

Political Agenda and Contextualization: Analysis of South African Policy, the Apartheid*

정치적 아젠다와 상황화: 남아프리카공화국의 아파르트헤이트 분석

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ABSTRACT

One of the most important aspects in modern missions is contextualization. Throughout ages it has been a great challenge to implant the unchanging Word of God to various contexts of this world. When this process was done appropriately, there were evident fruits. However, when it was done inadequately, it functioned as a stumbling block for missions. Particularly, if the biblical concept was contextualized for the political agenda, devastating consequences occurred. As an example, this article dealt South African political agenda, the apartheid. The paper investigated what elements of the Scripture did the Afrikaners, so-called the Calvinists, contextualized to maintain their power and status quo. The first part of the paper shared brief information about apartheid, settlers, and related research resources of the apartheid. In the middle part, the author introduced biblical concepts that the Afrikaners contextualized to justify the apartheid. The last part of this article dealt the evaluation and criticism regarding the contextualization of the apartheid.

Key words : apartheid, Afrikaner, South Africa, segregation, contextualization, political agenda

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I. Introduction

The Bible is the inerrant word of God. It functions as a solid guideline for Christians. When the Bible is applied to various cultures, it is understood variously by each culture. That is why contextualization is needed in order to convey the word of God without compromising the original meaning.

Contextualization is a neutral concept. When it is used appropriately it will provide a solution to complex issues. For an example Paul G. Hiebert's Critical Contextualization "stands as a means to alleviate cultural problems in the church" such as polygamy (Esseko, 2010:11-12). However, when the Word of God is unbiblically contextualized, it can result in syncretism. Especially when the Scripture is contextualized to fulfill a certain political agenda the result will be devastating. For an example, during the period of Roman Empire when the church conspired with the states, the role of the church was lost and the era of corruption began. During the colonial period, the West justified its slavery policy contextualizing the Scripture to support the slave trade resulted in inequality.

As a case study, this paper will explore the political agenda in South Africa, the apartheid. The apartheid was a result of unbiblical contextualization of the Scripture. So-called Calvinists, why did Afrikaners justify apartheid? On what ground did they contextualize reformed theology to execute racial segregation?

In the first part, this paper will cover brief background information regarding the apartheid, Afrikaners, and resources related to apartheid. Then how Afrikaners contextualized the biblical norms to justify the apartheid will be explored followed by evaluation and criticism.

II. Apartheid and Afrikaners

Apartheid is a Afrikaans term that means "separation (as in apart 'which lasted' between 1948-94 (Bruce and Yearly, 2006: 12)." This separation implied institutionalized racial segregation that was dominant during the period of 1948-1990. The system was managed through racial hierarchy that whites had the highest status, followed by Asians, Coloureds (multiracial groups), and black Africans (Mayne, 1999: 52). According to Tony Lawson and

Joan Garrod “Apartheid was maintained through the use of force and legal sanctions which included imprisoning its opponents (Mayne, 1999: 52).” Opponents here refers to the “blacks of South Africa” who were “denied the basic political, civil, and other human rights (Subberwal, 2009: A17).” An interesting part of it is that it was a legal “enforcement of segregation in almost every sphere of life with serious consequences for individual and political freedom (Mitchell, 2006: 173).”

Then who are the Afrikaners that initiated Apartheid? According to F. J. M. Potgieter, the word Afrikaner is defined as the white section of the population of South Africa who are descendants of the first colonists i.e. Dutchmen from Calvinistic homes as well as the Huguenots, the Germans and later on especially the Scots who intermarried with the Hollanders, people whose language developed chiefly from Netherlands and who accepted Calvin’s spiritual heritage as their own (Boshoff, 1977:3). Two things are notable in this definition. First is that they are generally Dutch descendants. Second, they are Calvinists.¹

Given the fact that the Afrikaners were Calvinists, so called the adherents of Reformed Theology, it is crucial to ask why they legalized apartheid? Afrikaners were unique people who lived through a unique time in history. Unlike England, France, Portugal, and others they were there to settle not to explore. Also, the environment that they experienced was continuation of constant wars. At the beginning of the settlement there were no racial segregation (Regehr, 1979: 105). But as time went on two critical issues arose. On one side they had to compete against their rival English colonists and on the other side they had to survive from the native Africans.

According to a statistics in 1956, the population figures were: whites, nearly 3 million; full blooded Africans (Bantu, as the whites prefer to call them, since the whites are African as well), nearly 10 million; colored (mixed races not unlike our own Negro population), nearly 1.5 million; and Asians (Indian and Malay), nearly 500,000 (Blake, 1960: 161). In other words, unlike the USA whites, Afrikaners were minority people group. An emphasis of their unique identity was inevitable and it fostered them to stick together for there survival.²

1) The Ancestors of Afrikaners are mainly Calvinists but German whites had Lutheran background

2) The famous Ncome River war is a key example that shows how enforcement of their identity was crucial for survival.

See Villa-Vicencio, 1985:13. Also during the war against England, they regarded themselves as the chosen people of God.

See Modie, 1975:32.

III. Prevalent Research on Apartheid

South Africa's apartheid policies are intertwined with political and economic factors. Abusing social status, minority whites pursued the monopoly resources (economy³) through white supremacy and needed a political (institutional) means (Mayne, 1999: 52). However, the political tools they used were used as a weapon to pressure the policy (apartheid). Through the United Nations, political solidarity in the international community has resulted in racial discrimination in the corners. Resources for it are provided in the United Nations Library(www.un-ilibrary.org). The factor that caused the apartheid to attract attention around the world was a human rights issue for Indians living in South Africa. The Indian government has proposed to the UN agenda to address this issue (UN, 2016). The human rights issue was enough to gain sympathy from the international community, from which time South Africa began to be isolated from the international community. Political isolation resulted in economic isolation, and the United Nations placed overall restrictions on economic activity in South Africa, including oil trade, culture, education and sports (UN, 2016).

Since apartheid was widely regarded as a notorious policy around the world, there have been numerous publications in the past. Generally main focal point of the majority of the publications dealt relationship between church and politics. Some of the examples include John W. de Grouchy (Grouchy, 1979), Alan Paton(Paton, 1973), Desmond Tutu (Tutu, 1982). Well known literature with political perspectives include Mary Benson(Benson, 1976), No Sizwe (Sizwe, 1979), Julius Lewin (Lewin, 1967). In Grouchy's book, the dominant perspective is the ecumenical approach. He focuses more on race than a social class and also focuses on too much on the church issues rather than ideologies such as democratism, socialism and etc. As a church leader, Clayton Jonathan introduces a personal biographical view on apartheid via Alan Paton's words. Clayton identified totalitarianism of South

3) Opinions are divided on who (what) is the biggest beneficiary of economic gain. Marxists claimed that capital benefited from the working class (non-white race) low wages, But the liberals argued that it was a policy to prevent black and white competition (Mariotti & Fourie, 2014: 115). It is meaningless, however, to discuss about who is the biggest beneficiary. The early economic growth of apartheid was from a rebound of World War II and the economy of South Africa expediences a downward curve from the 1970s (Mariotti & Fourie, 2014: 116).

Africa as fascism. As a Black Christian leader Tutu introduces the strong identity of black leadership. In his book, 'The Voice of One Crying in the Wilderness' consists of Tutu's sermons, articles, and speeches that provides his racial definition His focal point was more geared to the liberation theology. For an example his statement such as "the incarnation is a historical event that signals God's determination to liberate humanity from oppression and dehumanisation(Tshawane, 2009: 91)." As the first South African who testified to the United Nations Committee in regards to Apartheid Mary Benson exposes the reality of apartheid to the world through this book. Her focal point was on human rights of black South Africans that it introduces how black political leaderships are persecuted (imprisonment) through the eyes of whites. Unlike Benson's book that had white's view on Apartheid 'One Azania' provides black people's political view. With communism perspective Sizwe deals themes of oppression and liberation movement. Lewin's book 'The Struggle for Racial Equality, Longmans, Education' which consists of 32 documents approaches racial issues in various historical, political views. Page 27-29 covers John Philip's letter who was a missionary to South Africa but does not implement any idea of analysis of how Afrikaners justified (contextualized) apartheid.

There were numerous theological articles published regarding this topic. The majority of the publications range from the early 1940s to the 1990s. This is probably because the publication time overlaps with the time of apartheid. According to EBSCO (Elton B. Stephens Co), a web engine, 269 apartheid related articles were published from 2010 to 2019. Among these articles, 69 articles⁴ were published in the perspective of missions which seems to be related to this article. However, majority of these articles covered descriptions of phenomenon or approaches by ism (for an example, feminist view). None of these had contextualization approach which makes this study distinctive from precedent research is that none of them covers analysis of the contextualization of apartheid. The majority of the articles provides an overall analysis of the relationship between the church and the states, and the post-apartheid era.

Among Korean resources, there is a paper written on a topic similar to this paper. The title is 'A Case Study on Justification of Unbiblical Contextualization: An Analysis of

4) Some of the key literature are Tobias, 2014: 151-167; Werner and Gilberto, 2013: 103-116.

the Afrikaner's Theology for Apartheid' (Bae, 2018: 151-176). Bae's article have dealt a conceptual explanation of contextualization (including Paul Heibert's theory) through the lens of anthropology, but this article has more theological tone. The key difference from this paper is the justification of racism part. While Bae's article focuses on 'diversity', and 'hierarchy' this article emphasizes on 'Division of people group', 'Sphere Sovereignty', and 'Chosen people of God'.

IV. Contextualization and Apartheid

In order to justify Apartheid Afrikaners needed a solid ground. So called Calvinists, they utilized biblical norms to contextualize apartheid in South African context.

When it comes to a theological foundation for apartheid, it boils down to identity issue: Biblical view of themselves, God, and the world. Depending on how they define themselves and God, the racial segregation. can be or cannot be legalized. This is well manifested in their understanding of 'Division of people group' and 'Sphere Sovereignty' and 'Chosen people of God'.

First, Afrikaners claimed that divisions among the people group is biblical and natural phenomenon. One of the prominent verses that Afrikan's utilized was the narrative of the tower of Babel in Gen 11. According to Totius:

God again acts as the 'Divider' ('Skeidingmaker') by creating a confusion of languages and dispersing the nations over the whole earth (Genesis 11:9). Therefore the nations should stand their ground ('hulleself handhaaf') against this Babylonian spirit of unification ('die Babiloniese gees van eenmaking') (Vosloo, 2015:197).

Totius builds a theme of separateness upon God confusion the people. He also generalized that unification itself is a sin (Babylonian spirit). He does not make a clear distinction between unity that God created and the unity of rebellious attitude towards God. Groenewald's view does not differ from Totius that "division of the human generation into races, peoples, and tongues," despite a recognition that the scriptures teach the a unity of the human generation (Corrado, 2013:12).

Second, Sphere Sovereignty⁵ was another crucial area that the Afrikaners utilized for contextualization. It is regarded that Abraham Kuyper was one of the influential figures for apartheid theology (Corrado, 2013:11). Sphere Sovereignty basically “speaks of social spheres within creation within which a common grace operates preserving the “fundamental character”, the “in-nate law of life” and the “divine mandate” of that particular sphere(Villa-Vicenci0, 1977: 8-9).” However it was not Kuyper’s intention that this concept to serve Afrikaner’s national theology. Kuyper’s Calvinism condemned slavery, systems of castes, and any types of segregations (Kuiper, 1986: 65). It was Neo-Kuyperian Calvinists⁶ who turned diversity into racial segregation (Baskwell, 2006, 1279-1280). Afrikaners chose Kuyper’s Sphere Sovereignty, extracted the idea of separateness and applied it to justify apartheid. There are several biblical texts can support this idea. Dutch Reformed Church in South Africa interpreted “fixed the bounds of the peoples” in Deuteronomy 32:8-9 as “marked out the borders of the peoples” so that they could s a territories within people groups instead of evaluation marker for population sizes (Rich, 1991:44). The narrative of the Pentecost in Acts 2:5-11 functions in a similar manner. “The language miracle of the Pentecost shows that God wants people to hear about the Gospel in their language(Rich, 1991:45).” Acts 17:26 is also perceived as biblical foundation of drawing a territory between nations arguing “that the Bible demands that every nation should have own habitation (Strauss, 1977: 32).”

Lastly, God and Chosen People. The concept of God in Isaiah 1:16~17 and People in Psalm 89. The word God for Afrikaners referred to the God of white people. Roberts says, concerning this text, “it is presumptuous on the part of this racist government to claim that it was the God of the Scriptures who ‘gathered’ the whites from Europe to South Africa. . .it is a ‘God’ of the white people of South Africa (Deotis, 1986:32). They claimed that the word ‘people’ in Psalm 89 points to the white people (Modie, 1975: 28). What makes these two words relevant is that they are related to the doctrine of the elect. “For the Afrikaners the parallel with the chosen of the Lord grew into a form of mysticism (Jaarsveld, 1977: 17).” In other words, they identified themselves as the chosen people of God (volks), people of

5) Unlike the idea of division in the previous section this concept is inclined towards the concept of many different sects.

6) David Bosch uses Kuyperian neo-Calvinism which the term was coined in the beginning of 20th century. See Bosch, 1986: 209-210.

Israel that they are the superior nation that should fulfill God’s mission (Jaarsveld, 1977: 17; Thompson, 1985: 32). During the time of the pioneers, Boers (Dutch South African settlers) often understood themselves “as Israelites parallels to the Afrikaners’ own nomadic and pastoral mode of life (Du Toit, 1983: 924).” This superiority created inequality among the nations that black people were regarded as un-elected. Coetzee argues that equality means recognizing “the ordinances of God and do not try to make equal that which God had not made equal (Loubser, 1966: 324).” This concept laid a foundation to legitimize and justify racial segregation in the light of ‘apartheid biblical hermeneutics’. In this regards the narrative of Ham in Genesis 9 can be interpreted for apartheid. This view, which was made in 1703 by the church council of Drakenstein is based on a spurious interpretation of Genesis 9: 18-27 that Ham’s descendants were cursed to be slaves of Shem and Japheth, and that line has continued during the colonial periods (Loubser, 1987: 7).

V. Evaluation and Criticism

In the above section, division, sphere sovereignty, and God and people were described a distinctive characters of Afrikaner’s theology.

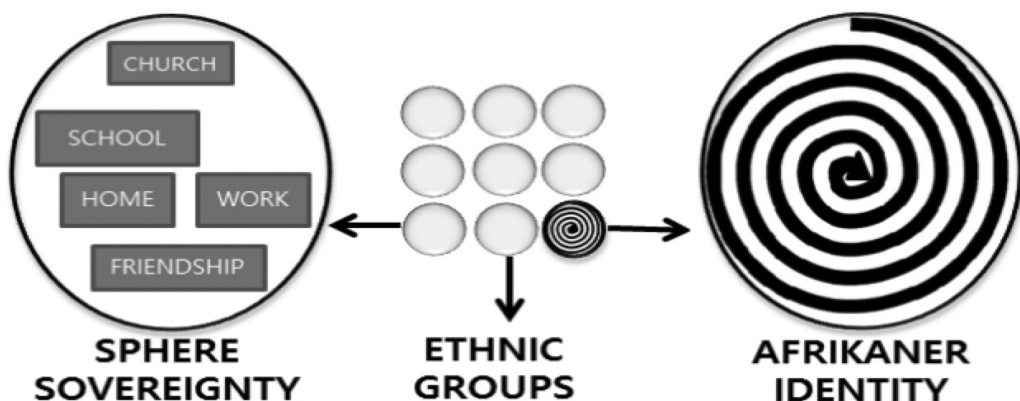


Figure 1. Division and Sphere Sovereignty and People

How Afrikaners saw themselves was that God created diversity (even they acknowledged unity was also created by God) with ethnic territory that should not be crossed. Within the boundaries they applied the sphere sovereignty principle that each ethnic groups has separate spheres. If these ideas of division and spheres were not developed to the next dimension (Chosen People), international society would have not executed sanctions to interfere apartheid for division itself is a neutral term and there are countries that hold to neutral political position (such as Switzerland). The main issue that triggered apartheid to become racial segregation was that Afrikaners identified themselves as “‘Israel’ a small, unassuming and humble nation among (black) heathen nations, protected by God and whom God would even assist in war (Kloppers, 2002: 185).” As Israelites in the Old Testament viewed themselves as the chosen people of God and as they believed that through them the salvation will occur, Afrikaners also viewed that they were the contemporary Israel that functioned as the light of the gentiles.⁷

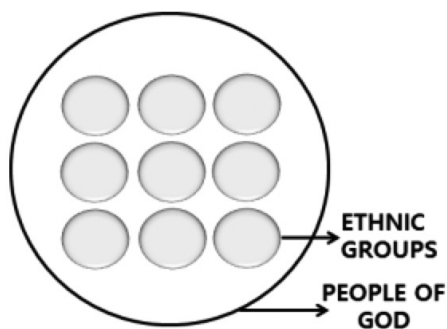


Figure 2. Biblical View of People

The idea of diversity is relevant especially when it comes to the Kingdom of God. In God there is unity regardless of cultures, and skin colors. But it is also true that God created diversity according to people groups which should be respected one another. In this regards concepts of division and spheres could have worked constructively without

7) This is known as the centripetal way of mission. Israelites were chosen to be seen among the nations that enabled different people groups to be invited to the works of salvation. See Exod 10, 12:38; 1Kgs 17:8-16; 2Kgs 5:2-5; Ps 68:31, 47:9, 72:10.

segregation (Farisoni, 2014: 214). However, even though the Afrikaners recognized the diversity within unity (Reddy, 2000: 39) it is evident that unity was set aside and diversity was over emphasized. If they were consistent with their policy they should have “rule out the integration between different cultures or nations” meaning Afrikaner “businessmen would be sinning if they “mixed” with businessmen from other cultures and nations(Rich, 1991: 45).” In reality the business partnership between races were valid while continuing racial segregation . In other words, they had double standards.

Another criticism regarding apartheid is the concept of ‘chosen people’. Van Jaarsveld is correct that there was “a confusion of the functions of “volk” and church. . .A people, a natural human community, cannot act per se as the expounder of the Gospel (Jaarsveld, 1977: 27).” Certain people group cannot be identified as church, the means of salvation.⁸

This is well manifested in the doctrine of the ‘five points of Calvin’, or well known ‘TULIP which gives understanding of Salvation of man. It is evident that these points are applied universally in oppose to partially (the Afrikaners)

First, the Total Depravity. Regarding the fact that every single person is sinner, there is no such thing as superiority in human being. However as it was seen earlier many whites veas superiority over black people. This goes directly against ‘Total Depravity’ that no one could regard “himself a higher standing before God or is more important because he belongs to a certain nation or race (Buys, 1987: 5).”

Second, the Unconditional Election. The fact that the only white people are God’s favored people does not derive from the Calvinistic view. It comes rather from the Arminian view that man is acceptable to God on the merits of something natural in him (i.e. his bloodline) with which he was born(Buys, 1987: 9).

Third, the Limited Atonement. The Canon of Dordt writes:

Moreover the promise of the Gospel is that whosoever believes in Christ crucified shall not perish, but have eternal life. This promise, together with the command to repent and believe, ought to be declared and published to all nations, and to all persons promiscuously and without distinction, to whom God out of His good pleasure sends the Gospel (Canon of the Dordt, 1682: 2:5).

8) This is a reenactment of Jewish elitism that is continued in the present time.

Again, it is evident that the merit of earning eternal life comes from Christ not from the concept of 'volks' of Afrikaners.

Fourth, the Irresistible Grace. Irresistible grace means that "God sends His Holy Spirit to work in the lives of people so that they will definitely and certainly embrace Jesus Christ as their Savior and Lord and be changed from evil to good people (Buys, 1987: 13)." So, propagating violence reveal that "they have lost hope in the power of the Holy Spirit, working through the Word to bring about changes, and therefore they see it as necessary to propagate the use of human power" to force change the society (Buys, 1987: 14). Thus the apartheid that was executed by the white South Africans could not be viewed as the work of the Holy Spirit.

Fifth, the Perseverance of the Saints. The idea of apartheid does not concur with this doctrine. The foundation of planning, developing and legislating racial discrimination itself is the opposite way of executing the Perseverance of the Saints.

As it has been evaluated above Apartheid cannot and should not be classified as reformed theology. Rather it should be considered as an ideology (Stamoolis, 1985: 17) for the Scripture does not interpret the context (exegesis) but the context interpret the text (eisegesis).

VI. Conclusion

A tragic ending can occur when a political agenda meets contextualization. A representative example was the apartheid policy in South Africa. Despite the fact that the Afrikaners were the colonizers, they were minority people group. It might be reasonable to say it was inevitable choice for their survival.

In order to justify the policy Afrikaners utilized the biblical norms ('diversity (division)', 'sphere sovereignty', and 'chosen people of God') for contextualization. They came to a conclusion, identifying themselves as the chosen people of God justifying their superiority over other nations. However the Afrikaners neglected biblical notion of unity. Diversity should be understood under the assumption of harmonization of unity of people groups.

The '5 points of Calvin' also supports that salvation is universally applied to all peoples of the world meaning that the Afrikaners are not the only chosen ones.

Biblical contextualization is a process of interpreting, analyzing the Word of God and applying it into a context which can be described as 'exegesis and application'. Unbiblical contextualization on the other hand is a process of fitting the meaning of the Word of God based on the context which can be described as 'eisegesis and application'

Throughout human history, unbiblical contextualization towards political agenda (namely racial segregation) were easily found. For an example, during the time of colonization, policy of slavery shaped the notion of mission. It was widely accepted to introduce the western culture to the natives as missionary works assuming the superiority of the missionary culture. In 1995 The Southern Baptist apologized for their endorsement of slavery.

These examples can happen at any time and anywhere that can result in profaning the name of God. It is important for Christians to be "alerted and of sober-minded" (1Pet 5:8) to watch out the temptations of unbiblical contextualization to reveal His glory.

“이 논문은 다른 학술지 또는 간행물에 게재되었거나 게재 신청되지 않았음을 확인함.”

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정치적 아젠다와 상황화: 남아프리카공화국의 아파르테이트 분석

Political Agenda and Contextualization: Analysis of South African Policy, the Apartheid

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논문초록

현대 선교에 있어서 가장 중요한 것 중 하나는 상황화이다. 변치 않는 하나님의 말씀을 다양한 토양 가운데 적용하는 것은 예나 지금이나 큰 도전임에 분명하다. 각 상황에 적절한 상황화는 열매를 맺도록 하지만 부적절한 상황화는 선교에 있어 큰 걸림돌이 된다. 특히 정치적인 아젠다를 위하여 성경적 개념이 상황화 된다면 돌이킬 수 없는 결과가 나타난다. 본 논문은 그러한 예시로 과거 남아프리카공화국의 정치적 아젠다인 아파르헤이트 (Apartheid) 정책을 다룬다. 소위 칼빈주의자들인 아프리카너 (Afrikaner)들의 기득권 유지와 생존을 위해 어떠한 성경적 개념들을 상황화 하여 정당화를 부여했는지 살펴보았다. 논문의 전반부는 아파르헤이트, 정착자들, 그리고 관련자료에 대한 간략한 정보를 공유하였고 중반부에는 이들이 인종차별정책을 위해 상황화 한 성경적 개념들에 대한 설명 다루었고 중반부에서는 아파르테이트의 상황화에 대한 평가 및 비판을 제시하였다.

주제어: 아파르헤이트, 아프리카너, 남아프리카공화국, 인종차별, 상황화, 정치적 아젠다