THE INFLUENCE OF CALVINISM ON THE
CONCEPTS OF GOVERNMENT, CHURCH
AND NATION IN THE REPUBLIC
OF SOUTH AFRICA

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INTRODUCTION

The title of this paper: "The Influence of Calvinism on the Concepts of Government, Church and Nation in the Republic of South Africa" requires a two-dimensional study. It implies a study of the concepts of government, church and nation in the works of Calvin on the one hand. On the other hand we have to study these concepts as manifested in the Republic of South Africa.

There is no doubt that Calvinism has influenced the South African _modus vivendi_ deeply. Much have been written about Calvinism in South Africa. Most of the Calvinist scholars in South Africa have only written laudatory statements and expositions about Calvinism. Not many—in our estimation—have stepped back and tried to analyze the Calvinist influence critically. Our concern therefore is to stand back and as objectively as possible take a fresh look at Calvinism within the framework of our title.

It is our contention that Calvinism has indelibly left its mark in South Africa on the concepts of government, church and nation. We actually want to go one step further and say that something was added to one of the
original doctrines of Calvin. We believe that it was a case of making the coat fit according to South African measurements.

Our work has already been mapped out for us in the first paragraph of this Introduction, viz. to study the three concepts under discussion in Calvin on the one hand and on the other hand see how they look in the Republic of South Africa and especially how they were or were not--influenced.

Our primary sources are Calvin's Institutes of the Christian Religion and his various Commentaries and tracts. Of course there are numerous works on Calvin and Calvinism in Afrikaans and Dutch. So the method that we will follow is basically that of comparing Calvin's thoughts on the three concepts with those in South Africa.

The procedure that we will follow is:
I. Introduction; II. A brief account of the spread of Calvinism to South Africa; III. The concept of government in Calvin; IV. The concept of church in Calvin; V. The concept of nation in Calvin; VI. The concept of government, church and nation in the Republic of South Africa; VII. Summary and Conclusion.
CHAPTER I

A BRIEF ACCOUNT OF THE SPREAD OF CALVINISM TO SOUTH AFRICA

Calvinism in South Africa was planted by the descendants of the "Watergeuzen" who rid the Netherlands from their Spanish oppressors during the Eighty Years War.

South Africa is at the tip of Africa on the crossroad between the Atlantic Ocean on the west and the Indian Ocean on the east. On April 6, 1652 Jan Van Riebeeck and his party representing the Dutch East India Company sailed with three ships: the Reiger, De Goede Hoop and Drommedaris into the Cape of Good Hope. The Seventeen Lords (De Heere Seventien) had given Van Riebeeck a set of commands of which the first was to pray the prescribed invocation. This prayer expressed the hope that the Reformed faith might be disseminated among the native inhabitants to the glory of God and the extension of his kingdom.

The government of the Cape Colony was founded on the Reformed faith and in the church the Reformed principles laid down by the Synod of Dort were followed.
The Dutch were to stay at the Cape until 1795. Dr. G. Besselaar says that the Dutch gave to South Africa its democratic institutions, its patriarchal or paternalistic attitude.\textsuperscript{1}

In 1688 the French Huguenots came to South Africa and brought with them a life of gratitude to God and a will to triumph over sin, Satan and his realm. After 1806 the British \textit{via} Puritanism gave to the Cape Calvinistic preciseness, pragmatism, respect for law and order and method.\textsuperscript{2}

In the second half of the seventeenth century such influences as supernaturalism which in the eighteenth century manifested itself in rationalism came to the shores of South Africa. Supernaturalism expressed belief in miracles and prophecy and also advocated a theoretical and humanistic ethic.

A later influence was liberalism or modernism. It was impeded by conservatism and the fear for its modern spirit. It was more emotion than reason which finally led to the premature death of liberalism.

The British were to stay in South Africa from 1806-1910. In the earlier part of the nineteenth century there was a revolt against the British by the Afrikaners, espe-

\textsuperscript{1}G. Besselaar, "Calvinisme en Nationale Reactie vooral in Zuid-Afrika." \textit{Antireus} 8 (1934) p. 163.
\textsuperscript{2}\textit{Ibid.}, pp. 161, 164-165
cially those on the eastern frontier. This led to the Great Trek—people fleeing into the interior and taking with them the Bible, Psalmbook and Reformed tradition. This led to the formation of independent republics and at the turn of the century to the Anglo-Boer War (1899-1902).

Let us pause for a while and analyze the Great Trek to get what amounts to the central point in the outlook of the South African Calvinist, i.e. God is especially concerned with the welfare of the Afrikaner, the white from Dutch stock, even in his adversity. J. Alton Templin points out how the Afrikaners during the Great Trek saw themselves as the Israelites and the Blacks they encountered as the Caanites. The Afrikaner Calvinists believed that God were guiding them.3 These fiery Calvinists had devotions every morning and night and went to bed with God's ever shining light.

As the Afrikaner proceeded into the hinterland, he met, for the first time, Blacks who had come in from the north and had now settled mainly on the east coast of South Africa. These people were seen as "heathens" and were treated with brutality—they were to be killed or perhaps converted—but they were never equals. These Blacks were always the "heathens" and no miscegenation

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or integration was allowed. The idea was always: "Since you don't try to make equal that God has not made equal."
The women ever mindful of what happened between Abraham and Hagar were all intent to see that native women and their bastard children should not be integrated.

The Afrikaners founded for themselves a republic, the Republic of Natalia, in 1835 on Calvinistic lines. The irony is the fact that the secretary of the Republic of Natalia, Jan Bantjes, was a black man. We must hasten to say that he started the Great Trek as a servant. This republic was eliminated by the British government and the Afrikaners once again decided to move away from "Pharoah." They crossed the Drakensberge and went west and in 1852 founded the Republic of the Orange Free State between the Orange and Vaal River. In 1852 the Afrikaners north of the Vaal River founded the Republic of South Africa (Transvaal). It existed until the Anglo-Boer War (1899-1902) when it was smashed along with the Free State by the British. This war was ended with the Treaty of Vereeniging on May 31, 1902. Once again some Afrikaners trekked, moving to such far away countries as Kenya, Angola, Rhodesia and even to Argentina in South America! Their descendants are still in some of these countries today.

After bitter years of concentration camps and reconstruction the four provinces viz. the Cape, Natal, Orange Free State and the Transvaal (the former Afrikaner
republics) united in 1910 and became the Union of South Africa.

From this brief account of the history of Afrikanerdom, one can see that religion played a crucial, even a life and death role.

In 1948 South Africa was taken over by the Nationalist government under the leadership of Dr. D.F. Malan who in some quarters is hailed as the "father of apartheid." In 1961 under the leadership of Dr. H.F. Verwoerd, South Africa became a republic outside of the British Commonwealth, the culmination of the Afrikaner-dream. The Nationalist Party after nearly twenty-eight years of government is no doubt still very strong. What Dr. D.F. Malan said in 1937 is still very evident and widely believed:

Afrikanerdom is not the work of man but the creation of God. Throughout our history God's plan is evident and no power on earth or in hell can kill our nation because God created our nation.⁴

Before we conclude this chapter, let us briefly look at the development of Calvinistic societies in South Africa. The Calvinist Student Association was founded in 1894. The University of Stellenbosch's students established a similar society in 1930. In 1933 the Federation of Calvinist Student Associations in South Africa was founded and in 1934 the National Calvinist Student

⁴D.F. Malan in the Cape Argus, March 5, 1937
Association. In that same year a Calvinistic society was started in Cape Town by the Rev. P.N. de Lange and later one at Bloemfontein by the Rev. A. du Toit and Dr. J.J. Dekker and in 1935 at the Steynburg Normal by the Rev. D.G. Venter. At present the Federation of Calvinist Student Associations have branches at most of the major Afrikaans universities and teachers' colleges.
CHAPTER II

THE CONCEPT OF GOVERNMENT IN JOHN CALVIN

In dealing with the concept of government in the thought of Calvin one should first ascertain what his idea of government or civil government was. Then can one proceed as to how the state should function and why.

In Book IV, chapter one, section one of the *Institutes of the Christian Religion* Calvin points out that the secular and civil government along with the church, the word and the sacraments are outward aids or instruments by which God calls us to and maintains us in communion with Christ.

A differentiation is made between spiritual and civil or physical government. The former has to do with the realm where God controls everything. Civil or secular government is that sphere where man is in control. Man is in control in this respect that he gets his power from God.

Calvin's concern with civil government was that it served to enhance the glory of God. Writes Mr. Wilhelm Niesel in this respect:

When he speaks of the secular government he is not concerned about the state as such, nor even
about the Christian state; but about Christ and about the significance which the civil power has for our life in fellowship with this Lord.  

We can therefore see that the state or civil government has never a per se objective. It is never an end in itself. It is always a means to an end.

Dr. Wilhelm Mueller makes it very plain that Calvin's main concern was never the state but his emphasis was on the church. The state existed for Calvin entirely for the welfare of the church. The state was always in the service of the church. Mueller emphasises Calvin's point that the state was nothing but an instrument.

How does the state or civil government function in Calvin's thought? The functions of the state were carried on by three agencies viz. the magistrates, the laws and finally the people.

Before we get to the functions of the state and the duties of the above-mentioned three agencies, let us briefly state something about the responsibility of the secular government. The secular government and its rulers are seen by Calvin as divinely ordained.


Writes Calvin:

For it is just as if it had been said, that it is not owing to human perverseness that supreme power on earth is lodged in kings and other governors, but by Divine Providence, and the holy decree of him to whom it has seemed good so to govern the affairs of men...8

The religious foundation being the structural principle, the civil government has therefore a direct responsibility to God. Complete obedience is expected. Furthermore the activities of the state should be in harmony with God.

The same should be said for the rulers (a fuller discussion follows). They were responsible to God for the modus operandi. They were therefore constantly busy deciding what is right and wrong for the citizens because they had to give an account of their stewardship to Jesus Christ. Rulers have therefore the right to inquire about citizens' lives whenever they want. Jesus was of course the supreme king and the rulers subject to him and the citizens to the rulers.

The existence of the state depends on its relationship with God. As long as rulers are obedient to God, He smiles graciously on them. This is reminiscent of the Old Testament idea by which the Children of Israel had that kind of relationship with Yahweh. Violation of this obedience and responsibility towards God result in damnation from God.

8Ibid., p. 653-654.
A. Functions of the State

The duties of civil government are contained in Book 1V, chapter twenty, section two of the Institutes. They are:

...while to the latter it is assigned, so long as we live among men, to foster and maintain the external worship of God, to defend sound doctrine and the condition of the church, to adapt our conduct to human society, to form our manners to civil justice, to conciliate us to each other, to cherish common peace and tranquility.

We can summarize and say that the state's functions are twofold viz. to protect the pure preaching of the gospel and the itself and secondly to care for the Church which preaches the pure unmixed gospel. Once again is the instrumentality of the State being emphasized.

B. The Magistracy

"Magistrates" is the broad term used by Calvin to refer to the rulers. Magistrates therefore included kings, princes, governors and judges. Calvin refers to the magistrates in his Institutes as "guardians and conservators of the laws, sinews of God."\(^9\) Most of the titles could be traced to scripture and suggest the authority of the rulers.

Like the state the magistrate also was invested

\(^9\)Ibid., p. 652

\(^{10}\)Calvin also calls the magistrates "souls of the laws, the father(s) of the country, the pastor(s) of the people, the guardians of the peace, the president(s) of justice, the vindicator(s) of innocence."
with divine power. It was sacrosanct because it was from God and he, the magistrate, was the ambassador of God.

Mueller summarizes the functions of the magistrates as follows: (1) "To maintain the honor of God and preserve public worship." (2) "To preserve public law and order." (3) "To protect the church of Jesus Christ." (4) "To remember their accountability to God."\(^\text{11}\)

Reflection on the state's duties will soon show us that in reference to the protection of the church, the magistrate was allowed to use his sword. The second function of the magistrate, viz. to support the efforts of securing internal orders, shows that Calvin was also concerned about the welfare of the state.

Other functions were the punishment of murders and the collection of taxes and other revenues. In the former we see Calvin's apparent contradiction with Exodus 20:13 "You shall not kill." Calvin resolves this dilemma by saying that the magistrate was merely executing the judgments of God. In reference to the collection of taxes scripture is quoted:

\[
\text{For the same reason you also pay taxes, for the authorities are ministers of God, attending to this very thing.}\(^\text{12}\)
\]

The magistrate was held responsible for the funds

\(^\text{11}\text{Ibid., pp. 138-147.}\)
\(^\text{12}\text{Rom. 13:6.}\)
and had to execute good stewardship because he was accountable to God and his subjects. So taxes could not be squandered. These funds were exclusively to be used for the amelioration of the human condition within the state.

Rulers also had the prerogative of declaring and engaging in war. The following reasons were suitable causes for war: (1) to protect law and order, (2) to prevent disturbances, (3) to liberate victims of oppression and (4) to punish crimes.\textsuperscript{13}

We can summarize by saying that the magistrates or rulers were nothing but "missi dominici."\textsuperscript{14}

C. Laws

Calvin distinguishes between the \textit{Lex Mosaica} and the \textit{Ius Gentium} (law of the people).\textsuperscript{15} The latter is referred to as "the strongest sinews of government" or as Cicero called them after Plato: the soul, without which the office of the magistrate cannot exist.\textsuperscript{16} Laws in the Calvinistic mould are nothing but instruments with which the magistrate works.

Calvin differentiates between three kinds of laws,

\textsuperscript{13}\textit{Ibid.}, p. 661
\textsuperscript{14}'Messengers of the Lord' was the title by which Charlemagne's representatives were known.
\textsuperscript{15}\textit{Ibid.}, p. 156
\textsuperscript{16}\textit{Ibid.}, p. 663
viz.: (1) moral, (2) ceremonial and (3) judicial. Moral laws or God's laws (they were made and executed by God) are divided into two groups: (a) the one group which forces us to worship God with pure faith and piety and (b) to love one another. These two groups of laws are to be obeyed by all men who say that they want to live in harmony with God's requirements.17

Ceremonial law was used as the act wherein God served as Israel's guardian or protector until she was come of age, when God would reveal to Israel certain things which were mysterious to her.

Judicial or criminal laws are necessary according to Calvin to ensure law and order.18 Two things are crucial in the execution of laws, viz. (1) their enforcement and (2) the fairness and validity in and on which the enactment are founded. All laws, contends Calvin, should be fair and should be adjusted to local circumstances and situations.

Before dealing with judicial proceedings, Calvin points out the necessity and importance of punishment. This is in line with Exodus chapter 22. Sound reasons are pointed out to substantiate this important ingredient of criminal law.19

17Ibid., p. 663
18Ibid., p. 665. 19Ibid., p. 665
In any legal or judicial proceeding in the Calvinistic fashion there are always two parties involved namely the defender and the pursuer. Calvin believed that both parties should be able to leave on an amicable note. We see this as a gross understatement on the part of Calvin. To expect that two parties who a few minutes engaged in heavy argument should all of a sudden leave as thick friends is, indeed, very naive!

Another ingredient of the typical Calvinistic criminal case is that both parties should be prepared to yield or suffer. This is to counter feelings of hatred, anger, vengeance and jealousy. Here again we see Calvin so caught up in legalism that there is no room for honest human common sense.

Calvin was aware of the controversy during his time about one Christian taking another to court. In fact, that was no new argument! Calvin quickly reacts by saying that this question is tantamount to repudiating the holy ordinance of God, viz. "which to the pure are pure." The above question also repudiates Paul who threw himself at the mercy of the Roman court. Writes Calvin:

For whether the action be of civil nature, he only takes the right course who, with innocuous simplicity, commits his case to the judge as the public protector, without any thought of returning evil for evil.20

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Christians have therefore a very good precedent in Paul when it comes to laying criminal charges against another Christian. Paul's advice to the Romans is quoted to substantiate the claim:

No, 'if your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him drink; for by so doing you will heap burning coals upon his head.' Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.\(^{21}\)

Augustine who earlier had developed the same idea as Paul and who no doubt served as a starting point for Calvin is also specifically mentioned.\(^{22}\)

Calvin correctly points out that an exegesis of I Corinthians chapter 4 will show that Paul was dealing with a local situation viz. the Christian church at Corinth and not with Christians in general. Calvin countered the aforementioned argument viz. the ethical dimension of one brother taking another to court by saying:

But when one sees that his property, the want of which he would grievously feel, he is able, without any loss of charity, to defend, if he should do so, he offends in no respect against that passage of Paul.\(^{23}\)

We can summarize by saying that criminal law and legal proceeding are inextricable parts of the Calvinist state. The only proviso that Calvin made, is that all laws should be promulgated and executed in love and complete fairness.

\(^{22}\)Ibid., p. 667.  
\(^{23}\)Ibid., p. 668.
D. The Responsibility of Citizens toward the State

The private citizen has two major obligations to his rulers and state namely: (1) to respect the office of the rulers and (2) complete obedience to his rulers.²⁴

1. Respect the office of the rulers

Rulers or magistrates like the state are ordained by God. They are the rulers and ambassadors of God, in short: God among men. Their function in the community is caring and nourishment. They are there for the communal safety. Rulers therefore demand respect because they represent the image of God. Scriptural support is Petrine and Pauline:

Honor the emperor.

Therefore one must be subject, not only to avoid God's wrath but also for the sake of conscience.²⁵

Calvin sums his own position up as follows:

...But I say that the station itself is deserving of honour and reverence, and that those who rule should, in respect of their office, be held by us in esteem and veneration.²⁶

2. Complete obedience to rulers

Absolute obedience to the laws, paying of taxes, or in public office or the execution of any law were required of the citizen. This obedience was based on

²⁴Ibid., p. 668-669
²⁵Rom. 13:5
²⁶Ibid., p. 669
scripture, veneration for the word of God and divine providence.

(a) The scriptural background

The biblical background is based especially on the works of Peter and Paul:

Be subject for the Lord's sake to every human institution, whether it be the emperor as supreme, or to governors as sent by him to punish those who do wrong and to praise those who do right.\(^{27}\)

Paul wrote to the Romans:

Let every person be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been instituted by God.\(^{28}\)

In these passages Calvin clearly makes it known that disobedience to any ruler constitutes disobedience to God. The latter is of course inconceivable for Calvin! Therefore if any citizen was dissatisfied about the res publicae (state affairs), he had to go to the magistrate. Never could the private citizen take the initiative to ameliorate any human condition.

(b) Obedience to God is further based on man's respect for the word of God. This honoring of the word of God usually results in respect for the rulers. The understanding is that God is the supreme power and rulers receive their power from him. The power that the ruler has, embodies the goodness of God. The assumption there-

\(^{27}\) Pet. 2:13-14.
\(^{28}\) Rom. 13:1.
fore is that magistrates or rulers should be morally up-right and should manifest nothing but goodness. We can therefore observe why Calvin insists that the king's life has to be unblemished.

(c) The obedience of citizens for their rulers is further based on divine providence of which God is the author. Hereby Calvin contends that God has a masterplan for this world. In this blueprint He uses certain agents to conduct his affairs. Scriptural background is given to substantiate the claim.\(^{29}\)

We can therefore safely conclude that a ruler has no hand in his assumption of power—everything has been worked out by God, the master-planner.

3. **Mutual obligation between rulers and citizens**

Rulers and citizens in Calvin's state are interdependent of each other. In other words the one party depends on the other for its existence. The ruler has therefore a twofold responsibility, viz. to God on the one hand and his citizens on the other.

Calvin, aware that all rulers are not perfect, declares that citizens have to search themselves whenever they find themselves with a corrupt ruler.

God in His blueprint has room for avengers.\(^{30}\) These avengers are nothing less than instruments of God.

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\(^{29}\)See Dan. 2:21, 37; 4:17, 25; Jer. 27:5-8.

\(^{30}\)Ibid., p. 674.
So instead of allowing private citizens to raise up against evil rulers God takes the initiative. These avengers are raised out of the ranks of the citizens or outsiders are summoned. Typical examples are Moses and Othniel who led the Hebrews out of Egyptian slavery and against Canaanite oppression respectively. God saw the suffering of the Hebrews under the Egyptians and commissioned Moses who was at that particular time an outsider because his residence was outside of Egypt, to go and liberate them. Othniel was raised by God to be a judge when the Hebrews found themselves oppressed by Cushanrishathaim for eight years (Judges 3:7-10).

So far the citizens have been allowed only a passive role in the state. Calvin however, says that citizens should and could disobey all rulers who would let them do things which are contrary to God's wishes. This shows the severity with which God judges violation of his wishes. Calvin substantiates his claim by saying that "we are subject to the men who rule over us, but subject only in the Lord."31 He also refers to Peter and Paul who respectively say: "...we must obey God rather than men" and "you were bought with a price, do not become slaves of men."32

We can summarize by saying that in the ruler-

31Ibid., p. 675.
32Acts 5:29, 1 Cor. 7:23.
citizen relationship the former is the dominant power. This is ascribed to him because of his godly ordination. On account of this he deserves all the respect and honor that accompany his station. Apart from objecting to a ruler when he contradicts and violates God's laws, the private citizen is requested to be passive at all times—Calvin had no time for revolutionaries in his state!
CHAPTER III

THE CONCEPT OF CHURCH IN JOHN CALVIN

The church, its meaning, its structure and nature were the crux of Calvin's writings. In volume it spans three hundred and ninety-nine pages. Due to the magnitude of the task we will understandably deal very briefly with it.

We can begin by asking the question: what was Calvin's definition of the church? From there we can pursue the issue of how the church functioned.

Calvin speaks of the catholic church by which he means the church universal--all men who confess to be believers of God. So the church is a multitude from many nations who is dispersed through the breath and length of the earth. This multitude has the same one divine doctrine and has one common religion.\(^{33}\)

In the framework of the church universal or the church at large are the visible and the invisible churches. The invisible church for Calvin was composed of the saints who have moved on to their eternal reward. The visible church refers to the outward structure which is obvious to the eye. Calvin also refers to the visible church

\(^{33}\text{Ibid.}, \text{p. 289.}\)
as the true church and as "mother."

The visible church could be recognized by the following:

Wherever we see the word of God sincerely preached and heard, wherever we see the sacraments administered according to the institution of Christ, there we cannot have any doubt that the church of God has some existence...\textsuperscript{34}

Dr. Niesel is very quick to point out that symbols by which the church can be recognized are in the structure itself but they are never contained within the fellowship of believers itself.\textsuperscript{35} What is meant is that the members do not reflect the symbols of the church.

Dr. Mueller refers to the Genevan Catechism of 1545 which asks the question: "Quid est ecclesia?" (What is the church?) and the answer is "Corpus ac societas fidelium quos Deus ad vitam aeternam praedestinavit." (The body and society of faithful whom God has predestined to eternal life).\textsuperscript{36}

We can summarize by referring to the Confessio Fidei Gallicana (The Gallican Confession):

\textsuperscript{34}Ibid., p. 289
\textsuperscript{35}Ibid., p. 194
\textsuperscript{36}Ibid., p. 78
We, say, then according to the word of God, that it is the company of the faithful who agree to follow his Word, and the pure religion which it reaches; who grows in grace all their lives, fear of God according as they feel the want of growing and pressing onward.37

We can proceed to a discussion as to how the church operates. We will discuss in this section: church discipline, the order of the church and the two sacraments.

A. Church Discipline

What is church discipline in Calvin's thought?

Let Calvin give his own definition:

Discipline, therefore, is a kind of curb to restrain and tame those who war against the doctrine of Christ, or it is a kind of fatherly rod, by which those who have made some more grievous lapse are chastised in mercy with the meekness of the spirit of Christ.38

We can deduce from his definition that Calvin feels discipline should never be undertaken in hatred or vengeance. It is rather an instrument to an end, viz. to bring the recalcitrant to see his error.

For the sake of discipline, the church is divided into the clergy and the laity. For each group there was a set of rules for discipline. For the latter group there were two steps in discipline, namely: (1) a pastoral

38 Ibid., p. 453.
admonition and if the recalcitrant ignored it (2) excommunication. If a person was excommunicated he also had to leave the community.

Calvin further distinguishes between private and public sins. This is obviously based on scriptures:

You are to deliver this man to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus.\(^{39}\)

At this point Calvin and the Roman Catholic Church agree. The latter believed that it could let individuals suffer in order to save their souls. This is exactly what Calvin advocated.

Public sins are those sins which were so obvious that the whole community could see them and were aware of them. Private sins were of course those sins which the individual committed secretly.

The clergy dealt with their own peers. The two basic elements of admonition and excommunication were used also in disciplinary action involving clergymen. While a minister or layman was undergoing church disciplinary action he was not allowed to partake of the sacraments but attendance at church services was demanded.

Calvin gave three reasons for his insistence on discipline, viz. (1) nobody should be allowed to insult

\(^{39}\) Cor. 5:5.
or defame God; (2) the good members of the community may be contaminated by the evil; (3) so that the sinner could be brought to repentance. The latter was of course for the violator's own benefit. The crux of the matter is that action was not against the individual, motivated by vengeance, but merely to stop him from harming God. The perpetrator should by all means be punished!

B. **Order of the Church**

The order of the church refers to the organizational structure of the church's ministries.

Calvin's order for the church is contained in his *Institutes* and the *Ordonnances Ecclesiastiques* (Ecclesiastical Ordonnances). Calvin advocates a fourfold ministry: (1) pastors; (2) doctors; (3) elders and (4) deacons. In this respect he differs from Paul who suggests a fivefold ministry viz. (1) apostles, (2) prophets, (3) evangelists, (4) pastors and (5) teachers. Calvin's reason is that the positions of apostles, prophets and evangelists are only temporary. Ever so often God raises up these three groups but they are not a part of the permanent life of the church. As scriptural references to substantiate his claim for his fourfold ministry Calvin quotes:

> And God has appointed in the church first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then workers of miracles, then healers,

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helpers, administrators, speakers in various kinds of tongues.

Having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us use them: if prophecy, in proportion to our faith; if service, in our service; he who teaches, in his teaching;\textsuperscript{42}

1. Pastors

They are seen as Christ's substitutes and interpreters of his will. Once again we have the Old Testament concept of instrumentality. Pastors do not represent themselves but are spokesmen for Christ.

How does one become a minister in Calvin's church? There were two requirements, viz., (1) the candidate had to be called by God; (2) he must answer to his calling i.e. undertake and execute the office assigned to him.\textsuperscript{43}

The calling consisted of four headings or categories: (a) who are to be appointed pastors; (b) in what way (how); (c) by whom; (d) with what rite or initiatory ceremony.\textsuperscript{44}

Before we proceed with these categories, let us interject the idea that Calvin recognized two kinds of calls, namely, the public call wherein the candidate or prospective pastor makes it known that he has been called. Then also is there the the private call where the future minister must go into his secret chamber and wit-

\textsuperscript{42}\textsuperscript{42} Cor. 12:18, Rom. 12:6-7
\textsuperscript{43}\textsuperscript{43} Ibid., p. 322-323.
\textsuperscript{44}\textsuperscript{44} Ibid., p. 323
ness to God as to his intentions.

Who, now, could be appointed pastors? Only those who were sound in doctrine and lived unblemished lives with no taints which may obstruct their duty. Scriptural foundation is found in a pastoral epistle:

The saying is sure: If any one aspires to the office of bishop, he desires a noble task.\textsuperscript{45}

The manner in which a prospective candidate was approved was by the electors who voted on the application. The utmost seriousness on the part of the electors was expected. They had to be in prayer asking God for a wise spirit and judge.

A preacher was called to a church by the whole assembly after the example of Acts 14:23. The prospective pastor had to be voted on and approved by the whole congregation who gathered for that purpose.

After a pastor was called, there was the induction or initiatory ceremony. In this respect Calvin advocated the laying on of hands on the new pastor, as he found in scripture:

And Israel stretched out his right hand and laid it upon the head of Ephraim, who was the younger, and his left hand upon the head for Manasseh was the first born.\textsuperscript{46}

2. Teachers

Their position was that of instructing scripture

\textsuperscript{45} Tim. 3:1.

\textsuperscript{46} Gen. 48:14.
and doctrine in the Genevan church. Apart from instruction they also had to interpret scripture and serve as watchdogs over the content of the pastor's sermons. Ministers could preach nothing but the pure word of God. In the various works on Calvinism, teachers are also referred to as doctors.

3. **Elders**

Their duties were: (a) to supervise the lives of the community; (b) to admonish those who walk incorrectly; (c) to see to order in their own ranks.

They were elected from the Little Council (two), the Council of Sixty (four) and the Council of Two Hundred (six).\(^{47}\)

4. **Deacons (Laypersons)**

Calvin differentiated between two kinds of deacons. Calvin found the origin, institution and office of deacon in Acts 6:3. The one deacon had to see to the poor, the other had to care for the sick. The first deacon was called a procurator and the latter a hospitalier.\(^{48}\)

The several orders are still in existence in the Reformed tradition today. It is interesting to note that

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\(^{48}\)Ibid., pp. 64-65.
the offices of elder and deacon have been taken over in
Methodist tradition, but there these are two clerical
orders.

C. Sacraments

One of the two symbols of the true church is the
sacraments. Calvin rejected five of the seven Roman
Catholic Church's sacraments and recognized only the
baptism and the Lord's Supper.

How does Calvin define the sacraments? Says Calvin
in Book IV, chapter fourteen, section one:

...That it is an external sign, by which the
Lord seals on our consciences his promises
of goodwill toward us, in order to sustain
the weakness of our faith, and we in our
turn testify our piety towards him, both
before himself, and before angels as well
as men.49

1. Holy Communion

We have to remember that bread and wine have nothing
in themselves except when grace is added to them. Calvin
and Zwingli are very similar in their opinions about the
Holy Supper. In fact one could say they hold almost iden-
tical position, namely that the Lord was or is not physi-
cally present in the Holy Communion and the latter is on-
ly a commemoration of Christ's death for us and what it
means for us. It was therefore crucial for Calvin to
have a sermon at communion because the word of God is the
foundation of faith.

49Ibid., pp. 491-494.
The stress for Calvin at the holy communion had to be placed on the spiritual presence of Christ. Christ is seen as having ascended to heaven, and his body is in heaven, a place whose exact location is separated by a distance from earth. The holy communion helps the believer to secure a link between himself and Christ through the secret working of the Holy Spirit. Through this operation of the Holy Spirit we partake spiritually of Christ's glorified body.\(^{50}\)

The crucified body of Christ overcame death and passed into eternal glory, therefore Christ is also the Risen One. This triumph is what is commemorated in the Lord's Supper. Through the Eucharist we also truly receive the spiritual body and the blood of Christ and develop with Him into one body. The eventual result is that He dwells in us and we in Him.\(^{51}\)

2. **Baptism**

Calvin sees baptism—paedobaptism (child baptism)—as the sign of our adoption and subsequent reception into the community of the church. We are grafted into the body of Christ and we can rightfully be called children of God.

Another major element involved is the fact that


\(^{51}\)Ibid., p. 216
we receive three gifts at baptism, viz. (a) forgiveness or our sins; (b) our dying and rising again with Christ and (c) our communion with the Lord Himself. The first two gifts are wholly dependent upon the third.

A further element of baptism is faith. We must immediately point out that there is a discrepancy in the case of infants. How can we talk of faith in the case of a baby? Calvin overcomes this dilemma by saying that the faith responsibility depends on the parents. At baptism, the parents take full responsibility but it gradually decreases as the child increases in age.\(^{52}\) At his confirmation the child assumes his own faith responsibility.

Calvin further gives the rules for baptism in the Ecclesiastical Ordonnances of 1521. He specifies for example who shall be godparents; where the parents should stand during the ceremony and the registration of babies.

Calvin summarizes his thoughts about the sacraments stressing that Christ is the foundation of the sacraments and both the body and spirit of Christ are promised to us.

We have dealt with the sacraments, not in detail of course, because that is impossible in so brief a paper. We shall now turn our attention to another important issue.

\(^{52}\text{Ibid.}, p. 218\)
D. *Volkskirche (Official State Church)*

Did Calvin ever advocate a state church, also referred to as *Volkskirche*? One very conspicuous point, which leaves no doubt, is Calvin's vehement rejection of the Roman Catholic Church. Nowhere does Calvin accept or reject the idea of a state church.

Mr. Niessel points out however, that with the rise and establishment of the evangelical church in Geneva, all other churches, priests and Roman Catholic figures disappeared. The Anabaptists were not even allowed in the city! In the meanwhile the Reformed tradition via the influence of Calvin wasculcated into every sphere of life.

The fact that no other denomination was allowed in Geneva support our thesis that there was in fact a state or official church. It was nothing less than the evangelical movement of which Calvin was the driving force. 53

We can summarize this chapter by saying that history has shown, and is still showing, that Calvin's concept of the church has had a deep influence on many denominations outside the Reformed tradition. Calvin as controversial as he was no doubt made a major contribution to the concept of the church in general. It is therefore no wonder that Calvinism instead of Lutheranism has spread further than any reformer's ideas.

CHAPTER IV

THE CONCEPT OF NATION IN JOHN CALVIN

It is not surprising to find out that Calvin never developed a concept of nation, if we look to the circumstances. He was a Frenchman who lived in exile in Geneva, Switzerland. He was accepted in Geneva and we have to say that Geneva is in the French-speaking section of Switzerland.

Compared to Luther, Calvin is thus an exception. Luther was German to the core. He strove in his translation of the Bible, begun at the Wartburg Castle, to make Moses totally German and Mary, the mother of Jesus, a good "Deutsche Hausfrau."

John T. McNeill, looking at Calvin's ecumenicity, makes it clear that Calvin saw one major difference between the Old and New Testaments namely that in the latter there is no favorite nation as in the former.54

In his commentary on Galations 6:9-11, Calvin discusses good neighborliness but that is in a set community but never developed a concept of nation.55


CHAPTER V

THE CONCEPT OF GOVERNMENT IN THE
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

In the discussion of the South African concept of government or state, we will look to what is meant by the term. After that we will explore the functions of government or state (these two terms will be used interchangeably), then to some of the laws, the government and opposition and finally give a summary.

Mr. Alan Paton notes that the year 1948 was no doubt a major watershed in the political life of South Africa. The author states that 1948 was the year in which General Smuts and his United Party lost the election to the Afrikaner Nationalist Party and the country was to be changed overnight. We mention this because for the purpose of this paper we will deal with only the period after 1948.56

John Calvin believed that government is ordained by God. Likewise Calvinism in South Africa sees the concept of government. Dr. G. Besselaar in a Dutch article

says the state, church, school and family life have a legitimate place before the majesty of God and they are all parts of God’s plan.\textsuperscript{57}

We can briefly summarize by stating that the South African concept of government, viz. that it is ordained by God, is in harmony with mainline Calvinism. This ordination of the state by God means that it is above human reproach. As in Geneva, there is in South Africa some room for criticism of the status quo—a passiveness as Calvin required—but absolutely no action for change is allowed.

A. Function of the State

In his discussion of the functions of the government, Dr. J.D. Van der Vyver makes it unmistakably clear that Calvinism calls for the state to be Christian.\textsuperscript{58}

The author describes the duties of the state as two-fold viz. (a) to see to its own ranks which include all state officials and (b) towards its general citizenship. These duties should further be seen as the fulfillment of a godly calling as Calvinism perceives them. As every task had divine meaning to Calvin so should the government approach its duties.\textsuperscript{59}


So once again we have the basic stewardship principle that we saw in Calvin's approach to the functions of the state.

The various writers fail to spell out the functions of the South African government in any detail. Van der Vyver scarcely mentions that the state should see that its laws are in accordance with the Ten Commandments. The government should therefore see that it respects the dignity of its citizens because they are the creations of God. That this is always the case in South Africa is very debatable and indeed questionable. A Christian government finally should see to the welfare of institutions like churches, schools, the family and marriage and other social structures. 60

As already pointed out, it is a dubious question whether the government is consistent with this pattern. We know for fact that it is more concerned about the welfare of certain groups of citizens and their institutions. Their welfare gets priority over the other racial groups. In this respect there is then a wide discrepancy between the state of Geneva and South Africa. Everybody except the morally unchaste was equal and received the same treatment in Geneva. There was no superior groups or more favors bestowed on one segment of the population to the exclusion of others.

There is no doubt that the South African government

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will have to improve its track record concerning its treatment of certain sections of the population.

B. Officers or Officials of the State

Little has been written about the position of the officers of the South African government. The state or government consists of the President who is nominated usually by the ruling party. At present writing the government is in the hands of the Nationalist Party. There are two branches of government, the legislative--the House of Assembly or Parliament--and the executive branch, the Prime Minister and his cabinet ministers. The legislative headquarters of the government--the Parliament--is in Cape Town and the executive branch in Pretoria. The Republic of South Africa therefore has two capitols.

That the South African Prime Ministers and other officials have some sacrosanctity ascribed to them could be seen in a newspaper report quoted by Dr. J. Alton Templin about the death of Dr. Francois Hendrik Verwoerd.\(^{61}\) Especially in the ranks of the Afrikaners we will not hesitate to say that various cabinet ministers and other officials are seen as divinely instituted. They are seen as not doing their own will but furthering God's plan. We would go so far as to say that there is widespread hero-worship for the Prime Minister and other

\(^{61}\text{Ibid.}, \text{p. 290.}\)
members of the bureaucracy. This practice is limited to one sector of the population namely the Afrikaners. We know personally no Blacks (African, Coloreds or Indians) who have demonstrated any love for members of the bureaucracy.

We can summarize by saying that South African rulers are seen as "divine and ordained by God" chiefly in certain circles. Dr. A.P. Treurnicht sums it up beautifully when he says that political leaders should be saturated with the "reign of Christ" and should practice their Christian principles in political matters. This is very near to Calvin's idea which says that the ruler should always be cognizant that he is an ambassador of God. Treurnicht speaks of the "Christian politician."

C. Laws

The legal system in the Republic of South Africa is not described in such lofty terms as Calvin depicts it but there is no doubt that the bureaucracy sees the various laws as instruments of God's will.

Dr. W.J. de Klerk draws our attention to the "Law Principle" (Wetsbeginsel) which is an intricate part of Calvinism. According to him God in his creation of

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the earth gave certain laws which must be obeyed; if not, there will be complete chaos. Laws for the different spheres of life are necessary to prevent a complete breakdown of society. This idea is of course in absolute harmony with Calvin who had the same concept of laws. Legal statutes are therefore seen as divine instruments.

Mr. Alan Paton however, is very critical of some of the laws which were enacted after 1948. Writes Paton:

These laws were intended to preserve and entrench racial differences. They were made by people for all people. The end was considered to be so good, so much in accordance with God's will, that the means were not subjected to moral judgement.64

We can definitely see that there are two opinions about South African laws. One group sees them as the summa bona, others condemn them. This of course depends on what is one's background in South Africa. If one is a full blooded Afrikaner the chances are very great that one would condone the legal system. If one is a wretched peasant or poor urban Black or just plain Black the chances are very great that one would condemn numerous laws. We can also state that many of the laws were not passed for the welfare of the citizens but rather for the welfare of the government only. Typical examples are the Suppression of Communism Amendment, the Riotous Assemblies Act and also the Terrorism Act, No. 83 of 1967 and the Sabotage Act of 1962. These laws serve nothing but the interest of the government.

64 Ibid., p. 205
The fact that certain laws should serve only the interests and welfare of the state is far removed and even foreign to Calvin's thoughts about laws. Laws in the Calvinistic pattern or at least for Calvin, existed only to facilitate the operation of the state and the welfare of the citizens. There is no trace that there was ever any legal stature promulgated with the intent purpose of safeguarding the government from criticism.

In our estimation Calvinism in South Africa moves considerably away from traditional Calvinism. How any law which discriminates against or is detrimental to a major portion of the population could be justified, defies argument. Not even the great John Calvin, conservative as he was, would condone such a situation.

Let us now briefly look at some of the laws. We have already mentioned several. It would be appropriate if we examine some of the laws which make apartheid possible. If we can use such terminology because apartheid is actually a way of life. Let us examine apartheid in three areas namely education, politics and economics.

1. **Education**

   In 1953 the Bantu (African) Education Law was promulgated whereby education for Africans was placed under the supervision of the Ministry of Bantu (African) Affairs. The same was to happen in 1964 with Colored education and later with Indian education.
What this all resulted in was that each racial group has its own educational system. There is today a white educational system, an African, Colored and Indian system respectively.

Education is compulsory for white children between the ages of seven and sixteen years. For Colored and Asians, education is compulsory between the ages of seven and fourteen years "where there is a demand for it." For Blacks or Africans, there is no compulsory education.

Examine the following figures:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Elementary</th>
<th>High School</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1963</td>
<td>Grade 1: 443,030</td>
<td>Grade 8: 20,800</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1964</td>
<td>&quot; 2: 332,390</td>
<td>&quot; 9: 15,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1965</td>
<td>&quot; 3: 300,733</td>
<td>&quot; 10: 10,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1965</td>
<td>&quot; 4: 239,141</td>
<td>&quot; 11: 3,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1966</td>
<td>&quot; 5: 197,853</td>
<td>&quot; 12: 1,800</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

These figures are alarming as we bear in mind that Africans total 20 million and more in the Republic of South Africa. This picture is understood when we look to the "ceilings" as explained by Mr. Prozensky, regional director of Bantu Education in the Southern Transvaal. The first ceiling is in grade four when students who are not "mature enough or gifted enough to derive further benefit from academic studies" have their formal schooling terminated.

The next ceiling is grade eight where the student must score 50% in order to proceed further or if he
attains less than that he must leave the school. The next ceiling is grade ten. Little wonder that only 1800 passed grade 12 in 1967.\textsuperscript{65}

If we look to the funding of these different systems, we can further appreciate the injustice of apartheid. For the Afrikaner, and many others, there is nothing wrong with the situation. Here follows the figures for 1965.

The South African Rand was worth $1.30 in that year:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Amount</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>R252 million on White education</td>
<td>77%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R 31 &quot; &quot; Colored &quot;</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R 14 &quot; &quot; Asian &quot;</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R 29 &quot; &quot; African &quot;</td>
<td>8.9%\textsuperscript{66}</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

We can proceed at great length but space would not permit. It is quite evident that Blacks (in this case everybody who is not white) have no control over their own education and the white overlords will see that there is no meaningful progress. And still the Calvinistic system in South Africa tries to justify this situation! We wonder what Calvin would say of this situation.

2. Politics

We can start by saying that no Black racial group (henceforth we will use "Blacks" for the African, Colored and Indian segments of the population) has direct participation in mainstream South African politics.


\textsuperscript{66}Ibid., p. 49
Every Black group is represented by a minister example the Minister of Bantu (African) Affairs, the Minister of Colored Affairs and the Minister of Indian Affairs. These ministers table legislature, etc. in the central parliament and decide the fate of his particular group.

In the 1960's there was further evolution of the apartheid idea. Apartheid was to become "separate development." On account of this philosophy every racial group has now a own parliament which is funded by the South African government. This parliament has limited legislative power. Every act needs to be approved by the minister of that particular racial group. For the Coloreds there is the Colored Representative Council and for the Indians the Indian Council.

Africans have been further divided along tribal lines. For this purpose the South African government came forward with its Bantustan policy. Africans have been given 13% of South African's land area to develop their "homelands" or Bantustans. So every tribal group has its own homeland with a parliament, etc. On account of this all Africans in urban areas are seen as aliens--no matter how long they have been there. There is furthermore a concerted effort to get all Africans to the Homelands with only a labor force remaining in the urban areas.

All these regulations are enforced by good Calvinists who constitute the deacon and elder boards of the church. These acts are so far removed from Calvin's doctrine as the east is from the west.

3. Economics

As in the case of education and politics, economics also deeply reflect the apartheid structure. Mr. Steve Biko writes about this situation in the following terms:

There is no doubt that the colour question in South African politics was originally introduced for economic reasons.68

We fail to agree with him fully because economics was only one of many reasons for the introduction of apartheid but his statement has a whole lot of weight.

Once again the fruits of the lands are enjoyed by whites to the exclusion of the other races. For this purpose there are laws to ensure that Blacks do not have a significant hand in the economy and the labor market. Blacks are not to supervise whites, or cannot get jobs in certain areas for example black artisans are not employed on the South African Railways and Harbours. (The background for this condition is the Great Depression of the 1930's).

Thus, South Africa, one of the richest countries

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in the world and technologically the best in Africa does not share its wealth with all its citizens. Who is responsible for this—the South African government with its policy of apartheid which is build on deep Calvinist foundation. If this is not diametrical to Calvin's doctrines then no argument will solve the situation.

4. The Government and Opposition

All advocates of change in South Africa are being persecuted relentlessly. The only opposition which is allowed is the United Party, the Reformed Progressive and the Herstigte Nasionale Party (Reformed Nationalist Party) and the Democratic Party. The first two parties have elected members in the South African Parliament.

Protagonists for change are either banned for a period of five years—in which they cannot participate in political activities or they are put under house arrest or imprisoned for periods up to 180 days frequently in solitary confinement with trials or simply declared and listed as "Communists." Robben Eiland where Black political prisoners are sent to is reminiscent of Alcatraz.

The status quo being kept in tact by laws like the Suppression of Communism Act, the Native (African) Administration Act; the Riotous Assemblies Act and the Terrorism and Sabotage Acts. Then of course there are the ever alert Security Police (South Africa's equivalent to the F.B.I.) and the Bureau of State Security. A meeting with the Security Police or the B.O.S.S., where
one is the victim, is something that would never be erased from the memory. The director of B.O.S.S. is responsible only to the Prime Minister. What is so surprising is that many of its activities, such as espionage on private citizens, for example, are being justified on scriptural grounds. Joshua's trip to Canaan for the purpose of spying out the land, Numbers 13, is frequently cited.

Some of the victims of governmental actions have been the Liberal Party which was banned in 1968; and the Communist Party which was also banned. Other organizations which have been banned are the Pan African Congress, the African National Congress, Poqo, the United Christian Movement and scores of others. The Christian Institute has been harassed to the point where it can no longer receive funds from abroad. The leaders of the National Union of South African Students and the South African Students Organization have been either banned or been put under house arrest.

Due to this consistent persecution and harassment there are thousands of South Africans who fled the country and live in the "four corners" of the earth. Included in this number are men who have excelled in their various professions.

Calvin's persecution of Servetus and similar measures for dealing with the recalcitrants in Geneva are a "Sunday School picnic" compared to persecution in South Africa. Once again we must say that the men responsible
for these persecutions are good Calvinists—men who are in church nearly every Sunday. I am sure that Calvin would condemn the situation in South Africa. There is no doubt that the South African government, which is in essence Calvinist, has gone beyond the limitations and boundaries of Calvinism to ensure that the status quo stays unchanged.

We can summarize this chapter by comparing certain elements in the Calvinist tradition of Geneva with South Africa.

Both Calvin and at least one section of the population—the Afrikaners—see the government and the bureaucracy as divinely instituted. Associated with this is the idea of instrumentality. As Calvin, so the South African government see itself in the service of God. In the Republic of South Africa its end is maintenance white supremacy. All other things are subject to this major goal.

Calvin did not emphatically spell out that the government should be Christian but the state as manifested in Geneva was clearly Christian. In South Africa there is no doubt that the government is totally Christian. At present nearly all the ministers, if not all, in the cabinet belong to one of the Reformed denominations. Many of them are in fact office-bearers in their local congregations. As quoted earlier Dr. A.P. Treurnicht, who himself is a member of parliament and a preacher, makes it
plain that in the Calvinist tradition the government could be nothing else but Christian.

Pertaining to the two-fold function of the government in Geneva, South Africa is more or less the same on that score. The cardinal difference however is that the South African government's approach to its citizens is not the same. All citizens for Calvin were the same and we are aware that they were more or less homogeneous in Geneva. In South Africa the white race long ago declared itself as superior. This is totally foreign to mainline Calvinism and this substantiates our hypothesis that something extra has been added to South African Calvinism. It deviates totally from Calvin's doctrine and it has become demonic to its black citizenry and the rest of the world. This blatant discrepancy between the two systems about the functions of the state is manifested in areas like education, politics and economics. This drives the South African government further away from the orthodox Calvinism.

Other elements in the South African governmental system like apartheid and political persecution further strengthen the discrepancy between Calvin's doctrine and South African Calvinism. Calvin's concept of government did not know apartheid and the persecution practiced in the Republic of Geneva was religious not political.

We can terminate by saying that there is a difference between Calvin's concept of government and the Afri-
kaner Calvinist's idea of state.

The Rev. Mr. Kay-Robert Volkwijn who made a comparative study of the concept of law in Martin Luther, John Calvin and South Africa, declares that the concept of law has been made so negative in South Africa that Calvinism and law and order are synonymous. Writes Volkwijn:

The law became more a negative term than a positive one and the Calvinists became more Lutheran in their interpretation—seeing the law as 'a condemning function'....further Calvin continues: 'The law commands; grace supplies the strength to act.'....God is seen as 'The Lawman,' one who tolerates no nonsense, the seeing eye who watches over you always and never lets you out of his sight and pounces on you whenever you make a slip!69

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CHAPTER VI

THE CONCEPT OF CHURCH IN THE
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

Most sources agree that Calvinism was brought by
different groups from Europe to South Africa. Two groups
with the most direct influence were the Dutch and the
French Huguenots who arrived in 1652 and 1688 respective-
ly.

The three principal bastions of Calvinism are the
Reformed churches, viz. (1) the Dutch Reformed Church
(Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk), (2) the Reformed Church
(Dopper Kerk) and (3) Nederduitse Hervormde Kerk. Other
white denominations with some Calvinistic teachings are
the Presbyterian Church, the Baptist Church and the Cal-
vinist Faith Mission (Calvynse Geloofsending). 70

The Dutch Reformed Church (D.R.C) and the Reform-

70 Other denominations are British (Anglican Church,
Methodist); German (Lutheran Church, New Apostolic Church
and Moravian Church); American (African Methodist Epis-
copal Church). Dr. Josephus R. Coan wrote a Ph.D. dis-
sertation about the A.M.E. Church in South Africa: "The
Expansion of Missions of the African Methodist Episcopal
Church in South Africa 1896-1908." (Hartford Seminary
Foundation, 1961). Roman Catholic Church and indigenous
South African churches.
ed Church are working among the Africans, Coloreds and Indians and each has its own synod for these various racial groups. These white synods have the final say in all matters and are referred to as the "mother" church. Of all the churches that follow the Reformed or Calvinist tradition, the D.R.C. is the most powerful and influential in South Africa. It is virtually the tone-setter of life in South Africa. In this respect the following have been written:

Calvinism affects our whole life—it affects God, man and nature. Those who see themselves as Calvinists should know this. Calvinism is set up according to Calvin, i.e., according to the Bible, not a set of human ideas, but a relationship for each person with God. 71

This is the quintessence of Calvinism in South Africa and never should the people forget: "We were sent to South Africa with a calling that we received from God and the Afrikaner's ultimate destiny is in the hands of God." 72

For the purpose of this discussion we can examine the Calvinist church in South Africa under the following headings: (1) repentance; (2) race relations, (3) mission and (4) Volkskirche.

1. Repentance

Whereas Calvin laid stress on sanctification in


repentance, the protagonists of South African Calvinism have their own version of repentance in which sanctification has no place.

Repentance for the Afrikaner is seen only when he has "sinned" against God, his God. When national catastrophes strike, then the Afrikaner especially calls his people to repentance, to point out that they been negligent in their ways of the Lord. So when during severe droughts the Afrikaner goes to church to pray for rain, he goes in an attitude of penance and admits that he has not kept the covenant of the Lord. That is why God has not sent rain for many months or years. Once this act of repentance and penance is done, and it does rain, the Afrikaner is more convinced than ever, that God IS his God. Repentance is never really seen as an individual act of turning away from sin.

We are dealing with the substitution of self-righteousness for righteousness and uprightness—if we are the people of God, chosen by God—how can we ever be wrong, except when we slip out of his favour? To the Afrikaner Calvinist repentance is mostly for those "heathens" who have never known God but who have come to know him through the preaching, since the Afrikaner is charged with "the mighty task of winning Africa for Jesus the King."
For this reason a denomination like the Dutch Reformed Church is very conscientious in projecting revivals and evangelistic campaigns. In many of these campaigns the preachers are usually white.73

A crucial difference between repentance for Calvin and the South African Calvinist is that "the desire to live in a holy manner, a desire arising from rebirth," is not stressed by the latter party. The assumption of the Afrikaner Calvinist is that "once in grace always in grace." This selfrighteousness believes Mr. Volkwijn has led to the founding of many other, especially Pentecostal, denominations.74

We can now look at the church and race relations in South Africa.

2. **The Church and Race Relations**

If we discuss the Calvinist or Reformed Tradition and race relations, then we have to remember that the Reformed churches believe in the concept of the chosen people or elect (this will be discussed in the next chapter).

In Calvin's Geneva there was no discrimination by the church along racial lines, due, in part, to the absence of races other than European. The religious discrimination which was practiced, unofficially, was aimed

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73Ibid., p. 9.
74Ibid., p. 10.
primarily against the Roman Catholic Church, the Anabaptists and other dissenters. The Reformed churches in South Africa are strictly divided along racial lines. There is a section for the Whites, for the Coloreds, Africans and Indians. As already mentioned in the Introduction all these sections have their own synods with the white church as the "mother church."

Some reasons quoted for the practice of separate-ness in the Afrikaner churches are the Tower of Babel where God on purpose divided the human race. Also is there the fact that God ordained the separation of the races. Writes Mr. Alan Paton in this respect:

In 1948 the Afrikaner churches regarded racial separateness as scripturally grounded and divinely ordained; but they have been forced, by both internal and external forces, to yield the scriptural claim and to fall back on divine ordinance.75

A very appropriate question at this time is: has there been any attempt to ban integrated church services and meetings? We have said that the Calvinist churches never allowed any integration at their sanctuaries. The Anglican (Episcopalian), the Roman Catholic and some other denominations all had and are still having integrated services. The answer to our question is given by the Native (African) Laws Amendment Bill clause 29 (c) of 1959 which banned all Africans from attending white churches.

75Ibid., p. 206.
Bishop Ambrose Reeves gives a very informative account of the Anglican Church's reaction to this clause. On account of this denomination's and others' concern and protests clause 29 (c) was removed from the law books.

We now definitely know where the Calvinist churches stand in race relations. Where are the other churches? Once again Bishop Reeves supplies us with an answer:

Already numbers of White Church people have been deeply corrupted by apartheid. That is not only so in the case of many members of the Dutch Reformed Church, who do not find anything incompatible between Christianity and apartheid; it is a travesty of the South African church situation to single out such people for criticism, because there are also many members of the so-called 'English speaking' churches who put their 'Whiteness' before their 'Christianness.'

We can perhaps conclude and say that most of the denominations in South Africa which have members from all races have separate sanctuaries for the various races. Here and there one would find integrated worshipping but the Group Areas which provide separate residential areas for the various races had eliminated this. On the other hand are there the denominations which have traditionally been either black or white.

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In comparison to traditional Calvinism, we can see that South African Calvinism has deviated in respect to race relations. Whereas Calvin tried to bring together, the South African Calvinist has split asunder. The Rev. D.W. De Villiers sums up very beautifully when he says that Calvinism was instrumental in bringing about national independence in a land thirsty for freedom and this made the Afrikaner proud of his church. Absolutely nobody will be allowed to defile his holies—a reference to those who are not white.  

3. Mission of the Church

Here we will only refer to the mission of the Reformed churches in South Africa. The mission of the South African Calvinist was evident right from the very first day in 1652 when Van Riebeeck set foot on the fairest Cape. In his opening prayer, as we can recall, he hoped that they, the Dutch, would be able to disseminate the word to the "heathens." This goal would remain forever.

The Afrikaner Calvinist churches see their duties as: (a) to evangelize the various Blacks of South Africa, and the larger African continent; (b) to be a guardian of the moral life of South Africa.

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(a) **Evangelization of various black races**

As been stated earlier, most of the Reformed churches have work among the various races in South Africa. The parent churches are the "mother" churches and churches for the various racial groups are the "daughter" churches and the white ministers working in these black churches are referred to as "missionaries." In fact for many years the moderator of the Colored Synod was the Rev. D. Botha, a white.

The fruits of this concerted evangelization effort has paid off handsomely if we consider that 25% of the Colored population are members of the Reformed tradition, and half a million Africans or 3% of the African population belong to the various Calvinist churches. Then is there of course also Indian Reformed congregations and a missionary to the members of Islam.

The evangelization of Blacks does not end only in South Africa. There are Calvinist missionaries from South Africa working in other parts of Africa.\(^7^9\)

This author has found that the Calvinist influence in ecclesiastical circles has even crept into his denomination. In many rural areas the Reformed equivalents

\(^7^9\)Mr. Wada Kibadaw a student at the Interdenominational Theological Center informed the author of the South African missionaries in the vicinity of Jos in Northern Nigeria.
for officers, offices, etc. in the African Methodist Episcopal Church are used.

(b) **The Church as guardian of the moral life of South Africa**

Every sphere of South African society is under the watchful eye of the Calvinist church. There is not an issue which is not commented on by the church. In many, many cases the government unofficially hears what the church has to say. This of course is not surprising if one bears in mind that nearly two-thirds of the white lawmakers are Afrikaners and members of the Reformed church.

Many agencies established by the government have been condoned by the church for helping it to regulate morals in South Africa. One such an example is the Censure Board which was established in 1963. It screens every book or film or play which appears in South Africa. Over the years about 12,000 books and numerous movies have been banned. ⁸⁰

The Calvinist church has power on the national as well as the local level. In many small rural towns the minister is the member of the school board and any other agency or society of influence. In most cases he is the regulator of activities in the community.

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The Afrikaner Calvinist churches spend much time and effort in their mission. No effort is too great and no venture too expensive to help it realizing its mission in South Africa.

4. *Volkskirche*

Most of the Calvinist writers in South Africa deny that the Dutch Reformed Church or the other two Reformed churches are the official churches in South Africa.

There is however no doubt that the Afrikaner Calvinist churches have left indelible marks in the South African arena. The Rev. Mr. Leonard Verduin alludes to the fact that the Reformed tradition in South Africa is that of the Jews prior to the Jerusalem Synod. (This theory of Mr. Verduin will be discussed in more detail in chapter VII). Mr. Verduin emphatically declares that: "As long as the church in South Africa continues to live on the far side of Jerusalem, South Africa's troubles will worsen."81

On account of Verduin and other evidence, we come to the conclusion that there is a state church or *Volkskirche* in South Africa. All evidence show us the importance of the Calvinist church. Its influence has permeated every sphere of life. The situation in South

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Africa in respect to the issue of a state church is reminiscent of Calvin's Geneva. In Geneva the Reformed tradition was never declared official but the Roman Catholic Church and the Anabaptists ceased to exist at least while Calvin was there. In South Africa there is no official legal stature which declares the Reformed tradition as the official state church but its actions, influence and importance all point to its high place in South African society.

We therefore want to conclude as in the case of the Reformed tradition at Geneva: we can at this time speak of a Volkskirche or state church in South Africa.

We can conclude by stating that there is no doubt that the Afrikaner Calvinist church is the foundation of the South African society. Its influence in politics, the economy and you just name it is undisputable. Its theology, which is in essence Old Testament has permeated race relations and led to apartheid or separate development as it is called now. This theology is responsible for the Afrikaner Calvinist's peculiar view of sanctification, the Gottesvolk theory (God's nation theory will be discussed in the next chapter) which is of course very closely related to the predestination or election theory.

The Calvinist church has supported the Afrikaner in his sojourn through South African history. The Afrikaners refused integrated communion at Potchefstroom in the late nineteenth century and ultimately founded the
Republic of South Africa (1854). The Reformed tradition helped the Afrikaner in his development of the concept of nation. It also supported the Calvinist in his quest for a language—Afrikaans—because the "fathers" of Afrikaans were all staunch Calvinist. When the Calvinist wanted his republic the church sustained him.

We agree with the Rev. Mr. Leonard Verduin when he says that to rid South Africa of all its problems, one should first see that the Reformed tradition eliminates its Old Testament theological basis. This according to Verduin is the crux of the matter. All other actions are secondary to this.

The Calvinist Church in South Africa has strayed from orthodox Calvinism on issues like sanctification, predestination and race relations and even theology. Whereas the Reformed tradition emphasizes the Old and New Testaments for its beliefs, the South African Calvinist falls back almost entirely on the Old Testament.
CHAPTER VII

THE CONCEPT OF NATION IN THE
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

A major difference between South African Calvinism and John Calvin's doctrine is the interpretation of predestination or election. Election of course is a cornerstone of the Afrikaner's superiority over the black races in South Africa.

What was predestination or election for Calvin? Election is the choosing of individuals as objects of God's mercy and salvation. It happens two ways, viz., by prescience and prdestination. Prescience refers foreknowledge. God knows everything and everybody. There are no future and past for God but only a continuous present. Every creature is under constant inspection. Predestination is the eternal decree by which God determines what will happen to us. Calvin therefore says that all are not born equal. Some are born to eternal damnation—death—and others to life. Those ordained to eternal life is a small group and is known as the "remnant."81

82 Ibid., p. 206-207

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The Afrikaner Calvinist understands predestination or election as God having chosen him to be superior to the other races. Writes the Afrikaner historian, Dr. F.A. Van Jaarsveld in this respect:

The history of the Afrikaner reveals a determination and definiteness of purpose which make one feel that Afrikanerdom is not the work of man, but the creation of God. We have a divine right to be Afrikaners. Our history is the highest work of art of the Architect of the centuries. 83

This Afrikaner Calvinist view of predestination has been reinforced by the Old Testament apposition of Volk-Volk Gottes. The Hebrews were a nation elected by God to be His favorite nation. All the other nations, Völker, were rejected by God. That is the very same situation in South Africa. The Afrikaners depict themselves as the Volk Gottes and the races which are black are the Volker, the Gentiles. 84 The Volk-Volk Gottes idea was nullified at the Synod of Jerusalem where the apostles Peter, James and Paul were in attendance. Calvinism in South Africa never took notice of this happening!

This Volk-Volk Gottes apposition was further reinforced during the Great Trek. The Afrikaners left the Cape Province--Egypt--and the British--"Pharoah"--and were enroute to the "Promised Land" which was Natal. The Blacks whom they encountered on their trek through the wilderness were the Canaanites, Hittites and Phili-

83 Ibid., p. 21
84 Ibid., p. 13
stines. Like the Hebrews, the Afrikaners also have a covenant with God. God is the senior and they, the Afrikaners, are the junior partner. Like the Hebrews had their Moses and Joshua who were their link with God, so did the Afrikaners have their leaders, men like Piet Retief, Andries Pretorius and the others.

The Afrikaner's superiority is further proved by the Hamite view based on the Genesis account. All Blacks are therefore inferior and cursed and subjected to the white race.

The idea of the Volk-Volk Gottes was shaped mainly during the nineteenth century, the period of the Great Trek. It has undergone further development with the end product being the Afrikaner as the identified leader of South Africa, the senior partner with the Blacks as the junior partner. In the process there has been some confusion with the result that one does not know where the idea of the Old Testament ends and where the idea of an elect of God begins.

Due to his election the Afrikaner Calvinist can never be wrong in any action that he undertakes. That also applies for agencies like the government, the police, etc. They are always right. Will the police arrest a person who is innocent? The Afrikaner obviously

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answers with an emphatic "No!" So the nation and all its actions and agencies are therefore divinely instituted. Challenging the nation and its possessions is parallel to challenging God.

These views explain why the government believes that its policy of apartheid and paternalism are correct. Apartheid as stated earlier is ordained by God. Paternalism towards the black races of South Africa is never wrong because they, the Blacks, cannot map out their own future. It has to be done for them by the Afrikaner.

The supposed superiority of the Afrikaner is emphasized at school, at church and in any thinkable sphere of life. The Afrikaner child is indoctrinated right from his crip about his superiority or as many writers have stated it: he is a member of the Herrenvolk and therefore better than anybody else.

So when the nation of South Africa is mentioned, the reference is to the white people only. This is being emphasized ever so often. Dr. H.F. Verwoerd, Prime Minister of South Africa from 1957 to 1966 in a speech on December 10, 1960, made it clear that when he spoke of the nation, he referred only to the white people of the country.

In summary, we can say that there is no doubt that the South African Calvinist has deviated far from Calvin's teaching about election. Calvin, we are sure, never intended his doctrine to be misued like this!
Mr. Volwijn writes the following in this respect:

Even if one is very unsympathetic towards Calvin's doctrine of eternal election (predestination) one could never accuse him of this confusion. To Calvin the elect was the Church--those called by God of all nations of all times.86

We further see the use of scripture—the Ham-Canaan view—as a blatant misuse of the Bible. The curse was not against Ham personally but against his descendants, the Canaanites. In the Genesis account there is no mention of Ham ever being black!

We also reject the Volk-Volk Gottes apposition which is one of the cornerstones of Afrikaner election because it was rejected and nullified by the Synod of Jerusalem. In fact, Paul made it understood that everybody could be Christian. The only proviso was baptism.

There is no doubt that to negate the Afrikaner's view will result in a major showdown. If we have to do it then we will certainly do it.

86 Ibid., p. 13
CHAPTER VIII

CONCLUSION

The hypothesis with which we operated, viz. Calvinism or the doctrine of Calvin has been used to suit the South African situation, has been substantiated. What this means, is that the South African Calvinists are implementing Calvinism to further their own aspirations. In the process of implementing the Calvinist ideas they have strayed away from orthodox Calvinism.

We can briefly compare Calvin's view of government and that of the Afrikaner Calvinist. Both parties see government and the various officials as ordained by God. This is where the similarity however terminates. Whereas Calvin saw the legal system as a means of facilitating the operation of the state and for the welfare of the citizenry, the South African Calvinist government views law as an instrument in furthering its own cause, viz., the oppression of the black races.

This misuse of the legal system is obvious in the economic, political and educational spheres. This is completely alien to Calvin's views of law.

We can conclude and say that the law is a benefit
to whites in South Africa but in most cases a burden to Blacks or any one who opposes it.

When we look to Calvin's views on the church we will find that many of them are still operative in Calvinist circles in South Africa, for example, church discipline, the order of the church and sacraments. Even the idea of the *Volkskirche* or official state church is noticeable. We have observed that the concept of the state church is not legal in South Africa but all evidences show that the Dutch Reformed Church is the most powerful and influential denomination.

The Calvinist church is no doubt a strong element in maintaining the South African status quo. Its opinion carries very much weight. This of course is to be expected if one bears in mind that most of the cabinet ministers and the Nationalist Party members of Parliament are followers of the Calvinist tradition.

There was in Calvin's Geneva a strong division between church and state which is also the case in South Africa. In the Republic of South Africa, the Calvinist church influences many issues of the government. This was of course not the case in Geneva. So also on this issue has South African Calvinism gone a few extra yards beyond the prescribed boundaries.

The author believes that the Calvinist tradition, at least the white section, must be totally annihilated
when black South Africans take over the country. Note well, we refer to the Calvinist tradition and not the elimination of Whites! It is only without the negative influence of the Calvinist tradition that South Africa will be able to obtain its goals. It is also our contention that God can never ordain and support all the actions of the Afrikaner Calvinist tradition.

It is in its concept of nation that the South African Calvinist has gone completely astray. Calvin never had a clear cut idea of nation, so there is no precedent in Calvin. Verduin points out that where most of the other Calvinist traditions have eliminated the Volk Gottes concept, the Afrikaner Calvinist still adheres to it. This is in spite of the Synod of Jerusalem's rejection of this idea. We find this Volk Gottes phenomenon a blatant misuse and prostitution of scripture. The Afrikaner had and still has no right to own for himself only a chosen spot under God's sun.

It is the author's belief that the Afrikaner should be made aware of his wandering. This is of course, no easy task as Dr. Abraham Kuyper found out. We will simply have to find a method of pointing out to the Afrikaner his error.

So even in Volk Gottes concept, can we see how the Afrikaner has further gone astray.

Is there a possible solution to correct the obvious misuse of Calvinism in South Africa? Are there any coun-
ter beliefs, etc.? We do not have a ready made or pack-
aged answer, but Black Theology as seen by South African
theologians can play a very important role. South Afri-

can Black Theology whose "father" is Dr. Manas Buthelezi,
a Drew graduate will have to be emphasized more and more.

Another possibility for correcting this situation,
is through Black clergymen in the various Calvinist chur-
ches. They have very great influence and they must use
their positions to bring about change.

We believe that our hypothesis has been satisfac-
torily proved by the material in this paper. We can
therefore safely make the conclusion that Calvinism in
South Africa has added to itself some elements to be
convenient for the Afrikaner.
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