

## **Chapter 3**

### **The origins and underpinnings of Christian education in South Africa**

Chapter two provides background information regarding the development of the settlement in South Africa as well as the educational system and the religion that was brought to the country from the Netherlands. Chapter three focuses on the origins and underpinnings of Christian based education in South Africa.

The Reformation was the starting point in history for the modern Western concept of religious education. As followers of Calvin, the Church in the Netherlands developed a unique system of education that was brought to South Africa by the first settlers.

The Afrikaner nation that emerged in South Africa was influenced not only by the Calvinism but also by the Romanticism and the Pietism. These influences as well as the curriculum that was taught to the children in South Africa until the Great Trek in the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century are the focus points of this chapter.

#### **3.1 The Reformation in the Netherlands**

Charles V, the Holy Roman Emperor (1519-1556) ruled over large portions of Europe, including Germany, Spain and the Netherlands (Koenigsberger, HG. Grolier Multimedia Encyclopedia 1996: Charles V). Although he was not in favour of the Reformation and was responsible for persecution of Protestants, he

was also not against everything Martin Luther said (Koenigsberger, HG. Grolier Multimedia Encyclopedia 1996: Charles V). While he was busy with military campaigns both inside and outside the Empire, the ideas of the Reformation swept over Europe like a fire.

In the Netherlands, the preparation for the Reformation was already done by Erasmus the Humanist and *De Broeders des Gemenen Levens* (The brothers of the community) who taught the people piety built on simple logic and a love for human freedom (Bloemhof 1980:156,157). Although the people of the Netherlands admired Luther, they chose to follow Zwingli and Calvin (Bloemhof 1980:157). John Calvin set the foundation of religious education in faith itself as early as 1538 (Coetzee 1940:8). Calvinism spread from Geneva over large parts of Europe, including the Netherlands, Scotland and England. The Calvinistic ideas were carried to the Netherlands by the writings of Calvin and Beza and other leaders (Bloemhof 1980:151). Very soon, the works of Calvin determined 'all aspects of life' in the Netherlands (Muller sa:314).

When the influence of the Reformation in the Netherlands became clear, persecution followed and the prominent leaders had to flee the country. They started new congregations in London, Wesel, Emden and the Paltz (Pont 1968:131,132). While working in these foreign cities, monumental work was done regarding Dutch Church Law, a Dutch Psalm book, and Dutch Formularies (Bloemhof 1980:158).

Both Luther and Calvin recognised the importance of spiritual songs in the lives of people. ‘Luther often referred to music as a gift of God and accorded it the highest place and greatest honor after theology’ ([www.churchmusic.ca/textandtune](http://www.churchmusic.ca/textandtune)). ‘After all, the gift of language combined with the gift of song was only given to man to let him know that he should praise God with both word and music, namely, by proclaiming [the word of God] through music’ (Martin Luther in the Preface to Georg Rhaus “Symphoniae Lucundae.” *Luther’s Works*, LIII – [www.churchmusic.ca/textandtune](http://www.churchmusic.ca/textandtune)). Calvin transformed the Psalms of David into songs and it became known as the Genevan Psalm book, that to this day, forms the spine of the Reformed spiritual song books (Van Niekerk 1970:51,52). Much of the work was done by Theodor Beza who also helped to transform Calvin’s thoughts into Calvinism (cf Bloemhof 1980:149). Petrus Datheen translated the Genevan Psalms into Dutch and it became very popular in the Netherlands as well as South Africa.

When Charles V abdicated in 1555, his son Phillips II of Spain increased persecution of Protestants. Guido de Bres wrote the *Nederlandse Geloofsbelijdenis* (Confession of the Netherlands) in an effort to explain the situation to the King, but the persecution intensified (Bloemhof 1980:171). Petrus Datheen translated the *Heidelbergse Catechismus* into Dutch and preachers began to preach in the streets (Bloemhof 1980:171). A few dark years followed for the Protestants in the Netherlands who saw Willem van Oranje (William I, Prince of Orange or William the Silent) as their leader. After 1578 the Reformed Church established itself (Bloemhof 1980:172).

The influence of the Remonstrance (the statement of the Five Articles of Arminianism prepared and published in Gouda, Holland in 1610 – Deist 1984:144) soon brought division in the Church of the Netherlands and Prince Maurits convinced the *Staten-Generaal* (the government of the Netherlands) to call a national synod to settle the disputes. The result was the Synod of Dordrecht (1618-619) (Bloemhof 1980:176), where the confession and the *Catechismus* were checked and confirmed and the formulas for use at Baptism, Holy Communion and marriages were developed (Bloemhof 1980:178). The *Dordtse Kerkorde* (Church Ordinance of Dordt) was also compiled containing general rules regarding the organisation of the Church. A decision was made to start working on a Dutch translation of the Bible and the work was completed in 1637. This Bible became known as the *Statenvertaling* (Dutch State Bible), and it influenced the Church in the Netherlands and its colonies for the next 300 years (Bloemhof 1980:178).

The Synod of Dordt, held in 1618-1619, gave clear instructions on what children should learn at school. The task of the teacher was to teach children to read, write, and to master the first basics of mathematics, but above all, the teaching of the Biblical history. Singing of spiritual songs as a subject was seen as very important (Muller sa:356). The aim of the educational system was to give children a sound and thorough religious education. This was done in three stages (Kaaajan 1914:207,208):

- The first part of education was done by the parents in their homes: the parents taught their small children by practising daily family worship, by

reading the Bible to them and helping them to learn the Bible history and some important texts by heart. Parents had to take their children to Church and explain and repeat all that was heard, to them.

- The second part of education was the work of the schoolmaster who had to be a member of the Reformed (Protestant) Church. He had to endorse the confession of the Netherlands and the catechism. The children had to be educated on the catechism itself, at least twice a week. Books used were the Bible and selections from the catechism in various levels of difficulty.
- The last part of education had to be done by the preachers. They visited the schools to teach the catechism to the children. Elders and sick comforters shared this task with the preachers.

The Synod of Dordt moved catechism from the Church to the school and made the teacher a catechist. Religious education was called 'catechism' and the aim of all education was to bring children to public confession of their faith. Parents prepared the children for the instructions they would get from school, while the religious instruction at school prepared them for the last phase of instruction, done by the preachers, elders and sick comforters in a short period of time, usually between three and four weeks (Venter 1929:8). After this, the children openly confessed their faith in God and became members of both Church and State (Weilbach, Du Plessis 1882:24).

This method of education was brought to the Cape. Here the office of teacher was often connected to that of the Church clerk, preacher, lead singer, lead reader and

sick comforter. This made the teacher an employee of the Church and the school became a 'one Book school' turning the people into a 'one Book nation' – religious and living by the word of God like no other nation on earth (Venter 1929:9).

### **3.2 The Cape of Good Hope**

In 1602 the Dutch parliament granted the Dutch East India Company (DEIC) a charter giving it a trading monopoly with all countries east of the Cape of Good Hope in Africa and west of the Strait of Magellan in South America (Microsoft Encarta Encyclopaedia 1998: The Netherlands). In 1652 the DEIC sent Jan Van Riebeeck to build a halfway station at the Cape to provide the merchantmen on their way to and from the east with fresh supplies of food and water (Le May 1995:3).

The years when the Cape was under supervision of the DEIC was also the time when the Calvinistic influence was at its highest level in the Netherlands (Ruperti 1963:1). Although it is true that the DEIC was only interested in the materialistic side of the halfway station, the Calvinistic worldview coloured every aspect of the lives of the settlers (Ruperti 1963:1).

The ecclesiastical court at Batavia, being in charge of the colonies, was instructed on matters of faith and policy by the classis (synod) of Amsterdam (Hattersley 1969:57). According to the Church Ordinance of the DEIC the local Church councils had to see to it that good teachers were appointed who had a calling, not

only to teach the children to read and write and do arithmetic, but also to teach the catechism and faith (Lubbe 1942:16). It was not good enough just to learn the words of the catechism; they had to practise this in everyday life. Children were taught to sing spiritual songs and how to pray. Above all, it was their duty to teach the children in the 'fear of the Lord' (Lubbe 1942:16). 'The Reformed religion became the single most important force behind the creation of the new nation in South Africa' (Malherbe 1925:21 – my translation).

The sick comforter established the first school in Cape Town in 1663. Ernestus Back was the first schoolmaster. Two years later, when the first permanent preacher, Johan van Arckel, came to the Colony, he became the official inspector of the school (Cronje 1945:191). Along with the Bible and catechism that were used as handbooks, the *Trap der Jeugd* (first published in 1650) was used to teach the basics of reading, writing and mathematics (Spoelstra 1922:60).

Schools functioned under supervision of both Church and State. The part played by the government in education was:

- 1) Nobody was allowed to act as teacher without permission of the government.
- 2) The government sometimes gave a subsidy, but as a rule, the parents paid the costs of education.
- 3) The government appointed inspectors to visit the schools. These inspectors were preachers and elders, who were to encourage both schoolmaster and pupils to hard work and devotion (Woltjer 1911:69).

The part of the Church in education:

- 1) The Church had to investigate the competence and orthodoxy of the teachers.
- 2) The Church had the right to prescribe the curriculum on the subject of religion (Woltjer 1911:71).

At about the age of 13, the pupils were considered fully educated, and could do the examination before the consistory to become members of the Church. In this examination their ability to read from the Bible was tested (Dominicus 1919:69). They also had to know the questions and answers of the catechism by heart and had to demonstrate their ability to write. The last and very important part of the examination was the practical part where the pupils had to demonstrate their ability to sing various spiritual songs (Dominicus 1919:69).

### **3.3 The forming of a new nation**

It soon became clear that the halfway station at the southern point of Africa would not stay a small settlement. 1657 was the birth year of the Afrikaner nation when nine farmers, no longer in the service of the DEIC, were given farms to provide for themselves and sell their stock to the company (Van Jaarsveld 1971a:8). By the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century the number of these independent farmers grew to about 25 000 (Van Jaarsveld 1971a:35).

Van Jaarsveld calls Simon Van der Stel the ‘father of the Afrikaner nation’ (Van Jaarsveld 1971a:27 – my translation). He was responsible for changing the refreshment post into a colony. Within 80 years, the colony spread about 800

kilometres into the interior of the country. Until the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, Tulbach was the nearest town and worship centre for the farmers living in the northern and north-eastern districts (Grobbelaar 1974:242).

Several factors combined to form the people living in the southern part of Africa into a nation. Although the most of these influences can be named individually, they cannot be separated from one another. First and foremost was the firm dependence on religion. Other factors were education, politics, and the land's geography, as well as ethnological, economical, social, cultural and historical influences (cf Nepgen 1938:47-49). The population developed a unique individuality, a distinctive character that can be summarised with these words: 'The manners and habits of the Dutch have an extraordinary similarity from one extremity of the colony to the other. They seem indeed to be all fashioned after one model; and few individual peculiarities are to be found in one character that may not be possessed in a greater or smaller degree in another' (Moodie 1835:146,147).

De Lima depicts the character of the people living in the Cape as the most hospitable nation in the world (De Lima 1825:195). He observed that although their music was excellent and that all of them were exceptionally good horse riders, they lacked the fine virtues of the Europeans (De Lima 1825:195). On this, Froude comments more than sixty years later:

They were rough, but they had rude virtues, which are not the less virtues, because in these latter days they are growing scarce. They were unlettered, but life taught them much that lettered men can seldom know; and their children had

endurance and a strength of limb, a keenness of vision and not least, a reliance on their own resources that had come from the taming of the wilderness – qualities which left their mark deep on the shaping of the new European people of South Africa (Froude 1886:37).

It is clear that the hostile environment and extreme living conditions had great influence on the lives of the farmers:

The farmers by patient labour, under adverse circumstances, such as lack of knowledge of the nature of the soil, conflicts with natives, ravages of wild animals, redeemed from barrenness some of the wildest land. The border farmers were the vanguard of civilization towards the wilderness. They have often been misjudged. They lived in isolation from town or village, Church or court of law, had no opportunity for education, and were always watching for the attacks of the Bushmen, ready with gun in hand to defend home and possessions. Alone on the wild veld, miles away from their nearest neighbour, they became an independent community (Botha 1962:152).

‘In general then, the frontier Boers were independent, self-reliant, unimaginative, tenacious, enduring, roughly courteous, hospitable, devout, restless in their movements, but narrowly conservative in their thinking’ (Patterson 1957:19). It was this ‘conservative’ thinking and the central place of the Bible in their day-to-day lives, that acted as a preservative, preventing them from degeneration and decline (Grobelaar 1974:160).

Recognising the strong resemblance between their own lives and that of the Old Testament patriarchs, the contents of the Biblical passages were drawn into their lives and they began to live as the ‘chosen people of the Lord’ (Helberg 1984:7 – my translation). This resulted in an orderly community where serious crimes and social misconduct like drunkenness were seldom seen (Van der Merwe 1938:253). Religion formed the central point of the social life: every child had to be baptised

and every young person had to become a member of the Church (Van der Merwe 1938:247).

With much truth we may describe the inhabitants of the Cape Colony at large as a serious and religious people, and especially with reference to that portion forming the most considerable part of the community, the Dutch Boers, who are deeply imbued with strong sentiments of genuine piety, and are consistent members of the Christian Church. In the towns and villages the strictest attention is paid to a close and regular attendance on public worship, as well as to the catechetical instruction of the youth, and no young person in any part of the country is considered eligible to enter into the married state (and they all marry at a very early age) unless he or she has first undergone the ceremony of admission into the Church and been admitted at the sacramental table (Chase 1843a:135).

The Bible, and not the Church, was the one thing that bound the people into a nation (Wichmann 1941:3). The Church did not have a great influence on the lives of the isolated people but God and his word was part of every aspect of their lives (Nepgen 1938:58). ‘The Cape Dutchman, or Boer, as we call him, is a slow, good-humoured person, not given to politics, occupied much with his religion and his private affairs...’ (Froude 1886:35).

‘They are a very devout people, maintaining their Churches and preachers with excessive liberality. Religious observances are attended to scrupulously in their households’ (Froude 1886:37). Every morning, after the first cup of coffee, everyone gathered for the morning prayer and all joined in to sing a Psalm or song from *Sluiter* (a popular spiritual song book). Every night, after supper, the family gathered around the Bible for family worship (Dominicus 1919:43).

All education was directed to enable the youth to read the Bible and become members of the Church. This resulted in the fact that religion had a great influence on education (Grobbelaar 1974:160). The people were not interested in secular books or ideas, because they found in the Bible all their theology, history, and science – all the literature they needed (Regan 1896:3).

After 1806, when Britain took over the Cape and the situation on the eastern border deteriorated, a group of Afrikaners decided to move deeper into the interior of the country. As soon as it became clear that many of the people living in the Cape would trek and would trek and leave the eastern frontier vulnerable, the government and the Church tried to stop the people from leaving. However, the minds of the Afrikaners were made up and the request was clear: ‘Let us go, but give us a school and a Church to take with us’ (Van der Merwe 1937:360 – my translation).

The Church was under supervision of the government and received instructions to try to prevent the people from leaving. The synod of 1837 decided that the Great Trek was a rebellion against the government, and forbade all preachers any contact with or services to the Voortrekkers north of the Orange River (Spoelstra 1988:46,47). This official hostile attitude of the Church towards the Great Trek was a devastating blow to the people leaving the Cape (Blok 1927:20). They then turned to the Netherlands and asked the old mother country to send teachers and preachers to guide them (cf Wessels 1954:1-5).

### **3.4 Education in the Cape prior to the Great Trek**

Governor MP De Chavonnes made the first education law in the Cape in 1714 (Du Toit 1944:21). This was not a new law, but a summary of the existing customs and principles brought from the Netherlands and practised here for more than sixty years. This law remained the guideline for education until 1795 and in the rural areas, it stayed in operation until the Voortrekkers took off into the interior of the country (cf Fourie 1954:4). The Reformed Church was recognised as the partner of the State and given a strong hand in education (Greyling 1946:67). Books that were not approved in the Netherlands for use in education were not allowed in South Africa (Pienaar 1968:218).

In the introduction to the Ordinance it was made clear that the wellbeing of the land is most important and that the youth must be educated to have faith in the Lord and to display true knowledge of God in their words and actions (Greyling 1946:31).

Education of the smaller children consisted of learning the Lord's Prayer, the Ten Commandments and the Creed. Older children had to learn the questions and answers of the catechism and everyone was taught to sing spiritual songs. The aim of education was to form members of the Reformed Church (Venter 1929:8). Teachers had to accompany the children to Church, watch over them during the service and back at school had to make sure that they listened to and understood the message preached during the service. The teachers had to encourage the

children to have respect for, and reminded them of their duty towards their parents and the government, and to live a good life (Du Toit 1944:21).

Church, school and education were not separated from one another. Spelling, reading, writing, and everything else were learned with one goal in mind: to be able to read the Bible – the most important requirement to become a member of the Church (Malherbe 1925:224). Membership also opened the door to adult life: after acceptance into the Church, young men were allowed to change the leather clothes for a linen shirt and they could have their own pipe and tobacco pouch (Malherbe 1925:224).

Even on the remote east border of the Cape, this was the established norm by which the people lived. The strict law of the Church was applied and everyone had to educate his children in order for them to become members of the Church. This saved the Afrikaner, who lived isolated on the farms and in the bush with their cattle, from becoming illiterate, and also built a nation with its roots and foundation firmly on the Bible and the knowledge of its contents (Van der Schyff 1953:13 – my translation).

The Provincial Church Ordinance of Governor JA De Mist broke this strong link between Church and school in 1804 (Fourie 1954:9). De Mist, under the strong influence of the French revolution, divided Church and State (cf Fourie 1954:9,10). The privileged position of the Reformed Church was taken away and Church based religious education was substituted by secular education (Greyling 1946:33). Now the aim of education was to form good citizens. Subjects that were taught included Dutch and other modern languages, calculation, book keeping, mathematics, history and the first principles of the Christian religion (Greyling 1946:33).

These changes in the law on education by De Mist were met with severe resistance: 'Better no education at all from books than instruction not based on religion was the cry from one end of the colony to the other' (Theal 1893 Vol 3:999).

In 1806 the Cape fell into the hands of Britain, and school and Church were brought together again under Governor Cradock's sexton schools of 1812 with the combination of the office of the teacher and that of the Church clerk (Fourie 1954:60,61). The sexton schools were founded where there were Church buildings (Fourie 1954:61). The school committee asked for education with the Bible as principle and foundation (Greyling 1946:35). The schools functioned under the supervision of the Church council (Fourie 1954:61).

The situation changed again under the supervision of Governor Somerset (1814-1826), who intensified measures to turn the schools into 'English Free Schools' (Fourie 1954:61). The supervision of these schools was done by the government itself (Fourie 1954:62). The number of private schools rapidly increased and this acts as an indicator that the people preferred private schooling of their children, although not always up to standard, above the free English schools that were used to anglicise the children (Fourie 1954:75). This did not have an immediate effect on the people living in the interior of the colony because they lived isolated on farms, home schooling their children.

The Voortrekkers took with them the old school system that they were used to up to 1795. It still existed in the interior of the country where the influence of the English anglicising process did not succeed (Fourie 1954:90).

### **3.5 Education during the Great Trek**

Paul Kruger was a ten-year-old boy when his parents joined the Trek of Hendrik Potgieter. His words give a summary of conditions regarding education during the Trek:

To institute schools or Churches, or a firm and regular management of external affairs, was out of the question. But the Boer fathers and mothers for all that looked after the education of their children to the very best of their ability. They knew that they lived in a country where anything that was once neglected was difficult to recover, and that to neglect the rising generation meant the ruin of their nationality. Therefore every Boer taught his children to read and write, and, above all, instructed them in God's Word. At dinner and supper, as the children sat round the table, they had to read part of the Sacred Scriptures and to repeat from memory or write down now this and now that text; and this was done day by day, unless unusual circumstances made it impossible. That is how my father taught me the Bible, and instructed me in its teaching during the evenings. My other course of instructions was covered altogether by a period of about three months, with frequent interruptions. My master's name was Tielman Roos, who found much difficulty in carrying out his mission. Whenever the trek came to a resting-place and we out-spanned, a small hut was built of grass and reeds, and this became the schoolroom for the trekker's children. This was done during the whole journey to the Magaliesberg, where my father settled (Kruger 1902 Vol 1:12).

Like before the Trek, the education of the children was intended to bring them to public confession of faith – the key to membership of Church and State (Grobelaar 1974:60). Parents took the promises made at the baptism of their children seriously. Knowledge of the Bible and the catechism was regarded

enough but mothers stood firmly on this and everyone had to have the minimum knowledge to do public confession of faith (O’Kulis 1918a:59). Fourie explains this view of education: To do their job on this earth, the children need no formal education. School for the boys was the practical day-to-day work on the farm and the daughters learned all they needed to know from working side by side with their mothers. ‘All that was left, was the preparation for the eternal life and to do this, every child had to be able to read and write’ (Fourie 1954:101 – my translation).

The Protestants believe that each and everyone must be able to read his or her own Bible (Fourie 1954:122). Mansvelt says that the Dutch Bible of the Afrikaners helped them to stay true to their language and culture in the uneven struggle against the English who were backed by money, power and fashion (Mansvelt 1902:15).

### **3.5.1 The books used for education**

The Voortrekkers took with them all the books they had. Louis Trichardt was ‘widely read and had his own private collection of books in an era and among a people for whom the Bible was the only literature’ (Tingay, Johnson 1978:58). The books used for the education of the children were the same ones that were used in the Cape Colony (cf De Villiers 1938:130-136). Lubbe stated that the similarity and unity in the education and character of the people came from the books that were used to educate the children. All children used the same books and all were educated and trained in the same way. These books were the *Groot*

*ABC boek, Trap der Jeugd, Borstius-vrageboekie* and the Bible (Lubbe 1942:115).

The fact that the Bible and spiritual songbooks had great influence on the education of the children is emphasised by writers of that period: ‘The Bible and songbook of Willem Sluyters [Sluiter] were the only books known to these people’ (Dominicus 1919:40). The Bibles were heavy editions of the *Statenvertaling*, some printed in 1648 (see Appendix 2). Others, like Charl Cilliers, owned a Lutheran Bible printed in 1702 (De Villiers 1938:131) and even the rare *Deus-aes* Bible was found in the homes of the farmers and in the wagons of the Voortrekkers (Steenkamp 1939:78).

The first educational material used (additional to the Bible and songbooks), was the *Groot ABC Boek* (1819) also known as *Die Haneboek* because of a picture of a rooster on the back of the cover page (Pretorius 1988:186). This book consisted of 16 pages. First the children had to learn the alphabet. They had to know it from A to Z as well as from Z to A. The rest of the book consisted of spelling and reading exercises. Another book sometimes used after the children learned the alphabet, was the *AB Jab*, a book containing spelling of words with two syllables (Pretorius 1988:187).

The next book used was the *Trap der Jeugd*, a very popular book, first published in 1650 and regarded as the standard handbook for education for centuries to

come (Dreyer 1988:55). Many parents skipped the previously mentioned books and only used this one to teach their children to read and write.

The first lessons of the *Trap der Jeugd* consisted of the alphabet in Roman script as well as the numbers 1 to 10. After this followed 29 spelling lessons, beginning with one-syllable words and ending with words consisting of seven syllables. The next two pages contained basic geography, followed by four pages of difficult Bible names. The next 30 pages explained basic Dutch grammar, but this was more often than not omitted by both the teachers and parents. Mathematics – basic adding, subtraction, multiplication and dividing were all explained on one single page. After learning the basics, most mathematics was done without pen and paper. The last pages of the book contained poems, proverbs and prayers (Dreyer 1988:55). An example of a proverb is: *Die in zijn jeugd heeft willen leeren, Zien zich in zijn grijsheid eeren* (Van Rooyen 1940:51 – He who wants to learn while he is young, will be honoured when he is old). An example of a prayer is:

*Zegen mijne jeugd, O Heere!  
Dat ik daaglijks toch mijn tijd  
Waarneem, en met lust en vlijt,  
Vroeg en vlug mijn lessen leere.*

Bless my childhood, o Lord!  
Help me to take time each day  
To learn my lessons early,  
Swiftly with joy and diligence.

*Laat mij ook in huis zoowel  
Als in school, oplettend blijven  
En mijn leeren, lezen, schrijven,  
Achten boven kinderspel.*

Help me to be attentive  
At home and at school.  
And to value learning, reading and  
Writing above child's play (Van  
Rooyen 1940:51 – my translation).

After gaining the basic grammar, mathematics and writing skills, the children moved on to the more difficult task of reading the Bible and learning the contents of the books on the catechism. The most important books used for this part of education were:

- Borstius, J. *Enige korte vragen voor de kleine kinderen, waarby gevoegd zyn eenige korte Historische Vragen, getrokken uit de Heilige Schrift, benevens de Wet des Heeren, de Twaalf Artikelen des Geloofs en eenige korte gebeden.* (Carstens 1988:146).
- Hellenbroeck, A. *De geloofsleer voor onze Christelijke jeugd.* (Steenkamp 1939:76)
- Hellenbroeck, A. *Voorbeeld der Goddelyke Waarheden, voor eenvoudigen die zich bereiden tot de belydenis des geloofs, enz* (Steenkamp 1939:75).
- Hellenbroeck, A. *Korte en eenvoudige Catechizatie voor het Voorbeeld der Goddelyke Waarheden* (Carstens 1988:146).
- Smytegelt, B. *Maandagsche Catechisatiën naar het beloop der Heidelbergsche Catechismus* (Steenkamp 1939:76).
- *Het Kort Begrip der Christelyke Religie opgestel in opdrag en met goedkeuring van die Dortze Vaders in de laatste Synodus Nationaal Ao 1618 en 1619* (Carstens 1988:146).

Unofficially (and when available), the following books were also used for educating the youth (De Villiers 1938:130-136):

- *De Kleine Print-Bijbel.* 1792. A very popular book consisting of pictures that explained Bible texts to small children.
- *Onderhoudend geschenk voor kinderen of verzameling van verschillende onderwerpen tot leering en vermaak der jeugd.* 1823. This is a book on nature study, explaining things like volcanoes, honey bees, wild animals, trees and birds, most of which are not found in South Africa.

- *Almanak voor het jaar 1824* contained poems and short historical essays on well-known persons.
- *Kern der Nederlandsche Historie*. 1753. This is a pocket-size book on the history of the Netherlands.
- Van Alphen, H. 1787. *Kleine gedichten voor kinderen*. This book consists of 65 poems, each with a picture, and the aim is to teach the children about things such as obedience, laziness and honesty. The Christian faith is part of almost every poem. The following poem on idleness serves as an example (my translation):

*Het Kinderlijk geluk*

*Ik ben een kind,  
Van God bemind,  
En tot geluk geschapen.*

*Zijn liefde is groot;  
'k Heb speelgoed, kledren, melk en brood,*

*Een wieg om in te slapen.*

*Ik leef gerust;  
Ik leer met lust;  
Ik weet nog van geen zorgen.  
Van't speelen moe,  
Sluit ik mijn oogjens's avonds toe,  
En slaap tot aan den morgen.*

*Geloofd zij God  
Voor't ruim genot  
Van zo veel gunstbewijzen!  
Mijn hart en mond  
Zal hem, in elken morgenstond,  
En elken avond prijzen.*

Childhood happiness

I am a child  
Whom God loves,  
And I am created to be  
happy.  
God's love is great;  
I have toys, clothes, milk and  
bread,  
And a bed to sleep on.

I live in peace;  
I love to study;  
I do not know of any sorrows  
yet. Tired of playing,  
I close my eyes at night,  
And sleep until morning  
comes.

Praise God  
For the luxury  
Of so many gifts!  
My heart and mouth  
Will praise Him every  
morning  
And every night.

Lists of books, housed in museums today, show clearly that the Bible and songbooks were not the only books known to the Voortrekkers, although they

were the most important ones (cf De Villiers 1938:129-136, Steenkamp 1939:75-80, Pretorius 1988:172-180).

On Sundays, families gathered for formal Church services usually held by the head of the family. The children all attended these meetings and this served as an additional means of education. Even the smallest children attended the meetings without making a sound. (Stuart 1854:209). A few of the books used at these meetings are (De Villiers 1938:132):

- Mel, C. *Bazuinen der Eeuwigheid* (a sermon book) and *De lust der heiligen in Jehova*, (a prayer book) were translated works of the German reformed preacher who died in 1733. These books were very popular.
- Smijtegelt, B. *Des Christens Heil en Cieraat, voorgesteld in vijf-en-veertig predicatien over Phil 4:7 en Col 1:22*, and *Het gekrookte riet* both popular books of sermons. He was preacher at Middelburg and influenced by the Pietism. His sermons were written down by his followers and were very popular (Bloemhof 1980:186).
- Van Lier, HR. *Eenvoudige leerredenen aan de Gemeente van de Hoofdplaats van Cabo de Goede Hoop*. Van Lier was a Pietist preacher at the Cape and he had great influence on the religious thinking on some of the Voortrekkers. Later in the chapter I will look at the influence Pietism had on the lives of the Voortrekkers.

### 3.5.2 Schoolmasters during the Trek

Most of the time there was among the people someone who could act as teacher, if not, the parents did this themselves. By 1837 about 1 700 children were depending on schoolmasters, who stayed with the wagons, for their education (Greyling 1946:68).

Daniël Pfeffer was schoolmaster of the Trichardt Trek. On April 22<sup>nd</sup>, 1837 the first permanent school building north of the Vaal River was opened where he taught 21 children (Preller 1917:56,58,77). Schoolmaster MacDonald died with the Liebenbergs and Tielman Roos was schoolmaster of the children in the Potgieter Trek (Pretorius 1988:182). Koos Nel was a well-educated and respected religious master. He was the first schoolmaster in Mooirivier where he taught about 100 children with the aid of the Bible, Psalm and Hymnbook and the *Trap der Jeugd* (Preller 1925:138).

Rev Erasmus Smit and his wife Susanna took part in the Trek that headed to Natal. They acted as teachers to more than 50 children. Smith also conducted the confirmation classes of the young people (cf Schoon 1972). Rev Daniël Lindley and his wife Lucy also conducted teaching and confirmation classes (Pretorius 1988:182).

Jan G Bantjes was a writer and teacher, lead singer and lead reader in his community. Jan H Visagie, also a respected teacher, later became magistrate of Potchefstroom (Pretorius 1988:182). Bernard Hobbel acted as a teacher at the

Boesmans River and Wijnand Mare, one of the people in Retief's Trek, taught children at Modderlaer (Pretorius 1988:182). The names of Jan Helberg, Alfred Smit, Mrs Nel, Hendrik Lezar, Sannie Prinsloo and Miss Mesham were also connected with the task of teaching during the Trek (Pretorius 1988:182).

It is remarkable to see the vast influence that this limited education had. It gave the people a sense of security and identity that bound them together in all aspects of life (Spoelstra 1988:45).

Without a formally structured school, without buildings, furniture and enough teachers, the Voortrekkers kept their children from intellectual and moral degeneration, and educated them in obedience, respect for authority, love for the nation and country; in summary: love and respect for God. It was an education that was adapted to the circumstances and living conditions and living up to the requirements and standards of the time (Bot 1936:11 – my translation).

High moral standards and religious day-to-day living as well as a yearning for eternal life, were all contributing factors that would later, after settling in the Transvaal (ZAR) and Orange Free State, shape a unique nation with unique customs, a governmental system that was closely linked to the Church and a remarkable people who took on England.

### **3.6 Song education as part of the curriculum**

Along with the first settlers came the Psalm book of Petrus Datheen, first printed in 1566 in the Netherlands, with the melodies of Calvin's Psalm book of 1562 (Cillie 1983:1). The *Ordonantie van de School ordening* of Governor De Chavonnes in 1714 stipulated that children must practise the singing of Psalms during school hours. This would help the congregations to sing better on Sundays

(Cillie 1985:8). The Genevan Psalm book was imported to South Africa in 1775 and was used in the Church until 1944 (Van der Merwe 1949:55).

In January 1807 the Reformed Church of the Netherlands began to use the Evangelical Hymns along with the Psalm book (Moorrees 1937:525). The hymn books arrived at the Cape late in 1813 and were introduced into the Church the following year (Moorrees 1937:526). These hymns were influenced by the Pietism, Rationalism and Moralism (Viljoen 1987:44). At first there were no serious objections against the use of these hymns but soon some of the more conservative people refused to sing them (Spoelstra 1988:50). They later formed the *Gereformeerde* or *Dopper* Church (the most conservative of the three Afrikaans speaking Churches in the ZAR).

Spoelstra says that the older people ranked singing higher than writing and mathematics (Spoelstra 1922:63). The important part played by spiritual songs in the lives of the people leaving the Cape and during the existence of the ZAR, even to the very end of the Second Anglo-Boer War, must not be underestimated. All children had to learn to sing even the most difficult melodies with perfect pitch (Spoelstra 1922:63).

The spiritual songs of the Reformed Churches are no artistic masterpieces (Van Niekerk 1970:56). They are *volksliedere* (songs of the nation), constructed to be sung by people with little or no musical background and knowledge. The songs

are characterised by the fact that they were made to be sung and not to be listened to, they are not choir songs (Van Niekerk 1970:56).

Cillie says that South Africans are not known as a 'singing nation' (Cillie 1985:11). He does note, however, that the history of the Afrikaners tells a different story: 'Under all circumstances, in times of joy and in times of sorrow, in good times and bad times, Afrikaners sang with all their heart. It is as if the songs bound people together and gave them strength' (Cillie 1985:11 – my translation). Van Rooyen says that the Voortrekkers definitely were a 'singing nation' (Van Rooyen 1940:37). The handwritten songs found between the pages of old Bibles or in the journals and manuscripts of the Voortrekkers serve to show their Calvinistic, spiritual minded worldview and love for singing (Van Rooyen 1940:27-30,37). Appendix 3 shows examples of the handwritten books and songs.

The song written above the picture of the Rose of Sharon is a prayer:

*Nimmer vruchtloos wederkeren  
Ach dat Gij haar wensh volseë,  
Dan zou ik uwen Naam altyd  
Roemen tot in ewigheid.*

May [she] never be barren  
[And] her wishes granted,  
Then I will praise your Name  
For ever (Pretorius 1992:74 – my  
translation).

The Voortrekker JH Hatting refers to an event during the crossing of the Orange River by the Potgieter Trek. The river was in flood and a big tree was cut down to build a raft (Preller 1920b:119). The wagons were taken over the river on the raft and then the sheep were taken to the other side while some of the cattle and horses swam through the river. The women, all of them with their hymn books in their hands, started singing from Hymn 20 the moment that the first women set foot on the raft (Preller 1920b:120):

*Komt, treën wij dan gemoedigd voort,  
In vast vertrouwen op zijn woord;  
Hoe moeilijk ons de weg ook schijn,  
Het eind zal zeker zalig zijn.*

Come, let us go, encouraged,  
Trusting fully on God's word.  
However difficult the road may seem  
The end will certainly be glorious  
(my translation).

All the women, load after load, sang this hymn while they were transported to the other side of the river (Preller 1920b:120). Preller also refers to other songs that the Voortrekkers composed and sung (Preller 1920b:308). Although not intended to be religious, the faith of the author is woven into the poem (Preller 1920b:308,309 – my translation):

*O Afrika, gij moogt wel weenen,  
Zie uw vreugde is verdweenen –  
Iedere bloem die heeft haar fleur  
Nu verlooren door getreur!*

O Africa, you may just as well cry,  
Your joy disappeared –  
Every flower has lost its beauty  
Due to crying!

*Hoe verheugt ook al voor deezē  
Nu vertoont g' een treurig weezen,  
Gij vertoont nu een droef gelaat –  
Al uw hoop en wensch vergaat!*

Although previously joyful  
Now you are full of sorrow  
Your face is looking sad –  
All your hopes and wishes gone!

*Maar Afrika, uw predikanten  
Onderwijz' aan alle kanten  
Dat er is één Opper-heer,  
Daarom: treur en ween niet meer.*

But, Africa, your preachers  
Teach everywhere  
That there is only one God,  
Therefore, do not cry any more.

*Ook Daniel was verstooten,  
Maar de Heer heeft toegesloten  
Zelfs een brullend leeuwen-muil,  
Toen hij neerslag in den kuil.*

Even Daniel was an outcast,  
But the Lord shut  
The mouths of the roaring lions  
when he hit the ground of the den.

*De drie mannen in den ooven  
Die de Schepper daar van boven  
Zoo verlost heeft uit den brand  
Door zijn goedertieren hand.*

The three men in the oven  
Were rescued by the Creator  
From the flames  
With his loving hand.

*Laat de sterke winden blazen  
En woestijnen nu maar razen, –  
God behoedt zoo meenig schip  
Voor den stroom en blinden klip!*

Let the wind blow with all its might  
and the deserts roar, –  
God protects so many ships  
from currents and unseen rocks!

*Wilt maar op den Heer vertrouwen,  
En niet op de wereld bouwen, –*

Trust in the Lord,  
Do not build your trust on this world,

*God zal eens te Zijner Tijd,  
Ons verlossen uit den strijd!*

God will, when the time is right,  
Rescue us from the struggle!

Singing played a major role in the life of the Voortrekkers and it formed part of the religious education of the children (Van Rooyen 1940:31). The children had to learn the words and melodies of spiritual songs by heart. Melodies of the 19<sup>th</sup> century spiritual songs were set in C major key and these were learned by pointing out the music notes on the fingers (Dreyer 1988:57). Songs were used to express emotions and were sung loudly and clearly, each morning and every night (Stuart 1854:208). Children were often asked to take the task of lead singer at the daily worship (cf Stockenström sa:225). The hymn books accompanied the people on the Trek and were used daily to comfort and encourage them (Meiring, JG. *Die Transvaler* December 13, 1949:61). The finger marks in the songbook of Sluiter show that this 'Morning song in sad times' was sung frequently:

*Heer mijn God, voor alle dingen  
Zal ik Uwe sterkte zingen  
En des morgens fris van geest,  
Vrolijk roemen Uwe goedheid  
Die mij tegen's volks verwoedheid  
Zijt een hoog vertrek geweest*

Lord, my God, I praise you for all things  
and this morning, refreshed in spirit  
I joyfully celebrate your kindness that  
is a safe haven for me against the wrath of  
people  
(Van Rooyen 1940:32 – my translation).

Hendrina Joubert, who accompanied the Trek as a small child, remembered many years later: 'Even when we had to go into the laager, we never stopped the singing at night. We knew that this was dangerous, but while one half kept watch, the other half of us sung to the Lord. When every one had a chance to sing and pray, we went to bed' (Rompel-Koopman 1916:63, 64 – my translation).

The most important songbooks used by the Voortrekkers were:

- The Psalms and Hymns that were at the back of the family Bibles (Viljoen 1987:56),
- *Uytspanningen* (1780) by Jodocus van Lodensteijn (O’Kulis 1918a:54). This book consists of 464 pages of songs and poems with music. Lodensteijn became preacher of Utrecht in 1652 (Van der Merwe 1949:20), strongly influenced by the Pietism emphasising the need to live a pious life (Bloemhof 1980:185,186).
- *De lofzangen Israels* (1802) by Groenewegen (O’Kulis 1918a:54).
- *Stichtelijke gezangen in verscheiden gelegenheden gedicht* (O’Kulis 1918a:54).
- The Songbooks of the preacher Willem Sluiter, printed in 1716. One book consists of 929 pages and among others, there were songs based on Bible texts, songs of joy and love, songs to be sung at funerals and death and songs for children. The book does not contain music notes and well-known melodies of the Psalms and hymns were used for singing these songs (Viljoen 1987:58). The following poem serves as an example of a poem for children:

<i>Kies van uw jeugd den onderwijs,</i>	Choose education and good discipline
<i>En goede tucht, mijns kind,</i>	While still young my child,
<i>Opdat gij oud en koud en grijs,</i>	And when you are old and cold and grey,
<i>Mog smaek in wijsheid vind.</i>	You will still savour wisdom
	(Lubbe 1942: 79 – my translation).

During the years after the Great Trek, the emphasis on the song education remained very strong. A programme for the examination of the pupils of the Government school in Pretoria in 1868 can be used as proof (see Appendix 4):

During the morning session 7 items of examination were included, three of them song items (even singing in four different keys). Two of the seven items on the afternoon programme were singing (*Vereniging van onderwijzers en onderwijzeressen in Zuid-Afrika 1918:112*).

Before the Second Anglo-Boer War, many handwritten manuscripts of songs composed and sang by the Voortrekkers were well known (Cillie 1985:8). Most of these, though, went up in smoke with the burning of the farmhouses (Van Rooyen 1940:27). The songbooks contained words of songs without melodies, and often *liederewysies* (song melodies – see Appendix 5) were composed and used to sing the songs (Van Warmelo 1958:7). Today, some of these melodies are known as *Voortrekkerwysies* (melodies of the Voortrekkers) and some of them are still used in the Church, like the melody of Psalm 38 (cf Carstens 1988:157).

After the Great Trek, other songbooks found their way to the ZAR and soon became part of the lives of the members of the Dutch Reformed Church (*Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk*). *De Kinderharp* (1863) and *Zionsliederen* (1871) brought the revival songs of Sankey to South Africa and was very popular (Viljoen 1987:67). *De Kinderharp* saw its eleventh edition in 1881 (Viljoen 1987:70) and *Zionsliederen* was printed for the twelfth time in 1903 (Viljoen 1987:67). The *Halleluja* songbook was introduced in 1883 (Viljoen 1987:72). The other Dutch Reformed Church (*Nederduitsch Hervormde Kerk*) did not use any of these songbooks and only sang the Psalms and Hymns brought from the Cape, while the Reformed Church (*Enkel Gereformeerde Kerk*) only sang the Psalms

and *Skrifberymings* (songs of which the words were taken directly from the Bible).

‘The Boers’ love of music cost some of them their lives in the trenches at Mafeking. At an advanced post one of our men played the concertina while his comrades sang. For a time the enemy took no notice, but at length curiosity prevailed: a Boer cautiously thrust his head over the breastwork and was shot down by an English sharpshooter.’ (Tingay, Johnson 1978:108).

During the Anglo-Boer War, Churchill reflected about the psalm-singing of the Boers: ‘And then, above the rain storm that beat loudly on the corrugated iron, I heard the sound of a chant. The Boers were singing their evening psalm, and the menacing notes – more full of indignant war than love and mercy – struck a chill into my heart, so that I thought after all that the war was unjust; that the Boers were better men than we, that heaven was against us...’ (Churchill 1900:108,109).

The singing did not stop when the Boers had to flee after the capturing of Pretoria during the Second Anglo Boer War; instead it grew more intense ((Meiring, JG. *Die Transvaler* December 13, 1949:60). The prisoners of war on Bermuda Island had spiritual songbooks printed in the United States of America, but were not allowed to use them because the English soldiers said it contained ‘agitating’ words and it would give the prisoners ‘false hope’ (Cillie 1985:10).

In the concentration camps the women and children found comfort and peace in the Word of God and the singing of all the beloved spiritual songs (Viljoen 1987:58). One of the Sankey songs by Fanny Crosby 'Safe in the arms of Jesus' (Van der Merwe 1949:74) was heard daily in the camps, sung to comfort those who stood at the bed of dying or dead loved ones.

The contents of the songs, poems and hymns learned and sang by the Afrikaners (from the time they left the Cape to the end of the second Anglo-Boer War) was a firm building block in the character of the nation. Virtues, good manners, Biblical truths and commandments formed the basis of these works.

### **3.7 Afrikaner spirituality**

#### **3.7.1 Romanticism**

The Romanticism (1760-1830) was a reaction to the Rationalism of the previous century (Oberholster 1965:2) and it had a great influence on the worldview of the young nation forming in the southern part of Africa. The strong urge for freedom, combined with the Christian aspects fundamental to the Romanticism, as well as the search to learn the truth from history (Oberholster 1965:8,9), all formed part of the worldview of the Afrikaner (see chapter five). These characteristics did not fade or made way for new ideas, but was taken with the Voortrekkers into the interior of the country where it played a major part in the shaping of the nation until well past the Second Anglo-Boer War (cf Oberholster 1965:10,11).

Deist defines Romanticism as ‘a trend in philosophy, literature and art in the late 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> centuries whose adherents prized and cultivated the emotional and mystical sides of human life rather than the intellectual, set great store by the beauty of nature, and took a special interest in the distant past and in primitive cultures, which they tended to see as better and purer than their own times and civilization’ (Deist 1984:147).

Four of the five typical characteristics of the Romanticism, as listed by Oberholster, can be found in the early South African society. First, he refers to the historical focus of the Romanticism (Oberholster 1965:6). The people living in South Africa used the Bible as focus point to give a firm foundation to their outlook on life. To them, history was synonymous with the history of the Bible and they closely associated with the people and circumstances of the Old Testament. They used Biblical names from the maps at the back of the Bible to name places that looked to them like those on the maps. ‘The Bible was their one preservative...Caring little for general education and with no means to pursue it on their isolated farms, the reading of the Sacred Book was all in all to them’ (Fuller 1908:164).

Nationalism (the second major characteristic) played a major part in the romantic era (Oberholster 1965:6). Nationalism never really united Afrikaners. Their strong-minded individuality, unwillingness to follow where others led, and pride, always managed to bring division and discord among Afrikaners (Wichmann 1941:2). It was only after the success of the First Anglo Boer War that the flame

of Nationalism began to spark but it soon died out again. The more characteristic disunity became clear during and after the Second Anglo Boer War.

Oberholster depicts the Christian faith as the third major characteristic of Romanticism (Oberholster 1965:7). Van Zonneveld remarks that the people living in the nineteenth century were drenched with faith (Van Zonneveld 1987:20). They believed in God as their Father who guided and led them and also blessed or punished them (Van Zonneveld 1987:20). Faith was seen as a personal issue (Van Zonneveld 1987:12). The strong Christian faith was the one central point that bonded Afrikaners together. They believed that the fate of the nation as well of the fate of every individual was held by the greater power of God Almighty (Dreyer 1977:40).

The fourth characteristic of the Romanticism is a strong urge for freedom (Oberholster 1965:7). The demand for freedom as a fundamental part of the character of the Afrikaner is acknowledged by historians (cf Garrett-Fisher 1900:35; Eybers 1918:1xvii).

A reaction of the Romanticism against the Rationalism of the Enlightenment, was the strong emotional and sentimental emphasis on life – the fifth and last characteristic (Oberholster 1965:8). In South Africa, this was evident in the emotional spiritual songs that formed part of the day-to-day life of the Afrikaners (cf Van Rooyen 1940:27-37).

Van Zonneveld also refers to the strong family ties that formed part of the romantic era (Van Zonneveld 1987:24). In the Netherlands and in South Africa the *gesin* (family or household) has its own special meaning. It was the household that formed the corner stone of society and everyone had his and her own place and designated job (Van Zonneveld 1987:24).

### **3.7.2 Calvinism**

Reference to the major part played by religion in the lives of the people living in the Cape was made earlier in this chapter. Protestantism had a great influence on the promoting of education. One of the key aspects of Protestantism is to give the Bible into the hands of every person, in his or her own language. Everyone has to do Bible study and in order to be able to do this, they must be able to read and write. One of the most important results of the Reformation was the founding of Church schools (Fourie 1954:99).

Calvinism, as the theology and the ecclesiastical tradition was upheld by the followers of the reformer John Calvin. They emphasize the sovereignty of God, the total depravity of human nature, divine election and rejection, the supreme authority of the Bible, the necessity of the Church and of sacraments and the necessity of glorifying God in every sphere of life (Deist 1984:23). It was kept as heritage from the ancestors, guiding everyday life of both individuals and the community of the Afrikaners. Calvinism is more conservative than most of the other confessions of faith. Absolutely no experiments with faith or aspects of faith are tolerated (Fourie 1954:30).

Calvinists showed a tendency for isolation, and the remote interior of the Colony and even the interior of the unknown country, posed no threat to them (O’Kulis 1918b:95). The strong-minded, self supporting individuals had all they needed to survive and conquer the interior of Africa from the Cape to the Zambezi: they had one important weapon that was used every day – their faith in God (Venter 1929:9,10).

History has shown that Calvinists, more than any other, are comfortable in God’s Word. They practised the instructions from the Bible in their lives and the doctrine had a major influence on the forming of the nation (O’Kulis 1918b:27). The Bible not only became the family guide to life itself, it also formed the general frame of reference, both as reading book and educational book, penetrating the thoughts, language, and frame of reference of every Afrikaner (O’Kulis 1918b:61). The Afrikaner could speak a word, in favour or against, on world and local politics, economy, literature, arts, education, the private lives of public figures, and everything else (cf De Kiewiet 1941:17). The instrument used to judge by, was the Bible. The fact that others (like the British press) made fun of the manner in which Bible texts were used in connection with politics, did not trouble or stop them from doing it (Dreyer 1977:40).

Religious movements, after their initial success, tend to transform into dogma. Although this also started to happen to Calvinism in the Netherlands by the beginning of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, the religion stayed a living stream of water due to the works of Pietistic theologians who firmly believed that faith living in the

hearts and minds of the people must be practised in everyday life. Through the works of Lodensteijn, a'Brakel and Smytegelt, (all of whom had great influence on the Voortrekkers – Engelbrecht 1977:58) the foundation of true faith stayed Calvinism, but it became a lifestyle, a living faith, determining the worldview and character of the Voortrekkers.

### **3.7.3 Pietism**

Pietism is a German Lutheran reform movement of the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries that emphasized individual conversion, 'living faith' and the fruits of faith in daily life (Pretorius 1988:165). Pietists held prayer meetings, studied the Bible individually and in small groups, and led a disciplined Christian life (Deist 1984:130). Convinced that the world could be won for Christ through the conversion and Christian training of individuals, Pietism also stressed the importance of education.

Some scholars, like Van der Walt and Schonken, believe, partly because of the isolation of the people living on the borders of the Colony, that the only religious influence on the Voortrekkers came from Calvinism. 'Calvinism carried the trek. Religion was not restricted to the walls of a Church but was practised in every day life, determining their worldview and their management of state affairs' (Van der Walt 1938:68 – my translation).

Although the Pietism and Methodism came to South Africa in 1786 in person of the young preacher Van Lier and also MC Vos, the farmers living in the interior had no contact with them. Isolated in Church and school, also for the duration of the Trek, there are no traces of Pietism and hypocrisy in the Transvaal. The people's faith is firmly built on the patriarchs

of the Old Testament with whom they identify (Schonken 1914:36, 37 – my translation).

Other scholars, like Pretorius, found traces of Pietism in the religion of the Voortrekkers: Pietism is the other side of the coin (vs. Calvinism) that had influence on the Great Trek. The intense emotional religiosity can be seen in the writings, notes, dairies, songs and preaching that were written down during the Trek (Pretorius 1988:165).

Without being tempted into a discussion about this, it is fair to say that the Calvinism gave a firm foundation to the educational system. It also provided a framework for the development of a new nation. A strong, positive influence of Pietism, especially in the song education and expression of ‘living faith’ cannot be denied. Together these two influences made the Afrikaner nation a unique specimen.

### **3.8 Conclusion**

Very early in the history of the Cape, the people living there became less European and more African. The climate, living conditions and the wilderness surrounding them all helped to form a new nation – the Afrikaners.

Contemporary views of them ranged from the earlier judgement of the Batavian De Mist in about 1800 that these “half-wild Europeans” were rebellious and unreasonable, and suffered from a “complete corruption of their moral sense” to the eulogies of Theal and Sir Benjamin d’Urban’s approving tribute to “a brave, patient, orderly and religious people” (Patterson 1957:19).

The educational system known and practised in the Netherlands backed by stern orthodox Calvinism was brought to and implemented in South Africa. Education

was under supervision of the Church and was closely linked to it. This system prevailed in the Cape and became official in 1714.

Although there were educators, the primary task of educating the children was done by the parents, in obedience to the promises made at baptism. Education was very elementary, religiously based and aimed to form members of the Church. The Bible was used as handbook on all subjects from history to geography, making the Afrikaners a 'One Book nation' (Venter 1929:9).

The whole educational system was changed by the ordinance of De Mist and after that by the colonisation of the Cape by the British, but life and education as a whole stayed the same for the isolated Dutch farmers in the interior of the country.

The most important books used in the household of the Afrikaner nation were the Bible and the spiritual songbooks. Singing was ranked very high and formed an important part of the education and the day-to-day lives of the children.

The children learned to read and write to enable them to study the Bible by themselves. The most popular book used to help the children to achieve this goal was the *Trap der Jeugd*. Older children had to prepare for public confession of faith. This was the ultimate goal of education. They had to study books on the catechism.

It is remarkable to see the great influence that the limited education had. It gave the people a sense of security and identity and high moral standards. The results of the religious education during the Great Trek were:

- A firm faith that God would help and protect them.
- A firm faith in and point of view regarding life after death.
- People who practised 'living faith' by singing, acting and living out the principles of their faith in every aspect of their lives.
- A strong identification with the patriarchs of the Old Testament. 'If you wonder how it is possible that these roamers...have managed to remain a nation, the answer lies in the fact that they have constantly cherished their Bible and their Church' (*Diamond Fields Advertiser* January 13, 1917).
- The emphasis on the education based on the Bible and catechism ensured no illiteracy amongst the nation because of the strict requirements of the Church for membership (Bekker 1954:34).
- 'It brought up a generation of pioneers who would establish a new homeland socially, economically and a government backed up by the stern Calvinistic faith in God' (Bot 1936:11 – my translation).

The most important factor shaping the new nation was their religion. The Afrikaners cannot be understood if one does not take into account their religion, because their whole existence evolved around it (Nepgen 1938:58).

The Church in the Colony, under influence and pressure of the British government, gave no support to the Voortrekkers, but because of the distinction

the Afrikaners made between Church and religion in their day-to-day lives, this posed no threat to the Voortrekkers (Spoelstra 1988:47). They continued to live their faith and teach their children with one goal in mind: to enable them to read, write, and confess their faith in God.

The orthodoxy of Calvinism, and the emotional outpouring of faith in songs, backed by the Pietism on the one hand, together with the influence of Romanticism on the other hand, all worked together in forming the unique characteristics and worldview of the people who made South Africa their home and developed into the Afrikaner nation.

Chapter four will focus on the educational system that was implemented after the Great Trek in the ZAR. It was based on the trusted system that the people were used to from the beginning of the settlement at the Cape.