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Fear and Loathing on the Margins of Empire: Socio--religious perspectives connecting the Netherlands and South Africa before and into the South African War

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Abstract. Focusing especially on writings by the theologian Abraham Kuyper and the impact of two Dutch born clergymen with substantial careers in South Africa's Dutch Reformed Church in the late 19th century, this article develops a perspective on the intertwined relationship between groups and cultural factors involving the Netherlands and South Africa during this period. This intertwined relationship went far beyond Reformed theology, but the literature produced by Reformed theologians and pastors is one area or lens through which one might perceive this relationship quite clearly. The article's thesis is that both the Netherlands and parts of South Africa during much of the colonial period experienced themselves as on the margins of a British Empire perceived with varying degrees of apprehension and hostility and that both the first and the second Anglo Boer Wars of the late 19th and early 20th century catapulted such shared sentiments into overdrive. Yet Dutch sympathisers often had to counterbalance their identification of shared culture and religion that they had with the Boers with their more general, perhaps growing, sensibilities regarding racial equalization and democracy, which created tensions in this complex relationship, as this essay will show.
Keywords. Abraham Kuyper, British Empire, Dutch Reformed Church, Netherlands, South Africa.

Introduction

This article proceeds from the perspective of an intertwined relationship between groups and cultural factors involving the Netherlands and South Africa in the late 19th – early 20th centuries. This intertwined relationship went far beyond Reformed theology, but the literature produced by Reformed theologians and pastors, and as commented upon by their interpreters, is one area or lens through which one might perceive this relationship quite clearly. Perhaps the most important reason for this is simply that theologians, clergymen, and missionaries counted among the most prolific non-fiction authors regarding southern Africa during the period in question. Hence, the focus in this article is less about theology as a specialised enterprise and more about the written products of theologians and pastors, and on relevant secondary literature discussing the original writings. Notably the writings in question were for the most part not of a theological nature, functioning instead at the level of social and cultural commentary. However, it might be said that the writings were theologically underpinned and imbued with cultural, religious, and historical value. This article presents the findings of a close reading of selected sources with a focus on views pertaining to the British Empire.

The thesis is that both the Netherlands and parts of what would in 1910 become the Union of South Africa during much of the colonial period experienced themselves as smaller regional entities on the margins, or at least in close vicinity, of a British Empire perceived with varying degrees of apprehension and hostility and that the late 19th and early 20th century South African War / Anglo Boer War catapulted such shared sentiments into overdrive. The southern African context that is mostly of interest in this article concerns the Transvaal as a Boer ruled counter-imperial formation. The Orange Free State could also be considered as on the margin of the British Empire, but the characters highlighted in this article directly concerned themselves with matters and individuals connected to the Transvaal.

It will also be shown that Dutch sympathisers with Boer anti-imperialism often had to counterbalance their identification of shared culture and religion which they had with the Boers with their more general, perhaps growing, sensibilities regarding racial equalization and democracy, which created tensions in this relationship.

The Dutch, their South African migrant colonists, and a leading Dutch Reformed voice at the turn of the century

The Boers and/or Afrikaners1 of southern Africa had their primary identity rooted in the 17th century Dutch colonial project at the Cape of Good

[1] This group of partially Dutch descendent inhabitants in southern Africa have had various designations referring to specific segments of this population over time. In some cases, the designations overlap. Boers was one such designation. Literally meaning farmers this referred to rural oriented groupings, particularly those who participated and found their communal identity in the 1830s emigration from the Cape colony, locally known as the Great Trek. This identity formation which developed primary connections to Transvaal and Free State based Dutch speakers became particularly solidified in history when for example two wars against the British Empire were fought, sometimes known as the first (1880-1881) and second (1899-1902) Anglo-Boer Wars. Other designations for Dutch descendants particularly in the Cape colony were Cape Dutch or Afrikaner. Over time, particularly in the 20th century, Afrikaner became the catchall designation for the entire grouping of primarily Dutch descendant whites in South Africa who also identified themselves by their late 19th century codified Dutch based language, Afrikaans. See, e.g. DU TOIT 2003; GILIOMEE 2011.

Hope, although they had a more diverse ancestry spanning different parts of Europe, South-East Asia and southern Africa. This was the result of the wide reach of the Dutch East India Company (DEIC) that controlled the Cape for a century and a half but also much of the Indian Ocean world (see, JACOBS 2020).

After the British takeover of the Cape colony in 1806 the subsequent history between the Netherlands and the descendants of the erstwhile DEIC colony in the south of Africa was not always characterized by unbridled mutual affection. Dutch church historian, Erica Meijers suggests for example that society in the Netherlands tended to look down on the Boers of South Africa as barely civilized and as a band of rather backward rustics. Writing in Dutch she summarises the general opinion which I will translate as follows: "Before the time of the Anglo-Boer War the Afrikaners were considered as stupid and backward farmers, who conducted themselves cruelly with regards to the black population" (MEIJERS 2008: 33).

In the same period there was a growing suspicion from the side of the Dutch Afrikaners2 in the Cape Colony against the Netherlands, at least in terms of theological matters. Within the Dutch Reformed Church of South Africa, the Netherlands came to be seen as thoroughly in thrall to liberalism. So wary were the local church of Dutch rationalism and its sway among theological faculties in the Netherlands that linguistically and culturally further removed Scots presbyterian pastors were increasingly intrusted to occupy vacant parishes and leadership positions in local church and seminary over against otherwise more obvious Dutch candidates. Liberalism associated with Dutch pastors, or local ones who were trained in the Netherlands, eventually became thoroughly purged from the mainstream Cape centred *Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk* – usually translated into English as Dutch Reformed Church (DRC) – (DREYER 1898: 48), although liberalism continued with a bit of a lifeline in the smaller Transvaal state sanctioned *Hervormde Kerk*3 which positioned itself against the Cape Church with its anti-liberal evangelicalism and increasingly British imperial leanings. All of this is to say that feelings towards the Netherlands from the side of the South African Dutch Reformed scene became increasingly complex, and at least within the dominant Cape based grouping, increasingly suspect as the 19th century dragged on.

[2] Since the 'Afrikaner' was an identity formation that developed over time, the term Dutch Afrikaner as used by Duff is perhaps more accurate for describing earlier parts of the history prior to the emergence of Afrikaner nationalism as a further distinguishing factor in the late 19th century. See DUFF 2018.

[3] This at least would seem to be the case in the interpretation of a leading DRC figure in the Transvaal, F.L Cachet. See KRIEL 1956: 46, 50ff.

Two conflicts involving the Boers and the British Empire influenced Dutch attitudes towards the Boers drastically. These conflicts, eventually affecting the entirety of what was to become South Africa, mainly involved two Boer controlled territories to the north of the Cape Colony and to the west of the Colony of Natal. While the Cape and Natal were under British colonial administration for most of the 19th century, as was the Orange River Sovereignty from 1848 to 1854 until it became a Boer republic with the name Orange Free State from 1854-1902, the Transvaal was a Boer republic from 1852-1902. The first conflict of note was the First Anglo Boer War (1880-1881) in which the Transvaal republic emerged victorious and the second was the turn of the century Second Anglo Boer War/ South African War (1899-1902) in which two Boer republics, the Transvaal and the Orange State unsuccessfully attempted to maintain their independence from a renewed and much more determined military campaign waged by the British forces (see, DAVENPORT and SAUNDERS 2000).

In the Netherlands a much warmer sentiment and closer identification with the Boers on the basis of so-called 'stamverwantschap' (tribal affiliation) started to take root (see, MEIJERS 2008: 35). It is worthwhile directly translating a couple of sentences from Erica Meijers' work regarding Dutch sentiments as influenced by the abovementioned two wars:

> Regarding these wars, wherein the Afrikaners eventually lost out, several narratives soon started doing the rounds in the Netherlands, which particularly concerned the heroism of the small troop of Boers against the overwhelming English power. Thus, the charitable predisposition regarding the Afrikaners gained the upper hand and there developed among the broad layer of the population an outright veneration of the Boers' (MEIJERS 2008: 34).

One place to locate the significance of this perspective is in reference to the most influential Dutch theologian in the reformed tradition of the period, Abraham Kuyper, who was also a high-profile public figure in the Netherlands. An anti-modernist and Calvinist thinker, who over the course of his lifetime had a career as journalist and newspaper editor, educationist and founder of the Vrije Universiteit in Amsterdam, and even prime minister of the Netherlands from 1901-1905, (SNEL 2020) Kuyper as theologian had been a particularly influential source within 20th century Afrikaans theological discourse. His 1900 publication, *De Crisis in Zuid-Afrika*, published in the middle of the Anglo Boer War with the clear intent of ramping up support for the Boer cause, argued that twice during the 17th century the Netherlands sought to venture out in overseas colonisation, to America in 1628 and to the Cape in 1650. "Both colonies were fallen into English hands and both in unlawful ways" (KUYPER 1900: 2). Kuyper further explained that Holland had to relinquish both America in 1667 and the Cape Colony in 1814 because it was the weaker party in relation to England (KUYPER 1900: 2). However, Kuyper continued, in neither America nor South Africa did the English succeed in winning the affection of the Dutch descendants. "Every attempt at fusion between the two elements were repulsed by the tenacity of the Dutch race" (KUYPER 1900: 3). Kuyper further claimed that in his contemporary times, two centuries later, the American Dutch retained the same level of animosity against the English as before. Even if they did not know the Dutch language anymore, they continued to seek the connection through their 'Holland Societies'. "Their Dutch origin is as it were an aristocratic title of which they are proud" (KUYPER 1900: 4). Whether or not the American Dutch truly had these sorts of sentiments regarding the Netherlands is less important than the fact that Kuyper portrayed them in this light. As the main tenor of *De Crisis in Zuid-Afrika* makes clear, Kuyper had a nationalistic interest in illustrating the Netherlands and its diasporic societies in counterpoint to what he evidently saw as British imperial overreach.

The comments about America in Kuyper's text are only a prelude. The central theme in the pamphlet by this famous Dutch theologian concerned South Africa. Regarding the early British incursions in the hitherto Dutch controlled territory inland from the Cape of Good Hope, Kuyper refers to a Captain Percival who in 1803 testified that "the English will be amazed at the aversion and even the hatred that the Dutch seem to foster towards us" (KUYPER 1900: 4). Kuyper, then related a well-trodden narrative in Boer/Afrikaner history of unjust suffering at the hands of the British empire. He gave the Boers a glowing testimony regarding their Calvinistic faith, their democratic social organization, and their morality (KUYPER 1900: 8-9). This perspective stands in marked contrast, in other words, to contemporary and slightly earlier British missionary portrayal of this very same group as slaveholders and oppressors of Africans, as seen for example in writings of David Livingstone (see SCHAPERA 1960) and James Stewart (1899).

Additionally, one may point out that Kuyper and his theology of sphere sovereignty have often been implicated, mainly by post-apartheid South African theologians, as an important source for the development of what came to be known as apartheid theology (see NAUDE 2005). However, the placement of Kuyper in such a compromised position has also met some resistance from neo-Calvinist Kuyperian scholars, especially within American Reformed circles where Kuyper is often regarded as a flawed hero of the faith rather than an outright villain4. Consequently, a more orthodox or at least less controversial position to take with respect to Kuyperian influence on South Africa and apartheid is that it was not Kuyper himself who is to blame for the development of apartheid theology. Instead, the blame should be laid at the feet of his Boer/Afrikaner proteges who misinterpreted his idea of sphere sovereignty to also include the notion of race within the overall scheme. Thus, racial apartheid could be justified theologically within a warped scheme of sphere sovereignty. Without getting into the intricacies of this argument and counter argument I could simply state that the counter-argument's point regarding a subsequent development of Kuyperian ideas within the South African context certainly did occur, and perhaps to an extent beyond what Kuyper himself might have been comfortable with (See BASKWELL 2006), but this is speculation to some extent. What is clear though from *De Crisis in Zuid-Afrika*, which is written in the genre of social commentary rather than theological discourse, is that Kuyper strongly championed the cause of the Boers during the South African War. And, as Erica Meijers points out, it is also in this document that Kuyper introduces a term that would become a mainstay in the subsequent Afrikaner ideology that would underpin apartheid. The term in question is *Zwart Gevaar* (black danger) (MEIJERS 2008: 44-45; KUYPER 1900: 19-20). Together with other dangers, such as *Roomse Gevaar* (Roman danger) (STRYDOM 1937) and *Rooi Gevaar* (red danger) (FOURIE 2024), *Zwart Gevaar* would throughout the 20th century function as bogeyman against which to guard and against which Afrikaner and more generally white isolationism would be bolstered through political, economic, and social machinations.

Nevertheless, perhaps it is only fair to consider Kuyper's role in this story in relation to his wider engagement with South Africa over time. The Dutch historian Gerrit Schutte is instructive in this regard (SCHUTTE 2010). For this one must turn the clock backwards a bit since Schutte relates a history of engagement between Kuyper and particularly S.J. du Toit, the most influential South African implementer of Kuyperian ideas in the late 19th century. The history that Schutte zooms in on concerns the period after the first British annexation of the northernmost Boer republic, the Transvaal, formally known as the South African Republic in 1877.

[4] See, for example, the high profile Kuyper Conference and Prize associated with a couple of the premier Reformed and Presbyterian institutions in the USA: https://calvin.edu/centers-institutes/de-vries-institute/kuyper-conference-prize/

Schutte describes du Toit as "a clergyman and author, founder of the Genootskap van Regte Afrikaners (1875), editor in chief of Di Patriot (1876) and founder of the Afrikaner Bond (1879)". These institutions and publication were the driving forces in the construction of what came to be known as Afrikaans language and Afrikaner identity as distinct from their Dutch origin.

When Kuyper founded The Vrije Universiteit in 1880 and delivered a speech on the topic of "Souvereiniteit in eigen kring", du Toit immediately wrote to congratulate him for "placing this [Reformed] doctrine on the lamp stand through your work" (SCHUTTE 2010) Du Toit was an inveterate opponent of everything liberal and English, which for him were virtually two sides of the same coin. As founding editor of *Die Afrikaanse Patriot* he was at one point responsible for the placement of a quite slanderous couple of letters in 1893 under the pseudonym Streng Gereformeerde Patriot (9 February; 23 February), which attacked the well-known church and mission leader Andrew Murray Jr. for being a supposed enemy of both the Reformed doctrine and Afrikaner nationalism. The author was possibly none other than du Toit himself (see GILIOMEE 2011: 217-18) and based on these letters it would be difficult to tell if the author was more incensed by Murray's supposed anti-reformed views or his anti-nationalism. Schutte for his part argues that du Toit became steadily more nationalistic and that his own willingness to compromise on Reformed principles in favour of more nationalistic ones over time was what led to an eventual parting of ways between Kuyper and du Toit. This marked the end of a period of shared ideas and friendly partnership as expressed in correspondence between the two (SCHUTTE 2010). Schutte seems to interpret their eventual fissure as a consequence of the fact that Kuyper placed the Reformed view ahead of nationalism contrary to du Toit, but perhaps a less sympathetic reading of Kuyper might reveal that it was rather a case of du Toit increasingly prioritising the Afrikaans language as distinct and even in opposition to Dutch that was the sticking point. In my reading, Kuyper was just as anti-imperial as du Toit but for Kuyper the oppositional category to British imperialism should have been a shared Dutch Reformed religion and culture between the Boers of South Africa and the Netherland's Dutch rather than the independently driven Afrikaans language and nationalism that du Toit wanted to foster.

Du Toit himself, however, early on in the relationship clearly contributed to the rhetoric of shared rootedness between Holland and the 'Hollandsche Afrikaners' as he called the Boers in a letter dated 3 January, 1881. This was after the outbreak of what is sometimes called the first Anglo-Boer War (1880-1881), which resulted in a Boer victory. In the middle of this three-month long conflict du Toit wrote to Kuyper from the British controlled Cape Colony:

> A war has now broken out in Transvaal, for which there is no end in sight. We (the Hollandsche Afrikaners) have from the very beginning prayed for help with our brothers from Transvaal, because they are being oppressed and are being done injustice. […] Would you be so kind as to use your influence to stimulate the Brothers in Holland to hold a day of prayer for Transvaal? (SCHUTTE 2010).

Apart from du Toit's, as it turned out unwarranted, pessimism regarding the longevity of that particular conflict, the suggestion of Dutch Afrikaner brotherhood is noteworthy, and perhaps indeed prophetic as the subsequent history would unfold. Schutte notes that while Dutch outrage at the 1877 British annexation of the Transvaal was muted, that many in the Netherlands even viewed the development favourably due to abolitionist hopes that the lot of the black population would improve under British rulership, the scales of Dutch public opinion tipped strongly in favour of the Boers after they unexpectedly emerged victorious in the 1880-1881 war, against overwhelming numbers and odds. To quote Schutte: "Unanimously, the Dutch came out in support of that "little tribe, that the mighty Great Britain could purge out and chase away, but never overwhelm"" (SCHUTTE 2010).

And regarding the Netherlands' self-perception on the margins of Empire, Schutte writes illuminatingly and worth quoting at length:

> The little country of the Netherlands, surrounded by the great powers of France, England and Germany, all competing with one another, had long doubted its own future. …. The uprising of the Transvaalers and their fearless actions caused a wave of enthusiasm in the Netherlands for these descendants of the Sea Beggars ('Geuzen') of the 16th century. The victories of the Boers – descendents of Oud Nederland and therefore kin – gave the Dutch self-confidence: faith in themselves and in the future. A clear nationalistic feeling arose across the full spectrum of the population. Excited dock workers in Amsterdam even spoke of boycotting English goods (SCHUTTE 2010).

Schutte shows how Kuyper underwent similar changes in himself during the course of these events, from lukewarm enthusiasm and cautioning the Boers against revolt to wholehearted endorsement of their perspective including their rationale for independent rulership in the Transvaal. “Kuyper thus placed himself firmly behind the Transvaalers, and quickly became one of the leaders of the pro-Boer movement in the Netherlands. He became cofounder and an influential committee member of the *Nederlands Zuid-Afrikaanse Vereniging* (NZAV, Dutch-South-African Society)” (SCHUTTE 2010) which was founded in 1881 and continued to exist until just a few years ago when it merged with some other Dutch related societies with links to South Africa.

This view comes especially clearly to the fore in Kuyper’s later publication, *De Crisis in Zuid-Afrika,* published in 1900 which was in the middle of the second Anglo-Boer War/ South African War, where he among other things completely endorsed the Boer rejection of the British demand that the Transvaal should give voting rights to ‘Uitlanders’ (KUYPER 1900: 28-29). This demand and the Boer refusal was the major catalyst for the outbreak of war.

However, a striking aspect of *De Crisis in Zuid-Afrika* is Kuyper’s critique of imperialism, which is what he also identified as the root cause of this conflict. According to his reasoning, the stated motivation for the British needing control of the Transvaal was simply an excuse for the real reason, which was the expansion of empire. Kuyper then proceeded to critique the imperial logic at some length (KUYPER 1900: 48ff). He stated that the English nation was in many ways unparalleled. “If I was no Dutchman, I would have wanted to be an Englishman”, he claims (KUYPER 1900: 47). However, how could one explain that this great nation would attack and wage this brutal war against the much smaller Boer nation? The answer was imperialism, regarding which he had fascinating things to say, including its tendency to apply the concept of nationalism ecumenically, “and attempts accordingly to form the whole world to its own national type” (KUYPER 1900: 50).

Furthermore, Kuyper argued that British imperialism was influenced by Herbert Spencer’s concept of social Darwinism whereby so-called weaker nations became destined to be supplanted by stronger ones. Kuyper mentioned an influential English clergyman who based a defense of British actions in the Transvaal on Spencer’s ideas (KUYPER 1900: 54ff). Worst of all, however, as far as Kuyper was concerned was that this British imperialism found itself thoroughly sanctioned by British Christianity, which tended to insist that all Christianity should look like the British variant of it. Kuyper quoted from the *Greater Christian Messenger* to argue that in fact there occurred a total

> self-identification between the Kingdom of God and the British Empire…. „God created and greatly expanded the British Empire, and also

> English Christianity. True imperialism sees in every gain of land an extension of the glorious task of proclaiming the gospel of the English Christ" (KUYPER 1900: 56).

Kuyper further blamed 'Methodism' for seeking to use the means of a violent war to bring civilization to the Boers of South Africa. The Boers were however inspired by 'Calvinism', and Kuyper claimed that even Winston Churchill who first became famous as an escaped prisoner during the South African War, had admitted that an 'invisible power' protected the Boer commandos (KUYPER 1900: 57).

This brief contrast established between Methodism and Calvinism is significant in as far as the former is alluded to as quintessentially English and the latter as characteristic of Dutch and Boers. Both the abovementioned S.J. du Toit and especially his son who was an influential 20th century literary figure and theologian, J.D. du Toit, would develop this theme very strongly in the shaping of Afrikaner Christian nationalism as a kind of nemesis and/or antidote to British Imperialism. Eventually this served as a quite effective strategy to neutralize and taint with suspicion their own ideological and theological opponents within Dutch Reformed Christianity in South Africa (MÜLLER 2022).

Finally, regarding Kuyper, and as a segue into the next session, it is important to note what he had learned from the Reverend Frans Lion Cachet. Schutte writes that regarding the perception of the Boers as victims of a British imperial theology of equality, "Kuyper proved to be unmistakably influenced by the argumentation of the Dutch pro-Boer authors P.J. Veth, R. Fruin and in particular Lion Cachet's *Worstelstrijd der Transvalers* (The Struggle of the Transvaalers)" (SCHUTTE 2010). Cachet will be considered here as one of two case studies of migrating Dutch missionary pastors who spent at least a decade and a half in South Africa before returning to the Netherlands, the other case being Dammes Pierre Marie Huet.

Dutch missionary pastors to the Boers of South Africa – F.L. Cachet and D.P.M Huet

In Kuyper, we have the thought of an academic theologian that had a great deal of influence in the international scene when the British empire was nearing its culmination, particularly in relation to South Africa. But when considering cross-regional influence, as I am doing here between the Netherlands and South Africa, then a theologian's ideas can only get one so far and perhaps not really all the way through to the popular level. Kuyper, after all, commented on South Africa from a distance. It is therefore helpful that a different level of discourse is available in the writings of and about migrant or traveling preachers/ missionary type figures who moved between the two contexts and produced literature of interest. I would like to consider specifically two 19th century Dutchmen who served as Reformed pastors in both South Africa and the Netherlands over extended periods of time. Both were strongly missionary minded and although their ministries among the Boers were typically interpreted along the lines of Dutch pastors serving Dutch emigrant colonists, a case might be made that these careers could be described as atypical missionary roles. Huet and Cachet were also friends whose paths overlapped in many ways, but their influence stretched in widely different directions. D.P.M. Huet was both a clergyman and a poet. His poetry will not be mentioned here but rather his prosaic portrayals of the South African religious and social contexts which was clearly inspired by a sense of moral outrage against racial prejudice. His writing was often in advocacy of groups of people he assessed as being oppressed in different situations. Regarding the Boers among whom he pastored for much of his career as a Dutch Reformed minister in Natal his position was ambivalent, in some cases as a promoter of their cause and in other cases, more frequently, as their accuser. His colleague and friend, Frans Lion Cachet, tended to fall much more in line in the role as defender of the Boers and their rationale regarding self-determination and rulership with respect to other population groups in South Africa. Interestingly, Cachet was a converted Jew whose influence might have played something of a role regarding the later Afrikaner tendency to self-identify quite strongly with the biblical Israel in their own anti-imperial imaginings. He wrote a very influential book promoting what he considered the righteous cause of the Transvaal Boers (CACHET 1882). However, Cachet was often an unpopular and divisive figure among this very group which cause he championed, which means that his role was also an ambiguous one. Most telling in this regard are personal letters where on a couple of occasions he expressed support for the British annexation of the Boer republics.

The value of Cachet and Huet as case studies within this theme lie both in the documents they produced and in the sentiments they provoked as transregional, complex identities. It is not possible within the scope of a single article to give a thorough analysis of these individuals' writings. Here a basic introduction of these two pastors filtered through the lens of their positioning vis-à-vis the British Empire, on the one hand, and the Boers, on the other, would have to suffice. This will be enough to show that Huet's and Cachet's loyalties were neither fixed nor undivided. The Boers whom they strongly concerned themselves with, either critically or sympathetically, occupied an interesting space with respect to Empire. Casual attitudes relating to informal slavery and general maltreatment of the indigenous population provided useful foil for Britain to claim a righteous extension of their empire as a protective measure whereby indigenous peoples would be saved from Boer tyranny. Cachet and Huet's combined actions during a brief period when they were pastoral colleagues in the Natal DRC initiated the commemoration of "Zondagslag van Bloedrivier" (HOUGH 1962: 102), which became variously known as Dingaansdag/ Geloftedag within Boer/ Afrikaner Christian context countrywide. This occurred on the occasion when Huet proposed and Cachet seconded a motion at the general church meeting of the Natal DRC on 20 October 1864 to the effect that the 16th of December should be commemorated as a day of thanksgiving in the Natal congregations of the DRC (BAILEY 2002: 33). This consequent sacralization of the 1838 Boer victory over the Zulu as a divine victory would in the subsequent century become central to the founding myth of what has been described as Afrikaner Civil Religion (MOODIE 1975).

The writings of and about Cachet and Huet can be shown as responding in varying and not always consistent ways to this context. Perhaps their responses may in part be read as reflective of a general anxiety inherent in living and operating on the margins of empire. Transvaal Boers, as portrayed in these writings, for their part seemed to approach both the Empire and the indigenous population with mixtures of fear and loathing. At the same time, these Boers were often also evaluated along lines that shifted from revulsion to sympathy and back again by the Netherlands Dutch as indicated above.

Huet

Huet's timeframe in South Africa begins slightly earlier and ends earlier than that of Cachet. This may be significant for explaining some of the difference between the two men which I shall return to in the conclusion. Huet arrived in South Africa in 1854 on the invitation of G.W.A. van der Lingen who was an influential DRC minister in the town of Paarl (HOUGH 1962: 12ff). Van Lingen was looking for an editor for a Christian magazine he wanted to launch, and Huet, who was a poet of note and who had also completed theological studies in the Netherlands got the job. In Paarl, Huet soon came under van der Lingen's spiritual influence, experienced a 'conversion' and decided to exchange his journalistic career for a missionary vocation. Van der Lingen advised him to pursue the route for licensing as minister in the DRC, and Huet then became an assistant pastor in the northern Cape town of Aliwal Noord (HOUGH 1962: 21). He availed himself for a call to Lydenburg in the Transvaal, which was something of a lone northern outpost for the Cape DRC at the time. Huet's ordination was conducted by the synod of 1857 without him having seen Lydenburg (HOUGH 1962: 60ff).

This synod happened to be a controversial one which gave permission to congregations to be segregated along racial lines. In this the church leadership gave in to the demand of popular sentiment among the white membership, while yet at the same time acknowledging that such a measure would be both unscriptural and wrong. Huet opposed the measure with his key arguments also subsequently elaborated and published in the important ecumenical and anti-racist text, *Eén Kudde En Één Herder* (1860), in which he gave an impassioned theological treatise on spiritual equality and the unity of the church.

Huet travelled to the Transvaal by sea from Cape Town to Durban and overland through Natal. He first spent a couple of months at Pietermaritzburg as substitute for the resident pastor who went on sick leave (HOUGH 1962: 63ff). In route to Lydenburg he received news that the Lydenburg Boers were not overly keen to have him as their pastor after all (HOUGH 1962: 71). This, apparently, after word regarding Huet's racial equalising sentiments had reached them. Huet nonetheless continued on his journey into the Transvaal where he eventually spent significant time not only in Lydenburg but moreover in Zoutpansberg (HOUGH 1962: 72ff). Zoutpansberg became the setting for Huet's other noteworthy book, *Het Lot Der Zwarten in Transvaal* (1869), in which he relayed his impressions regarding Boer maltreatment of the black population, including their participation in informal slavery and various other abuses. Although the book itself was published much later, in 1869, it is partly written as a travelogue and makes clear that Huet did not have a friction free relationship with the Zoutpansbergers. Nonetheless, this congregation wanted to call him as their minister at the end of his time with them, but this idea was blocked by the secular authority with the aid of the Transvaal state church's Rev. Dirk van der Hoff. Instead, a minister affiliated with the state sanctioned church, the *Hervormde Kerk*, was installed at Zoutpansberg (HUET 1869: 58). Huet returned to Natal where he had accepted a call to Ladysmith in 1858.

He subsequently moved to Pietermaritzburg in 1860 but not before he became involved in a theological dispute that raged within the Cape between the so-called orthodox majority and liberal minority. Huet wrote in defence of the orthodox position which countered liberal positions on scriptural interpretation and the place of the Reformed confessional documents in the church. During this time he also became active in recruiting orthodox ministers for the northern and eastern regions of the country. He lamented, for example in the *Lot der Zwarten,* that there were no homegrown preachers of the DRC who were willing to serve in these outlying regions. And so it is also noteworthy that for Natal he recruited another Hollander, Frans Lion Cachet (HOUGH 1962: 90-91). Cachet would become a controversial figure in his own right as the following section would indicate.

Huet returned to the Netherlands in 1867. Within the context of this article, it is noteworthy that Huet as a Dutch migrating pastor to South Africa did not apparently concern himself with opposition to the matter of Empire. His theological concerns all centred on issues of mission, spiritual equality between black and white, the union of the church, and particularly the unjust plight of the black inhabitants of the Transvaal under Boer rulership. Huet, one might assume would not have been against British annexation of that region for this very reason. In fact, this is confirmed by his own commentary in *Het Lot der Zwarten in Transvaal*. There Huet argued that in the light of the many writings and reports that has gone up in defence of the situation of the blacks in Transvaal and the fact that the English government had been fighting the slave trade on the African coasts, it would be a good deed if the English could take authority over the Boer Republics, although he stated that he thought there was only slim hope of this occurring in this publication dated, 1869 (HUET, 1869: 13).

Nevertheless, Huet took a philosophical stance regarding the present state of fear and loathing. He commented on the so-called 'treklust', which could loosely be translated as the desire for migration, among the Boers as a way of opening up the wilderness of southern Africa and, in his anticipated near future, central Africa for 'civilization'. However, this 'treklust' was neither exclusively not mainly driven by the need to get away from injustices at the hands of the English. No, as Huet related the self-acknowledged position of the Boers who participated in the migration, the main cause was equalisation between white and black in church and law. They could not tolerate that there were laws that protected their workers against repression and maltreatment. Huet set himself directly against sentiments that sought to counter equalisation. At the same time, he revealed his own pro-imperial bias at the time when he stated that rightfully or unrightfully, Africa was being opened, and civilisation, legal authority, and gospel proclamation would follow (HUET 1869: 35-36).

Whatever the case, he returned to the Netherlands before the encroachment of the British Empire into the Transvaal became a reality.

Cachet

Born in 1835 in Amsterdam, Cachet was part of a family of Jewish jewellers originally from Lyon, France, hence his second name. His entire family converted to Christianity and were baptised in Amsterdam in 1849. Cachet then studied at an Amsterdam based seminary of the Free Church of Scotland and having received his diploma, which prepared him for foreign service, Cachet set out for South Africa in 1858. Cachet apparently interpreted his qualification enabling him for work as missionary in 'foreign service' to imply that he would be ordainable as minister in the Dutch Reformed Church of South Africa. However this request was declined upon his arrival at Cape Town. The DRC there apparently considered itself an extension of the Netherlands based body rather than a missionary institution. Cachet's diploma qualifying him for foreign service did not suffice.

Cachet did eventually become a fully ordained minister in the DRC in 1862 but this occurred in a roundabout way. After a period as missionary among Cape Town's Muslim community, Cachet came into contact with Tiyo Soga who is famous for among other things being the first black South African to be ordained as church minister. Soga, a Presbyterian, helped Cachet to be ordained in the Scottish church at Alice, located in what is currently the Eastern Cape. Cachet's opening into the DRC occurred when DPM Huet invited him to serve as interim minister in the Natal town of Ladysmith. Huet at that time led the Natal section of the DRC based in Pietermaritzburg. His licensing as minister in the DRC occurred during the synod of 1862 and afterwards, he was installed as fulltime pastor in Ladysmith and also with responsibilities to congregations finding themselves outside the borders of Natal but which for a time was also independent from Transvaal. This ambiguity allowed Cachet to establish congregations for the mainstream DRC in an area where it did not previously exist. The Transvaal based *Hervormde Kerk* was the operative religious body among the Boers at this time. It was state sanctioned and its ministers during the late 19th century were all Dutch and so-called liberal in the theological sense. This was in contradistinction to figures like Cachet, Huet, and the majority of leading figures in the Cape based DRC who understood themselves as orthodox (*regzinnig*). Another important distinction was that Cachet, Huet and others were all infused with missionary fervour whereas the *Hervormde Kerk* ministers were not, and even in some cases opposed to missionary work (HUET 1869: 58).

Cachet occupied an interesting space with respect to the Boers on the margins of Empire. As mentioned above he was responsible for a publication that provided much of the fuel for Dutch pro-Boer sympathy in the lead-up to the turn of the century war and thereafter (CACHET 1882). He became a much respected and even loved figure among one sector of the Boer population. He became a defender of Boer actions against the Basuto in the Orange Free State. This placed him in disagreement with the French missionaries of the Paris Evangelical Mission who were formerly friends of his. The French missionaries had a negative view of the Boers and agitated for British rule in the area. On the other hand, Cachet was a derided figure among the Boers. His Jewishness was apparently a major reason for this, as especially reported on by his friend, Huet:

> Despised for his Jewish origins, constantly reproached by the preachers of the *Hervormde Kerk,* hated by the Government that supports the *Hervormde Kerk,* scolded, threatened and fought against, especially with the easy and cowardly weapon of slander… [transl.] (HUET 1869: 101).

Yet, he was also accused of favouring equalisation between black and white (HUET 1869: 101), which was the near ultimate sin for much of the Boer population, particularly in the Transvaal. As noted in the quotation above, ministers of the *Hervormde Kerk* were allegedly to a large degree responsible for the negative sentiment of Boers towards Cachet.

Cachet also had his run-ins with the Transvaal government. President T.F. Burgers, who ruled in the Transvaal between 1872 until the British annexation in 1877, was one of a handful of so-called liberal ministers who became accused of heresy by the Cape DRC. Although eventually cleared and reinstated by a court, he left the church ministry to become president of Transvaal when he was elected to that role by a large majority. Cachet and Burgers became strong opponents as seen in letters written by both men attacking each other's character (KRIEL 1956: 114-115). Burgers accused Cachet of undermining his position among the populace by portraying him as a heretic standing in leadership of a free nation to their detriment. Cachet in his turn made no secret of his animosity towards Burgers who he saw not only as a heretic but a traitor who "sold out his fatherland" (de STANDAARD 1877) – an accusation which must have stung as Britain annexed the Transvaal while under the Burgers presidency.

Yet, a letter by Cachet to Theophilus Shepstone in 1877 relays a different side of Cachet. In this, Cachet writing from Villiersdorp in the Cape Colony where he was based during his second and final sojourn in South Africa, described first his disappointment that the annexation of Transvaal had occurred but he also suggested that as it had by then become a foregone conclusion, he would support it strongly. He went further to draw attention to an apparently pseudonymous letter he had written earlier to a Natal newspaper in 1869 or 1870 in which he urged Britain to do precisely what it had now done, annex the Transvaal by royal proclamation. He even explained how this could be done in that earlier letter by fomenting the least resistance from the populace which would be to send people from the Cape to take charge of government rather than Brits from abroad. This conflicting messaging had apparently much to do with Cachet's serious disconnect with the leadership in the Transvaal in the preceding years. He acknowledged in the writing that as much as he hated to see the Boers lose their independence and the Republic cease to exist, he preferred the state of affairs to the Burgers presidency (KRIEL 1956: 113). And so, as he argued under changed circumstances and under the assurances he received that Shepstone's proclamation of annexation would not "make our people feel that they are a conquered race", Cachet wrote: "I would be the first to declare openly for the Queen's government. In fact I am doing so now. I am using my influence with the people to accept quietly the change of Government and not speak of leaving the country" (KRIEL 1956: 113).

Although his lasting impact in terms of the case of the Boers against the British Empire had been a major declaration in the interests of the Boers in his magisterial *Worstelstrijd der Transvalers,* which kept him busy right up to his death, it is noteworthy that in his final period in the Netherland he could not exactly shake free the suspicion that he was a British asset. A deputation under President Paul Kruger, the abovementioned Kuyper contact S.J. du Toit, and a couple others visited Holland after they had been to the London Convention (1884), which improved the terms of the Boer victory following the First Anglo Boer War. They were heroically welcomed in Holland and paraded around the streets of Rotterdam where Cachet was minister at the time. However, when Cachet attempted to attach himself to the victory parade this was refused, particularly because one of the leaders, Genl. Smit accused him of painting the Boers black in his writings, and that he encouraged them to come under British rule. Yet now he pretended to be a friend of the Republic (KRIEL 1956: 119-120).

Conclusion

The above will suffice to portray both Huet and especially Cachet as complex yet significant figures within the context of the Boers, the wider population of South Africa, and the British Empire. Although similar themes tended to keep the two men busy, their individual trajectories and social and theological emphases stretched into widely divergent directions. German Lutheran missionary to South Africa and anti-apartheid theologian, Wolfram Kistner, in a 1975 article on the history and influence of the annual 16th December commemoration of the Battle of Blood River zooms in on the roles played by both Huet and Cachet in the day's ideological foundations. He comes to the conclusion that while Cachet might he held responsible for instilling a kind of nationalistic self-identification with the biblical Israel among the Boers for the way in which he interpreted and preached about Blood River, the same could not be said about Huet, who is interpreted as wishing to keep the memory and tradition of divine salvation in the face of danger as experienced by the Boers at that earlier time alive (KISTNER 1975).

On the surface of things this judgement by Kistner appears to hold water, but a different way of looking at the two might be in connection with the divergences in the time periods that they spent in South Africa. Cachet had been there for two different periods, first from 1858-1873 and again 1876-1880. Huet on the other hand arrived in 1854 and returned to the Netherlands in 1867. This meant that Huet, who on different occasions expressed a desire for the British Empire to take over Boer controlled regions in order to improve the situation of the black population, nonetheless did not directly experience the lead up of the first Anglo-Boer War whilst in South Arica, as Cachet for example did. As a result, Huet might be seen as paradigmatic of what Erica Meijers, above, indicated regarding the sensibilities of the Dutch regarding the Boers as uncivilized oppressive ruffians in South Africa during much of the nineteenth century. Such a view corresponds somewhat to the position taken by Huet.

Perspectives changed with the 1877 annexation of the Transvaal, and the consequent victory against overwhelming odds of the Boers during the First Anglo Boer War. This is the point from where Cachet's apparently more sympathetic stance should be evaluated. Sure enough, there were personal factors such as his Jewishness and theological disagreements with the church and secular leadership in the Transvaal that all influenced his perspective. Remarkably, the shifting attitude of growing sympathy with the Boers from the side of the theologian Abraham Kuyper during this period and into the turn of the century second Anglo-Boer War was apparently to a degree influenced by Cachet's magnum opus *De Worstelstrijd Der Transvalers*, published in 1882, which was a passionate defence of the Transvaalers' struggle against the overwhelming might of the British Empire. Although this text is perhaps rather comparable to hagiography in its extolment of the Transvaal Boers' virtues, Kuitenbrouwer, for example, writes that Kuyper "was one of the few to praise *De worstelstrijd* as an 'objective' account" (KUITENBROUWER 2021: 58).

At the risk of explaining moral positioning on the basis personal experience and the arbitrary nature of historical developments, the following may still be worthy of consideration in the final analysis. Could it be that the perspectives of people like Kuyper and Cachet were largely reactive against this looming horizon of Empire, which perhaps allowed both to deemphasize the matter of the Boers' even worse, yet smaller scale, atrocities against the black people in their immediate surroundings? Huet's apparently more morally exemplary critical stance regarding the Boers' racial discrimination, on the other hand, might perhaps in part be influenced by the fact that his judgements could be felled in the relative absence of British imperial aggression during the period in which he was active in the region in question.

Whatever the answer might be to such speculations, it might be fair to conclude that the characters mentioned here were subject in varying degrees to the shifting winds of fear, rage, and loathing on the margins of Empire in the late 19th century.

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