

‘Now, what has become of our prayers and supplications?’ Faith in an Anglo-Boer War concentration camp of 1901

First submission: February 2007

Christian faith played a significant and decisive role in the concentration camps of the Anglo-Boer War (1899-1902). This article focuses on the diary of A D Luckhoff (1874-1963) who, after completing his theological training, volunteered for the ministry in the concentration camp at Bethulie. The anguish, distress and trials of this inexperienced young clergyman are disclosed by allowing the diary to speak for itself, thus ensuring that its profound spiritual and emotional character is retained in the exposition. Alongside this exposition, observations and historical notes are appended, as well as questions concerning the diarist's underlying theological convictions, which are compared and contrasted with those evinced in the contemporary diary of a young female resident of the camp, Rensche van der Walt (1878-1948). The ensuing analysis aims to demonstrate that Christian faith was a more complicated and complex issue during this war than has yet been realised.

‘Ag, wat het van ons gebede en versugtinge geword?’ Geloof in ’n konsentrasiekamp gedurende die Anglo-Boereoorlog 1901

Gedurende die Anglo-Boereoorlog (1899-1902) het die Christelike geloof ’n bepalende en belangrike rol gespeel in die konsentrasiekampe. Hierdie artikel gaan in op die dagboek van ’n jong aspirant predikant, A D Luckhoff (1874-1963). Hy het hom na voltooiing van sy teologiese opleiding beskikbaar gestel vir die bediening in die konsentrasiekamp van Bethulie. Sy dagboek word geanaliseer met die oog daarop om die spiritualiteit, onderliggende teologiese oortuigings, refleksie én aanvegting, bloot te lê. Dit word begelei met teologies-kritiese vraagstelling, historiese aantekeninge sowel as vergelyking met die dagboek van Renche van der Walt (1878-1948) wat ’n tydgenootlike inwoner van dieselfde kamp was. Deur die dagboek so ver as moontlik self aan die woord te stel, word verseker dat die geestelike en emosionele aard daarvan behou word. Die bedoeling is om aan te dui dat die beoefening van die Christelike geloof inderdaad ’n veel meer gekompliseerde en komplekse aangeleentheid gedurende die oorlog was, as wat algemeen aanvaar word.

Prof R M Britz, Dept of Ecclesiology, Faculty of Theology, University of the Free State, P O Box 339, Bloemfontein 9300; E-mail: britzrm.hum@ufs.ac.za

The vast majority of the residents of the concentration camps were members of the three historically Dutch-speaking Reformed churches,¹ hence the Christian faith, particularly its Reformed ecclesiastical and liturgical practices, played a significant role there.² In general, however, discussion of religion in the camps is characterised by description rather than exposition and lacks theological-critical differentiation as well as the necessary elucidation. There has as yet been no adequate critical assessment of primary sources (such as books of sermons, hymnals, religious literature, diaries, letters, and so on) with the aim of examining the nature of the theology underlying the ministry, the personal devotion, the spirituality, and the experience of faith in the camps.

This article investigates the personal reflections and religious appreciation of a young and inexperienced volunteer candidate-minister, A D Luckhoff (1874-1963), expressed in a diary which he kept while ministering in the concentration camp at Bethulie during August, September and October of 1901. His emotional and spiritual suffering is disclosed by allowing the diary to speak for itself — thus ensuring that its profound spiritual and emotional nature is retained in the exposition. Running alongside the exposition are observations and historical notes, as well as questions concerning the diarist's underlying theological convictions, which are also compared and contrasted with those evinced in the contemporary diary of a young female resident of the same camp. The ensuing analysis demonstrates not only the existential anguish, emotional distress and trials to which a young minister was exposed and with which he had to contend, but also illustrates that faith as such was a more complicated and complex issue than has yet been realised.

- 1 These were the *Nederduitsche Gereformeerde Kerk*, the *Gereformeerde Kerke van Zuid-Afrika* and the *Nederduitsch Hervormde Kerk in Zuid-Afrika*.
- 2 The kind permission of Gilles Teulié, editor of 'Religious writings and war', *Les Carnets du Cerpac* 3, 2006, to publish a revised version of this article in *Acta Academica* is acknowledged with appreciation.

1. That night ...

Let me attempt what I have never before done ...³

On the night of September 25th, 1901, Luckhoff's diary entry was not the usual scribbling down of patched-together notes from a pocket book.⁴ On the contrary: he was contemplating. As he remarked three years later (1904) in the introduction to the published edition: "A diary is simply a confidential talk to one's self of one's self — such is its pre-rogative". Then he appended: "[N]eed it be suggested how hard it is occasionally to lay bare the naked soul within?" In a note he added that the published edition was substantially the same as the original, except that contractions had been written out in full, and colloquial speech had been replaced, where possible, by less obtrusive wording. While copying the diary, it had become clear to him that it should be published. It was to be seen as a tribute to "Women's endurance [...] present[ing] in the story of that endurance, and the fortitude of the Dutch women and children, one of the nobler aspects of the late war."⁵

2. 'We will never forget the days of August and September 1901, and October, November and December'

He sat on a wooden box at a small table in a military-issue tent. A candle — a valued article⁶ (as the box would also prove to be) — provided

3 L(uckhoff) A D, *Women's endurance* (Cape Town: S A News Co Ltd, 1904), September 25: 44 (hereafter *Women's endurance*, followed by the date and page no).

4 Just before retiring he noted down the events and activities of the day, consulting his pocket notebook. He simply scribbled the information down without any regard for style, language or form, due to the stress of the circumstances. The entries were usually made in a weary hand. Cf *Women's endurance*, Introduction.

5 *Women's endurance*, Introduction.

6 The diary confirms the value of this commodity. For instance, *Women's endurance*, August 26: 9; September 7: 23: "This evening two girls came to ask for candle; great misery no light; gave half a candle ..."; September 10: 25; September 12: 28: "Another burden — no lights! There are numbers of tents where there is sickness, in some cases dying people, and where to-night there is not an inch of candle"; September 14: 31: "The cry for a little brandy or wine is simply pitiable. And candles! Fie on it! O fie!"; September 19: 38.

light. Six weeks had elapsed since his arrival on 21 August 1901⁷ at this “refugee camp” located about one mile from Bethulie, a town on the southern border of the recently instituted Orange River Colony.⁸ Since the fall of its capital Bloemfontein at the end of March 1900 the former Boer Republic (Oranje Vrijstaat) had been officially and politically incorporated into the British Empire. The existence of Bethulie is indebted to missionaries of the *Société des missions évangéliques de Paris*.⁹ In 1833 they had selected this spot between the hills and the Orange River to establish a mission station.¹⁰ Eventually it developed into a town, surrounded by a prosperous farming community. In March 1901 the British High Command favoured it as a site for another white refugee camp,¹¹ mainly because of the railway line which skirted it.

The Anglo-Boer War (1899-1902)¹² had by then become devastating and unmitigated. A scorched earth policy¹³ involving both the white and the black civilian populations¹⁴ had reduced the country almost

7 Cf *Women's endurance*, August 21: 3.

8 Cf for Bethulie *Eeufeesalbum: Centenary album Bethulie 1863-1963* (Bethulie: City Council, 1963).

9 Cf Betz H D, Browning D S, Janowski B, Jüngel E (Hrsg), *Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart*, 6 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2003[4]): 939.

10 For the history of the Paris Evangelical Missionary Society in South Africa, cf Ellenberger V, *Landmarks in the story of the French Protestant Church in Basutoland during the first hundred years of its existence: 1833-1933* (Morija: 1933). Also Pellisier S H, *Jean Pierre Pellisier van Bethulie. 'n Volledige lewensbeskrywing van een van die eerste Franse Protestantse sendelinge wat 'n sendingstasie op Bethulie in 1833 gestig het asook 'n weergawe van baie van die geskiedkundige, politieke en geestelike veranderinge wat in die suidelike Vrystaat tussen die jare 1826 en 1900 plaasgevind het* (Pretoria: Van Schaik, 1956).

11 Raath A W G & Louw R M, *Die konsentrasiekamp te Bethulie gedurende die Anglo-Boeroorlog: 1899-1902* (Bloemfontein: War Museum of the Boer Republics, 1991) contains poignant historical material concerning the history of the camp and life within it.

12 Cf Pakenham T, *The Boer War* (London: Futura, 1988), Wessels A, *The phases of the Anglo-Boer War* (Bloemfontein: War Museum of the Boer Republics, 1998).

13 Cf Pretorius F (ed), *Scorched earth* (Cape Town, Pretoria, Johannesburg: Human & Rousseau, 2000).

14 For the involvement of civilians in the War, cf Spies S B, *Methods of barbarism? Roberts and Kitchener and civilians in the Boer Republics. January 1900-May 1902* (Cape Town: Human & Rousseau, 1977), Ploeger J, *Die lotgevalle van die burgerlike bevolking gedurende die Anglo-Boeroorlog: 1899-1902* (Pretoria: Government Archive, 1990) 5 vols.

Britz/Faith in an Anglo-Boer War concentration camp of 1901

to a wasteland. The establishment of white and black concentration camps (or “refugee camps”)¹⁵ sought in different ways and for diverse purposes to serve the military strategy of ending the War.¹⁶ The administration of the camps left much to be desired; medical services were inadequate, and there was a lack of nutritious food. Through neglect and incompetence thousands met their deaths due to disease.¹⁷ The situation escalated out of control, particularly during the second half of 1901. The camps bore the “brunt of the war”.¹⁸ Nearly 28 000 Boer civilians — men, women and children — died there.¹⁹ The same holds true for more than 18 000 black civilians.²⁰ And Bethulie? As Rensche van der Walt (1878-1948),²¹ a resident of that camp, recalled in her journal at the end of the War, “We will never forget the days of August and September 1901, and October, November and December — those months when we were more dead than living. O, we still see the many corpses buried each morning and afternoon — and all the children ...”.²² Between May 1901 and March 1902, 1 307 deaths were recorded in the camp,²³ while more than 4 850 people were detained.

- 15 Pretorius, *Scorched earth*, includes a map showing the locations of the approximately 100 concentration camps constructed during the War.
- 16 For the role of Blacks in the War, cf Warwick P, *Black people and the South African War 1899-1902* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), Wessels A, *Die militêre rol van swart mense, bruin mense en Indiërs tydens die Anglo-Boereoorlog (1899-1902)* (Bloemfontein: War Museum of the Boer Republics, 1998).
- 17 The most common diseases were whooping cough, measles, typhoid fever, diphtheria, diarrhoea and dysentery. Cf ‘Camps’ at <<http://www.anglo-boer.co.za>>.
- 18 Cf Hobhouse E, *The brunt of the War and where it fell* (London: Methuen, 1902).
- 19 Cf Grundlingh A, *The Anglo-Boer War in the 20th-century Afrikaner consciousness* (Pretorius, *Scorched earth*: 243).
- 20 Cf Mohlamme J S, African refugee camps in the Boer Republics (Pretorius, *Scorched earth*: 110) and Kessler S V, The Black and Coloured concentration camps (Pretorius, *Scorched earth*: 132, 148, 150). The Orange River Colony provided for 37 and the Transvaal for 28 Black concentration camps, with more than 110 000 inhabitants.
- 21 For her, cf Van der Walt R, *Dagboek van 'n kampdogter*. Compiled and edited by Kezia Hamman (Bloemfontein: 1965): ix [hereafter *Dagboek*, followed by the page number].
- 22 *Dagboek*: 88: “Om wy zullen dien dagen van Augustus en September van 1901 nooit vergeten en October en November en December, die vier maanden was ons meer dood als leeven. O, wy zien nu nog de menig lyken alken morgen en meddag begraven en al de kenderen van 7 jaar af” [My translation, DB].
- 23 *Women's endurance*, 67.

Among Afrikaners the concentration camps constituted a shared national tragedy, whose effect was destined to endure throughout the twentieth century.²⁴ They left a legacy of bitter memories, giving rise to expressive images which have had a profound effect on the interpretation of the War. Even memories of the camps compiled at a later date did not escape subjective representation.²⁵ Few primary historical sources — in the true sense of the word, written at the time of the War — exist.²⁶ Furthermore, letters from the concentration camps were censored, inhibiting the writers.²⁷ Indeed, not much was written at all, especially in the overwhelmingly tragic situation of the camps. Van der Walt's journal and Luckhoff's diary are welcome exceptions.

It is significant that the two documents were compiled contemporaneously, but independently. Both were also written by young people. However, the differences are noteworthy. The 27-year-old Luckhoff was an educated minister of religion and came from a well-known Western Cape family. He had travelled in Europe.²⁸ Rensche van der Walt, four years

- 24 Cf Grundlingh, *The Anglo-Boer war* (Pretorius, *Scorched earth*: 243). Cf also Teulie G, *Les Afrikaners et la guerre anglo-boer, 1899-1902: étude des cultures populaires et des mentalités en présence* (Montpellier: Université Paul Valéry: Centre d'étude et de recherches sur les pays d'Afrique noire Anglophones et du Commonwealth, 2000).
- 25 Reverend H C J Becker's reminiscences on the Bethulie concentration camp are a good example (cf Raath & Louw, *Die konsentrasiekamp te Bethulie*: 70-82 for a translated text). During the War Becker was the local minister to the Bethulie congregation of the Dutch Reformed Church, and assisted Luckhoff in the camp. Cf Ferreira I L, *'n Baken vir Bethulie* (Bloemfontein: NG Sendingpers, 1988): 70 Becker recalled a "... general complaint [...] that vitriol and splinters of glass were occasionally found in the flour and sugar". Cf Raath & Louw, *Die konsentrasiekamp*: 73. While this has no historical substance, the suggestive power of his remark concerning treatment in the camps was of great significance for contemporary reflections on the War.
- 26 Stemmet found only nine books, comprising diaries and reminiscences of participants published between 1906 and 1931, cf Stemmet J G, *Die insameling van outobiografiese getuienisse oor die Anglo-Boereoorlog, Christiaan de Wet Annale 3* (Bloemfontein: S A Akademie & Oorlogsmuseum van die Boererepublieke, 1975).
- 27 Reading the letters written from the camps, one is struck by their concision and succinctness. Cf for example the letters of D H Erasmus from the Springfontein Camp: OM 5690/207, OM 5690/169, OM 5690/209. Cf also the letter of A E Barnard (Bethulie) dated 13 September 1901, OM 6713/1 (OM = Archives of the War Museum of the Boer Republics, Bloemfontein).
- 28 Cf *Women's endurance*, Introduction. Cf also August Daniël Luckhoff, Geldenhuys J N (Chief Compiler), *Jaarboek van die Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk (Moeder-, Sending- en Bantoekeke)*: 115 (Cape Town: NGK Publishers, 1964): 389. Cf further Van Wyk

his junior, had grown up and lived on a rural farm near the Free State town of Reddersburg.²⁹ Before being captured, she had not even seen a train.³⁰ She was a member of the Reddersburg Reformed Church.³¹ This congregation was one of the Reformed Churches in South Africa which had been instituted as a denomination in 1559, and had withdrawn from the Dutch Reformed Church and the “Hervormde Kerk” in the South African Republic.³² The Reformed Churches identified with the tradition and theology of the *Heidelberg Catechism* (1563), the *Belgic Confession* (1561), the *Canons of Dordt* (1618/19) and the *Church Order* accepted at that famous synod. Luckhoff came from the much larger Dutch Reformed Church,³³ whose theology was deeply influenced by nineteenth-century evangelical Presbyterianism. He wrote in English; she expressed herself in an early form of Afrikaans-Dutch. She was forced to become a resident of the camp. Luckhoff was a clergyman who volunteered for the ministry there. Their perspectives thus differed in more than one respect.³⁴ Essential to both documents, however, were their authors’ respective religious convictions, spirituality and reflections in terms of the Christian faith. This is not peculiar — the Boers were a deeply religious people and the Christian faith played an explicit and significant role throughout the War.³⁵

W E, *Die bediening van Dr A D Luckhoff as armesorgsekreteraris van die Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk, met spesiale verwysing na die Noordweste 1916-1943* (Stellenbosch: unpublished MTh thesis, 1986): 1.

29 *Dagboek*, ix.

30 *Dagboek*, 63: “Ik heef nog nooit die ding voor myn oogien gezien. Een groot vrees en angst heef ons daarvoor al van de huis af.”

31 Cf *Dagboek*, ix.

32 For the history of this ecclesiastical division, cf Brown E, *Die Kaaps-Hollandse Kerk loop uiteen — ondanks die Drie Formuliere van Eenheid, Studia Historiae Ecclesiasticae* 19(2) (December 1993): 35-56.

33 Cf Van der Watt P B, *Die Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk*, 1 1652-1824, 2 1834-1866, 3 1824-1905, 4 1905-1975 (Pretoria: NGK Booksellers, 1976-1987).

34 Luckhoff had to contend with — and was quite aware of — the differences, since he ministered to members of Reformed Churches as well. Cf *Women's endurance*, September 16: 34; September 20: 39: “Her delight, Psalm 62, verse 1, and when I read it aloud I was on the point of remarking [...] ‘No, wait, I have the right verse for you — Hymn 39, verse 3 — Come ye all, sinners come, what dare hold you back?’; saved from this calamity by mere chance (grace); perhaps they are Doppers! And so it was. Narrow shave; second time! Members of the Dopper (or Reformed) churches sing only Psalms, never hymns.”

35 Cf *Religion and the Anglo-Boer War* (Johannesburg: Rooftop Communication for the SABC Religion, 1999) (Video recording).

3. 'God rules our destiny'

As a period of cataclysmic upheaval, the War in South Africa was theologically interpreted and ecclesiastically assessed and adjudicated.³⁶ For most of the churches of British origin and with an English tradition (including the many Anglo-Saxon mission societies) it was a justifiable war, a God-given opportunity to rectify the injustices of the past. It was an instrument for furthering the establishment of the Kingdom of God and a Christian commonwealth in the region.³⁷ As far as the Black Christian churches and their assessment of the War is concerned, little is known.³⁸ The "Boer churches" viewed the War as an unjust development that should have been prevented by arbitration. Once it was under way, however, the War was related to the decrees of God's Providence: "God rules our destiny" and "God is on the side of the oppressed" were oft-repeated statements. Almost without exception the Boer populations in the two Republics belonged to the three traditional reformed churches. The Christian religion thus constituted a prominent interpretative lens for their experience and appraisal of the War.

As the War escalated, "catastrophic" events determined or transformed, even distorted, its initial theological comprehension and motivation among the Boers. A kaleidoscope unfolds to the interrogating eye: the articulation and ministry of the Christian faith to the Boer commandos,³⁹ in the concentration camps,⁴⁰ and in the prisoner-of-war camps in Ceylon, India, the Bermudas and St Helena⁴¹ create a multi-

36 Cf Brown E, *Die oorlog van 1899-1902 en die problematiek van die vaderlandse kerkgeskiedenis van die 20ste eeu met verwysing na die Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk, Die kerk in die wêreld: 'n Bundel opstelle* (Pretoria: Kital HAUM, 1982): 34. Also Hofmeyr J W & Pillay G J (eds), *A history of Christianity in South Africa*, 1 (Pretoria: HAUM, 1994): 152.

37 Cf Cuthbertson G C, *The nonconformist conscience and the South African War 1899-1902* (unpubl DLitt et Phil dissertation, Pretoria: Unisa, 1986).

38 Cf in this regard, Britz R M, *Waaioek se NG Sendinggemeente in Bloemfontein 1891-1903*, *Acta Theologica* 2002 22(2): 1-18.

39 Cf Pretorius F, *Kommandolewe tydens die Anglo-Boereoorlog 1899-1902* (Cape Town, Johannesburg: Human & Rousseau, 1991): 171-202.

40 Cf in this regard Britz R M, 'n Bet-el kerk in die veld ... Die (NG) gemeente van vlugtelinge op Springfontein Mei 1901-Januarie 1903, *Studia Historiae Ecclesiasticae* 2002 29(1): 238-77; Britz R M, *Die kampkerk van Bloemfontein 1901-1903*, *Acta Theologica* 2003 23(1): 1-22.

41 Cf Oosthuizen S P R, *Die bebeer, behandeling en lewe van die krygsgevangenes gedu-*

Britz/Faith in an Anglo-Boer War concentration camp of 1901

hued picture which makes any attempt at generalisation or systematisation difficult. This was also well illustrated at the final peace talks during the first months of 1902, when the Boer leaders stood “at the grave of their Republics”.⁴² Their faith was indeed a central theme: many reflected on it, spoke of it, and referred to its significance. But diverse conceptions emerged: General C R de Wet (1854-1922), who proposed continuing the War, gauged the situation thus:

My answer is: Faith alone, and nothing more. This was the only veritable foundation on which we started the war. Faith even now remains our single foundation [...] Has the way ahead become dark? Or illuminated? Faith alone [...] and we know that a small nation can conquer the mightiest enemy in faith. Our struggle is a struggle in faith — to conquer.⁴³

General J B M Hertzog (1866-1942), a trained jurist who was a judge before the War, held a different opinion:

The incessant reflection on the question of religion in a public meeting such as this irritates me. It is continually pointed out that this or that is Divine Intervention. But, although I have my faith, I say that neither you nor I have the vaguest conception of what Divine Intervention is. God has given all of us common sense and a conscience and when these lead us, then we need to follow nothing else.⁴⁴

General J H de la Rey (1847-1914), who, like De Wet, had been a farmer before the War, had his own view:

I will be brief [...] Here you may speak and decide as you like. But, I tell you: this meeting is the end of the war. The end can come honourably or dishonourably. If we decide to continue the war, for no reason, the end will be dishonourable. Many have spoken of faith. What is faith? Faith is: Lord, Thy will be done [...] And not: My will be done to be the victor. I must mortify my will and I have to act and

rende die Anglo-Boereoorlog: 1899-1902 (unpublished DPhil dissertation, University of the Orange Free State, Bloemfontein, 1975).

42 Kestell J D & Van Velden D E, *De vredesonderhandelingen tusschen de regeeringen der twee Zuid-Afrikaansche Republieken en de vertegenwoordigers der Britsche Regeering welke uitliepen op den vrede, op 31 Mei 1902 te Vereeniging gesloten* (Pretoria-Amsterdam: J H de Bussy, 1909): 212.

43 *Ibid.*: 171 [my translation, DB]. For De Wet, cf Scholtz W L v R, *Generaal Christiaan de Wet as veldheer* (Leiden: Rijksuniversiteit, 1978).

44 Kestell & Van Velden, *De vredesonderhandelingen*: 180 [my translation, DB]. For General Hertzog, cf Van den Heever C M, *Generaal J B M Hertzog* (Johannesburg: APB, 1943), Le Roux J H, Coetzer P W, Marais A H, *Generaal J B M Hertzog. Sy strewe en stryd* (Johannesburg: Perskor, 1987).

think as He guides and leads. That is my understanding of faith.
This is the faith by which God's children should live.⁴⁵

To this, the lawyer and general J C Smuts (1870-1950) added:

We now submit to the will of God. The future is dark, but we can not sacrifice the courage, the trust, the hope that is embedded in the faith in God.⁴⁶

The views of these generals indicate a wide range of religious opinion and reflection, and constitute a good reason for proposing that the role and significance of the Christian faith during this War should be examined more carefully and critically than has yet been the case. Popular assumptions can easily engender oversimplifications.

4. 'Chaplain to the refugee camp'

During 1900, the first year of the War, the diarist was a student in the final year of his training at the Theological Seminary in Stellenbosch.⁴⁷ He would have been well acquainted with the situation of the war. His professors and the Cape Colony's foremost churchmen had taken the lead in trying to prevent it and then, after October 1899, in attempting to come to terms with the ensuing disaster, theologically speaking. Furthermore, Professor N J Hofmeyr (1827-1909) had been instrumental in constituting an ecclesiastical committee to discuss the situation of prisoners of war with the Cape authorities and to co-ordinate the ministry to these men.⁴⁸ This ministry was typical of the approach of the contemporary Dutch Reformed Church's evangelical theology, in which

45 Kestell & Van Velden, *De vredesonderhandelingen*: 161 [my translation, DB]. For De la Rey, cf Meintjes J, *De la Rey — Lion of the West: a biography* (Johannesburg: Kearsland, 1966).

46 Kestell & Van Velden, *De vredesonderhandelingen*: 196. For Smuts, cf Smuts J C, *Jan Christiaan Smuts: a biography* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1973), Cameron T, *Jan Smuts: an illustrated biography* (Cape Town: Human & Rousseau, 1994), Beukes P, *The religious Smuts* (Cape Town: Human & Rousseau, 1994), Geyser O, *Jan Smuts and his international contemporaries* (Johannesburg: Covos Day, 2001).

47 Cf August Daniël Luckhoff, Geldenhuys, *Jaarboek*: 389. He enrolled at the Seminary in 1896.

48 Cf *De Kerkbode* 22 Maart 1900 17(12): 176. For the role of N J Hofmeyr in the War, cf Du Toit S, *Professor N J Hofmeyr 1827-1909: predikant in die lesingsaal* (unpubl DTh dissertation, University of Stellenbosch, Stellenbosch, 1984): 390-6.

Britz/Faith in an Anglo-Boer War concentration camp of 1901

much emphasis was placed on sin, repentance, conversion and surrender to Christ.⁴⁹ In February 1900, for example, Andrew Murray (1828-1917)⁵⁰ preached in the Green Point (transition) camp on trial, faith and repentance. The ministry to prisoners of war thus inaugurated would continue until after the War.

At the end of that year the diarist was licensed for the ministry in the Dutch Reformed Church. After a six-month tour of Europe — a privilege for the more affluent students — he received a telegram from the Reverend William Robertson (1842-1913), inviting him to serve in one of the refugee camps for whites in the war-stricken interior.⁵¹ Robertson, previously the minister to the Dutch Reformed congregation of Petrusburg, was officially appointed co-ordinator of spiritual services to refugee camps in the Orange River Colony on 1 July 1901.⁵² This appointment included the responsibility for recruiting clergymen to serve the spiritual needs of the camps. Martial Law required these clergy to be British subjects, or at least to have taken the oath of neutrality, and to be cleared by British Intelligence. They were entitled to an officer's tent and rations, and received a salary of about £200 per annum. Their activities were restricted to what the authorities considered to be spiritual work.

When the inexperienced A H Luckhoff arrived at Bethulie on 21 August 1901, he was approved and appointed “chaplain” to the concentration camp.⁵³ He was not unfamiliar with the region, having been born at Colesberg, a neighbouring town in the Cape Colony, where his father had been minister to the local congregation.⁵⁴ As was the case with

49 The sermons of the Reverend H J L du Toit of Lichtenburg are a good example: *Aan de rivieren van Babel: ter herinnering aan onze krijgsgevangenschap te Simonstad Belle Vue Kamp* (Cape Town: Citadel Printers, 1900). Between June and October 1900 he ministered to captured Boers in the transition camp at Bellevue near Cape Town.

50 Cf *De Kerkbode* 22 February 1900 17(8): 115. Cf *De Kerkbode* 5 April 1900 17(14): 210, 211.

51 *Women's endurance*, Introduction.

52 Cf in this regard Britz R M, Die Tweetoringkerk as een van die NG gemeentes van Bloemfontein gedurende die Anglo-Boereoorlog, *Acta Theologica* 2002 22(1): 9.

53 *Women's endurance*, title page.

54 Cf August Daniël Luckhoff, Geldenhuis, *Jaarboek*: 398. Also *Women's endurance*, August 23: 4 and August 26: 8: “... very nice to meet so many great friends of Oom Jacob and of Papa from Colesberg ...”.

most volunteering colleagues — and ministers — from the (British) Cape Colony, he was motivated by a typical evangelical urge. This was characteristic of the theology of the nineteenth-century Cape Dutch Reformed Church — a theology on which the contemporary Anglo-Saxon evangelical movement had a significant impact.⁵⁵ The ministry to people in refugee camps thus represented an opportunity and a challenge.⁵⁶ Week after week the official journal of the Dutch Reformed Church of the Cape (*De Kerkbode*) conveyed news and information about the camps (albeit censored) to a growing circle of sympathetic readers. It also gave detailed descriptions of the spiritual work in the camps: what was being achieved not only in terms of the ecclesiastical structures that were being institutionalised (the camps in effect formed large temporary Dutch Reformed congregations), but also in terms of the practical outcomes: special evangelical preaching occasions and touching prayer meetings, altar calls, decisions for Christ, repentance and moving conversions, even revivals.⁵⁷ This evangelicalism clearly resulted in a theological shift from the (“objective”) Christ of faith to the (“subjective”) faith of man. This shift deeply influenced the ministry.

- 55 Cf Franken M C, *Spesiale evangelieprediking in die Ned Geref Kerk in Suid-Afrika 1876-1945* (unpubl MTh thesis, University of Stellenbosch, Stellenbosch, 1987): 10-2, 56, Kuyler D A, *Die ontwikkeling van die Sinode en sinodale dienswerk van die Ned Geref Kerk in Suid-Afrika gedurende die 19de eeu. 'n Ekklesiologiese studie* (unpubl DTh dissertation, University of Stellenbosch, Stellenbosch, 1997): 115, 228, 233. Cf also Britz R M, *Teologiese aantekeninge by die jubileum van 'Ons Teologiese Seminarium' op Stellenbosch*, d'Assonville V E & De Boer E A (reds), *Ad Fontes. Teologiese, historiese en wetenskaps-filosofiese studies binne reformatoriese kader. Festschrift vir Ludi F. Schulze* (Bloemfontein: University of the Free State, 2004): 217-49.
- 56 A number of remarks confirm Luckhoff's evangelical concern and approach. Cf in this regard *Women's endurance*, August 26: 9: “Mrs. Botha [...] penitent; wonder if it is only the fear that drives her, or whether it is a genuine case of true repentance”; September 11: 27: “Gave old woman [...] children and grandchildren, earnest talking-to this afternoon; old woman, over seventy, quite callous as to religion; no sense of need ...”; September 20: 39: “Called after dinner Mrs. Pelser; ill and concerned about soul; same one I had long talks with before; afraid she is still ignorant of primary step, reconciling with God; spent long while in making way of salvation clear”; 24 September: 44: “Mr. V.d.B. [...] hard character, but today quite softened; long talk; not yet saved; prayer; great suffering”. Cf further September 26: 50 and September 30: 53.
- 57 For an assessment of the role of this journal during the War, cf Britz R M, *De Kerkbode oor die Anglo-Boereoorlog Julie 1899-Julie 1900* (Deel 1), *NGTT* March & June 2001 42(1&2): 28-45; Britz R M, *De Kerkbode oor die Anglo-Boereoorlog Julie 1900-Julie 1902* (Deel 2), *NGTT* September & December 2001 42(3&4): 266-84.

5. 'What sorrows [are] to be [found] tent upon tent'

That night in the tent, his weary hand was not able to compile an acceptable representation of the situation in the Bethulie camp for interested readers near and far. He could have done so. He could have penned a report about the thirty-nine "elders" who helped him,⁵⁸ the Sunday school that had been organised⁵⁹ or the Sunday services, which were conducted outdoors, with most of the congregation standing. Later a marquee tent was provided for this purpose, serving to accommodate the school during the week.⁶⁰ He could have mentioned the regular gatherings of young people,⁶¹ prayer meetings for girls, women and men.⁶² And then there was much singing in the camp, sometimes slow and impressive "strains of Psalm-singing"⁶³ but also songs from the popular *Kinderharp*, an evangelical hymnbook characterised by the songs of Sankey (1840-1908), translated into Dutch.⁶⁴

Or, he could have described the normal course of a day's exhausting work: visitation rounds at the hospital and tents; comforting and helping the dying, the sick, the weary, the weak and the feeble; reading scriptures and praying; the funerals in the afternoons; the prayer meetings thereafter. He could have added — as his colleagues did — information on the conditions prevailing in the camp: the problem of overcrowding; the squalor; the inadequate sanitation;⁶⁵ the distrust of many

58 *Women's endurance*, August 22: 3; September 24: 43.

59 *Women's endurance*, August 25: 8; September 2: 17; September 19: 38.

60 *Women's endurance*, August 25: 6; September 8: 23; September 18: 36; September 22: 41; October 20: 64.

61 *Women's endurance*, September 1: 16; September 20: 40; September 23: 42.

62 *Women's endurance*, September 8: 23; September 29: 47; September 29: 49. Once he commented on the long and wearying prayers of the women. He thought that men could drag on, "...But let me be silent about the women" (*Women's endurance*, September 27: 49). And, on those of the girls: "Regulated prayers somewhat; first for our own special needs, second and third for our camp, fourth and fifth relatives and friends far away; Land en volk" (*Women's endurance*, October 20: 64).

63 *Women's endurance*, August 23: 5.

64 *Women's endurance*, September 23: 42. See also September 23: 42; September 24: 44 "May many a sad and weary heart have found in our singing a balm for the aching, longing heart ..."; September 27: 48; October 13: 59; October 12: 59; October 16: 61; October 20: 64.

65 *Women's endurance*, August 22: 3; August 24: 6: "Great concern because of the difficulty of cleanliness amid such dire straits; point determined; to warn and exhort

in the medicine, medical prescriptions and treatment received; the superstition and trust in their own remedies,⁶⁶ and that the doctors and nurses did their best to combat pneumonia, fever, measles and enteritis.⁶⁷ However, reference⁶⁸ to insufficient provisions and nourishment, to the inferior quality of the meat, and to shortages⁶⁹ or criticism of the in-

one and all to the strictest cleanliness; for cleanliness is next to godliness". Cf also September 4: 19; October 16: 60.

66 Cf for example the following remark, *Women's endurance*, September 9: 25: "The quack doctor deserves to be kicked; found bottle of medicine on table somewhere; pure water; five shillings. He is coining money and fleecing people most scandalously; child now luckily in hospital; spoke strongly to parents on the point". See also August 26: 9: "... the idea that is dangerous to wash with measles; rot!".

67 *Women's endurance*, August 25: 7.

68 Cf also *Dagboek*, 65: "Zoo gaan ons leeven toen aan, elken acht dagen moet ons gaan meel, koffie, zyker en zout ontvang. En elke vyftien of twintig dagen paar stukgies zeep ontvang en elken morgen vlees en elken Zondag kerk van Ds. Becker en mandag en woensdag en donner dag Bud uir en dan zijn hier ook vrouwens die de behoeften van ons op schryf wat dan iets aan gedoen wort en schoenen wort ook gestuir die aan de menschen uit ge deel wort"; *Dagboek*, 67: "De avont wort dit gezint tot om negen uir. Om drie uir begin de kinderen alweder huil en tyn dagbreek dreem dit al, zoo als hele schreeuw en dan gaan dit zoo als wasgoed wat geklop word zoo slaat de moeders de kinders en zonop dan is dit net een gedreem. Dit lach in huil en praat en kap en slaan en ry en Op ver vleis, elken mogen. Zoo dreem di die dag deer tot die avond en de dag als men uit de Camp gaan dan kan men net vrouwmenschen zien aankom wat gaan hoit haal en niet ander dan kriedorings. Elken morgen wort voor elken tent hoit neergezit zoodat hy dien dag kan daarmee kos kook, maar ons bakhout moet ons zelf aandra."

69 The lack of sufficient nourishment for the camp is often mentioned in the diary. See *Women's endurance*, August 28: 12; September 1: 16; September 5: 21: "Milk supply has been stopped in Camp; this causes great distress. What sorrows is to find tent upon tent with sick children and no nourishing or invalid food; not even milk"; September 12: 28; October 3: 54: "Can a man (let alone a woman — breathe not a child) remain healthy and strong on bread, meat (miserable half-pound), coffee, and condensed milk? And so, when sickness comes there is nothing to fall back upon — no resistance. And with a wasted constitution who can battle against fever, pneumonia, and other things? And for those that grimly struggle through, there is nothing wherewith to nourish and strengthen; no real milk; no eggs; wine; no delicacies such as convalescents should be tempted with. About as saddening sight as one can dream of is a peep into the children's ward — poor wasted, withered little innocents!" Rensche van der Walt also refers to the poor quality of the food (*Dagboek*, 88). She tells how they used to go out into the hills to dig "uintjies" (uncultivated root plants) to eat. Cf also *Dagboek*, 82: "Under old Daer," (Camp Superintendent during 1901) "we were like dogs".

competent camp authorities would not have met with the approval of the censor — in fact, his ministry would have been abruptly terminated.⁷⁰

6. 'It is so hard to pray and so wearying'

The diary clearly shows that Luckhoff was overcome by the situation in the camp. After only a week he had to deal with the "fearfulness of being awakened repeatedly in the night"⁷¹ by the tramp of those carrying away the dead to the morgue tents.⁷² The "horrible whistle" — as he called it — that summoned "the morgue tent people" to come and remove the dead upset him greatly. Four days after his arrival, he wrote: "It is Death's shrill, harsh, jarring, triumphant shout! It shivers one through".⁷³ By then he knew that more funerals were inevitable. The Sunday after his arrival he had 14 bodies to lay to rest. He noted then that the burial ground contained about 120 graves,⁷⁴ still awaiting gravestones. Many of them were marked with bottles stuck into the fresh soil, each containing a piece of paper bearing the deceased's name, date of birth and date of death. During September 1901 a further 500 graves were added.⁷⁵

He jotted down the biblical texts used at the funerals⁷⁶ and complained that the preparation had to be done when he led the slow, weary

70 *Women's endurance*, September 12: 27: "This is my daily dilemma: Speak out and protest, and be removed or imprisoned — hold silence and be the coward, and remain in the work. And I chose the latter."

71 *Women's endurance*, September 1: 16; Cf also August 28: 11; September 21: 40.

72 There were three such tents, about 100 yards beyond the hospital. See *Women's endurance*, August 29: 13.

73 *Women's endurance*, August 25: 8.

74 *Women's endurance*, August 23: 4.

75 *Women's endurance*, October 1: 54.

76 He decided to write down the texts for the addresses at the gravesides in his diary. See *Women's endurance*, August 24: 6. Cf further August 24: 6: "As for man his days are as grass; as for a flower of the field so he flourishes"; August 26: 9: "It is sown in corruption, it is raised in incorruption"; August 28: 11: "So teach us the number of our days", "And the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works"; August 30: 14: "I was dumb, I opened not my mouth because thou didst it"; August 31: 15: "For it is soon cut off"; September 2: 18: "That which thou sowest is not quickened except it die"; September 6: 21: "Lord, Thou hast been our dwelling place in all generations"; September 8: 23: "But they which are written in the Lamb's book of life"; September 11: 27: "To know Thee is life everlasting"; September 16: 34: "The Reaper and the flowers"; September

procession to the graveyard.⁷⁷ Now and again the outline of a sermon was written out, for example:

And the dead were judged out of the things which were written in the books. We are all busy, each with his own book, and each day we add a page; but one day, like with these dead, we come to our last page. What have we written? How do we write? When we become God's children, God writes in letters of red — with Christ's blood as ink — over the pages of sin we have till now written 'Cleansed in Jesus' blood' and thence we write only to the glory of God. And the little children we bury today — they too have their little books completed, but I believe there was an angel to hold the pen of each child, and that therefore their little books will be pure before God.⁷⁸

Apparently the text for that occasion was taken from Revelations 20:12.⁷⁹ It is clear that the application does not complement the original meaning of the text. Luckhoff rather re-interprets it in terms of a conceivable metaphor in which consolation may be found but which contradicts the teaching of the Bible. There are no biblical grounds for assuming that angels intervene in such a way on behalf of infants in their final moments. Luckhoff was not only theologically inaccurate; in fact, he was in error. There is no substitute for Christ. However, his exposition may indeed have comforted the weeping mothers and children gathered at the open graves. One must therefore ask: did this metaphor (and the approval thereof) indicate the existence of a devout spirituality concerning angels among the residents of the camp? The angels carved on so many gravestones could indeed have been powerful expressions of this spirituality or belief.⁸⁰

18: 37: "Lord, make me know mine end"; September 20: 39: "So teach us to number our days"; October 16: 60: "Blessed are the dead that die in the Lord"; October 8: 56: "And they brought the children to Jesus"; October 16: 61: "I was dumb. I opened not my mouth because Thou didst it"; October 18: 62: "I go to prepare a place for you".

77 *Women's endurance*, August 28: 11.

78 *Women's endurance*, October 18: 62.

79 "And I saw the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne; and books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of the things which were written in the books, according to their works". *Holy Bible*, Revised Version, 1938.

80 *Women's endurance*, September 8: 24: "May God's angels guard over those hospital tents this night."

Britz/Faith in an Anglo-Boer War concentration camp of 1901

It was not only the daily deaths and the regularity of disturbing funerals⁸¹ that constrained Luckhoff's reflection. He was continuously hampered by the sense that his ministry was falling short.⁸² He could never find time to prepare sermons properly.⁸³ His duties were demanding. "It is so hard to pray, and so wearying. And then, to comfort and cheer, when your own heart is lead within."⁸⁴ Furthermore, the intense misery, the disconsolateness of the people around him, and the overwhelming helplessness in the presence of death⁸⁵ run like a molten core through the diary. Listening on the evening of 27 August to "great coughs; little coughs; deep coughs; shrill coughs; hoarse coughs; long coughs; coughs that are no coughs at all" he wondered "how many are to die to-night!"⁸⁶ "One longs for day, and the night seems never to end."⁸⁷

The burden of an inner tension is clear in his report on the 21-year-old Annie Bothma, desperately ill with pneumonia in the hospital. He could not reconcile himself to the prospect of her death. And yet she yearned to be released from life, and begged him to pray to that effect.

81 See *Women's endurance*, August 27: 10; August 30: 14: "Oh, the sorrow of it! The sorrow of it! Nothing is more regular than that dreary procession every afternoon at four o'clock"; September 3: 19: "And so we go forth day by day; the dread whistle; the regular tramp of the bearers to the morgue tents, and the slowly winding procession every afternoon".

82 Cf *Women's endurance*, August 24: 6; September 1: 16.

83 See *Women's endurance*, August 28: 11; August 31: 15; September 1: 16; September 21: 40; September 22: 41; October 12: 59; October 24: 65.

84 *Women's endurance*, September 1: 16; September 4: 20; September 12: 28: "These funerals most painful and wearying, and then the burden of having to give address". Cf also September 29: 49.

85 He was confronted with the biblical story of Jairus's daughter. Many dying children in the hospital tent asked him to read this very story to them. Cf *Women's endurance*, September 15: 32; September 16: 35. Cf further August 24: 5: "The mother died last week. Daughter this morning [...]; remaining daughter very very bad; 'Mijnheer, moet assemblief bid dat ik gezond kan word' [Sir, you must pray, please, that I may recover]; little hope; inflammation"; August 26: 8: "Weinanda; five years; pining away; large grey eyes; far-away look; poor little mite. [...] Wonder if I am really rather soft; but when this little mite clasped her tiny hands together when Oom began to pray, I was bowled clean over." She died on September 8; cf September 8: 24; September 21: 40; October 18: 62.

86 *Women's endurance*, August 27: 11.

87 *Women's endurance*, August 28: 11; September 7: 22.

Now, God forgive me, but this dying girl's request I cannot, cannot accede to. Humanly speaking she simply cannot live; it is only her abnormally strong constitution that fights so rimey [*sic*]. I have wrestled with God for her life. Oh, she must not, may not die! Think of the weak, frail mother — of the father far away in Ceylon! 'O ye of little faith,' and yet I firmly believe God can still spare her life.⁸⁸

Two days later she was buried with others, some of whom were wrapped in blankets due to the shortage of wood for coffins.⁸⁹ "Our camp", he wrote on 1 September, "is a veritable valley of desolation."

For the very essence of sorrow and misery, come here! For weeping, wailing mothers, come here! For broken hearts, come here! For desperate misery and hopelessness, come here! What would become of us if we had not our Religion to fall back upon! What, if we had not the assurance that a Good and Merciful God reigns above! What if there was no Love! What if there was no hope of the Resurrection and Life Everlasting! What, if there was nothing beyond the grave!⁹⁰

7. 'Is there no pity sitting in the clouds that can see into the bottom of our grief?'

But what was there? His uncertainty and doubt in this regard surfaced at the end of September. On the night of 29 September he wrote:

Our fellow men around us are carried off by death; and now they are solving the great mystery of the hereafter. Stupendous thought! These same men, women and children with whom I prayed, to whom I spoke about eternal things — they know now what we are burning to know. Is there life after death? Is there a Heaven? Is there a hell? What do the departed do just now? Is there perhaps a purgatory where souls are purified? Is there a throne above? Around which crowds that cannot be numbered stand clothed in long white robes? What about the palm branches? And a thousand more questions.⁹¹

He was perplexed. He was questioning the Bible. He concluded, though: "The just shall live by his FAITH."⁹²

88 *Women's endurance*, August 28: 12.

89 *Women's endurance*, August 30: 14; For burials in blankets, cf September 28: 11.

90 *Women's endurance*, September 1: 16. Cf also September 4: 20: "Two things I have learnt during these fourteen days which till now to me were all fancy — the meaning of Love and the thing called Religion". Also September 12: 28: "The fruit of our faith is our resignation and peace of heart".

91 *Women's endurance*, September 29: 50.

92 *Women's endurance*, September 29: 50.

Britz/Faith in an Anglo-Boer War concentration camp of 1901

By that time the sensitive young evangelical minister was challenged by even deeper questions that arose: questions concerning God Himself ... He found himself in the same position as the husband who had rushed out of the tent in tears when his wife was dying. The man's question as he fled had not gone unnoticed. Luckhoff wrote it down in his diary: "Is there no pity sitting in the clouds that can see into the bottom of our grief?"⁹³ Is this sentiment not also what the enigmatic story of Herklaas really reflects? The entry for 31 August 1901 reads as follows:

Glum; just returned from dying boy, Herklaas; young, strong; father Ceylon; visited him yesterday; said he did not want to die because his father was away, and he had to care for the mother. Touched late last night and found him very bad [...] this morning he was better, but this afternoon worse, and now (10 p.m.) I find him dying. I am very very down-hearted tonight, and am tempted to think that, after all, God — No, I won't write it, because I believe this is a temptation of Satan! But, oh, we did pray so fervently that God should spare his life; he still is so young and so strong.⁹⁴

Did the same thoughts crop up when he joined lamenting women-folk crowding a tent a few days later, and noticed "the helpless babe, casting her black eyes from one to another"? "Some people will insist on anticipating the Almighty", he wrote, but "the child is dead, though".⁹⁵

"Why is there so much sorrow and bitterness in this life?"⁹⁶ "But where, o where are our prayers? May God save me from sin of unbelief and doubt during these days!"⁹⁷

These thoughts did not cross the mind of Rensche van der Walt:

We do not lament, because the Lord Jesus was a stranger on earth for thirty years, and He has said: Whoever wants to be my disciple, must take up my cross and follow Me. Thus I may not whimper when I have to take up my cross.⁹⁸

93 *Women's endurance*, August 27: 11.

94 *Women's endurance*, August 31: 15.

95 *Women's endurance*, September 4: 19.

96 *Women's endurance*, September 17: 35.

97 *Women's endurance*, October 10: 57. Cf also October 12: 57: "Thirteen coffins; so sad, so painfully sad. May I never forget the weeping crowd around the open graves! [...] And now, where are these dead? What would I not give to have short minute's talk to that young girl! What would she tell me? We read together so often, prayed so often, spoke about eternal things so often. And now! What now? How good and wise of God to withhold from our knowledge some certain things."

98 *Dagboek*, 62 "Maar ons klagen niet want de Heere Jezus heeft dertig jaar op de aarde

In that dreadful camp — a place of noise, of affliction, of weeping, of sorrow,⁹⁹ a grieved mortal dale¹⁰⁰ — her faith found expression in submission to and compliance with God's will¹⁰¹ and God's chastening hand.¹⁰² There is an invitation to surrender and take comfort in God's Word.¹⁰³ And hope.¹⁰⁴ Is this a portrayal of an uncomplicated and unpretentious reception of the teaching of the *Heidelberg Catechism* and the *Belgic Confession* on the Providence of God?¹⁰⁵ Luckhoff, on the other hand,

een vreemdeling gewees en heef gezeg: Die een deceipel van my wil wees zoo neem my kruis op en volg my. Zoo moog ik niet kernen als ik myn kruis moet opneem" [my translation, DB].

99 Cf in this respect *Dagboek*, 71, 73, 75.

100 *Dagboek*, 72: "5 october was my treurigste dag wat ik in de Camp gehat heef, dien ik nimmer of nooit zal vergeeten. Waarop ik moet psalm 118:9 uit roep: De heer wou my wel hard kastyden maar storten my niet in de doodverzachte vaderlyk myn lyden en redde my uit alle noot."

101 Cf *Dagboek*, 80: "Zo zien ik dat de leeven ver kort wort door zwaar maar wy klaagen niet, want dit doen de wil dus Heeren. De Heer heef gegeven, de Heere heef genomen, de naam dus Here zy geloof"; *Dagboek*, 76 "Wat de lieve Heere aan ons daan is wel gedaan. Want de Heer is groot een heerlyk God een Koning die het zaligste lot. Alles die op aarde leef beef onder de wil en beschermd hand dus Heere. Wat de Heere doen is en zyn wil behaagen. Het diepst van aardryks in gewand het hoogs geberg is in zyn hand. Van booven de aarde tot ook zoo diep mensch het ook moog bevat tot ook het hoogs geberg, zyn ook onder de wil des Heeren, aan dien hy dit ook toe geschink heef dien zal het beert is al gehoorzaam op zyn sinken. Zoo zyn het ook met de gene die de Heere roep tot de eeuwige wooning die moet spoedig gaan, want de hooge berge als de Heere ook tot hun wink zal zy hun oude staanplaats moeten verlaaten, zoo moet ons maar zwygen over de gene die hun reis voleindig hat en over ons self treeren, want ons weeten niet waar en hoe ons ook nog moet vaaren voor ons ons reis vol eindig het. Waaken en bidden moeten wy op dien weg gaan. Zoo gy zyn stem dan heeden hoort verhard u niet maar laat u leiden. Geloof zyn heil en troosryk woort. Onze leeven wort op wonderlyke wyze beproef."

102 Cf *Dagboek*, 77: "Maar zy allen zyn geduldig onder de Kastydende hand dus Heeren want de Heere kastyd de gene die hy lief heef"; *Dagboek*, 77: "Dog wy klaagen niet, want wat de Heere doen is welgedaan"; *Dagboek*, 58: "Ons werp al onze bekommernis op de Heere. Hy zal het voor ons maaken"; *Dagboek*, 59: "Maar de Lieve Heere heef toen nog een ander doel met ons die ons niet weeten. Ons dink toen ons weg. Maar de Heere bestier ons gang"; *Dagboek*, 60: "Maar ik troosde my maar weder met Ps. 25:6. Deze woorden: God zal zelf hun leidman weezen, leeren hoe zyn wandelen moet."

103 *Dagboek*, 73, 84.

104 Cf *Dagboek*, 80: "Maar ik hoop ons zal niet altoos verstooten wort de dag breek aan dat ons weder zal verlos worden van ons treerigheid. Dan zullen ons getroos worden van al ons droefheid."

105 Cf *Heidelberg Catechism* Sunday 9 and 10; *Belgic Confession* Article 13.

nowhere refers to or even implies the same confessional standards of his church. He raises serious questions and records the temptation to doubt and despair. Does this indicate that the evangelical theology in which he was trained was unable to prevent him from questioning God's will and providence in the circumstances he was experiencing?

When he sat down at his small table on a wooden box that Wednesday night to write in his diary, he had been subjected to unforeseen, even unthinkable experiences and thoughts. It is fully understandable that he wanted to tarry over the tragic scenes of life that evening. Thus he writes: "Let me attempt what I have never before done — a description of a deathbed".¹⁰⁶

8. 'Let me attempt to ...'

From the very first day he was confronted by death, by deathbeds, and by the moment of death. By 23 August he had already gained the impression that a "deathbed" seemed to hold "a grim attraction for our people".¹⁰⁷ He found "such barefaced curiosity [...] revolting [...] I hate it," he remarked.¹⁰⁸ On the night of 25 September, though, he found himself describing a deathbed scene.

Something prompted me to make early visit to the hospital, so went before breakfast. In first ward went straight to little Mita Duvenhage's bed, and her I found very bad — struggling hard to breathe; so young and yet so bitter a suffering!

From there called by Mrs. Van den Berg to new ward, to come quickly, as Lenie was dying.¹⁰⁹ I went, and when I entered saw that God was going to take her away. Let me not attempt to describe her angelic little face of marble white, her beautifully chiselled nose, and her sweet little mouth! Silently we knelt around her bedside — mother, nurse and I. Of her beautiful blue eyes I have said nothing, for they were closed — the lids gently drawn, and the lashes trying hard to kiss the soft smooth cheeks. 'O God, come and help us! O Saviour, come and take

106 *Women's endurance*, September 25: 44.

107 *Women's endurance*, August 23: 4; August 24: 5; August 26: 9: "... if anyone is seriously ill, they 'hands up' and cluster around to await the end, lest per chance they miss seeing such a beautiful deathbed".

108 *Women's endurance*, August 28: 11. Cf also August 31: 15: "Some folks will put themselves to endless inconvenience to be able to witness a deathbed. They revel in it. I am vexed in my soul, and feel as though I could knock down every one of them."

109 He visited her in the hospital on 21 September and prayed that God might spare her life. *Women's endurance*, September 21: 41: "A girl of fourteen, with the softest, sweetest face imaginable; two clear languid, blue eyes ...", he then observed.

Thy place beside her bed — hold her hand — take her in Thy tender arms and press her against Thy bosom! Bear her, Saviour, where Thou wilt, for with Thee she is safe. Comfort our hearts and give us to bend our heads in humble resignation — Thy will be done. Amen!

'Lenie, Lenie, Lenie, mij kind, jou mammie is hier bij jou, en Jezus ook is hier om jou hand te hou — moenie bang wees nie, mij kind.' ['... my child, your mother is here, near you, and Jesus too is here to hold your hand — don't be afraid, child.'] Under her weary eyelids she looked at us, and a large tear gathered in her left eye. It glistened like a diamond for a moment, and then became the possession of the sorrow-stricken mother. Then we were silent and watched. Slowly and gently the lids opened — now again we could look into those clear blue orbs. Wider — wider — and still wider they grow — uplifted, right away beyond the three forms of clay before her. See how the pupils dilate — they seem to swamp the blue! And so for a few short moments they remain. It was a gaze right beyond us to — what! Will it be old-fashioned to suggest 'Angels', perhaps! Until I grow wiser I shall hold fast to Angels. O, the mystery of the Unknown!

And slowly, gently, those lids sink once more to rest — to rest indeed — for her spirit has fled — perfect peace!

How passing strange, how majestic in its simplicity, how weird in its strange stillness — the passing of a Soul — the disunion of Body and Spirit! Is this Death? Then may I never fear its shadow!

Sunset and Evening Star!¹¹⁰

Lenie was buried the following day. There was a problem. The supply of boards for coffins was again exhausted. "Well, I (next to) stole two nice planks in the store tent, and was, with empty condensed milk box and the box which I used as a chair, able to give quite a small fortune in wood for Lenie's coffin."¹¹¹ Mita Duvenage, 14 years of age, was buried as well. They laid her to rest next to her brother. There were another two small children. Thus four in total. The text came from the Gospel of Matthew: "Suffer the children to come unto Me, and forbid them not, for such is the kingdom of heaven."¹¹²

While Luckhoff was singing and praying with the children that evening, another young girl died: Lena Steyn.¹¹³ The conclusion of his diary entry reads: "And so these three girlies have gone to Jesus. Now, what has become of our prayers and supplications?"

110 *Women's endurance*, September 25: 44-5.

111 *Women's endurance*, September 26: 46.

112 *Women's endurance*, September 26: 46.

113 *Women's endurance*, September 26: 47.

9. 'The people wept'

On Friday 1 November Luckhoff himself was carried into the hospital. He had collapsed. He was mentally affected and suffering delusions. "During these days of blank, my chief past-time was to recite the Burial Service."¹¹⁵ In December 1901, after about six weeks, he was taken back to his parents' home in Durbanville. For August Luckhoff, the War was over.

For Renche van der Walt, the War finally ended on 28 December 1902, when she arrived back on the farm where they had been captured in April 1901.¹¹⁶ During May 1902 her family chose to move to the new camp at Kubusie near King Williamstown.¹¹⁷ There the news that peace had been declared reached them on 3 June. A huge bonfire was lit. Psalms and hymns were sung, as well as the national anthems of the former Republics.¹¹⁸

'Daarna heef hele toen dooje meziek gespeel genoem gremevon.' ['There-
after they played "dead music", entitled gramophone.']¹¹⁹

In the same week the terms of the peace agreement were communicated to them. "It was after all not a declaration of peace", Van der Walt commented, "but surrender [...] That was a bitter hour. The people wept."¹²⁰

10. Conclusion

This article has recorded a sample of Luckhoff's effusive outpourings onto the pages of his diary, tracing some of his personal experiences and observations, with special reference to the impact of his experiences on his faith. He was overcome by the reality of life and death in the camp. He eventually suffered a spiritual and psychological breakdown. The intention of the article, however, was not to highlight the trauma of a pastoral care-giver. Its aim was rather to illustrate the diverse range of the experience and understanding of faith in the concentration camp. Hence the

114 *Women's endurance*, September 26: 48.

115 *Women's endurance*, 67.

116 *Dagboek*, 97-98.

117 *Dagboek*, 86, 91.

118 *Dagboek*, 90.

119 *Dagboek*, 90 [my translation, DB].

120 *Dagboek*, 90: "Zoodat dit niet toen een vrede making gewees heef maar een overgeven. [...] Dit was een bitter uur. De menschen huil" [my translation, DB].

critical questions and the suggestion that nineteenth-century Anglo-Saxon evangelicalism played a decisive role in the ministry to and the ecclesiastical praxis in the concentration camps of the Anglo-Boer War. Clearly, we should be cautious about generalisations when discussing the role of Christian faith in the Anglo-Boer War. This fundamental aspect of the War should be scrutinised in terms of the requisite theological and critical differentiation.

Incidentally, Luckhoff regained his health and served as minister to the congregations of the Dutch Reformed Church in Caledon (1904-1905) and Darling (1912-1916) before being appointed as Secretary of the Commission for Poor Relief of that church — a position which he held until his retirement in 1943. The University of Stellenbosch conferred an honorary doctorate on him in recognition of his significant contribution to combating poverty. He published a number of books: *Die Afrikaners in Argentinië: rapport van die Kommissie vir die Algemene Armesorg, Ned. Geref. Kerk, K.P.*; *Federale besproeiingskemas en staatsnedersettings in die Verenigde State van Amerika: rapport van 'n besoek na die Verenigde State van Amerika onder vleuels van die Visitors Grants Comm. of the Carnegie Corporation of New York*;¹²¹ *Praatjies oor die Armesorg, K.P.*;¹²² *Die ontwikkeling van Bellville* (1945); *Rynse N.G. Gemeente Stellenbosch: Anderhalfeufees 1802-1952: Korte geskiedenis van sy ontstaan en ontwikkeling*.¹²³ He died in 1963.¹²⁴

121 Stellenbosch: Pro Ecclesia, 1930.

122 Stellenbosch: Pro Ecclesia, 1942.

123 Stellenbosch: Kerkraad van die Rynse NG Sendinggemeente, 1952.

124 Cf August Daniël Luckhoff, Geldenhuis, *Jaarboek*: 398.