missionary Society (SAMS). The LMS used the structures of the SAMS to promote its work in South Africa.²⁸⁷ Villa-Vicencio and Grassow tells us that the SAMS' constitution expressed the general attitude of most missionaries towards the colonial authorities at the time:

The board of directors of this society was requested to be mindful of the general duty of all Christians, that it is the Lord's will that all Christians are expected to be obedient and respectful of the Government, and to be very careful to avoid anything which may cause conflict between State and Church interests.²⁸⁸

In line with the above attitude and official policy, the first missionaries to come to the Cape after 1795 were strictly instructed not to preach to the local Reformed Church community without first having the sanction of the Reformed Church council.²⁸⁹ However, in time, this approach changed. A critical moment was reached with the Abolition of Slavery Act, which emancipated slaves at the Cape in 1833. When, thereafter, the Reformed Church refused to baptize certain free blacks and freed slaves, the British intervened by allowing military chaplains the right to administer the sacraments.²⁹⁰ In this time it also became apparent that the Lutheran community no longer concerned themselves about the limitations placed on them by the previous VOC establishment. They felt that the Reformed Church had lost its overwhelming authority with the state after the British takeover.²⁹¹

²⁸⁷ Charles Villa-Vicencio and Peter Grassow. "Christianity and African Culture: Christians, Converts and Resisters, 1795-1820." In *Christianity and the Colonization of South Africa, 1487 to 1870*, by Charles Villa-Vicencio and Peter Grassow, 8-27 (Cape Town: RICS/UCT, 2005), 8.

²⁸⁸ Villa-Vicencio and Grassow, "Christianity and African Culture", 8.

²⁸⁹ First British Occupation, 54 Letters Despatched: Ross – Serrurier, 7/1/1802. No. 393.

²⁹⁰ A. Moorrees, *Die Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk in Suid Afrika, 1652-1873* (Kaapstad: Suid-Afrikaanse Bybelvereniging, 1937), 433.

²⁹¹ Giliomee, *Eerste Britse Bewind*, 223.

The opening up of the Cape to missionary activity from the turn of the 18th century had a major influence on all forms of religiosity in the region, including that of Calvinism. In a nutshell, the dilemma facing the new administration was that while they had the power to impose their political authority on the local white population they lacked the religious authority – traditional, legal or charismatic – to successfully insist on any lasting changes in the cultural sphere, including an anglicization policy. A key intervention that tilted the balance in their favour was the decision to recruit Calvinist clergy from Scotland. The historian Bradlow argues that the British administration was motivated by a genuine shortage of Reformed clergy to import ministers from Scotland.²⁹² In correspondence with Earl Bathurst, the British Secretary of State, Somerset wrote of the beginning of a plan to import Scottish ministers to the Cape thus:

All the endeavours which Your Lordship has made to procure a sufficiency of clergy from Holland, have not had the effect of supplying vacancies which had occurred and even with the aid of half-educated colonists who have returned here with letters of ordination, still the wants of the colony in this respect have not been provided for. In this dilemma I have availed myself of the services of the Reverend Mr. Thom²⁹³, a gentleman regularly ordained of the Scotch Church, the tenets of which are, as I am informed, precisely similar to those of the Reformed establishments of this place. I however, previously to taking this step, obtained the certificate of four of the established clergy of this place of the conformity of Mr. Thom's religious principles to those of the Calvinistic church of this place.²⁹⁴

Historians of the period do not agree on the precise motivation behind this step. According to van Jaarsveld the intention was to promote the anglicization of religious practices. Referring specifically to the British Governor who actively promoted missionary activity in his term of office (1814-1826), he states: "Somerset and his successors

²⁹² Bradlow, Edna. *Some Aspects of the Anglicisation Policy of Lord Charles Somerset* (Cape Town: University of Cape Town, 1962), 5.

²⁹³ Reverend Mr. Thom was a former member of the London Missionary Society.

²⁹⁴ Theal, *Records* Vol. 3, 116-7.

systematically tried to anglicize the church, because they realized that the fall of this bulwark would herald the end of Dutch nationality”.²⁹⁵

Whatever the intention, the outcome of this intervention was that the British administration gained greater authority in the realm of religion. The enlistment of the Reverend Mr. Thom to recruit Calvinist Scottish ministers to the Cape helped the anglicization policy that the British sought. The Scottish ministers had to first be proficient in Dutch.²⁹⁶ However, after 1820, with the arrival of over 5 000 British settlers on the Eastern frontier region, the frontier Boers felt the onslaught of the anglicization policy a lot more displeasing. At the same time, other missionary activity amongst the black population, including the work of Dr. John Philip and Dr. Johannes Van der Kemp, sped up the process that led to the eventual abolition of slavery.

By the early 19th century the Boers at the Cape had evolved a way of life that was rooted in traditional ways. It was characterised by farming and production for the local market, a strong religious commitment to the Calvinist faith and very little experience of political self-administration. The limitations imposed by the VOC in their economic world had been followed by uncomfortable exposure to competition by British immigrant entrepreneurs, both developments which kept them from the material benefits of greater participation in trade. As a result of growing dissatisfaction with the socio-political events of the period, the time came when a large percentage of Boer farmers living on the eastern boundaries of the Cape decided to migrate inland, to areas outside British control. They took their Calvinism with them. The next section describes key developments in the history of this

²⁹⁵ F.A. Van Jaarsveld, *The Awakening of Afrikaner Nationalism, 1868-1881* (Pretoria: Human & Rousseau, 1961), 2.

²⁹⁶ Giliomee, *The Afrikaners*, 199.

group, who would eventually be reunited with their Cape cousins within a single political entity after the establishment of the Union of South Africa in 1910.

3.6. The Great Trek

The social dislocation being experienced by frontier farmers left many in the group feeling that they were faced with only a few options. One option was to fight to retain control over the land that they were contesting with the Xhosa-speaking chieftaincies on the border. Another option was to migrate inland away from British authority, in search of new land and political independence. After considering these options, those of heightened political persuasion advocated the second one. According to Leonard Thompson, by mid-1837 about 5 000 Voortrekkers had crossed the Orange River in a movement that came to be known as the Great Trek, and by 1845 a total of perhaps 14,000 people of Boer extraction had left the Cape Colony.²⁹⁷

Historians have given many reasons for the Great Trek. Poverty; disillusionment with British administrative policies, the loss of slave labour, inadequate compensation by the British for slaves who were freed, religious zeal, and the need for self-rule are some. In my view all the above factors had contributed to the destruction of this frontier population's worldview.²⁹⁸ In this mix, however, the Voortrekkers' identification with the religious ideas of predestination and their sense of calling as owners of God's land were certainly important

²⁹⁷ Leonard Thompson points out in *The Oxford History of South Africa* that most of the Voortrekkers were derived from the Colonial *trekboer* community of semi-nomadic pastoral farmers. It was their *trekboer* mode of life that made it possible for them to become Voortrekkers and determined their manner of migrating and settling in new terrain. Quoted in Leonard Thompson, *Co-operation and Conflict: The High Veld*. Vol. I, in *The Oxford History of South Africa*, edited by Monica Wilson and Leonard Thompson, 391-446 (Cape Town: Oxford University Press, 1969), 406. Thompson's account was informed by the work of Eric. A. Walker, *The Great Trek*, 6.

²⁹⁸ The abolition of slavery occurred in 1833, three years before the Boers decided on migration.

themes under which they rallied to support migration.²⁹⁹ According to the sociologist, Stokes:

The Afrikaners' identity with the Hebrew tribes was so strong that many believed they were literally retracing the Exodus as they made their Great Trek into the northern wilderness. An illustration of this belief is that the Nylstrom (Nile River), a small river in the Transvaal, was thought to be the Nile, and the ancient ruins in the Israelitische Kloof (Canyon of the Israelites) were believed to have been left by the Hebrew tribes during their wanderings.³⁰⁰

Stokes' argument is in line with the point of M.C. Vos, that a strong reliance on the scriptures of the Old Testament underpinned the attitude of the trekboers to religion. Only this time, the Voortrekkers came to actualize their religious understanding, through Old Testament rationalizations, in their frontier and migration experiences.³⁰¹

We are reminded by scholars like Jan Loubser that Weber's variables of capitalism and religious ethic are interdependent phenomena that come together very differently under various circumstances.³⁰² From this point of view, cases where there is no significant correlation or relationship between these variables can deepen our understanding of the relationship between capitalism and religion, since they provide an opportunity to explore alternative outcomes to the intersection found in 19th century Europe. South Africa's Calvinist Voortrekkers, with their move to territorial isolation and insularity, offer one such

²⁹⁹ Those whites who decided to move inland, in the event referred to by scholars as the Great Trek will be referred to as *Voortrekkers* from this point on.

³⁰⁰ Stokes, "Afrikaner Calvinism and Economic Action", 62-81. Note that these ideas were not unique to the Voortrekkers and that the reconstruction of Southern African religio-cultural situation of the time in pseudo Biblical terms was found also among educated colonial commentators of the day. See David Chidester, *Savage Systems : Colonialism and Comparative Religion in Southern Africa*. Cape Town: University of Cape Town Press, 1996.

³⁰¹ M.C. Vos, *Merkwaardig verhaal aangaande het leven en de lotgevallen van Michiel Christiaan Vos, als predikant der Hervormde Christelijke Gemeente op onderscheidene plaatsen in Nederland, Afrika en Azie, van zijne jeugd af tot den tijd van zijn emeritusschap* (Kaapstad: HAUM, 1911), 128.

³⁰² Loubser, "Calvinism, Equality, and Inclusion," 368.

example of alternative outcomes. A review of the economic, administrative and religious structures in the two republics that the Voortrekkers established offers new insights on the relationship between Calvinism and the spirit of capitalism in southern Africa in the mid-19th century.

3.7. Social Conditions for the Voortrekkers in the Orange Free State and Transvaal

The Voortrekkers remained, for most of the period under discussion, in frontier conditions, only gaining a measure of territorial independence after the Bloemfontein Convention in 1854.³⁰³ The Voortrekkers who settled in what was to become the Orange Free State had to contend with ongoing wars over territory with the Basuto, under Moshweshwe, and it was only after the discovery of diamonds during the mid-1860s, in what became the Kimberley area, that a degree of economic prosperity was achieved for this territory. In the early years the Orange Free State's economy was more advanced than that of the Transvaal, mostly due to sheep farming in the Cape district of Colesberg to the south,³⁰⁴ however, conflict with the Basotho over land slowed down economic development.³⁰⁵

Insights drawn from G.D. Scholtz's study of the political sphere suggest that after independence in 1854 the government of this new republic lacked the necessary bureaucratic skills to run a state. Scholtz discusses a letter written by Jacobus Groenendaal, the Dutch man responsible for writing the Orange Free State's constitution, and states:

³⁰³ Thompson, *Co-operation and Conflict*, 407. The Bloemfontein Convention, also known as the Orange River Convention, was a convention whereby the Britain formally recognised the independence of the Boers in the region between the Orange and the Vaal rivers.

³⁰⁴ Hobart Houghton, *Economic Development, 1865-1965*. Vol. II, in *The Oxford History of South Africa*, edited by Leonard Thompson and Monica Wilson, 1-48 (London: Oxford University Press, 1971), 7.

³⁰⁵ Houghton, *Economic Development*, 8-9.

In 'n brief van 3 Junie het Groenendaal eerlik beken dat hy nie geesdriftig oor die totstandkoming van die nuwe staat was nie. Sy eerste beswaar was die gebrek aan die nodige personeel om die staat te bestuur. Die tweede was die afwesigheid van 'n militêre mag waarop die wetgewende mag kon steun. Die derde was die neiging van 'vele kwaadwilligen om zich van alle schatting en last' te ontslaan, 'waaruit moest volgen dat de publieke fondsen niet aan de behoefte der publieke diensten zouden volden'.³⁰⁶ [In a letter dated the 3rd of June, Groenendaal honestly declared that he was not enthusiastic about the formation of a new state. His first grievance was the lack in qualified personnel to run the state. Second, the absence of a military on which the ruling power could depend. Third, was the tendency by many who wanted to free themselves of taxes and debts. The result is that the public funds would not be enough to cover public services].

At first establishment the Orange Free State was seemingly far-removed from being able to establish both an effective bureaucracy in government and a military capable of protecting its citizens. And, based on Groenendaal's observations, there were many of its citizens who did not have the desire to contribute to an efficient state structure or to pay its taxes.

Hobart Houghton and G.D. Scholtz agree that, the new government struggled financially throughout the 1850s. Houghton says that "the self-subsistence character of much of the economic activity presented grave fiscal difficulties because it made direct taxation well-nigh impossible".³⁰⁷ Scholtz adds that the lack of a harbour made tariff collection on imports impossible as the Cape government kept the taxes that were collected on goods destined for the Orange Free State that arrived at Cape Town.³⁰⁸ The Cape's response to the issue was that they "may reasonably take credit for the advantages which it directly affords to the Free State..."³⁰⁹ Houghton says, "The difficulties of creating a modern administrative

³⁰⁶ G.D. Scholtz, *Die ontwikkeling van die politieke denke van die Afrikaner*. Vol. 3 (Johannesburg: Perskor, 1974), 338.

³⁰⁷ Houghton, *Economic Development*, 8.

³⁰⁸ Scholtz, *Die ontwikkeling III*, 347.

³⁰⁹ Scholtz, *Die ontwikkeling III*, 348.

machine without trained staff or adequate finance proved almost insuperable in both the Orange Free State and the Transvaal”.³¹⁰ The gradual improvement in finances to run a more efficient state was to come only later, with the mineral finds during the late 1860s for the Free State and the late 1870s for the South African Republic (informally known as the Transvaal Republic).

In its early years the Transvaal, the region furthest from the Cape, had a very small population of white settlers, including hunters, missionaries, travelers, traders and of course, Voortrekkers. The region was not conducive to farming in all regions.³¹¹ Besides, the Voortrekkers in this northern territory arrived at different times, under different leaders, and did not settle in the same areas. This created additional difficulties, as Leonard Thompson argues: “The great distances between their main pockets of establishment, their persistent internal antagonisms, and intermittent British diplomatic interferences made it extremely difficult for the independent Afrikaners to co-operate with one another”.³¹² According to Thompson the Transvaal “remained a pure frontier area” until the discovery of gold, and “the primitive quality of its public service is shown by the fact that as late as 1867 a Volksraad commission found that in the preceding year the Treasurer of the South African Republic had kept no books and the only documents he had were hopelessly confused”.³¹³

Thus the Afrikaners in the inland Boer republics distanced themselves further from potential exposure to modern and capitalist ways while their counterparts at the Cape were compelled to engage with the new dynamics introduced by the British government. The lack

³¹⁰ Houghton, *Economic Development*, 8.

³¹¹ Scholtz, *Die ontwikkeling III*, 427.

³¹² Thompson, *Co-operation and Conflict*, 424.

³¹³ Thompson, *Co-operation and Conflict*, 427.

of functioning legal systems and bureaucratic structures, as well as their distrust of the British, kept the former group in relative isolation from a faster modernizing Cape. In these circumstances the Voortrekkers followed a course of action that would cement religious sectarian divides by forming their own reformed churches that would not be influenced by the English language or the bureaucracies of the British. It is possibly the institution of religion, in general, that had the strongest impact on this group's worldview in the decades to follow.

3.8. Religious Isolation, new Mythologies and new Prophets

The historical events of the period, including the Great Trek, had major impact in shaping a Calvinist religious mythology in the 20th century for the development of the future Afrikanerdom. Central amongst these events were the Battle of Blood River in 1838, in which 400 to 500 Voortrekkers fought against an estimated 10,000 Zulus on the banks of the Ncome river, and the building of the Church of the Covenant to commemorate this victory in 1841. For the Voortrekkers, the Great Trek was glorified as the new Exodus, even though most of the hagiography was only committed decades after the event.³¹⁴ The political rationalization that this interpretation allowed was that God had blessed the Voortrekkers' conquest of the new land on which they settled. In their battles against the Zulus in present-day KwaZulu--Natal, the Voortrekkers used the biblical stories of Gideon and Jephthah as evidence of God's favour.³¹⁵ Their military success against the Zulu chieftain, Dingane, at Blood River was interpreted as a confirmation of their covenant with God, constructed on the basis of the Abrahamic covenant.³¹⁶

³¹⁴ Stokes, "Afrikaner Calvinism," 74.

³¹⁵ Afrikaner interpretations of God's favour include: because of their small numbers against a Zulu army many times their size, God had intervened on the side of the Voortrekkers and that this intervention signaled their divine right to exist.

³¹⁶ J. Alton Templin, "God and the Covenant in the South African Wilderness." *Church History* 37, no. 3 (1968): 295.

Significantly, the Voortrekkers left the Cape without any Reformed Church ministers accompanying them. Historians generally agree that Dutch Reformed ministers opted to remain as employed clergy in the Cape Colony because they were paid by the British administration.³¹⁷ Given this deficit in religious leadership, I argue, the Voortrekker political leaders had to merge political and religious roles into one. In this process Piet Retief became a Moses figure and Andries Pretorius a latter-day Joshua.³¹⁸ The charisma that these frontier Voortrekker leaders clearly possessed in being able to convince their followers to leave the Cape in the first place, served them well. They could call on the sacred to promote what would become their politico-religious agendas. Thus this period offered the Voortrekkers the opportunity to start a new sectarian movement within South African Calvinism, through the leadership of a new group of prophets: the Voortrekker leaders.

The absence of official religious leaders on the Trek says much about the lack of institutional support the Voortrekkers had to contend with, first as a result of their conflict with the British colonial authorities, and then by being denied official church sanction. The theologian John De Gruchy tells us that:

They were devout men and women, avid readers of the family Bible; and yet they went without the blessing of their church. Furthermore, in 1837 a full two years after the beginning of the Trek, the Synod of the DRC (Dutch Reformed Church) denounced the trek, and refused permission for any of its ministers to leave with the Trekkers. Thus the theological interpreters of the events that were to shape Afrikaner tradition were not trained by Dutch or Scottish faculties of Calvinist theology, but by their own experience and their reading of the sacred book.³¹⁹

³¹⁷ Scholtz, *Die ontwikkeling III*, 573.

³¹⁸ Templin, "God and the Covenant," 282.

³¹⁹ John de Gruchy, *Liberating Reformed Theology: a South African contribution to an ecumenical debate* (Michigan: Eerdmans, 1991), 20.

The denunciation of the Voortrekkers only deepened the divide between them and the Cape Dutch Reformed Church and forced the Voortrekker leaders (Piet Retief and Andries Pretorius, already mentioned above, but also Gerrit Maritz, Louis Trigardt, Andries Potgieter, and Sarel Cilliers) to fill the void left by the absence of church ministers. The new role that they adopted, as both political leaders and church ministers, soon had an impact on the Voortrekkers' version of Calvinism. Historians Barbara and Grey Villet imply this as the start of religious sectarianism when they state:

Persuaded that God himself had guided them through their years of travail before, during, and after the Great Trek, many came to regard their own history with reverence once reserved for Scripture, to canonize their martyrs as saints, assign a prophetic role to their national leaders and, in this country, to elevate their own political causes to the level of a cultist religion that they would pursue with daemonic zeal.³²⁰

It would seem, then, that as a response to their political and religious alienation, the Voortrekkers established new religious mythologies that spilled into and shaped the political domain. The result of this fusion gave rise to denominational forms of Calvinism that would become institutionalized as the *Nederduitsch Hervormde Kerk* in 1853 and *Gereformeerde Kerk* in 1859.³²¹ T. Dunbar Moodie points out that the Voortrekkers across the Vaal River formed their own church, the *Nederduitsch Hervormde Kerk*,

as they feared that any connection with the N.G. [*Nederduits-Gereformeerde Kerk* or Dutch Reformed Church in English] at the Cape would lay them open to control by the British governor... that Leiden-trained Dirk van der Hoff, the first Transvaal Hervormde minister, encouraged these suspicions because he had no desire to fall under the control of the orthodox Cape synod... At the other extreme, the *Gereformeerde Kerk* has always been the most theologically conservative of

³²⁰ B. Villet and G. Villet, *Blood River: The Passionate Saga of South Africa's Afrikaners and of Life in Their Embattled Land* (New York: Everest House, 1982), 89.

³²¹ Brian Du Toit. "Missionaries, Anthropologists, and the Policies of the Dutch Reformed Church." *The Journal of Modern African Studies* 22, no. 4 (1984): 617.

the Dutch Reformed Churches in South Africa. It broke away from the Hervormdes in 1859... Ds. Dirk Postma... rallied the *Dopper* (“conservative”) element among the frontier farmers, and provided them with a strictly Calvinist locus for their conservatism.³²²

While these developments were taking shape in the interior, most of the white Calvinists who remained at the Cape practiced the Cape version of Calvinism that the British were so instrumental in shaping, now also directly influenced by Scottish ministers. The efforts at anglicization among the Cape Calvinists brought forth its own nuances within the DRC at the Cape. Thus, at the same time as the Voortrekkers were changing their version of the Calvinist religion, so were the Calvinist adherents at the Cape changing theirs. From the mid-19th century, therefore, the Calvinism of the descendants of the first Dutch and Huguenot settlers at the Cape took a number of forms, including a more anglicized one. This form has, however, received less attention than the Calvinism of the Boer republics, as it melted into Afrikaner Christian nationalism after 1910, when the Voortrekkers’ territories were united with the Cape and Natal under white political power.

The Voortrekkers’ years of isolation during the Great Trek had much to do with the new world they were not only engaging, but also making. Their separation from the Reformed Church at the Cape introduced a political dimension to their theology that strongly informed their religious consciousness. Included in the new world the Voortrekkers were building was the view that the British, along with their industry and the capitalism that underpinned it, was a world from which they were very distant. Participation in a modern industrial economy, so closely associated with the British, was not part of the world of their patrimonial society. Importantly this separation from the Calvinism of the south would become embedded in the Afrikaner nationalism that would later develop: a nationalism that

³²² T.D. Moodie, *The Rise of Afrikanerdom: Power, Apartheid and the Afrikaner Civil Religion* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1975), 59-60.

was not able to separate religion and politics. The communities established by the Voortrekkers remained entrenched in patrimonialism throughout the 19th century, as evidenced by their commitment to farming over urbanization, their allegiance to personal political icons such as Paul Kruger, leader of the resistance movement against the British during the 1870s and president of the Zuid-Afrikaansche Republiek (ZAR) from 1883 to 1898 and their religious loyalty to Holland, rather than shifting their allegiance to religious institutions from Scotland and Britain.³²³

3.9. Conclusion

By the end of this period, 1860, there were broadly three versions of Calvinism in southern Africa: the established Dutch Reformed Church in both the Cape and the Boer republics, and the Nederduitsch Hervormde Kerk and the Gereformeerde Kerk, both almost exclusively in the Boer republics. To add to the complexity of the analysis, the two groups, the Cape Afrikaners and Voortrekkers had to contend with different economic, political and religious dynamics that had an effect on their engagements with bureaucracy and their respective engagements with emergent forms of capitalism.

The British administration – armed with European liberalism – jarred white sensibilities, thereby prompting greater group cohesion, especially among the frontier free burghers. Reformed Christianity was the only state-sanctioned religion at the Cape but the support that the new administration gave to the missionary movement placed it at odds with the racial and religious sensibilities of the local white population. Those whites that ignored the growing bureaucratic influences were gradually being confined to the farmlands

³²³ This section draws on the following histories: F.A. van Jaarsveld, *Van van Riebeeck tot Vorster 1652-1974* (Johannesburg: Perskor, 1976), Leonard Thompson, *Co-operation and Conflict: The Zulu Kingdom and Natal*. Vol. I, in *The Oxford History of South Africa*, edited by Monica Wilson and Leonard Thompson, 334-390 (Cape Town: Oxford University Press, 1969) and T.D. Moodie, *The Rise of Afrikanerdom: Power, Apartheid and the Afrikaner Civil Religion* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1975).

throughout the colony. Those Voortrekkers who chose to move away from the Cape in search of political self-determination would, however, successfully entrench themselves in their patrimonial ways. Consequently, the Great Trek was to distance a significant number of whites, mostly Calvinists, from the nascent modern industrial capitalism that would sprout in the Cape region, especially after the discovery of gold and diamonds later in the 1860s and 1870s.

The patrimonial structures of the Boers were further entrenched in their new-found homeland north of the Cape. Evidence of a continued commitment to a chosen people ideology can be found in their failure to form a missionary movement to work among black communities or to create opportunity for their servants and other people of colour to worship within their Calvinist churches.³²⁴

Arguably, the Voortrekkers were reaching back to the historical roots of their ‘original’ religion, mixing new mythologies with old ideologies. It is worth restating Max Weber’s theory on historical revelations here, where he reminds us that:

...however incisive the social influences, economically and politically determined, may have been upon a religious ethic in a particular case, it receives its stamp primarily from religious sources, and, first of all, from the content of its annunciation and its promise. Frequently the very next generation reinterprets these annunciations and promises in a fundamental fashion. Such reinterpretations adjust the revelations to the needs of the religious community. If this occurs, then it is at least usual that religious doctrines are adjusted to religious needs.³²⁵

In the case of the Voortrekkers, it is possible to see in their commitment to an identity as a chosen-people the language and actions of an “elect” of religious actors that harks back to the original ideas of John Calvin’s *Institutes*. Unfortunately, for the black people in their midst –

³²⁴ In 1857 the Dutch Reformed Church synod decided on separate services for coloured people. The Dutch Reformed Church in Africa was formed for blacks in 1951.

³²⁵ Weber, *Essays in Sociology*, 270.

the marginal, the poor, the non-elect – the Reformed God of the Voortrekkers had other plans for them.

In the end, the path of isolation and political self-determination followed by the Voortrekkers kept them decisively away from the influence of modern institutions. This extended to the bureaucratic and economic institutions that would be called for in the period following the discovery of diamonds and gold in their newly-established territories.

Chapter 4: The Shaping of an Afrikaner National Consciousness, 1860 – 1910.

This chapter addresses the early shaping of a distinctive Afrikaner national consciousness in a period of major socio-economic and political change. By the start of this period the Voortrekkers had succeeded in establishing the two independent republics of the Orange Free State and the Zuid-Afrikaansche Republiek (ZAR, commonly known as the Transvaal Republic) while the British controlled the coastal colonies of the Cape of Good Hope and Natal.³²⁶ With the Sand River Convention on the 17th of January 1852 Britain recognised the independence of the Boers living beyond the Vaal River. The Boers in the Orange Free State gained territorial independence after the Bloemfontein Convention in 1854.³²⁷ The next fifty years witnessed unprecedented socio-economic change as a result of major mineral discoveries: first, diamonds in land claimed by the Orange Free State and then gold in the Transvaal, most significantly on the Witwatersrand. This is when modern industrial capitalism, in Weber's sense, takes root in southern Africa. In this time, Calvinists in the Boer Republics began to build a religious identity distinct from their Calvinist brethren in the Cape. Linked to this religious denominationalism, this period also saw the first signs of an emergent Afrikaner national consciousness in the Boer Republics and the Cape, drawing its inspiration, I argue, from its experiences as a "political community" as described by Weber. At the end of this period the region was convulsed by the South African War (1899 – 1902), which paved the way for the establishment of an essentially whites-only

³²⁶ Natal was annexed by the British in 1842, only six years after the first Voortrekkers had left the Cape. The Afrikaners in Natal were always a minority amongst the white population and will not form part of the historical analysis of this project.

³²⁷ Thompson, *Co-operation and Conflict*, 407. The Bloemfontein Convention, also known as the Orange River Convention, was a convention whereby the Britain formally recognised the independence of the Boers in the region between the Orange and the Vaal rivers.

political union under British dominion for the former Boer republics and coastal colonies. (See Map 2 below.)

The dynamics unleashed by the events of this period would keep the world's attention focused on economic issues in this region for most of the next century. These developments would directly impact the economies of South Africa, Great Britain and North America, especially so since these countries had accepted gold as the standard metal of currency evaluation. Of course, the development of racial politics and its economic underpinnings has occupied most commentators and researchers of this time. However, while the issue of race is important in the larger historiography, it is not a central concern of this chapter. Within the scope of this thesis, the primary goal of this chapter is to understand the behaviour and attitudes of the Boers towards the industrial capitalist order that was taking root in southern Africa during this time. This is done through an examination of their engagement with modern bureaucracies, in government and within industry, which helps illuminate the very distinctive nature of the meeting of Boer Calvinism with modern industrial capitalism on their own territory.

As the subsequent discussion will show, the citizens of the two Boer Republics were economically and politically ill-prepared to participate in the mining revolution and the fortunes to be made from it. The poverty they had endured through the years of their *trek* and their isolation under pioneering conditions had left the majority economically and politically weak. Van Jaarsveld points out that in addition to the complexities of building a state, the Orange Free State Republic had to fight three energy-sapping wars with the Basotho over border disputes.³²⁸ These wars increased the economic burden of nation-building at a crucial period in their history. In the ZAR, van Jaarsveld notes that after 1865 the Voortrekkers in

³²⁸ Van Jaarsveld, *van Riebeeck tot Vorster*, 172.

this region experienced serious conflict with the chieftaincies of the *Soutpansberge* (Salt Pan Mountains) and that further battles continued during the 1870s against the Pedi chieftaincies.³²⁹ Battles against the different chieftaincies in the ZAR were especially difficult for the Voortrekkers because of their own disunity in this region due to political divisions amongst the group and partly because of the terrain. The ZAR had to thus also contend with wars at a crucial time of their nation building.

The process of anglicisation taking place in the Cape and Natal at the time led to a greater willingness of Afrikaners in these regions to adapt to the British cultural agenda; they therefore, did not add so directly to the development of an Afrikaner group consciousness at this stage. Scholtz has argued that had it not been for the Voortrekkers' mass migration and the eventual establishment of the Republics of the Orange Free State and Transvaal, the idea of an independent group of Afrikaners with a sense of national identity might not even have emerged.³³⁰ He adds that unlike the Boers in the Cape, the Voortrekkers had to actively construct their political administrations in their territories in order to prevent a state of anarchy brought about by the challenges of both British imperialism and the resistance being waged in defence of their autonomy by various black tribes. In other words, says Scholtz, the Boers in the interior "were forced into action as republican Afrikaners".³³¹ In the end, even though they were a minority group compared to the Afrikaners under British rule, their political fate contributed significantly to the eventual development of a distinct Afrikaner political identity. And as a minority group of Calvinists in the future Union of South Africa after 1910, the fortunes of those who had benefitted contributed significantly toward the

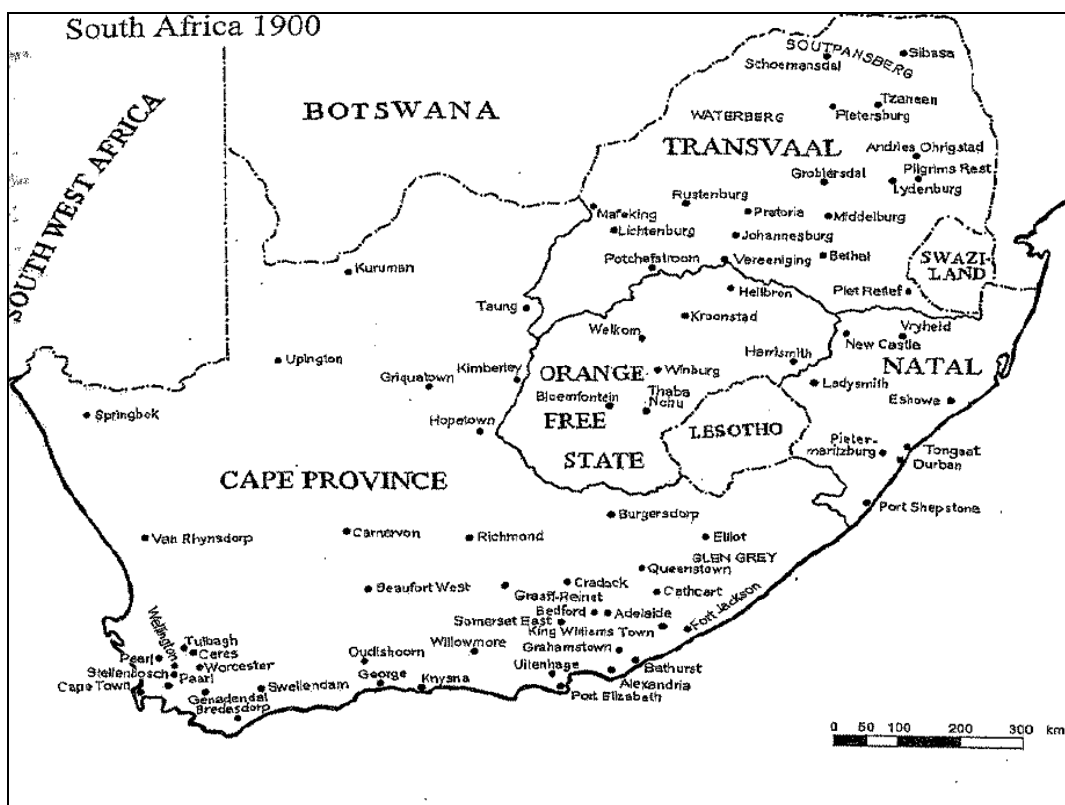
³²⁹ Van Jaarsveld, *Van Riebeeck tot Vorster*, 163.

³³⁰ Scholtz, *Die ontwikkeling*, 335.

³³¹ Scholtz, *Die ontwikkeling*, 336.

future capitalism of South Africa, especially those who had benefitted from the increased market conditions that the mining boom brought.

This chapter begins with a discussion of the importance of the mineral revolution and the interplay between modernity and capital in the Boer republics. Thereafter it looks at the issue of Boer bureaucracy and the emergence of an Afrikaner nationalist consciousness. The chapter concludes with a brief account of the South African war (1899 to 1901) and the establishment of the Union of South Africa in 1910 that, critically, omitted an expectant black South African population from the political dispensation.



Map 2: South Africa 1900

Source: Monica Wilson and Leonard Thompson, *Oxford History of South Africa*, vol. 2 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971)

Rodney Davenport and Christopher Saunders, *South Africa: A Modern History*, (London: Macmillan, 2000)

4.1. The Mining Revolution

The discovery of diamonds in 1867 led to the mining revolution in South Africa. As soon as it was realized that diamond deposits were plentiful in the Orange Free State region, thousands of people from all corners of the world started flocking to the region. Very soon, alluvial mining had to be replaced by deep-level mining to recover profitable yields. In the words of Houghton “diamonds had ceased to be merely a fortune-hunter’s gamble, but had become the stable foundation for a large-scale modern industry”.³³²

The fortunes to be made at Kimberley and Griqualand precipitated new forms of settlement and governance as well as new population dynamics. At the beginning of the 1860s the Orange Free State was a sparsely populated territory with a white population of approximately 25 000 people; however, by 1871 the population had ballooned to 50 000 inhabitants in the mining town of Kimberley alone.³³³ Houghton points out that within a few years the population of Griqualand rose from a few hundred Griqua under their chief, Nicholas Waterboer, to some 45,000 people concentrated on the diggings.³³⁴ Diamond-rich Griqualand, at the time under sovereign dispute, was eventually annexed by Britain in 1871. Seizing Griqualand from the Griqua nation and away from possible Boer rule gave the Cape Colony and Britain direct access to the world’s biggest diamond deposits. It also provided a political and economic platform for the British to negotiate further mining developments. Britain’s direct economic interests north of the Cape brought thousands of British subjects to southern Africa. Other immigrants from Europe, America, Russia as well as large numbers of

³³² Hobart Houghton, *Economic Development, 1865-1965*. Vol. II, in *The Oxford History of South Africa*, edited by Leonard Thompson and Monica Wilson, 1-48 (London: Oxford University Press, 1971), 11.

³³³ Houghton, *Economic Development, 1865-1965*, 11.

³³⁴ Houghton, *Economic Development, 1865-1965*, 11.

local black people also moved to the new mining camps to partake in the opportunities for work and a more urbanised life.

There were Boer prospectors who were involved in alluvial diamond mining and sometimes prospecting claims on Boer-owned farms. The owner of a farm with one of the richest diamond veins, Van Wyk, would “charge diggers seven shillings and sixpence a week for each claim of thirty square feet”.³³⁵ A similar situation was found on an adjacent farm owned by Cornelius du Plooy. In the end both Boer farmers sold their farms as they thought that the alluvial deposits could not sustain the industry, as had been shown in India and Brazil.³³⁶ What these Boer farmers did not know was that beneath their farms lay the richest diamond veins in the region. These veins extended two miles northwards to an adjacent farm, Vooruitzigt, owned by another Boer farmer, Johannes de Beer, whose original farmhouse was not far from these diamond-rich farms.³³⁷ The historian, Meredith, concludes, “Put together, the three farms covering an area of about fifty-eight square miles amounted to the most valuable piece of real estate in the world”.³³⁸ The Boer farmers were paid handsomely; nevertheless, their behaviour reflected a preference for opting for an immediate return on their investments, rather than engaging foreigners and participating in the challenges of developing the mineral potential of their land and thereby embracing the opportunities of modern industrial capitalism.³³⁹

³³⁵ Martin Meredith. *Diamonds, Gold and War: The Making of South Africa* (Cape Town: Jonathan Ball Publishers, 2007), 17.

³³⁶ Meredith, *Diamonds, Gold and War*, 17.

³³⁷ Meredith, *Diamonds, Gold and War*, 17.

³³⁸ Meredith, *Diamonds, Gold and War*, 18.

³³⁹ Meredith, *Diamonds, Gold and War*, 18.

Major bankers in France and Britain were interested in investing in the Kimberley and Orange Free State region including financier Nathaniel de Rothschild in London, head of Europe's wealthiest financial house and an active speculator in diamond shares. So were entrepreneurs like Cecil John Rhodes, Alfred Beit, and Barney Barnato,³⁴⁰ who also embraced British political interests and supported the leading colonial power. By 1889 De Beers, established by Cecil John Rhodes, ranked as one of the most powerful companies in the world.³⁴¹ The level of technical sophistication required by the mining industrial sector forced these mining magnates to seek skilled white labour outside of South Africa. Miners and artisans were largely recruited from the coal mines of Cumberland and the tin mines of Cornwall, in England and, to a lesser extent, from Scotland.³⁴² As a result, the number of local whites employed in Kimberley fell to just 10% in the 1880s and a poor-white community emerged in this milieu.³⁴³ It soon became apparent that most Boers lacked not only the socialization to engage with the opportunities of modern industrial capitalism but also the necessary skills to meet its labour requirements.

After the discovery of gold in 1876 in the Witwatersrand area near Johannesburg, the urban and labour dynamics in Kimberley became the model for city development in the Transvaal.³⁴⁴ By 1886, only ten years after the first gold finds, the Witwatersrand was proclaimed a gold-mining area "and the whole of southern Africa was drawn into the new

³⁴⁰ Meredith, *Diamonds, Gold and War*, 159-163.

³⁴¹ Meredith, *Diamonds, Gold and War*, 162.

³⁴² John De Gruchy, 2005. *Christianity and the Colonization of South Africa, 1487 to 1870*. [CD-ROM]. Available: RICS/UCT [2005], 33.

³⁴³ Meredith, *Diamonds, Gold and War*, 156. The issue of poor whiteism is discussed in detail in chapter 5.

³⁴⁴ The Witwatersrand is located in the Transvaal Republic or present-day Gauteng.

mining boom which exceeded anything yet experienced”.³⁴⁵ The developments witnessed in Kimberley — the move from small-scale to large-scale mining, the grouping of small mining operations together under a single mining house, the demand for technical expertise, the emergence of a black migrant labour system — were repeated on the gold mines in Transvaal. The huge influx of people meant that towns sprang up rapidly around these mining enterprises. By 1896 the city of Johannesburg housed more than 60 000 whites and 50 000 blacks.³⁴⁶ Thus in less than four decades southern Africa had transformed from an agricultural region into one in which both mining and agriculture were significant.

Even more significant was that although Johannesburg had become a cosmopolitan city, with immigrants from many west European countries and the USA, Britain was the biggest supplier of white labour and capital investments and, the majority of this new class of labour remained loyal to its Empire.³⁴⁷ While the Boers were slow to participate in the transition from rural society to urban life, the unexpected economic promise of the region was seized upon by Europeans and Americans who were acutely aware of the power and returns that the mining-led boom offered.³⁴⁸ By the time the Boers were forced by both micro and macro-economic forces to partake in the modern capitalist economy, they were regarded as laggards. They were hampered by their lack of investment capital and administrative infrastructure, as well as their lack of English.

³⁴⁵ Houghton, *Economic Development, 1865-1965*, 13.

³⁴⁶ These population numbers were taken from F. A. van Jaarsveld, *Van van Riebeeck tot Vorster 1652-1974* (Johannesburg: Perskor, 1976) and Hobart Houghton, *Economic Development, 1865-1965*. Vol. II, in *The Oxford History of South Africa*, edited by Leonard Thompson and Monica Wilson, 1-48 (London: Oxford University Press, 1971).

³⁴⁷ De Gruchy, *Christianity and the Colonization*, 33.

³⁴⁸ De Gruchy, *Christianity and the Colonization*, 33.

Instead, most capital and administrative expertise came from Britain with some Dutch, German, United States and French investments. At the forefront were economic entrepreneurs like Beit, Barnato and Rhodes, the latter referred to by Max Weber as typical of the 19th century entrepreneur displaying an ascetic Protestant upbringing.³⁴⁹ They amalgamated mining capital, first in the diamond industry and later in the gold-mining regions of the Witwatersrand. The successes of these gold mining magnates on the Witwatersrand made the Transvaal Republic the richest region in southern Africa, just as diamond mining had done previously for the Orange Free State.

A contributing factor to the malaise that the Boers displayed in their response to the economic and political challenges of this period was their history of divided leadership. In the early stages of the establishment of their two republics, the trek leader Andries Potgieter had developed an “autocracy under the Potgieter clan” while “Maritz, by contrast, viewed the trek as a common enterprise – a *vereenigde maatschappij* (united community) or a *volk* – and called the leaders’ submission to an elected council.”³⁵⁰ The Boers in the Transvaal Republic continued to be plagued by conflictual leadership, making it difficult for the group to unify.³⁵¹ The establishment of two splinter Calvinist churches in the 1850s had already created divided loyalties, both in the Boer Republics and between the Republican-minded Boers and their brethren at the Cape. The absence of leaders to overcome such divisions was exacerbated by a shortage of officials, teachers and clergy willing to challenge the demands of the wilderness, apart from a few from the Cape and a small stream of Netherlanders.³⁵² As van Jaarsveld has observed, the Voortrekkers were both conservative and individualistic, and

³⁴⁹ Weber, *The Protestant Ethic*, 42.

³⁵⁰ Giliomee, *The Afrikaners*, 164.

³⁵¹ Van Jaarsveld, *Van Riebeeck tot Vorster*, 137.

³⁵² Van Jaarsveld, *Van Riebeeck tot Vorster*, 173.

tensions between their different geographical-political groups were not uncommon.³⁵³ Hostilities were especially evident in the Transvaal where “burgher-wars”³⁵⁴ were fought among each other on a regular basis between 1860 and 1864.³⁵⁵

In the end, the Boers missed the early economic advantages offered by the mining boom, which was taken up by foreigners, mostly British. However, Boer opposition to the social changes this brought to their Republics led to two wars with Britain. The destruction caused by these wars ultimately put an end to any ideas of continued republicanism for the Afrikaners in this region.

4.2. Boer Bureaucracy

Developments in this period in the South African Republic (ZAR), later known as the Transvaal, provide important insights into the attitudes of the Boers engaging with modern industrial capitalism and the efficient bureaucratic structures it required. A lengthy quote from the historian, A.A. Mawby, referring to the 1870s SAR government, is worth citing in this regard:

That Government [ZAR], the product of subsistence farmers, lacked the expertise to effect smoothly the transformation of the economy and infrastructure which was necessary to meet the needs of the new mining industry and its dependent population. Those who controlled the ZAR Government also lacked the will to effect major changes; they did not wish to see their world order transformed and in particular had many reservations about facilitating the further growth of an

³⁵³ Van Jaarsveld, *Van Riebeeck tot Vorster*, 173.

³⁵⁴ Van Jaarsveld refers to the Boers in the Transvaal that were living in separate geo-political groups and that tensions between groups led to “burgher-wars” between 1861 and 1864. Van Jaarsveld, *Van Riebeeck tot Vorster*, 173.

³⁵⁵ Leonard Thompson, *Co-operation and Conflict: The High Veld*. Vol. I, in *The Oxford History of South Africa*, edited by Monica Wilson and Leonard Thompson, 391-446 (Cape Town: Oxford University Press, 1969), 424.

industrial population which they regarded as fundamentally alien and as threatening their way of life.³⁵⁶

At this stage the social structure of the Boers of the South African Republic was still largely rooted in patrimonialism. They were especially dependent on the charismatic leadership of Paul Kruger, President of the Republic between 1883 and 1898, a profoundly conservative man. He did not foresee the long-term financial advantages of industry in their midst, and equally important, found the British presence in their land anathema to the Boer worldview. He was a member of the Calvinist *Gereformeerde Kerk*, and as Moodie points out:

According to Kruger's understanding of the sacred history, God chose His People (*volk*) in the Cape Colony and brought them out into the wilderness....God then covenanted with the chastened People... the enemies were defeated and the trekkers inhabited the land which God had given them in his rightful manner.³⁵⁷

G. Saron and L. Holtz note that many government officials lacked the necessary education to be employed in a modern bureaucracy and that a literal interpretation of the Old Testament informed a variety of state decisions.³⁵⁸ The overarching authority of religion and especially the Calvinist notion of election adhered to by both President Kruger and his political rival, General Joubert, remained central to their system of leadership.³⁵⁹

Mawby, commenting on state inefficiency, cites the Johannesburg Chamber of Commerce which in 1903 recorded that "the existing personnel and institutions of the administration lacked the level of skill and flexibility essential to administer a dynamic and

³⁵⁶ A.A. Mawby, *Gold Mining and Politics – Johannesburg 1900-1907* (Toronto: Edwin Mellen Press, 1943), 87-88.

³⁵⁷ Moodie, *The Rise of Afrikanerdom*, 26-7.

³⁵⁸ G. Saron and L. Holtz, *The Jews in South Africa: a history* (Cape Town: Oxford University Press, 1955), 205.

³⁵⁹ D.W. Krüger, *Paul Kruger: n biografie*. Vol. II. 2 vols. (Johannesburg: Praag, 2009), 90-91.

complex urban society”.³⁶⁰ In her assessment of the period, Shula Marks refers to the slowness of the postal system, the inefficiency of the court system and the technical inadequacies of the laws.³⁶¹ A further source of tension was the employment of people of questionable integrity by President Kruger. Both the historian, D.W. Krüger, and the author, J.P. Fitzpatrick, describe rampant bribery and corruption in the Kruger administration, further adding to the picture of poorly developed and fragile administrative skills and accompanying dishonesty among Boer government officials.³⁶² Mawby and Marks concur that the result of these developments was that skilled whites in the region (who were known among the Boers as *uitlanders*, ie foreigners) felt alienated from the Transvaal polity. This led to a growing perception among them that the whole of the Transvaal government, including Paul Kruger, was corrupt.³⁶³

From a Weberian perspective, the low levels of bureaucratic expertise in the Transvaal government are indicative of its inability to engage with the demands of modern capitalism. Instead of the emotional detachment in administration that modern industrial capitalism requires of bureaucracy, what was present was the clan-like solidarity that is expected of actors within a patrimonial society.

4.3. The emergence of an Afrikaner nationalist Consciousness

A discussion on the development of an Afrikaner national consciousness during this period will throw light on its encounter with capitalism in the next chapter. The discussion below will highlight the importance of a “shared memory of experiences” for both the Boers

³⁶⁰ Mawby, *Gold Mining and Politics*, 92.

³⁶¹ S. Marks, *Southern and Central Africa*. Vol. 6, in *The Cambridge History of Africa*, edited by R. Oliver and G.N. Sanderson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 468.

³⁶² Krüger, *Paul Kruger*, 97 and J.P. Fitzpatrick, “The Reform Committee Manifesto”, 246.

³⁶³ J. Scoble and H.R. Abercrombie, *The rise and fall of Krugerism: a personal record of forty years in South Africa* (London: Heinemann, 1900), 96.

in the republics and Cape Boers in their development of a national consciousness. I argue that, at least initially, language was not a critical driver even though it had some significance in the Cape.

The establishment of the two Boer Republics in the north had not brought about the peaceful political accommodation with the Cape that the Voortrekkers had hoped for on leaving the colony in 1836. The mineral finds in the republics added to Britain's interest in the region leading to further division between the republican-minded Boers and those whites supporting British imperialism. Marginalization in most cultural spheres, especially the political, for the Cape Dutch-speaking population added to the attraction for this group of the promise of an Afrikaner national consciousness. However, the Anglo-Boer War of 1899 to 1902, with its devastating cost in human lives on both sides, drew the Boers at the Cape closer in political sentiment to their cousins in the republics.

The different Boer groupings in the Republics also had to contend with the consequences of what they regarded as increasing British intervention on the side of the African chieftaincies in their midst, with whom they were fighting for authority over both land and labour. This attitude owed much to the role of English missionaries, who were active in evangelical and educational work among the African chieftaincies in the region. An address by the missionary J.P. Ritchie of Queenstown, printed in the Yearbook of the Congregational Union in 1892, described the Boer attitude towards this missionary activity thus:

It is only too apparent that the missionary spirit is in the midst of 'a great fight of affliction' in South Africa. The missionary's foes are largely those of his own nationality; his sorest wounds are those that he receives in the house of his friends. The old settlers in the Colony having had to fight for life and liberty against the native races, fell back upon Old Testament morality in relation to them, and still feel imposed to question whether they can be safely dealt with on New Testament

principles. As far as my experience goes, there would appear to be but few Colonial farmers willing to acknowledge that mission work among the natives has been productive of any good results.³⁶⁴

Not only does this assessment allude to Boer resentment about what they saw as one-sided support for African people among the missionaries (mostly British). It is also evidence of a belief among the Boers that this was part of a divide-and-rule strategy on the part of the British, which was contributing towards increasing racial tensions.

The British policy in support of African sovereignty in the Boer regions came at a time when British foreign policy sought to control the direction of the European scramble for African colonial territory. The 1880s witnessed an active imperialist phase in Europe which led to competition for African land. This led to restrictions on the expansion of the Transvaal's borders, as Britain vied for control over the surrounding lands in what became known as Rhodesia and Bechuanaland.³⁶⁵ The barriers to the expansion of the Transvaal's borders in the north-west reinforced Boer dependence on the seaports of Cape Town, Durban and East London for their imports and exports, the revenue from which remained within the Cape and Natal. Britain also took steps to prevent the expansion of the Transvaal to the east, towards a harbour in Delagoa Bay harbour — in present-day Mozambique — while simultaneously securing colonial land on which Germany had set its sights.³⁶⁶

In addition, the rationale for British colonial policy towards non-expansion of colonial borders north of the Cape had been evolving. At first the only concern was to keep the region

³⁶⁴ Reverend J.P. Ritchie, "Mission Work and the Native Question." *Yearbook of the Congregational Union*, 1892, 35-36.

³⁶⁵ See S. Forster, W.J. Mommsen, & R. Robinson eds. *Bismarck, Europe and Africa: The Berlin Africa Conference and the Onset of Partition* (London: Oxford University Press, 1988) for a comprehensive history of British expansion in the region.

³⁶⁶ Forster, Mommsen & Robinson, *Bismarck, Europe and Africa*, 1988.

peaceful for a stable economy. However, the discovery of gold and diamonds in the 1860s meant British policy of non-expansion in the region was revisited.³⁶⁷ The discovery of valuable raw materials and minerals on southern African soil was serving British industry well, and stewardship over yet more African lands was seen to hold further promise of large-scale mineral returns. Thus the mineral discoveries in the Boer Republics snuffed out any hopes of immediate Boer self-determination and regional peace. The disruption of Boer aspirations was driven, firstly by the intensification of the pace of migration to the region by individual British people in search of burgeoning business opportunities, and, secondly, by the replacement of British philanthropic ideals to protect African chieftaincies against Boer hegemony with selfish material interests in the economic returns for individuals and the empire. A third factor was the realisation that the antiquated policies and institutions of the Boer Republics, administratively inefficient, inflexible, and sometimes corrupt, were becoming a hindrance to modern commerce. For all these reasons, therefore, the second half of the 19th century witnessed increased calls by entrepreneurs for British state intervention. The outcome of these tensions accelerated the reversal of official British policy towards expansion north of the Cape, and after 1870 Britain embarked on a determined policy of territorial expansion, focused especially on the territories surrounding the mineral-rich Boer republics.³⁶⁸

Opposed to British political manoeuvring at the Cape, the Boers of the Republics had their own political designs and offered fierce resistance to British intervention by attempting to form what Weber has defined as a “political community”:

³⁶⁷ Leonard Thompson, *Great Britain and the Afrikaner Republics, 1870-1899*. Vol. II, in *The Oxford History of South Africa*, by M Wilson and Leonard Thompson, 289-324 (Cape Town: Oxford University Press, 1971), 291.

³⁶⁸ A.M. Grundlingh, "Prelude to the Anglo-Boer War, 1881-1899." In *An Illustrated History of South Africa*, edited by C. Trehwella, 183-199 (Cape Town: Human & Rousseau, 1986), 183-199.

The term 'political community' shall apply to a community whose social action is aimed at subordinating to orderly domination by the participants a 'territory' and the conduct of the persons within it, through readiness to resort to physical force, including normally force of arms. The territory must at any time be in some way determinable, but it need not be constant or definitely limited. The persons are those who are in the territory either permanently or temporarily. Also, the aim of the participants may be to acquire additional territory for themselves.³⁶⁹

Both Boer Republics had already established their independence, with their own hopes and aspirations, including sovereign rule and a desire to acquire additional territory which, for the (Z.A.R.) Transvaal was the outcome of the Sand River Convention in 1852. By the same token, the Orange Free State achieved independence at the Bloemfontein Convention of 1854.³⁷⁰ After 1860, the Republics decided in principle to protect their right to self-governance at all costs and specifically not to amalgamate in any form under British rule. To strengthen full political and economic independence, it was also their goal to have access to an independent harbour which would free them from reliance on colonial harbours and open the way to international opportunities. Most importantly, the Republicans wanted to unite their two states, and increasingly they aspired towards these goals. Leonard Thompson reminds us that: "it was the events of the 1870s that began to evoke among Afrikaners that combination of group insecurity and group pride that constitutes a sense of nationality".³⁷¹

Weber has emphasised the significance of political struggle in the development of "national consciousness": "The community of political destiny, i.e. above all, of common political struggle of life and death, has given rise to groups with joint memories which often have had a deeper impact than the ties of merely cultural, linguistic, or ethnic community. It

³⁶⁹ Weber, *Economy and Society*, 901.

³⁷⁰ G.W. Eybers, *Selected Constitutional Documents Illustrating South African History 1795-1910* (London: George Routledge and Sons Ltd., 1918), 281.

³⁷¹ Leonard Thompson, *Great Britain*, 289-324.

is this “community of memories” which...constitutes the ultimately decisive element of “national consciousness”³⁷². This outcome can certainly be seen in the case of the Republican Boers, where years of common political struggle for life and death contributed significantly to the development of their national consciousness. Their struggles started with their initial travails on the Eastern Cape frontier, which were followed by the political tensions around British rule that led to their mass exodus from the Cape, their battles against the Zulu kingdom in Natal, the loss of prominent leaders like Piet Retief, the much mythologized Battle of Blood River, and the subsequent wars against the Basuto, as well as other border disputes with African tribes on the Highveld.

In this process the Afrikaans language appears to have been a less important contributor to this national consciousness for those Afrikaners living at the Cape. Leonard Thompson has argued persuasively that before the 1870s some Boers in the anglicizing atmosphere of Cape Town spoke English in their homes while most of the Dutch Reformed Churches clung tenaciously to Dutch and looked down on Afrikaans as a rural patois. The bulk of the Dutch-speaking Boer people could neither understand English nor express themselves accurately in proper Dutch, while their own language had no literature.³⁷³ Ethnically they were descended from a variety of European peoples (not all Dutch) as well as the Khoisan and slave populations of the Cape. Cultural heritage was thus ill-defined as a marker of national consciousness. Culturally, the Boers were somewhat disconnected as farms were widely dispersed, with the quarterly *nagmaal* (communion service) the mainstay of Boer communal gatherings. In this context, Weber’s “community of memories” — here encompassing the years of wars and skirmishes in which thousands of loved ones were lost in

³⁷² Max Weber, *Economy and Society*, 301.

³⁷³ Leonard Thompson, *Co-operation and Conflict*, 301.

battles — best defines the route through which an Afrikaner national consciousness was born in the two Boer republics.

By 1880 the Boer Republics had established the rudiments of a “state”. In terms of Weber’s definition of a functioning modern state, the Republics could be seen to be meeting the basic functions of enacting laws, protecting the personal safety of their citizens, maintaining public order, administering justice, and promoting the health, educational, social-welfare, and cultural interests of their citizens. Last but not least, they were also able to carry out organized military administration.³⁷⁴ The rapid progress from undifferentiated economic conditions to a functioning state owes much to the funds and influences brought by the discovery of gold in the Transvaal Republic.³⁷⁵

However, it was the assault of British imperialism on the Boer Republics that really gave impetus to the reinterpretation of an Afrikaner collective consciousness in the Cape. According to Van Jaarsveld:

*Hulle het die ontneming van hul regte van taal as “griewe” herinner, simpatie met die “verdrukte” Afrikaners van die Republiek betoon en hulle as ’t ware “ontdek” as bloed van hulle bloed en vlees van hulle vlees, sodat die skeiding wat deur die Groot Trek ontstaan het, oorbrug is. Daar het ’n gevoel by die Kaaplandse Afrikaners ontstaan dat daar één Afrikanervolk is wat één gemeenskaplike toekoms het, al is hulle deur politieke grense soos die Oranje en Vaalrivier en die Drakensberge van mekaar geskei.*³⁷⁶ [The loss to the right to their language served as a reminder of grievance. They showed sympathy with the Republican Afrikaners and discovered, if you will, that the Republicans were of their own flesh and blood such that the divide caused through the Great Trek was bridged. A feeling of a single Afrikanervolk with a common destiny developed amongst the

³⁷⁴ Max Weber, *Economy and Society*, 905.

³⁷⁵ The University of Manchester, The John Rylands University Library. "Boers and British: facts from the Transvaal." *Foreign and Commonwealth Office Collection*, 1899: 17.

³⁷⁶ Van Jaarsveld, *Van Riebeeck tot Vorster*, 219.

Cape Afrikaners even though they were divided by political boundaries like the Orange and Vaal rivers and the Drakensberg Mountains.]

This quotation highlights the importance of the wars that were fought by the Boer Republics against Britain in fostering a sense of shared national consciousness among white Afrikaans-speaking people across their political and administrative divisions. The following section explores this point in more detail.

4.4. The South African War and post-war reconstruction

Initially the British political response to the new Boer states was to work to incorporate them into a federation or union of states in South Africa. Peaceful means were not always seen as possible, however, and in 1877 the Transvaal Republic was forcibly annexed by Britain to serve this end. Annexation of the Transvaal Republic led to the First Anglo-Boer War, which lasted from 16 December 1880 to 23 March 1881, and an increase in Afrikaner national consciousness by many Boers in the Cape and the republics. From this time until 1902 the Boer republics and the British government were locked in dispute, culminating in the costly second Anglo-Boer or South African War between October 1899 and May 1902.³⁷⁷

Historians have given many reasons for this war. Albert Grundlingh points out that at the time imperialist writers blamed Paul Kruger, leader of the Transvaal Republic, for its outbreak. In this vein, Keppel-Jones has blamed the demands of the *uitlanders* for the franchise and the unwillingness of the Transvaal government to comply with these demands, for fear that the Boers would soon be out-numbered; this then led to the British Government

³⁷⁷ During the First Anglo-Boer War gold deposits in the Transvaal Republic were not considered large enough to have full-scale investment in war by Britain. However, by 1899 gold deposits in the Witwatersrand region was considered large enough for Britain to invest the resources for full-scale war.

deciding to intervene on behalf of the *uitlanders*.³⁷⁸ Other historians have pointed to British material interests in the wealthy gold-mining republic as the primary cause of the conflict. Historians Shula Marks and Stanley Trapido argue that the role of gold in the international economy ought to receive higher priority as a cause of the conflict, especially given Britain's position in the international monetary market.³⁷⁹ Whatever the most important cause for the war might have been, all the factors listed above contributed in some way to a conflict that writer Thomas Pakenham has described as "the longest (almost three years), the costliest (over £200 million), the bloodiest (at least 22 000 British, 34 000 Boer and 15 000 black lives), and the most humiliating war for Britain between 1815 and 1915".³⁸⁰

Both the Jameson Raid³⁸¹ of 1895 and the South African War of 1899 were displays of British force and its willingness to bring about political change through force (arguably, to suit mining and other capitalist interests).³⁸² However, this use of force had the effect of strengthening Boer national consciousness, and also brought Afrikaners at the Cape closer in political sentiment to their brethren in the Boer republics.³⁸³ Also important for the growth of Afrikaner unity was the unanimous support given by all three Afrikaner churches to the Boer

³⁷⁸ Thomas Pakenham, "The Anglo-Boer War, 1899-1902." In *An Illustrated History of South Africa*, edited by C. Trewhella (Cape Town: Human & Rousseau, 1986), 198.

³⁷⁹ S. Marks, & S. Trapido, 1979 "Lord Milner and the South African State," *History Workshop* 8, (1979) : 52-54.

³⁸⁰ Thomas Pakenham, "The Anglo-Boer War", 217.

³⁸¹ The Jameson Raid was a military invasion by Leander Starr Jameson, with a party of Rhodesian and Bechuanaland policemen, of Paul Kruger's Transvaal Republic over the New Year's weekend of 1895-96.

³⁸² Marks and Trapido, "Lord Milner and the South African State", 54.

³⁸³ Van Jaarsveld, *Van Riebeeck tot Vorster*, 192.

cause in the north. For them the war represented a righteous Boer struggle against British imperialism.³⁸⁴

That the Dutch Reformed Church leaders, including the ministers at the Cape, were in support of the republicans was evident from the start of the war. Already in June 1899 the Cape Dutch Reformed Church executive church council sent a letter to Sir Alfred Milner, the British High Commissioner, expressing their concern about the possibility of grave consequences should war break out between the British and their members in the north, people who had blood ties to the Cape community.³⁸⁵ Milner acknowledged their concerns and replied that he had sent the request to the Queen for attention. However, he remained resolute that peace would only be possible if the *uitlander*³⁸⁶ problems in the Transvaal were resolved.³⁸⁷ As soon as the war started a strong sense of solidarity with the Afrikaner people of the north became evident among Cape Afrikaners.³⁸⁸ John de Gruchy suggests that “in many respects this led to the healing of the breach dating from the Great Trek.”³⁸⁹ To show their support, many Dutch Reformed Church ministers went on commando to the north with church followers and ministered to Boer women and children in the concentration camps.³⁹⁰

³⁸⁴ J. A. Loubser, *The Apartheid Bible: A Critical Review of Racial Theology in South Africa* (Cape Town: Maskew Miller Longman, 1987), 19.

³⁸⁵ *De Kerkbode*, 10 August 1899, Letter from J. H. Hofmeyr and others to Sir Alfred Milner on 30 June 1899.

³⁸⁶ *Uitlander* is the Afrikaans for foreigner. The term was used for the expatriate migrant workers during the 19th century exploitation of the gold fields in the ZAR.

³⁸⁷ *De Kerkbode*, 10 August 1899, Reply of Milner on 8 July 1899 to letter from Hofmeyr.

³⁸⁸ *De Kerkbode*, 10 August 1899, 495.

³⁸⁹ De Gruchy, *Christianity and the Colonization*, 42.

³⁹⁰ J.W. Hofmeyr, and G.J. Pillay, *A History of Christianity in South Africa* (Pretoria: Haum Tertiary, 1994), 166.

4.4.1 Post-war Reconstruction, 1902-1910

The years between the end of the Anglo-Boer war in 1902 and the formation of the Union of South Africa in 1910 were spent in arguments between the Boers and the British on local autonomy and the terms of the future independence of the union. All four regions (the Cape, Natal and the former Boer republics) witnessed the formation of political parties rallying for support among white constituents. In the Transvaal and the Orange Free State the Afrikaner political party, *Het Volk*, moved toward reconciliation, believing this strategy to be the best way to overcome the depredations of the war, whilst simultaneously preparing for opportunities once the new constitution came into being. These years also witnessed the growth of political formations among the black population, including the African Political Organization (APO) and the Natal Native Congress (which was founded during the war years). Mahatma Gandhi's Natal Indian Congress, founded in 1894, also spread its influence to the other provinces.

The Boers remained strongly committed to their Reformed Churches and by 1903 some ministers were calling for a separate identity for Afrikaners apart from the *uitlanders* and blacks.³⁹¹ In particular, the Dutch Reformed Church had emerged as “the most powerful Afrikaner institution which survived the war intact” and proceeded to take the leading role in the rebuilding of rural Afrikaner communities.³⁹² According to Thompson, the NGK's main focus moved increasingly along a nationalistic path rather than one of conciliation with the *uitlanders*.³⁹³ Ds. H.S. Bosman's sermon delivered at Paul Kruger's funeral, and published in

³⁹¹ L. Thompson, *The Unification of South Africa* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1960), 18.

³⁹² Thompson, *Unification of South Africa*, 17.

³⁹³ Thompson, *Unification of South Africa*, 18.

the Cape Times on the December 17, 1904, likened Afrikaners to the Babylonian Israelites who never lost their faith in God. Afrikaners, he laments:

...should let the development of freedom go forth, so that the national feeling should become stronger, and as that in Malta gave freedom of language to a small people, so did they ask that it should be the same for them here... Paul Kruger was dead, but his people were not dead. Neither was his spirit dead, and they could go along the lines that he laid down under the flag that now waved over them, and still be true to it, but they would always remain Afrikanders, God helping them.³⁹⁴

On the political front, the British government and the mining magnates wanted stable governance as fast and as expediently as possible. The damages of the war were enormous but by March 1903 the resettlement of blacks and whites displaced by the war effort was almost complete. Within eight years after the war, both Afrikaner nationalists and whites loyal to Britain were reconciled by political manoeuvres which culminated in the South Africa Act of 1909. This, the editor of *The Star*, René de Villiers, in his contribution to *The Oxford History of South Africa* said: “united the territories occupied by white people in a British Dominion under a government which could fairly claim to represent both the white communities and which was led by men who were sincerely committed to a policy of Anglo-Afrikaner conciliation and co-operation with the other members of the British Empire”.³⁹⁵ However, De Villiers remarked: “In withdrawing from South Africa, Great Britain left behind a caste-like society, dominated by its white minority. The price of unity and conciliation among Boer and British whites was thus the institutionalization of white supremacy”.³⁹⁶

³⁹⁴ *Cape Times*, “The Dead President,” December 17, 1904.

³⁹⁵ Leonard Thompson, *The Compromise of Union*. Vol. II, in *The Oxford History of South Africa*, edited by M. Wilson and L. Thompson, 325-364 (Cape Town: Oxford University Press, 1969), 363-4.

³⁹⁶ Thompson, *The Compromise of Union*, 364.

4.5. Conclusion

In this chapter I have shown how the delay in the Afrikaner's embracing of modern industrial capitalist development until the end of the 19th century had much to do with the structural features of the society within which the Boers found themselves historically. Rooted in a patriarchal society and involved in an economy based primarily on hunting and self-provisioning farming, they were plunged into a period of upheaval which destroyed their modes of living and propelled them towards an ideological unity with other Boers in South Africa and, ultimately, into a new national consciousness of themselves as Afrikaners. At this juncture, the Boer Calvinist ethos appeared to be incongruous with the spirit of modern industrial capitalism; however, all this was set to change in the years that followed as elites amongst the Boers (nascent Afrikaners) set out to improve the attitude of the *volk* towards capitalism and work in general.

The establishment of the Union of South Africa in 1910 ushered in a new set of social dynamics, primarily political, that forced the Afrikaners onto new economic trajectories. The key developments that shaped the period to follow, that between 1910 and 1948, were firstly, the wide-scale destruction of farming as a result of the South African War and the British scorched-earth policy, leading, secondly, to the rapid urbanization of landless Afrikaners in search of new modes of production. Other significant developments in this time were the competition between Afrikaner and black labour in the towns, and the advent of the First World War. These events were forcing many Boers, now identifiable as Afrikaners, into urban centres where they were encountering modern capitalism directly for the first time. Critically, in the period following 1910 these Afrikaners were competing in the modern capitalist arena not as individuals but as a distinct, nationally defined group. It is only in the

post-1910, period, then, that the meeting between the distinctive Calvinist ethic of the Afrikaners and the spirit of modern capitalism in Weber's terms could be seen to unfurl.

It is thus in this next phase that we can fully assess whether the Boers as Afrikaners failed or flourished in terms of Weber's thesis, as they began to compete in urban settings, and engage with modern industrial capitalism.

Chapter 5: Afrikaner Protestantism and the Geist of Volks-Capitalism

5.1. Introduction

This chapter reflects on certain key historical processes that unfolded between 1910 and 1948 – a time commonly referred to by historians as the era of segregation. This is the period that laid the foundations for the apartheid years that followed. In these years Afrikaners engaged directly with modern industrial capitalism, both as workers and, significantly, in the case of a budding but small elite, as entrepreneurs. The economic and political empowerment of the *volk* was supported by capital, state and church, as can be seen in the efforts to eradicate the “poor white” problem and, later, to raise the economic base of the group as a whole in the development of modern, Afrikaner-based institutions. In the economic sphere these institutions included banking, assurance and industrial companies. In the cultural and political spheres the *volk* was increasingly organised under religious and political institutions such as the Reformed Churches, *Federasie van Afrikaanse Kultuurvereniginge* (FAK, Federation of Afrikaner Cultural Associations), *Afrikaanse Christelike Vroue Vereniging* (ACVV, Afrikaner Christian Women’s Association) and the *Afrikaanse Nasionale Studentebond* (ASB, Afrikaner National Student’s Association).

My review of these selected socio-historical issues is aimed at crystallizing out core features of the meeting between Afrikaner Calvinism and the spirit of modern industrial capitalism, using a Weberian interpretive framework. This chapter addresses firstly, the issue of the “poor white” Afrikaner followed by a discussion on Afrikaner Christian Nationalism. The focus of the discussion then shifts to the Reformed Churches and the question of race. Thereafter, it looks at the role of the Afrikaner Broederbond (or *Bond*), a secret society that was established in this period and played a key role as the ideological “mastermind” behind

what has been described as *volkskapitalisme* (people's capitalism), discussed below.³⁹⁷ Finally, the chapter discusses the growth of Afrikaner capitalism. This chapter also shows the crucial role played by the Reformed Calvinist churches and their ideas as “switchmen”, in Weber's terms, directing their church members down the Protestant ethic track. Here it considers how the interplay between this particular form of Calvinism left the issue of white/black race relations within South Africa in a precarious state on the eve of apartheid. An analysis of the events of this period reveals that the use of cultural power was perhaps the most important lever in lifting Afrikaners to a position from which they could engage successfully with modern capitalism as a group in the years after 1948.

The establishment of the Union of South Africa had brought white English and Afrikaans-speaking South Africans in the four provinces of the new union into direct party-political competition, and rallying voter support to lead the country became an important consideration for political parties. The strengths and weaknesses of these two political groupings can be seen at play during these trying years. The two groups differed in that, most English-speaking white South Africans were loyal to the British crown, and the other, those who were increasingly identifying themselves as members of an Afrikaner *volk*, intent on the possibility of self-determination. However, both groups were also becoming more aware of their own political and economic interests. In the case of the English, political hegemony and capital had to be hedged against the religious authority of the Reformed Churches as well as the emerging power of Afrikaner nationalism.

³⁹⁷ The term *volkskapitalisme* is taken from Dan O'Meara's famous study, *Volkskapitalisme: Class, Capital and Ideology in the Development of Afrikaner Nationalism 1934-1948*. Johannesburg: Ravan Press, 1983.

5.2. The “Poor Whites”

Social historians such as Charles van Onselen, Luli Callinicos and others have drawn attention to the emergence of a “poor white” class in the urban centres of the new Union and the socio-economic problems facing both new immigrants from Europe and poor Afrikaners abandoning the countryside in this time.³⁹⁸ Hermann Giliomee has pointed out that “the first three decades of the twentieth century saw the problem of poor Afrikaners at its worst”.³⁹⁹ This refers to the social dislocation arising from the tensions in the Afrikaner socio-political arena. This was a direct result of the British scorched earth policy which left Boer agriculture in ruins after the South African War, but was also related to land tenure and changes in agriculture as South Africa became more modernised. There is a large historiography on the issues above; for instance, Shula Marks and Stanley Trapido argue that the pressures brought about by the growth of commercial agriculture in the wake of South Africa’s ongoing industrialisation were probably the major factor behind the shift away from the traditionalist farming mindset of the Boers in the early twentieth century.⁴⁰⁰ Many of these traditional farmers were forced to the urban centres due to a combination of factors listed above.

According to Bill Freund, these newcomers to town were “thrown up onto the Reef vortex by the force of late nineteenth-century capitalism”.⁴⁰¹ The form of poverty they presented was different from the poverty found in a pre-capitalist context, for instance among farmers in the former Boer republics who might have been victims of drought or disease. In

³⁹⁸ Charles Van Onselen, *Studies in the social and economic history of the Witwatersrand 1886-1914, New Nineveh*. Johannesburg: Ravan, 1982. Luli Callinicos, *Working life, 1886-1940: factories, townships, and popular culture on the Rand*. Johannesburg: Ravan, 1987.

³⁹⁹ Giliomee, *The Afrikaners*, 323.

⁴⁰⁰ Shula Marks, S. & S. Trapido, “Lord Milner and the South African state,” *History Workshop Journal* 8, no. 1 (1979): 68-72.

⁴⁰¹ Bill Freund, “The poor whites: a social force and a social problem in South African history,” in *White but Poor* (Pretoria: Univ. of South Africa, 1992), xiv.

the 19th century, Boers with very limited material resources — who, as we have seen, were mostly defined within a patriarchal society — did not self-consciously behave as “poor whites”; nor were they socially stratified as such.⁴⁰² The 20th century Afrikaner “poor white” was landless, unskilled and unemployed in a new urban-industrial setting.

The migration of Afrikaners to the urban centres in search of work brought with it new and unexpected social, gender and racial dynamics.⁴⁰³ In the labour market, white workers were forced to compete against black unskilled labour for the lowest paid jobs on the mines and in the other labour sectors.⁴⁰⁴ Some of the newly urbanized “poor white” Afrikaners also found themselves living with black people in squalid conditions.⁴⁰⁵ But most abhorrent for many state officials as well as the Reformed Churches, the “poor white” social problem offered the dreaded possibility of racial mixing.⁴⁰⁶ Robert Morrell has astutely described these fears in his examination of the evidence presented by P.H. Ferreira and the Reverend A.P. Burger of Middelburg to the Unemployment Commission, which published its report in 1920. Morrell says: “Becoming a poor white meant not only becoming poor, it also involved a change in class position and world view. Contemporary observers described this transition as people “losing their self-respect and their characters”. This in turn led to the spread of “lazy sickness”, a “disease” which well-to-do farmers disparagingly accused poor whites of suffering from”.⁴⁰⁷ The behaviour described by these observers is hardly evidence

⁴⁰² John Iliffe, *The African poor* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 142.

⁴⁰³ There is an absence of a discussion on gender issues in this thesis. For a comprehensive discussion on gender issues during this period, see Cheryl Walker, ed. *Women and Gender in Southern Africa to 1945*. Cape Town: Philip, 1990.

⁴⁰⁴ Robert Davies, *Capital, State and White Labour in South Africa* (Brighton: The Harvester Press, 1979), 59.

⁴⁰⁵ Giliomee, *The Afrikaners*, 324.

⁴⁰⁶ John de Gruchy, *Nationalism, Land and Labour 1911-1922* (Cape Town, RICS/UCT, 2005), CD-Rom.

⁴⁰⁷ Robert Morrell, “The poor whites of Middelburg, Transvaal, 1900-1930: resistance, accommodation and class struggle,” in *White but Poor* (Pretoria: University of South Africa, 1992), 15.

of the Protestant ethos at work among this “poor-white” population. However, Morrell’s account is very revealing of the attitudes, motivations and actions of those Afrikaners of means, who were trying to alleviate the “poor white” problem, and drew on the ideological resources of Calvinism in this endeavour.

It is apparent that both the Reformed Churches as well as ambitious politicians played a major role in alleviating poverty among the “poor white” population. What was unsettling for the ruling class, and especially the Afrikaner elite, was the possible development of a unified class movement that included both black and white that would transcend the boundaries of race while at the same time unifying the poor and oppressed.⁴⁰⁸ At the same time, the leadership within the Reformed Churches saw a threat in racial mixing and miscegenation, and, as averred by Morrell, the image of a “lazy” segment of the Afrikaner community was particularly concerning to them. This was not consistent with the “signs of election” shown by the successful farmers of the Afrikaner Calvinist community, especially those at the Cape. Many of these farmers traced their ancestry to the French Huguenots, Dutch and German settlers from the middle of the 17th century.

The response of these elites was to initiate various programmes in an attempt to alleviate the poverty and “rescue” poor whites from any identification with poor blacks. A women’s organization, the *Afrikaanse Christelike Vroue Vereniging* (ACVV), was formed under the auspices of the Reformed Churches in 1904 precisely to solve the “poor white” problem,⁴⁰⁹ their primary motivation being the threat of racial mixing among this group.⁴¹⁰

⁴⁰⁸ Freund, “The poor whites,” xvii.

⁴⁰⁹ De Gruchy, “Land and Labour 1911-1922,” 89.

⁴¹⁰ Freund, “The poor whites,” xviii.

The Reformed Church also established labour colonies like De Lagersdrift in 1907 which “became the focus of the ‘poor white solution’ in Middelburg for the next thirty years”.⁴¹¹

The Afrikaner churches were supported by the state in these endeavours to eradicate the “poor white” class. The commitment to privileging white workers over black in state institutions is best displayed in the employment policies of the South African Railways after 1910. Before Union, the three railway services operating in the Cape, Natal and the former Boer republics had already begun to favour white unskilled workers over blacks, even though this pushed up the wage bill and led to some concerns about the cost of favouring white unskilled employees.⁴¹² The amalgamation of the three railways into the unified South African Railways (SAR) saw the entrenchment of these affirmative practices for unskilled white workers, with ministerial approval.⁴¹³ As a result, many white railway workers were promoted to higher positions, the posts they vacated almost immediately filled by the appointment of unskilled white workers. Furthermore, in order to create more vacancies for white employees, black workers were retrenched and replaced by whites; this practice was particularly prominent in the province of Natal where the process of improving wages for whites was seen to be lagging.⁴¹⁴

Pirie’s account of these developments points to the importance of the underlying work ethic that the SAR and Afrikaner Churches were seeking, even in this racial project:

Having announced improved wages, the SAR sought publicity for its attempt to recruit white men who were ‘of good character’, physically fit, aged between 18

⁴¹¹ Morrell, Robert, “The Poor whites of Middelburg,” 4.

⁴¹² Pirie, Gordon. “White railway labour in South Africa,” *White but Poor* (Pretoria: Univ. of South Africa, 1992), 101-114.

⁴¹³ Pirie, “White railway labour,” 108 -109.

⁴¹⁴ Pirie, “White railway labour,” 105 – 108.

and 40, and able to use pick, shovel and barrow on earthworks. With the help of magistrates, ministers of the Dutch Reformed Church, field cornets, members of parliament and senate, almost 1400 applications were soon received, mostly from single men.⁴¹⁵

What is abundantly clear is that during this phase in South African history the elites of the Afrikaner community were working to eradicate the “lazy sickness” that they found so abhorrent among “poor whites”, by creating employment avenues for those “of good character”. Such obligations and injunctions are reminiscent of the commitment to the Protestant ethic displayed by the VOC administration when recruiting French Huguenots of “good character” to settle at the Cape in the 1680s.⁴¹⁶

5.3. Afrikaner Christian Nationalism

To appreciate the support given by both state and church to the “poor white” community, and the latent advantages this afforded the Afrikaner elite, it is necessary to understand the special form of national consciousness that developed in Afrikaner history at this juncture – a nationalism that has been described in politico-religious terms as “Afrikaner Christian nationalism”. Through their all-embracing white South African Party (SAP) Louis Botha, the first Prime Minister of the Union, and Jan Smuts, another Boer general who served as Prime Minister from 1919 to 1924 and a second term from 1939 to 1948, favoured a broad-based white South African nationalism that included both Afrikaner and English whites.⁴¹⁷ Their ideals were challenged, however, when in 1913 a key member of the SAP, General Barry Hertzog, left the cabinet and established the National Party (NP) in Bloemfontein. The NP, with strong support from the Afrikaners in the former Boer

⁴¹⁵ Pirie, “White railway labour,” 109.

⁴¹⁶ See Chapter 2.

⁴¹⁷ De Gruchy, “Land and Labour 1911-1922,” 93.

Republics, decided to contest the existing political *status quo* under the political banner of racial segregation.⁴¹⁸

One could argue that the formation of a political union between the Boer republics and the British colonies of the Cape and Natal after the destructive South African War was made without the full commitment of Afrikaner nationalists and that Hertzog was thus closer to the “political pulse” of the Afrikaners than either Botha or Smuts. The exceptional support the NP received from Afrikaner nationalists transformed it into a party rooted in a sense of its divine calling as the authentic representative of Afrikanerdom.⁴¹⁹ In this process the events of the Great Trek and the battles fought against the British and African tribes in the 19th century were re-interpreted as elements of a sacred history. This theme, which was already present in the speeches made by Paul Kruger in the years before the South African War, was one which Afrikaner ideologists of the 1920s and 1930s mobilised to win national political power among the white electorate.⁴²⁰

The Reformed Churches and its clergy used their pulpits to stress the religious importance of Afrikaner history, especially the events between the start of the Great Trek and the South African War.⁴²¹ “The Day of the Vow”, celebrated on the 16 December as a sacred day of remembrance for Reformed Christianity, is a major example of the success of these religio-political re-interpretations.⁴²² Moodie tells us: “When Dr. Malan explicitly invoked fear of black domination at Blood River in 1938, he did not talk of development for black

⁴¹⁸ De Gruchy, “Land and Labour 1911-1922,” 93.

⁴¹⁹ De Gruchy, “Land and Labour 1911-1922,” 93.

⁴²⁰ F.A. Van Jaarsveld, *The Afrikaner's Interpretation of South African History* (Cape Town: Simondium Publishers, 1964); T.D. Moodie, *The Rise of Afrikanerdom: Power, Apartheid and the Afrikaner Civil Religion* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1975).

⁴²¹ Loubser, *The Apartheid Bible*, 21.

⁴²² “The day of the Vow” is the celebration of the Boer victory over the Zulu. It is also referred to as *Geloftedag* or Dingaans Day.

men along black lines. Rather he described the predicament of urban Afrikaners as a second Blood River.”⁴²³ A speech entitled “*Het is ons Ernst*” [We are serious about it], delivered in 1908 in Cape Town by Dr. D.F. Malan, church minister, and future Prime Minister of South Africa, encapsulates the sentiments, motivations and political aspirations of this form of Afrikaner nationalism:

...No, we have to nurture our national feelings on another, healthier foundation which is increased national possessions. We need to enhance our fatherland which unites us, our national history which binds us together, our national character, our national religion and our national language, by the addition of our own national literature, which is the embodiment of our own arts and our own national culture. It is the noble calling and difficult task of the youth in South Africa to create such extensive national possessions, in which our nationality will always be kept safe and in which it can be rooted more healthily.⁴²⁴

In this declaration from the pulpits of the Dutch Reformed Church we can clearly see the marrying of a commitment to the idea of Luther’s “calling” as discussed in chapter 1 (albeit here directed towards a national consciousness) with an invocation of Calvin’s ideas of the “signs of election” through material possessions. Here again, as during the Great Trek period, a political-religious leader was tying the idea of “the chosen people” to the project of nationalism, with the Afrikaans language now emerging more centrally as a necessary marker of the identity that was already being championed in the 19th century, notably in the Cape. In other words, the clergy of the DRC were using the church to socialize Afrikaners into believing that they had “a religious duty to be a nationalist”.⁴²⁵

⁴²³ Moodie, *The Rise of Afrikanerdom*,” 247.

⁴²⁴ D.F. Malan, “*Het is ons Ernst*” (speech made in Cape Town, December 1908).

⁴²⁵ Loubser, *The Apartheid Bible*, 22.

It was argued in chapter 4 that from a Weberian perspective a “community of memories” constitutes the ultimate decisive element of “national consciousness”.⁴²⁶ However, a shared language can play an important role in further helping to cement a group consciousness. By 1910 many Afrikaners had already developed a national consciousness but, at this juncture the Afrikaans language was still not regarded by all whites as of equal status and authority as English or Dutch.⁴²⁷ In the ensuing years, members of the Afrikaner elite worked hard to get the Afrikaans language recognised as an official language with English.⁴²⁸ In a lecture delivered at the Afrikaans Taal Monument in Stellenbosch by Rev. Tobie Muller in 1913, entitled, “*Die Geloofsbelydenis van ’n Nasionalis*” [“A Nationalist’s Confession of Faith”], we see evidence of the call to respect the Afrikaans language, which was still seen by many as a patois Dutch:

Their [Afrikaner’s] environment tells them slowly but surely that they are on a lower level than their English-speaking countrymen and the foreigners they encounter. This is also a result of the Afrikaner’s own tendency to regard Afrikaans as a kitchen language and to scorn it because it is not Dutch. This attitude has already produced more poor whites and good-for-nothings in our country than we can imagine.⁴²⁹

In the same speech Muller derided the lazy attitude of some Afrikaners and spurred them on to both nationalism and hard work:

Religion includes morality. For this reason it is a religious duty to be a nationalist. Besides, for the Christian and Theist who believe that separate nations exist, not merely by chance but for a certain purpose, each particular nation has its calling

⁴²⁶ Weber, *Economy and Society*, 903.

⁴²⁷ T.B. Muller, “The Creed of a Nationalist” (Lecture at the Afrikaanse Taal Monument in Stellenbosch, 10 October 1913). (Translation: ‘Die Geloofsbelydenis van ’n Nasionalis’)

⁴²⁸ The Afrikaner elite are defined as those Afrikaans and Dutch-speaking whites who had access to financial resources and those who had cultural and political influence amongst members of the group. These elites included mostly business people, politicians, educators and clergy.

⁴²⁹ T.B. Muller, “The Creed of a Nationalist”, (Stellenbosch, 10 October 1913).

and special tasks to carry out in the world. From this point of view, laziness in the national area is a religious offence, i.e. a sin. It is therefore literally true and not metaphorical when the Afrikaner says that maintaining his language is part of his religion.⁴³⁰

This speech encapsulated critical elements of the nationalist aspirations of Afrikaner elites at the time: the view of their nationalism as a divine calling; the invocation of the Protestant ethic in the call for a change in attitude from laziness to hard work; commitment to the notion of the predestination of “the Afrikaner” as a group, and Afrikaans to a position of religious sacredness.

5.4. The Reformed Churches and the Question of Race

As the previous discussion has made clear, the development of an Afrikaner nationalist consciousness cannot be separated from the question of race or more broadly culture. Concomitantly, the issue of culture was an important dimension of the encounter between Afrikaner Calvinism and modern capitalism.

In unravelling the complexity of the challenges faced by the Afrikaner *volk*, the role of religion and race need some explanation. In the run-up to Union in 1910, the three Reformed Churches discussed in chapter 3 — the Dutch Reformed Church, *Gereformeerde Kerk* and *Nederduitsch Hervormde Kerk* — had failed at an attempt at unification.⁴³¹ The best they could do before 1910 was form a Federal Council (*Die Raad der Kerken*) in 1907 to improve communication links among the three of them. Central to the relationships among the Reformed Churches were their divergent policies on the position of black members, in

⁴³⁰ T.B. Muller, “The Creed of a Nationalist”, (Stellenbosch, 10 October 1913).

⁴³¹ De Gruchy, “Land and Labour 1911-1922,” 94.

particular people later classified as “coloured” in the Cape.⁴³² In the Cape Reformed Churches blacks could attend church services but in the churches established in the Boer republics, there was a policy of strict segregation. Any liberal leanings that the Cape division of the Reformed Church might have displayed on the issue were denied in the consensual process of decision-making that was insisted on by the Federal Council.⁴³³ In the end all the Reformed Churches adopted a unified position on the question of black members, which was reflected in the passing of the Dutch Reformed Church Act of 1911, which made segregation legal within the Reformed Churches throughout South Africa. Clause X of this Act stipulates:

No coloured person, being a member of the Dutch Reformed Church of the Colony or Province of the Cape of Good Hope, shall be entitled, by reason of such membership or of the passing of this Act or the union brought about thereby, to claim membership of the united church [the three Reformed Churches] in the event of his finding himself, or of his being or becoming resident, in any of the adjacent Provinces and so long as he shall remain without the boundaries of the Province of the Cape of Good Hope; but this status as regards such membership in the adjacent Provinces shall be the same as, and be regulated and determined by, the status of coloured persons as regards such membership in such of the other Provinces within the Union as he shall find himself or be or become resident in.⁴³⁴

After 1915 racially mixed marriages were discussed in the synods and in that year the Cape Synod instructed its church councils to oppose such marriages firmly. By 1917 the prohibition of mixed marriages had become the policy of the National Party, by then the official opposition in parliament, thereby indicating how the influence of the DRC had become entrenched in that shaping of racist political policy.⁴³⁵

⁴³² E. Strassberger, “Ecumenism in South Africa 1936-1960 with special reference to the mission of the church” (Ph.D. thesis, Stellenbosch University, Stellenbosch, 1971), 182.

⁴³³ *The Church Chronicle*, 2 March, 1911.

⁴³⁴ Dutch Reformed Churches Union, Act No. 23 of 1911.

⁴³⁵ Loubser, *The Apartheid Bible*, 23.

The theological justification for this intimate relationship between the DRC and the National Party owed much to the ideology of Abraham Kuyper, the Dutch theologian and prime minister of the Netherlands between 1901 and 1905.⁴³⁶ Kuyper's argument for separate development originated in the principle that all reality in the universe exists under the dominion of Christ. To this end, Calvinism is "an independent system of principles" that equates with a "quite unique, all-encompassing world view".⁴³⁷ Kuyper further employed the concept of "pillarisation", which allows for the differentiation of institutions as under secularization, but insists that these "spheres of sovereignty" overlap inasmuch as they all fall under a common denominator: God.⁴³⁸ Put differently, the idea of pillarisation allows for each institution, such as the state, the church and the economy, to exist independently, as is the case under secularization. However, God still holds vice-regency over them all, and thus this independence is not absolute.⁴³⁹ This religious ideology allows the clergy, the representatives of God on earth, to move into political power as heads of state - as in the case of Kuyper himself, in the Netherlands in the early 1900s, and, later, of Dr. D.F. Malan in South Africa. In sum, the church in this neo-Calvinist form holds the space of intersection among the different institutional spheres.

The notion of "sovereign spheres" further rationalizes the importance of different nations and ethnicities operating within their own, separate spheres. For neo-Calvinists in the Netherlands and those South African Reformed clergy who trained in the Netherlands, this idea became central to their understanding "that each form of life should multiply "according

⁴³⁶ John De Gruchy, *Liberating Reformed Theology: a South African contribution to an ecumenical debate* (Michigan: Eerdsman, 1991), 25.

⁴³⁷ Abraham Kuyper, *Der Stone-lezingen* (Amsterdam: Hoveker and Wormster, 1898), 14.

⁴³⁸ Moodie, *The Rise of Afrikanerdom*, 99.

⁴³⁹ Abraham Kuyper, *Calvinism* (Amsterdam: Honeker and Wormser, Stone Lectures, 1899), 116.

to its own sort”, according to the peculiar character it received” and that this “is the greatest law of creation which applies to more than only seed-sowing plants”.⁴⁴⁰ To drive his idea home for those in the Dutch colonies Kuyper stated unequivocally: “for Javanese and European, for each an own form of life, an own form of government”.⁴⁴¹

These ideas of their theological mentors in the Netherlands were influential in directing Afrikaner Calvinists, now also identified as Christian Nationalists,⁴⁴² along a path of segregationist policies at the level of both the church synod and in state laws. Arguably, the idea of “sovereign spheres” for each group is consistent with the notion of being predestined to operate in one’s own sphere and it is therefore not difficult to see how Afrikaner leaders and DRC clergy latched onto the ideas of Kuyper, as both Moodie and de Gruchy have observed. In the words of de Gruchy, “the language of “own spheres” clearly demonstrates the influence which Kuyperian neo-Calvinist thought was having at this point within dominant DRC circles”.⁴⁴³

5.5. The Afrikaner Broederbond: The Totalizing Dynamism of Religion, Culture, Economics and Politics

It is important to recognize the very particular relationship that existed between religion, culture, politics and ideas about race and ethnicity at this time. To this end, the

⁴⁴⁰ Abraham Kuyper, *Eenvormigheid, de vloek van het moderne leven* (Amsterdam: Hoogh, 1869), 22.

⁴⁴¹ Abraham Kuyper, *Eenvormigheid*, 30.

⁴⁴² T. Dunbar Moodie in his book, *The Rise of Afrikanerdom: Power, Apartheid, and the Afrikaner Civil Religion*, 110, say, “the words ‘Christian National’ originates in Holland where Groen van Prinsterer coined the term to refer to the necessary interdependence of culture and faith in Christian education. The Christian National movement was kindled in South Africa after the Boer War to ensure Christian education for young Transvaalers and Free Staters in their own language. However, the original emphasis had shifted somewhat under the assumptions of *volkskerk* theology. The movement was concerned with the continuance of the Christian faith among Afrikaners, but now it recognized that the Dutch Reformed churches could not exist without the Afrikaner People.”

⁴⁴³ John De Gruchy, *Liberating Reformed Theology: a South African contribution to an ecumenical debate* (Michigan: Eerdsman, 1991), 25. And T.D. Moodie, *The Rise of Afrikanerdom: Power, Apartheid and the Afrikaner Civil Religion* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1975).

political scientist Dan O'Meara is critical of earlier studies on Afrikaner Nationalism that do not connect apartheid and capitalism, arguing:

Almost without exceptions, studies of Afrikaner Nationalism have accepted the conceptual apparatus and social categories inherent in Afrikaner Nationalist ideology: they have failed to query the ideological premise that ethnic/racial/cultural categories constitute the natural and sole units of social action in South Africa, where social classes 'are not meaningful social realities'. Explanation remains rooted in ideas and ideology, themselves aspects of social action but hardly its explanation.⁴⁴⁴

However, a Weberian understanding of the relationship between ideas, identity and behaviour allows for a more nuanced understanding of Calvinism and capitalism in the Afrikaner case study. In this analysis material interests are not absent but are merged with religious ideas and culture.

Following this line of thought, culture, including ideas about race, religion and politics are the primary markers of social integration of Afrikaners. These markers were focussed on by the *Afrikaner Broederbond (Bond)* in their attempt to uplift the Afrikaners economically as a collective. The *Bond* was formed in June, 1918. It traces its origins to a speech made by Dr. D.F. Malan, minister-turned-editor of the Afrikaans language newspaper *De Burger*, towards the end of the First World War when German victory seemed inevitable.⁴⁴⁵ The speech was largely anti-British and invoked sentiments of Afrikaner nationalism through "shared memories" of the misery suffered by the *volk* as a result of British policies during the Great Trek and the South African War.⁴⁴⁶ After the gathering a brawl broke out in the streets of Johannesburg between English-speaking British loyalists and

⁴⁴⁴ Dan O'Meara, "The Bond 1927-1948: Class Vanguard of Afrikaner Nationalism," *Journal of Southern African Studies* 3, no. 2 (1977): 157.

⁴⁴⁵ De Gruchy, "Land and Labour 1911-1922," 96.

⁴⁴⁶ De Gruchy, "Land and Labour 1911-1922," 96.

Afrikaner militants. These young Afrikaners formed the bedrock of a new society called “Young South Africa”, who would rename the society the *Afrikaner Broederbond* on 18 June 1918. The objective of the *Bond* was “to weld all Afrikaners into a vast single brotherhood, based on shared ties of tradition, culture, language and religion”.⁴⁴⁷ By 1922 the *Bond* had gone underground and became a secret society and the “ideological mind” behind Afrikaner Nationalism. De Gruchy argues that the *Bond*’s reason for going underground was based on its political aims that were directly opposed to that of General Botha and the South African Party.⁴⁴⁸

In many ways, Afrikanerdom’s encounter with capitalist development during the early 1900s is reminiscent of Weber’s study of the East Elbian territories in the 1890s, where the traditionalist world of the farmers collapsed under the onslaught of new capitalist productive forces. Sociologist Lawrence Scaff has captured Weber’s analysis succinctly when he writes:

The process of capitalist rationalization not only puts an end to the historically articulated relations of social stratification in the East; it also creates a new propertyless class and ‘formally free’ labor and dissolves the centres of authority that had previously served as carriers of “culture.” A change of such magnitude will reverberate throughout the social and political order, Weber maintains. But his conclusion in the early studies of the agrarian world leaves undefined the precise character of the culture that might emerge through this irreversible process.⁴⁴⁹

In the case of the Afrikaners, a new landless class emerged in the form of “poor whites”, while new centres of authority for “culture” developed by way of the *Bond*. The decades after 1910 leading up to the *apartheid* years witnessed changes that reverberated throughout the social and political order, not only for Afrikanerdom, but for all South Africa.

⁴⁴⁷ C. Bloomberg, *Christian-Nationalism and the Rise of the Bond in South Africa, 1914-48* in S. Dubow, ed. (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1990), 69.

⁴⁴⁸ De Gruchy, “Land and Labour 1911-1922,” 96.

⁴⁴⁹ Lawrence A. Scaff, “Fleeing the Iron Cage: Politics and Culture in the Thought of Max Weber,” *The American Political Science Review* (1987): 740.

The *Bond*'s debt to Kuyperian-style Christian Nationalism was evident from the start. It regarded the maintenance of Afrikanerdom as a God-given *volks*-calling and saw its role in this project as a sacred mission. Early leaders of the *Bond* included two prominent NGK ministers, W. Nicol and J.F. Naudé, and, as noted by de Gruchy, “many dominees ... soon became leading members of the Broederbond and, through their influence, the church’s support for Afrikaner nationalist aspirations and programmes was assured in all areas of public life”.⁴⁵⁰

From the time of Union a major concern of Afrikaner Nationalists was that they would be overwhelmed by forms of British culture and that Afrikaner heritage and values would disappear. This fear was reinforced by the prevailing view among the general English-speaking population that Afrikaners should learn English but it was not necessary for English speakers to learn Dutch.⁴⁵¹ English was, by the 1910s the dominant language of the state and capital. In other words, for most English South Africans the good Afrikaner was one willing to trade his language and worldview for English and a British way of life. Those Afrikaners who resisted British re-socialization were considered extremists and reactionary.⁴⁵² The placatory attitude of the SAP government towards English was unacceptable to Afrikaner nationalists and it was against this backdrop that the *Bond* had assumed the role of cultural protector of Afrikanerdom after 1918. However, as an underground movement, its reach was limited and it was difficult to gain ground on a wider national front. With this in mind, the *Bond* established the *Helpmekaarvereniging* (Help-each-other Association) in 1928 and then in 1929 the more all-encompassing *Federasie van Afrikaanse Kultuurvereniginge* (Federation

⁴⁵⁰ De Gruchy, “Land and Labour 1911-1922,” 96.

⁴⁵¹ Van Jaarsveld, *Van Riebeeck tot Vorster*, 272.

⁴⁵² Van Jaarsveld, *Van Riebeeck tot Vorster*, 272.

of Afrikaans Cultural Associations) more commonly referred to as FAK.⁴⁵³ It functioned essentially as the public wing of the *Bond*. Together with the NP and the DRC, the FAK thus became the third element of a tripartite alliance upon which Afrikaner life (and *Bond* power) was based and was foremost in “preserving Afrikaner culture and communal cohesion waging the struggle for Afrikaner autonomy and predominance”.⁴⁵⁴

As this discussion makes clear, the *Bond*'s strategy was to penetrate all spheres of social institutions of Afrikanerdom and to use this infrastructure for the betterment of Afrikaner social well-being and, ultimately, to gain power over all South Africa. Access to religion was guaranteed through the Dutch Reformed Churches; influence in the political sphere was obtained through the National Party; authority in education and ideological matters was maintained through the Institute for Christian National Education and the Afrikaans-speaking schools under its patronage; cultural hegemony was achieved through the Federation of Afrikaans Cultural Societies; access to youth and students was attained via the Voortrekkers (an Afrikaner version of the Boy Scouts) and the Afrikaanse Nasionale Studentebond (ASB), while its influence in higher education was realized through the Potchefstroom University of Christian Higher Education and other Afrikaans universities.⁴⁵⁵ Finally, the project toward economic success was channelled through the *Afrikaanse Handelsinstituut* (AHI) and the White Workers' Protection Society (established in 1942).⁴⁵⁶

By the 1960s the *Bond* had, through its extensive network, successfully infiltrated some 2

⁴⁵³ O'Meara, *Volkskapitalisme*, 101 – 102.

⁴⁵⁴ Bloomberg, *Christian-Nationalism*, 54.

⁴⁵⁵ Within the first decade the leadership of the *Bond* was increasingly influenced and eventually dominated by the Christian Nationalist worldview of Potchefstroom University for Higher Education. See J.W. De Gruchy, 2005. Nationalism, Land and Labour 1911-1922, in *The Social History of Christianity in South Africa 1487 to 1994* [CD-ROM]. Available RICS/UCT [2005].

⁴⁵⁶ De Gruchy, *Nationalism, Land and Labour 1911-1922*, in *The Social History of Christianity in South Africa 1487 to 1994* [CD-ROM]. Available RICS/UCT [2005]. and Bloomberg, C. 1990. *Christian-Nationalism and the Rise of the Bond in South Africa, 1914-48*. Dubow, S. (ed.). Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press.

000 organizations, effectively blanketing the whole of Afrikaner life and socio-politically affecting race and economic relations in SA as a whole.⁴⁵⁷

In the pre-1948 period the *Bond* was intent on building a Calvinist society and to influence Afrikaner society from the bottom up as well as from the top down. A relatively high percentage of its members were teachers; it also included professors from the leading Afrikaans-medium universities.⁴⁵⁸ J.H.P. Serfontein quotes from a special report of the Smuts Government dated August 1, 1943 to note that “about 30 per cent of its members are teachers and probably over 50 per cent of the members are in a position to influence schools and children either by being teachers or by serving on school boards or committees.”⁴⁵⁹ The question that concerned Hertzog as Prime Minister most was whether the state should be paying for the opportunities of the *Bond* to propagate disruptive propaganda amongst them.⁴⁶⁰

There was never a doubt during the 1920s and 1930s that the *Bond*, while working toward the upliftment of Afrikaners, also aspired to the eventual achievement of a republican form of government, i.e. full political independence from Britain. Politically, the *Bond* was aligned to the National Party but once Hertzog had formed an alliance with the predominantly English Labour Party in order to defeat the SAP of Botha and Smuts — the National Party and the Labour Party formed the Pact government that brought Hertzog to power as Prime Minister in 1924 — tensions began to mount. Afrikaner disillusionment toward Hertzog gained impetus after his Pact alliance started expelling some of the NP’s parliamentary members. It was further fuelled by Hertzog’s participation in the Imperial Conference of

⁴⁵⁷ Bloomberg, *Christian-Nationalism*, 45.

⁴⁵⁸ Moodie, *The Rise of Afrikanerdom*, 100.

⁴⁵⁹ J.H.P. Serfontein, *Brotherhood of Power: an exposé of the secret Afrikaner-Broederbond* (London: Rex Collings Limited, 1979), 67.

⁴⁶⁰ Bloomberg, *Christian-Nationalism*, 52.

1926, at which the Balfour Declaration on British sovereignty in its colonies was adopted. On his return Hertzog decided to abandon all past demands for Afrikaner republicanism.⁴⁶¹ However, it was Hertzog's famous attack of the *Bond* in a speech given on November 7, 1935 at Smithfield, his parliamentary constituency in the Orange Free State, that motivated the *Bond* to look to a more purist form of government for the Afrikaners.⁴⁶²

The *Bond*'s political hopes were given a boost when, in response to the Smithfield speech, Dr. D.F. Malan, then Cape leader of the National Party, led a break-away group of 27 MPs to form the Herenigde Nasionale Party (HNP – Re-united National Party). The *Bond* then pledged their support to Malan and the HNP “and with its secret activities in the schools and churches did much to promote the philosophy of a narrow, exclusive Afrikanerdom”.⁴⁶³

5.6. The Growth of Afrikaner Capitalism

As described in chapter 2, those farmers who lived in the vicinity of Cape Town, including the French Huguenots who were recruited for their Protestant work ethic, had greater opportunities for capital accumulation than those who lived far from the market centre. In the 19th century, when the British first arrived and economic development grew at unprecedented rates, these Cape farmers maintained their economic advantages. Their economic status divided them from their cousins on the frontier, especially after the Great Trek. In chapters 3 and 4 we have seen how the Boer farmers of the north were embroiled in constant skirmishes with local black tribes, lacked the support of strong state institutions, and were hampered by the backwater conditions of their new territories, all of which left them

⁴⁶¹ Serfontein, *Brotherhood of Power*, 39. At the Imperial Conference in 1926 the Balfour Declaration made the sovereignty of the dominions clear beyond all shadow of doubt. On his return from the conference Hertzog declared that the constitutional aims of his party had been largely satisfied and that he would abandon the republican demands.

⁴⁶² Serfontein, *Brotherhood of Power*, 39.

⁴⁶³ Serfontein, *Brotherhood of Power*, 40.

economically challenged. This kept them out of the industrial capitalism that was beginning to take off in the region from the late 1800s after the discovery of gold and diamonds. The major war that engulfed the region at the turn of the century certainly added to the economic difficulties of inland farmers.

Thus by the time of Union in 1910, Afrikaners were divided into two financial camps: the relatively affluent farmers in the Cape and the generally much poorer farmers in the Transvaal and Orange Free State provinces. The alleviation of the “poor-white” problem was important for both groups of Afrikaners, but those in the north aspired towards a more egalitarian economic system than many Cape Afrikaners, who were already beginning to engage modern capital on their own terms by reinvesting the profits from their farming. They included astute individuals such as W.A. Hofmeyr who, along with five Afrikaners and a Scotsman, started the financial empire, SANLAM, in 1918.⁴⁶⁴ According to O’Meara “by 1934, the development of capitalism had transformed Afrikaans-speakers into “poor whites”, proletarians, petty bourgeois or capitalist farmers, but had not produced Afrikaner capitalists in industry or commerce. Only in the Cape had there emerged anything resembling capitalist undertakings controlled by Afrikaner-speakers.”⁴⁶⁵

Given the strong support from the *Gereformeerde Kerk* and the *Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk*, the *Bond* found it easier to engage the north in its quest to eradicate “poor whiteism” than the south, where rich farmers already had business investment opportunities. To assuage the tensions around capital accumulation between poorer northern and more affluent southern Afrikaners, it focused on *volk* capitalism. In its attempt to engage modern capitalism, the *Bond* had to create what Weber has described as a “this worldly

⁴⁶⁴ O’Meara, *Volkskapitalisme*, 101.

⁴⁶⁵ O’Meara, *Volkskapitalisme*, 96.

Protestant asceticism” between the Afrikaner-Neo-Calvinist-Christian-Nationalism and the *Geist* of modern capitalism.⁴⁶⁶ O’Meara points out that at the 1930 congress the *Bond* resolved to strive for “the economic self-sufficiency of the impoverished section of our *volk* and for the training of a commercial community among Afrikaners”.⁴⁶⁷ The church and members of the Afrikaner elite were using the Calvinist rhetoric of “calling”, “predestination”, “chosen people”, “thrift” and “hard work” from their pulpits and speeches across the country to lift the “lazy poor whites” from their positions of being “non-elect”.⁴⁶⁸ The resolution taken by FAK at the Economic *Volks* Congress in October 1939 best speaks to the notions of thrift and to Benjamin Franklin’s ideas of savings:

Thrift should be cultivated and strengthened in our *volk*; full support be obtained for existing Afrikaner savings and credit institutions; greater facilities for the exercise of thrift be provided through the establishment of new savings and credit institutions, if, after investigations, these are deemed necessary; new opportunities for the profitable and safe investment of capital be created through the establishment of new commercial and industrial undertakings, or through the expansion of existing establishments; Afrikaners and financially strong Afrikaner establishments must be encouraged to invest a greater share of their capital in commerce and industrial undertakings.⁴⁶⁹

The FAK and the *Bond*, both strongly represented at this conference, were earnestly motivating all Afrikaners in Protestant ethic ways. On the question of “poor whiteism” the *Bond* had decided to approach the problem rather differently by working towards a change in

⁴⁶⁶ Weber, *The Protestant Ethic*, 170.

⁴⁶⁷ O’Meara, *Volkskapitalisme*, 102.

⁴⁶⁸ De Gruchy, “Nationalism, Land and Labour”, 93-95.

⁴⁶⁹ E.P. Du Plessis, *’n Volk Staen Op: die ekonomiese volkskongres en daarna/in opdrag van die Ekonomiese Instituut van die F.A.K.* (Kaapstad: Human & Rousseau, 1936), 125-133.

attitude concerning capital accumulation among this group instead of focusing on immediate measures to improve their condition.⁴⁷⁰

During these early years Cape Afrikaners viewed the path toward modern capitalism somewhat differently from the *Bond*. As early as 1914-15 W.A. Hofmeyr, who, as already noted, was a prominent member of Cape Afrikaner society, saw an opportunity “to develop the national consciousness into a business consciousness.”⁴⁷¹ According to O’Meara, Hofmeyr and a small group of associated professional men in the Western Cape, pursued this vision with an iron determination.⁴⁷² In 1918 they formed the *Suid-Afrikaanse Nasionale Trust Maatskappy* (the South African National Trust Company – SANTAM).⁴⁷³ The capital for the venture was supplied by wealthy Western Cape wine farmers and its main financial focus was short and long-term assurance. A few months later, a sister company, SANLAM (the South African Life Assurance Company), was created, working primarily on life assurance.⁴⁷⁴

There are two important interpretations to be made at this point. First, wealthy Cape Afrikaners were engaging in very modern forms of capitalism: putting their long-term trust in modern capitalist corporations. In so doing they were displaying an attitude towards accumulation through re-investment opportunities. Second, these developments show that wealthy Cape Afrikaners had realized their collective financial potential in competition with the “foreign” capitalists who were operating in their midst. According to E.P. Du Plessis,

⁴⁷⁰ O’Meara, *Volkskapitalisme*, 102.

⁴⁷¹ O’Meara, *Volkskapitalisme*, 96-7.

⁴⁷² O’Meara, *Volkskapitalisme*, 97.

⁴⁷³ Du Plessis, *’n Volk Staans Op*, 54.

⁴⁷⁴ O’Meara, *Volkskapitalisme*, 98.

echoing the sentiments of the *Bond* and the *Helpmekaarvereniging*: “All at once the Afrikaner realized that, comparatively poor as he was, there lay locked up in him a dispersed capital which could and must help him to find his economic feet – if the money could be effectively mobilized”.⁴⁷⁵ The wealthy Cape Afrikaners had decided on the idea, at this early stage, to develop capitalist ways with the help of Cape farming money by connecting a unified Afrikaner nation to a capitalist agenda which had not yet been formed by the *Bond*.

As credit institutions SANLAM and SANTAM were important not only because they sought the widest possible customer base, by mobilising Afrikaner nationalist sentiment, but also because they attempted to develop an Afrikaner bureaucratic class. These commitments are evident in a speech written by M.S. Louw, SANLAM’s financial strategist, in the organisation’s 1921 Chairman’s Report:

Sanlam is an authentic institution of the Afrikaner volk in the widest sense of the word. As an Afrikaner, you will naturally give preference to an Afrikaner institution. I would just remind policy holders that we are busy furnishing employment to young Afrikaners, and training them in the assurance field. We hereby intend to provide a great service to South Africa. If we want to become economically self-reliant then we must support our own institutions. To that end, Sanlam offers you opportunity.⁴⁷⁶

It is clear that at this stage the elite among the Cape Afrikaners had the necessary pre-requisites to engage in the rationalization process of capital described by Weber, by building bureaucracies and educating actors for bureaucracy. However, before the 1930s less fortunate Afrikaners, mostly in the north, were far from being able to employ the instruments necessary to work with structures already laid. Thus by the 1940s the Afrikaans-speaking population in

⁴⁷⁵ Du Plessis, *‘n Volk Staans Op*, 48.

⁴⁷⁶ N.J. Le Roux, *W.A. Hofmeyr: society werk en waarde* (Kaapstad: Nasionale Boekhandel, 1953), 28-29. Obviously, there is also an element of marketing in this statement but it resonated with broader social conceptions.

the cities of South Africa was “overwhelmingly working class”⁴⁷⁷ but they were not yet close to the ideal type of the modern industrial capitalist. Data for 1938 showed that at that stage businesses owned by the Afrikaans-speaking population contributed roughly 8% of national commercial turnover, 1% of mining, 5% of finance and a meagre 3% of industrial output.⁴⁷⁸ However, the *Bond* and the many institutions under its umbrella, including the FAK and various Afrikaner journals such as *Inspan* (belonging to the FAK), *Koers* (an academic journal), *Volkshandel* (the voice of the *Afrikaanse Handelsinstituut*) and the *Reddingsdaadbond* (Rescue Association), were all promoting an economic ideology in favour of the *volk*.

In 1933 the first editorial of the journal *Koers* set out the ideological direction of this *Bond*-aligned publication clearly when it stated:

Indeed, in our country and throughout the entire world, there exists the greatest confusion on religious, moral, educational, social, political and economic issues. However weak and impotent it may be in many respects, with the help and mercy of God *Koers* will try to give directions in all these areas.⁴⁷⁹

The move toward industrial economic power was further emphasised by Professor L.J. du Plessis at the 1934 *Ekonomiese Volkskongres* when he stated:

Since the Afrikaner fell under the economic control of imported capitalism he discovered that capitalism offers both new economic opportunities and also dangers. He [Afrikaner] developed an economic consciousness and a new economic drive... [The Afrikaner] developed an economic *volk* movement that finds the goal of economic production in raising the welfare of the community and not just an enrichment of individualism or regional advantages. The goal of our economic struggle is thus national. Yes, even Christian-national, as opposed to personal or regional. As an organised Afrikanerdom [as a collective rather than as

⁴⁷⁷ O’Meara, *The Bond*, 164.

⁴⁷⁸ *Volkshandel*, 11, September 1950.

⁴⁷⁹ *Koers*, 1, August 1933.

individuals] we would like to consciously partake in the economic development of our country. Naturally, also to partake in order to ensure our livelihood but especially to establish our *volk* to economic prominence and to equip our *volk* to fulfil its God-given calling.⁴⁸⁰

In this period the *Volkshandel* — an Afrikaner commercial publication — was also advocating that in order to confront imperialist domination Afrikaners would have to gain economic superiority.⁴⁸¹

Thus by the 1930s the official media of the Afrikaners and *Bond* leaders were calling for an engagement with modern capitalism rather than seeing it as equivalent to imperialism or as the architect of the “poor white” problem. This engagement, however, had certain distinctive features. Notably, the emphasis was on the collective - the *volk* - rather than the individual. Linked to this, the notion of a God-given calling was invoked, again for the group rather than for the individual.

At the 1934 economic conference already mentioned above, Professor C.G.W. Schumann invoked the Protestant ethic when he spoke of the ways which the Afrikaner elite wanted the *volk* to adopt:

It is evident that Afrikaner capital power and total potential savings is not negligible. It can be further increased by bigger shares in the business life of the country as well as the promotion of a frugal and simple lifestyle. Here again capital saved can be consolidated and used more productively. Healthy Afrikaner enterprises need not suffer due to a lack in capital. The need for a strong central finance company is thus the future... Only when a family or an older generation has built a stable tradition and are accustomed to wealth then can it be a source of a refined lifestyle. Only then can it be viewed as a valuable national asset. However, for a young nation it is dangerous. Our policy should be especially geared to work

⁴⁸⁰ Du Plessis, *'n Volk Staans Op*, 104.

⁴⁸¹ *Volkshandel*, 11, September 1941.

against sudden wealth accumulation through speculation and rather to grow the wealth of the country in order to strengthen and educate the entire *volk*.⁴⁸²

The emphasis was on reinvestment of capital; frugality and simplicity in lifestyle while accruing wealth; security through building modern financial institutions; patience in wealth accrual; and sober business ventures rather than speculation in business in order to strengthen, once again, the *volk* rather than the individual. All of these injunctions are reminiscent of Weber's Protestant ethic and spirit of capitalism ideal types. It also reminds us that the values first evinced by the Huguenots at the end of the 17th century were now the values embraced by the leadership of the Afrikaner nation.

In 1948 Afrikaner nationalists achieved political power through the electoral victory of the Nationalist Party, under Dr. D.F. Malan. There are many reasons for this victory, including the support that Prime Minister Smuts had given to the British war effort during the Second World War, which led to further ideological differences with the purified National Party. What is of interest for the analysis developed in this thesis is the level of Afrikaner participation in the modern capitalist economy in South Africa on the eve of this shift in political control in 1948. The following tables, derived from data supplied by the *Ekonomiese Instituut* (Economic Institute), shows the significant growth in Afrikaner participation in managerial and professional occupational classes compared to the English-speaking white population in the decade preceding the political developments of 1948.⁴⁸³

⁴⁸² Du Plessis, *'n Volk Staans Op*, 110-111.

⁴⁸³ Du Plessis, *'n Volk Staans Op*, 185. It is important to note that the English speakers still dominated in higher managerial classes.

Table 2: Occupational Statistics (1939-1948)
GROWTH IN DIFFERENT OCCUPATIONS AMONG WHITES IN 1939-1948

Occupational Group	Afrikaners	Non-Afrikaners
Directors, Manufacturers, etc.	295%	98%
Professions	117%	21%
Business managers	208%	8%
Merchants	212%	44%
Clerks	154%	29%
Teachers	68%	5%
State Officials	41%	-10%
Fitters	350%	52%
Printers	47%	-2%
Carpenters	88%	-2%
Factory workers	294%	134%
Mine workers	16%	-29%
Unskilled labourers	7%	-23%

Source: Du Plessis, E.P. 'n Volk Staar Op: die ekonomiese volkskongres en daarna/in opdrag van die Ekonomiese Instituut van die F.A.K. Kaapstad: Human & Rousseau, 1936.

In the period 1939 to 1948 South Africa was directly involved in the Second World War which had both negative and positive effects on manufacturing and entrepreneurial endeavours. That said, the table shows that by 1939 the numbers of Afrikaners who were directors of companies and manufacturers had increased significantly, with a sizeable growth also evident in the categories of business managers and merchants. Equally important was the significant increase in clerks. These developments indicate that Afrikaners were finding employment in both public and private-sector bureaucracies and were being educated as

actors operating along rational lines and hence conducive to capitalist ways. There was also a noteworthy growth in Afrikaners among fitters, which suggests an improvement in Afrikaner industrial skills.

At the same time, the occupational indicators reflect a move by Afrikaners towards employment in the cities rather than clinging to farm life. There were small percentage increases in the mining and unskilled labourers' categories to support the idea that Afrikaners were improving their skills and not growing significantly in the mining sector where black unskilled workers could potentially be employed at lower wages.

Table 3: Afrikaner Males in Different Occupations in the Cities
The percentage of white Afrikaner males in
different occupations in the cities of South Africa

Occupational Group	1939	1948
Unskilled labourers	82%	86%
Mine workers	69%	79%
Railway workers	57%	74%
Factory workers	50%	63%
Carpenters	31%	46%
Bricklayers	53%	65%
Fitters	8%	21%
Clerks	19%	32%
Business managers	8%	15%
State officials	43%	54%
Teachers	49%	61%
Merchants	4%	10%
Professionals	9%	15%
Directors, Manufacturers, etc.	3%	5%

Source: Du Plessis, E.P. *'n Volk Staen Op: die ekonomiese volkskongres en daarna/in opdrag van die Ekonomiese Instituut van die F.A.K.* Kaapstad: Human & Rousseau, 1936.

The table above is particularly useful as it excludes black labour and reflects only the trends in Afrikaner employment at this time. In addition to their growing presence in the professional sector, it shows notable growth in the proportion of Afrikaner males in the occupational categories of business managers, merchants and directors/manufacturers. This is indicative of the growing importance of these sectors of the economy. O'Meara had noted a dearth of "Afrikaner capitalists in industry or commerce" except in the Cape.⁴⁸⁴ Significantly these statistics also reflect the skilling of Afrikaners in the trades – carpenters, bricklayers and fitters which indicates they were embracing new vocations as well as the structures of city life on a formal basis.

By 1948 the Afrikaner "poor white" problem no longer existed as a *volksvraagstuk* (concern of Afrikanerdom).⁴⁸⁵ Although most Afrikaners were by no means exemplary capitalists in the mould of the ruling classes in Britain or the USA at the time, the two tables above do make clear the extent to which this group had embraced both the spirit and the practices of capitalism by this time. There were individuals within this group who had embraced capitalism much earlier in the 20th century and were far ahead of the rest of the *volk* in the rationalization process by 1948. However, Afrikaner Calvinists had reworked notions of "election", "frugality", "predestination", "work ethic" and the *Geist* of modern capitalism as a collective (a *volk*) rather than as individuals.

⁴⁸⁴ O'Meara, *Volkskapitalisme*, 96.

⁴⁸⁵ Du Plessis, *'n Volk Staans Op*, 184.

Chapter 6: Conclusion: Afrikaner Calvinism and the spirit of capitalism

In the introduction to this thesis I described my project as twofold. Firstly, it has involved an investigation of the extent to which the people who came to be identified as Afrikaners embraced the Protestant ethic between 1652 and 1948, initially as European settlers and then as a “self-identified Afrikaner *volk*” by the beginning of the twentieth century. Secondly, I have aimed to show the relevance of this ethic for an understanding of how it was that when Afrikaners were confronted with modern industrial capitalism in South Africa in the second half of the 19th century, they were, ultimately, able to respond to it positively as a group, by drawing on entrenched religious attitudes. This depended on a deeply racialised conception of themselves as a “chosen people” who were white. I also summarised my underlying research questions as follows: Did the early European settlers of the seventeenth century display Calvinist values like hard work, honesty and frugality? Were these values able to take root and survive until the time when Afrikaners were confronted with modern industrial capitalism? Finally, does Weber’s famous thesis have significant explanatory power when applied to this South African case?

In the intervening chapters I have attempted to show that all three questions can be answered in the affirmative. In this concluding chapter I draw the strands of my argument together by reviewing both my methodological and conceptual framework as well as my historical narrative, to confirm the valuable insights that a Weberian lens provides while not denying that other lenses provide insights as well. My discussion is divided into three sections. I begin with a brief restatement of key elements of Weber’s sociology. Here I review Weber’s use of “ideal types” and his understanding of the role of ideas as “switchmen” in relation to material interests. I also employ bureaucracy and rationalization — from a Weberian perspective — as ideal types and processes to understand human

behaviour and ultimately the Afrikaner Calvinists' engagement with modern capitalism. I then provide an overview of the unfolding of events between 1652 and 1948 that have already been described in detail in chapters 2 – 5 (including the use of bureaucracy and rationalization in the analysis), in order to pull together the different strands of my argument about the meeting between Afrikaner Calvinism and modern industrial capitalism. Finally, I draw my thesis to a close with some reflections on the continued relevance of Weber's thesis for the study of Afrikaner Calvinism, including in the period that follows after 1948.

6.1. Weber's historical sociology: the switchmen and ideal types

This study has used Weber's historical-sociological methodology to interpret the history between 1652 and 1948 of the first European settlers to put down roots at the Cape of Good Hope, in order to examine whether his thesis on the relationship between the Protestant ethic and the spirit of modern capitalism has explanatory power in the case of Afrikaner Calvinism. In my historical narrative I have searched for Weberian "ideal types" among this population, the majority of whom were strongly committed to the religious tenets of Calvinism, the very religious belief system that Weber regarded as fitting particularly well with the rationalizations of capitalism and modernity. The key "ideal types" I have deployed in my study are "the Protestant ethic", "the spirit of capitalism", "bureaucracy" and "rationalization". I have used them to shed light on the Afrikaners and their meeting with capitalism over this protracted period. Drawing on Weber's interpretive method of *Verstehen* as an aid to understanding, I have also explored the structural constraints that the contingencies of history have placed on this group and its encounter with different incarnations of capitalism at particular stages.

It is worth restating that for Weber the "ideal type" is a conceptual construct (*Gedankenbild*), not a strictly factual set of attributes in any given socio-historical context. As

already discussed in chapter 1, Rolf Rogers notes that the value of an “ideal type” for analysis lies in its being purely an “ideal limiting” construct with which “significant components” of the real situation can be compared with.⁴⁸⁶

In other words, using the Protestant ethic ideal type as an example: did the group under investigation exhibit any evidence of ideal type behavior, such as hard work and honesty in business transactions? Did they believe that they were singled out by God to be successful in material acquisition? Is there evidence of careful and restricted participation and enjoyment of worldly material and pleasures? Did the layperson develop a systematic lifestyle that often included careful planning? Here it needs to be noted that for the period between 1652 and 1795 it was important to focus on the evidence for the first part of Weber’s thesis, that of the Protestant ethic, because at that stage the second element of his thesis, that of the spirit of capitalism — that particular *Geist* that finds its sustenance in the modern industrial world in which bureaucracy constitutes the dominant organizational form — was not yet in evidence. It was only from the beginning of the nineteenth century, when the British administration took over, that the influence of British bureaucracy and nascent forms of modern industrial capitalism became salient historical forces at the Cape.

For Weber, human behaviour or action is not an automatic reaction guided by material interests, but it is the interplay between ideas and material interests which gives the actor meaning and informs his or her worldview. Understanding the socially constructed reality of religion, Weber, unlike Karl Marx, embraces the importance of religious ideas which cannot be reduced to a derivative of material interests. Here Weber’s “switchmen” metaphor has been of particular value for my analysis. As already described in chapter 1, Weber argued that “Not ideas, but material and ideal interests, directly govern men’s conduct.” However, he

⁴⁸⁶ Rogers, *Weber’s Ideal Type Theory*, 20-21.

went on to valorize the importance of ideas: “Yet very frequently the “world images” which have been created by “ideas” have, like switchmen, determined the tracks along which action has been pushed by the dynamic of interests”.⁴⁸⁷

In my analysis of the meeting between Afrikaner Calvinism and modern industrial capitalism I have identified these “switchmen” operating through the combination of ideas and material interests at key moments in the historical narrative. In chapter 2, for example, I show how the French Huguenots were selected by the VOC because of evidence of hard work and honesty, sanctioned by their Calvinist ministers in Holland, in order to improve labour outputs at the Cape. In each period into which my narrative is divided I have been able to identify key role players in the Reformed Church, political and cultural organizations and the small elites of relatively wealthy men who practised or were able to articulate key principles of the Protestant ethic, which were then able to perform the “switchmen” role at critical historical junctures. At the same time, defining features of Weber’s ideal type bureaucracy was used to understand the readiness of the group to engage modern capitalism. I also used Weber’s explanation of the rationalization process to gauge the group’s psycho-social readiness when faced with emergent forms of capitalism, and finally, modern industrial capitalism in the 1910 to 1948 period.

6.2. An overview of the trajectory of the Protestant ethic and the spirit of capitalism between 1652 and 1948

Considering the sailor-settler social groups that first settled in the Cape, South Africa may not be the first place one would look at in search of the Protestant ethic and yet, the values of the Protestant ethic among those of the Calvinist faith were evident. In chapters 2 – 5 I trace the threads of these values and show how they were able to survive, despite an

⁴⁸⁷ Weber, *Essays in Sociology*, 280.

inhospitable social environment, particularly in the interior. In chapter 2 I showed that the early Dutch, German and Scandinavian sailors who landed at the Cape in the second half of the seventeenth century demonstrated a set of behaviours and values that was at odds with the Protestant ethic as an ideal type, as described in chapter 1. The general character of the early sailors was best encapsulated in the individual of Jan van Riebeeck, who had been indicted for fraud by the VOC before he convinced the company to deploy him as Governor to the Cape: a place that the VOC had decided would always serve only as a refreshment station for passing vessels.⁴⁸⁸ Some of the early settlers were in fact banished to Mauritius precisely because they lacked an ethic of hard work and honest commitment in their business dealings with the company.⁴⁸⁹ As stated in chapter 2, the very earliest settlers were members of a floating maritime sector of European society and certainly not an industrious type of people. One of the responses to the problem of slovenly labour that the VOC officials experienced from this early group of European settlers was to import slave labour from the Dutch colonies in the Far-East.⁴⁹⁰

Another attempt to solve the labour problem threatening the VOC's investment at the Cape, of far-reaching significance for the rooting of the Protestant ethic in southern Africa, was to recruit a group of settlers from among the French Huguenot population then seeking refuge from religious persecution in the Netherlands. In 1687 Simon van der Stel, the VOC Governor at the Cape, was informed by the VOC that the French Huguenots earmarked for the Cape had been recruited under a strict policy in which evidence of hard work was

⁴⁸⁸ Van Riebeeck, *Journal of Jan van Riebeeck*, XXIV.

⁴⁸⁹ Spohr, *Zacharias Wagenaar*, 4.

⁴⁹⁰ Spohr, *Zacharias Wagenaar*, 4.

required.⁴⁹¹ The Huguenot recruits also had to show they were trustworthy by signing an “oath of trust” with the Reformed Church in the Netherlands before they could embark on their journey to the Cape.⁴⁹² In chapter 2 I argue that the approximately two hundred Huguenots who eventually arrived at the Cape made a major contribution to rooting the cultural values associated with the Protestant ethic in this region, even though they made up only seventeen percent of the white population at the Cape at the time. Not only did they bring with them attitudes that conformed to the Protestant ethic but they also included in their party a significant number of women and children. These family groups and their descendants who would later marry other settlers helped shape the culture of the local white population that until that time had consisted mostly of single male sailors and soldiers.⁴⁹³

Many of these French Huguenot immigrants, especially those who arrived first, were also awarded valuable land that they cultivated with diligence. C. Louis Leipoldt suggests that before the start of the 1700s some of the Huguenots were already known for their industry, productivity and the manner in which they decorated their loan farms.⁴⁹⁴ Thus hard work and diligence in labour was evident among at least a sector of the early Cape settlers, in this case a product of the social engineering that had been directed by the “switchmen” (ideas) of the Protestant church and the Heeren XVII in the Netherlands.

Cape Town remained the key trading centre for the entire VOC administrative period of 1652-1795. The evidence drawn from O.F. Mentzel’s travel writings in the middle of the eighteenth century suggests that for most of the 18th century the settlers in Cape Town were

⁴⁹¹ Taken from a letter sent by the Heeren XVII on the 16th of November 1687.

⁴⁹² Eed van getrouheid – unsigned copy in French in the Cape Archives. Published in Spoelstra, section II, p. 644.

⁴⁹³ Leipoldt, *Die Hugenote*, 158-162.

⁴⁹⁴ Leipoldt, *Die Hugenote*, 202.

involved primarily with speculative and petty trading.⁴⁹⁵ Mentzel gives numerous examples of these petty traders, including the burgher Eckstein who traded with soap, a soldier named Franz Burg trading in candles and other examples involving the sale of tobacco.⁴⁹⁶ According to Mentzel at the Cape “no article of merchandise is free from these speculative ventures”.⁴⁹⁷ The image of speculative business undertakings by all strata of white society at the Cape that he presents is incongruous with the somber spirit of capitalism that Weber describes as the core element of Calvinist entrepreneurs in Europe at this time. I have taken this as evidence that the structures of careful bookkeeping and minimization of risk-taking in business ventures that were foundational elements of Weber’s “Spirit of Capitalism” were not subscribed to by the Cape merchants and traders that Mentzel wrote about. However, a somewhat different picture emerges for the hinterland of the Cape. The historians Katzen and Mentzel concurred that while in Cape Town residents engaged in speculative endeavours because of the opportunities that the harbour trade offered, the rural community generally displayed virtues of frugality and simplicity.⁴⁹⁸ Those wealthy farmers living close to the city often owned more than one farm and most of them employed *knechte* (white managers) to manage their estates. The farmers on the furthest borders had a nomadic style of life, always in search of pastures and land, but Mentzel’s account of the attitudes towards work of this community shows that here too a large segment were hard working, industrious, and “unremitting” workers who prized order and things running “like clock-work”.⁴⁹⁹ Considering that the hinterland group constituted two thirds of the Boer population at the

⁴⁹⁵ Mentzel, *A Geographical and Topographical Description 1*, 78.

⁴⁹⁶ Mentzel, *Geographical and Topographical Description 1*, 76-7.

⁴⁹⁷ Mentzel, *Geographical and Topographical Description 1*, 78.

⁴⁹⁸ Katzen, *White Settlers*, 232.

⁴⁹⁹ Mentzel, *A Geographical and Topographical Description 111*, 105-9.

Cape by the 1770s, Mentzel's observations support the idea that the Protestant ethic was evident amongst the Boer farming community in the hinterland, although less evident in the city region for most of the eighteenth century.

As a result of the VOC's policy of deliberate containment of private business ventures during this period, the Boers emerged as a farming class far-removed from the developing structures of bureaucracy in both government and the economic sphere.

The administrative takeover by the British, first in 1795 and again, after the Batavian interlude, in 1806, left the local white population uncertain and facing many new challenges. Between 1795 and 1806 the British and Batavian administrations did very little to grow the region economically.⁵⁰⁰ However, the career of Willem Stephanus van Ryneveld that I describe in chapter 2 provides evidence that in this transitional period, at least some local whites who were employed by the interim governments, displayed the qualities of trustworthiness and hard work that fit with the Protestant ethic as an ideal type.

The significance, historically, of the establishment of a permanent British presence at the Cape after 1814, was that henceforth local Boers were forced to partake in more structured bureaucracies and a form of imperialist capitalism that would eventually transform into a form of "free trade" capitalism centred on the Cape by the late 1850s.⁵⁰¹ This period, described in chapter 3, also witnessed large numbers of British immigrants settling at the Cape and the focused efforts of the Christian missionary movement to spread Christianity to all people, especially people of colour, in the region.⁵⁰² Most of the missionaries who came to the Cape in this period were Protestants who, although not necessarily of the Calvinist

⁵⁰⁰ Freund, "The Cape", 214.

⁵⁰¹ Bruwer, Protection in South Africa, 54-55.

⁵⁰² Boas and Weiskopf, "Activities of the London Missionary Society", 431.

variant, certainly displayed the Protestant ethic. These new members of Cape society contributed to a general attitude towards life that valued labour and improving the environment, as was evident in the mission stations that they established. In the words of Monica Wilson, what informed this behaviour was “not the value of their labour but the principle that Christianity and idleness are not compatible”.⁵⁰³ Here again one could argue that the ideas of the missionaries behaved as ideological “switchmen” of the Protestant ethic, even though the rationalization was a result of their commitments not a goal thereof.

By the 1800s the Boers at the Cape had been engaged in farming, especially grape farming and the production of wine, for more than a century. It is amongst this group of actors that I have sought for evidence of the Protestant ethic in the period before the far-reaching discovery of minerals in the interior, by assessing the attitude of these wine farmers toward their products and their willingness to use new technologies in their business. As described in chapter 3, in 1824 the *South African Chronicle, and Mercantile Advertiser* wrote that Cape wines were the poorest quality in terms of taste of all the wines reaching the European markets, and suggested that the reasons for this included the careless attitude by producers toward their product.⁵⁰⁴ Many others shared this view, including the traveler John Barrow.⁵⁰⁵ The general picture of the wine industry at this time thus suggests that many farmers were not displaying the Protestant ethic. The business dealings of these wine merchants and farmers displayed a form of ruthless profit maximization with little concern for quality and value in the products they delivered. However, there is also evidence of

⁵⁰³ Monica Wilson, 239.

⁵⁰⁴ “Foreign Wines,” *South African Chronicle, and Mercantile Advertiser*, (Cape Town), December 15, 1824.

⁵⁰⁵ Barrow, *Travels*, 156.

farmers amongst this group who were starting to deliver good quality wines, such as Paul Roux and Pieter van der Byl of the Stellenbosch district.⁵⁰⁶

Before the administrative changes in 1795, only 10 to 12 individuals at the Cape could be considered wealthy.⁵⁰⁷ These were local Boers who had either inherited wealth or had benefitted through the monopoly system under the VOC, whereby certain individuals were able to secure sole rights to the meat, wine and beer trade. The political changes brought by the establishment of British rule led to the abolition of the VOC monopolies, thus placing many of these privileged individuals and families in a more competitive market. Dirk Gysbert van Reenen, who according to Giliomee had been part of the upper strata of the Cape economy in the VOC era,⁵⁰⁸ but whose estate was declared “notoriously insolvent”⁵⁰⁹ after his death in 1828, is an example of a farmer who had benefitted enormously from the VOC monopoly system but was unable to adjust to the new, more competitive era instituted under the British. The example of van Reenen supports the claim that the VOC was successful in denying the growth of an entrepreneurial spirit among the local Boer population. It also tells us that this individual and his family lived fairly lavishly with seemingly little concern for the longevity of their opulent lifestyle. In terms of this thesis, it also tells us that this family did not conform to the ideal types of the Protestant ethic or the spirit of capitalism.

This then was the situation at the Cape when the British arrive at the beginning of the 19th century. The coming of the British led to a major split within the white Calvinist community with far-reaching consequences for the way in which Calvinism developed and

⁵⁰⁶ Van Zyl, *Kaapse wyn en Brandewyn*, 54.

⁵⁰⁷ Giliomee, *Die Eerste Britse Bewind*, 27.

⁵⁰⁸ Giliomee, *Die Eerste Britse Bewind*, 26.

⁵⁰⁹ Blommaert, *Joernaal van Dirk Gysbert*, 8.

the future of Afrikanerdom. Those Boers who decided to leave the Cape on their Great Trek maintained a form of tribal loyalty amongst their groups, partly because they were fragmented in their new lands of the Transvaal and the Orange Free State and partly because of their largely subsistence mode of production. The economic environment in which they found themselves was not conducive to building structures around formal organizations such as bureaucracies for business and government. In the Orange Free State, the wars against the Basotho leader, Moshweshwe, “strained the Republic’s resources to the limit”.⁵¹⁰ During this tumultuous period some relatively successful sheep farmers who were producing wool for export had emerged in this region by 1860. Even after independence and the withdrawal of the British, production in wool bales increased.⁵¹¹ Their entrepreneurial spirit was exceptional. However, in chapter 4 I describe how those Boers who owned farms that were found to be rich in diamond veins, including, Van Wyk, Cornelius du Plooy and Johannes de Beer, all sold their farms rather than take up the major economic opportunities that mining was to offer.⁵¹²

With regard to those Boers who moved to the Transvaal, they were, in the words of Thompson “essentially *trekboers*, occupying vast areas of land without improving it, living on their herds and flocks, and producing very little for exchange.”⁵¹³ In terms of my Weberian aims and its key terms, one has to note that this group of Calvinists remained embedded within a patriarchal society with strong dependence on charismatic leaders until the South African War, which ended in 1902. The tensions amongst their leaders kept them

⁵¹⁰ Houghton, *Economic Development*, 8.

⁵¹¹ Houghton, *Economic Development*, 7.

⁵¹² Meredith, *Diamonds, Gold and War*, 17.

⁵¹³ Thompson, *Co-operation and Conflict*, 425.

divided, especially in the period before the discovery of gold and diamonds in the region.⁵¹⁴ Furthermore, according to Thompson, “the absence of a money economy placed serious limitations on the governments of the republics.”⁵¹⁵

The fate of the Boers in the Transvaal Republic was no different from that of their fellow Voortrekkers in the Orange Free State. In the economic sphere the Boers of the Transvaal were even less developed than their counterparts in the Orange Free State.⁵¹⁶ Apart from the deficit they displayed in terms of a modern spirit toward capitalism, the *uitlanders* who flocked to the Transvaal after the discovery of gold perceived government, including the president, Paul Kruger, to be corrupt.⁵¹⁷ Thus although the discovery of gold and diamonds in the second half of the 19th century sealed the fate of the republicans in both the Transvaal and the Orange Free State, it is evident that they were reluctant to engage with modern industrial capitalism when it was first thrust upon them. The historical evidence shows that the actors in the Transvaal Republic’s government displayed behaviour that was incompatible with both the Protestant ethic and the spirit of capitalism as articulated by Weber. Equally important, the commitment of these Boers to religious dogma in political matters supports the idea that the actors of this group were still motivated by traditional and emotional forces and had not yet moved far enough along the process of rationalization to fit the emotional detachment needed to run “impersonal” bureaucracies.

The wars that broke out in the late 19th century, most significantly the South African War of 1899-1902, placed the Boers of the region in extreme economic difficulty. Key

⁵¹⁴ Van Jaarsveld, *van Riebeeck tot Vorster*, 146-7.

⁵¹⁵ Thompson, *Co-operation and Conflict*, 426.

⁵¹⁶ Houghton, *Economic Development, 1865-1965*, 7.

⁵¹⁷ Scoble and Abercrombie, *The rise and fall of Krugerism*, 96.

developments here were the British “scorched earth” policy towards Boer farms and the labour tensions that the growth of the mining industry brought. However, the upheavals of this period led to the formation of the Union of South Africa in 1910, in which Afrikaans-speaking and English-speaking whites formed a political alliance in government for the first time. The new political landscape brought with it many new realities in the socio-economic sphere, including an influx of masses of impoverished Boers, described as “poor whites”, to urban areas as well as new possibilities for engaging with capitalism outside of farming. But most importantly, these events gave impetus to the melding together of the different sections of Afrikaans-speaking people across the Union into the Afrikaner *volk*.

At this stage the road ahead held many challenges for Afrikaner nationalists, including the problem of “poor whiteism”, divisions within the Reformed Christians, British imperial hegemony in a country with significant numbers of English-speakers who were loyal to the British crown, and, most serious of all, competition over labour and the threat of racial mixing among “poor white” Afrikaners and poor blacks, both on the mines and in urban settings.

In the first few decades of the twentieth century it was left to the clergy and members of the elite, mostly from the Cape, to salvage the moral and social dislocatedness of the Boers after the devastations of war. The Reformed Church and its ministers, members of the *Afrikaanse Christelike Vroue Vereniging* (ACVV), Afrikaner state officials and professionals all worked towards the eradication of the “poor white” problem and in this effort the language of the two ideal types, the Protestant ethic and the spirit of capitalism, was clearly evoked. As described in chapter 5, in D.F. Malan’s famous 1908 speech, “*Het is ons Ernst*”, we can see the language of both Martin Luther and John Calvin in his invocation of “the

noble calling” to create “extensive national possessions.”⁵¹⁸ For Malan, these national possessions included a national character and a culture of being successful in all that Afrikaners undertook.

As De Gruchy has suggested, the National Party (NP) soon became the party of the Afrikaners, rooted politically in a sense of a divine calling.⁵¹⁹ Its leaders invoked the notion of a “calling” for the entire *volk*. In a lecture delivered at the Afrikaans Taal Monument in October 1913 the Reverend Muller declared that “...each particular nation has its calling and special tasks to carry out in the world. From this point of view, laziness in the national area is a religious offence, i.e. a sin”.⁵²⁰ Evidently the *volk* had to move toward hard work and diligence in their daily callings. In their use of the language of a calling and their efforts to move the *volk* in the direction of hard work, rather than the religious offence of laziness, both the ideas of Malan and Muller can also be likened to Weber’s ideological “switchmen”. Here again, the motivation of these “switchmen” was directed towards material gain for the entire Calvinist *volk*.

The idea of the *volk* having its particular calling and special tasks received further ideological support from the Reformed Church, through the influence of the Dutch theologian, Kuyper. His ideas on “spheres of sovereignty” spoke directly to the group’s election as separate from others. It not only fed a sense of distinct identity but also offered theological support for the ideology of racial segregation.⁵²¹ Kuyper’s ideas of separateness and election informed the ideas of the “switchmen” (elites) in South Africa at a time when the

⁵¹⁸ D.F. Malan, “Het is ons Ernst” (speech made in Cape Town, December 1908). Cited in chapter 5.

⁵¹⁹ De Gruchy, “Land and Labour 1911-1922,” 93.

⁵²⁰ T.B. Muller, “The Creed of a Nationalist”, (Stellenbosch, 10 October 1913).

⁵²¹ Kuyper, *Eenvormigheid*, 22.

material interests of the *volk* were assuming primacy because of the scourge of “poor whiteism” and the image of Afrikaners as second-class citizens amongst the English elites at the Cape. During the first decades of the twentieth century poor whites certainly did not show signs of being elected by God in terms of their material conditions of life. The image of the “poor white” as a lazy Afrikaner also does not conform to the Protestant ethic ideal type.

It is in the efforts of particular elite Afrikaners that we can see a concerted attempt to drive the Calvinist *volk* towards the *Geist* of modern industrial capitalism. Here it is worth restating a set of injunctions that were made by FAK at its Economic *Volks* Congress in October 1939:

Thrift should be cultivated and strengthened in our volk; full support be obtained for existing Afrikaner savings and credit institutions; greater facilities for the exercise of thrift be provided through the establishment of new savings and credit institutions, if, after investigations, these are deemed necessary; new opportunities for the profitable and safe investment of capital be created through the establishment of new commercial and industrial undertakings, or through the expansion of existing establishments; Afrikaners and financially strong Afrikaner establishments must be encouraged to invest a greater share of their capital in commerce and industrial undertakings.⁵²²

What this quotation shows is that not only were these actors pushing for thrift and savings as the way forward for the *volk*, but they were also encouraging those of means to invest in industry and commerce. Quite early in the post-Union period prominent Afrikaner figures like W.A. Hofmeyr saw both the need and the opportunity “to develop the national consciousness into a business consciousness.”⁵²³ Hofmeyr and other members of the Cape elite, who were funded by the wine merchants of Stellenbosch, realised the potential of growing their companies, SANLAM and SANTAM, by expanding their economic base

⁵²² Du Plessis, *‘n Volk Staans Op*, 125-133.

⁵²³ O’Meara, *Volkskapitalisme*, 97.

nationally. Here again, the language of thrift and savings that was central to Weber's ideal type of the Protestant ethic, was invoked to advance the material interests of the Calvinist *volk* and, ultimately, to benefit the coffers of these credit institutions.

In this time the religious elites found their voice through their publications, including the journal *Koers* which in 1933 married religion to the economic agenda of the church in its inaugural editorial.⁵²⁴ The move toward the spirit of capitalism was further promoted by intellectuals such as Professors du Plessis and Schumann. As described in the chapter 5 at the *Ekonomiese Volkskongres* in 1934, both men drew on the collective *volk* rather than individual in promoting the spirit of capitalism when they stated that: "Since the Afrikaner fell under the economic control of imported capitalism he discovered that capitalism offers both new economic opportunities and also dangers. ... [The Afrikaner] developed an economic *volk* movement that finds the goal of economic production in raising the welfare of the community and not just an enrichment of individualism or regional advantages." Du Plessis emphasised that the goal of the Afrikaner's economic struggle was "national":

Yes, even Christian-national, as opposed to personal or regional. As an organised Afrikanerdom [as a collective rather than as individuals] we would like to consciously partake in the economic development of our country. Naturally, also to partake in order to ensure our livelihood but especially to establish our *volk* to economic prominence and to equip our *volk* to fulfil its God-given calling".⁵²⁵

Professor L.J. du Plessis thus welcomed Afrikaners into the arena of modern industrial capitalism and economic prominence, in order to fulfil their God-given calling. Not only was he motivating elite Afrikaners to take part in the modern economy, but also poor whites. He

⁵²⁴ *Koers*, 1, August 1933.

⁵²⁵ Du Plessis, *'n Volk Staans Op*, 104.

was also taking on the role of an ideological “switchman” by reinterpreting the notion of election while paving the track ahead for Afrikanerdom economically.

At the same economic conference the speech made by Professor C.G.W. Schumann drives both the Protestant ethic and the spirit of capitalism home for the *volk* when he says, “It is evident that Afrikaner capital power and total potential savings is not negligible. It can be further increased by bigger shares in the business life of the country as well as the promotion of a frugal and simple lifestyle. Here again capital saved can be consolidated and used more productively”.⁵²⁶ He promotes an attitude similar to the double injunction Max Weber points to when he says, “When the limitation of consumption is combined with the release of acquisitive activity, the inevitable practical result is obvious: accumulation of capital through ascetic compulsion to save”.⁵²⁷ Professor Schumann is careful about lavish spending and warns the *volk*. He says, “Our policy should be especially geared to work against sudden wealth accumulation through speculation and rather to grow the wealth of the country in order to strengthen and educate the entire *volk*”.⁵²⁸ Caution is advised in capital speculative ventures and direction is given toward sober growth including education for the *volk*. Here again the ideas of an actor among the elite of the Calvinist community is taking on the role of the “switchmen” in redirecting the *volk* toward the Protestant ethic and the spirit of capitalism.

On the eve of the Afrikaners coming to power in 1948 the “poor white” problem no longer existed as a *volksvraagstuk* (concern of Afrikanerdom).⁵²⁹ The successful eradication

⁵²⁶ Du Plessis, ‘*n Volk Staans Op*, 110-111.

⁵²⁷ Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic*, 172.

⁵²⁸ Du Plessis, ‘*N Volk Staans Op*, 110-111.

⁵²⁹ Du Plessis, ‘*n Volk Staans Op*, 184.

of poverty among large sections of the Afrikaner population was the outcome of a concerted effort by, what one might call, “cultural engineers” in the Bond and its affiliates, in partnership with the Reformed Churches. By 1950 there was clear evidence of significant growth in the presence of Afrikaners in the skilled sectors of the industrial labour force, as well as in teaching, business and industrial entrepreneurship. The exponential growth in an Afrikaner capitalist class in this time owed much to the enterprise of Calvinist nationalist leaders who were astute enough to merge cultural power with economic power and political power.

At the *Tweede Ekonomiese Volkskongres* (Second Economic Congress of the Nation) organised by in October 1950, Dr. D.F. Malan, Afrikaner cultural engineer *par excellence* and by then Prime Minister of South Africa, made a passionate opening address which summed up the iron determination of the leaders of the Afrikaner nation to engage with capitalism as a group:

“Vir iedereen wat wil terugkyk op die pad waarlangs die Afrikanervolk gekom het, moet één ding duidelik wees, en dit is dat hierdie voorwaartse beweging op ekonomiese gebied uit die nood gebore is. Die Afrikaner moes die toestand van steeds versnellende agteruitgang die hoof bied, en steunende op sy eie innerlike krag daaruit opstaan, of hy moes sterf”. [For each and every one of you that want to reflect on the path the Afrikaner nation had to travel, one thing is for certain, that this forward march in economics was born out of need. The Afrikaner had to win the battle against the still growing decline. And dependent on his inner strength he had to rise, alternatively, he had to die.]⁵³⁰

The strong commitment to the collective infused the cultural, political and economic spheres and empowered this group to seek to impose their will on the entire country, by any means deemed necessary. The idea of a chosen people, as espoused by Calvin and the idea of

⁵³⁰ Du Plessis, *'n Volk Staan Op*, 169.

a separate group operating in their own spheres, as promoted by a follower of Calvin, Kuyper, was realised.

6.3. Concluding comments: Afrikaner Calvinism and capitalism in 1948 and beyond

What my discussion has shown is that on the eve of apartheid key members of the Afrikaner elite had made significant progress toward motivating actors within their group along an economic path that can be seen to be consistent with the ideal type models of the “Protestant ethic” and the “spirit of capitalism” so convincingly theorised by Weber. Considering the ubiquity of poverty among Afrikaans-speaking whites at the beginning of the 1900s, their most telling success was undoubtedly the elimination of the phenomenon of “poor whiteism” as a national issue. This success had much to do with the investment of the Calvinist Reformed Churches in both the urban and rural areas among this indigent group. The Calvinist church was an obvious choice even for John X. Merriman, Prime Minister of the Cape between 1908 and 1910, who may himself have unconsciously turned to Martin Luther’s reimagination of one’s “*Beruf*” as a sacred “calling” when he suggested that the Dutch Reformed Church was the best institution to educate “poor whites the great and indispensable truth that there was no shame attached to labor.”⁵³¹ And educate they did, along with the many teachers and cultural organizations that subscribed to the goal of eliminating the “poor white” problem whilst raising Afrikaners to the level of a chosen people.

The victory of the “purified” Afrikaner National Party in 1948 was evidence of the Bond’s elite’s single-minded focus on the challenges of modern industrial capitalism, through the upliftment of Afrikaner prestige, political power and capital. The success of Afrikaner *Volks*-capitalism can be ascribed to the commitment by the elites of this group. The rhetoric

⁵³¹ Potgieter, “Die Nederduits Gereformeerde Kerk”, 342-4.

of hard work, trust in communal capitalist endeavours, and the belief that God had chosen the Afrikaners to succeed outwardly, kept this group fixed along Calvinist pathways. What the Afrikaners were able to achieve during this epoch despite their pariah status economically, was to hold fast to their Calvinist values at the level of the individual while simultaneously working toward a Protestant collective ethos.

The process of building an Afrikaner bureaucratic class and moving the *volk* along rationalist pathways is explained well by Weber's second *Verstehen* construct of value-rationality (*wertrational*). In this context, the motivations of the Afrikaner elites were "determined by a conscious belief in the value for its own sake of some ethical, aesthetic, religious, or other form of behavior, independently of its prospects of success."⁵³² In other words, the Afrikaners used rational means to achieve their end goal: an end goal that was, in Weber's terms, an affectual (emotional) political state defined by religion, race and "ethnicity".

An understanding of the meeting between Afrikaner Calvinism and modern industrial capitalism has to recognize the unique historical contingencies that this group faced. Unlike Protestant groups in the United States and Europe, the Afrikaner Calvinists who encountered modern industrial capitalism as actors in the first half of the 20thth century were not long removed from patriarchal society. Unlike their Protestant counterparts in Europe and North America, who were members of esteemed groups within their respective societies, Afrikaner Calvinists had to struggle to uplift their status as second-rate citizens against arguably the most successful cultural imperialists the world has known in the modern period: the British ruling class. The *volkish* nature of the Protestant Ethic that the Afrikaners developed in their

⁵³² Weber, *Economy and Society*, 24-5.

engagement with modern industrial capitalism is better understood against this socio-political backdrop.

The strong drive towards an identity as along a chosen people created divisions that also need to be understood in the context of British colonialism. The insistence on divide-and-rule policies that the British imposed in the Afrikaner's first frontier encounters with black chieftaincies goes some way to explaining the degree to which the Afrikaners perceived the members of these entities as "Other". Moulded out of a variety of historical contingencies, including the implementation of racist laws, the Afrikaner *volk* rationalized their position as a separate white people. In the end, isolated and far-removed from the liberal changes taking place in Europe, the Afrikaners' reinterpretation of John Calvin's ideas kept them on a path of racial exclusivity. The epoch of apartheid that followed saw a much more repressive and radical continuation of the attitudes and practices born out of the events of history during the period of segregation between 1910 and 1948. In the end, the ideas of John Calvin were reinterpreted at different epochs in Afrikaner history to rationalize human existence — be that in the sphere of economics, or of relationships between people classified as belonging to different races.

Yet however successful these cultural "switchmen" (the ideas of the elites) had been in uplifting the Afrikaner people as a *volk*, both politically and economically, in 1948 the Afrikaners still had hard work ahead of them to reach the levels of economic achievement attained in other capitalist countries in Europe and North America where Protestantism had met fewer historical obstacles in its engagement with modern industrial capitalism. In this regard, a further study of the history of the Afrikaners during the apartheid years would shed light on their continued success or failure in marrying the religious ethic of Calvinism with the *Geist* of capitalism in their new political reality.

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