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Topic:

THE UNMAKING OF AFRIKANERDOM

Speakers:

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The aim of these dialogues is to create a space for open and informed dialogue and debate around key local and global political, social and economic issues facing South Africa.

THE UNRAVELING OF AFRIKANERDOM

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Near the outset of his artfully written memoir, Leon Wessels meditates on the Anglo-Boer War and a question put to him by Cyril Ramaphosa: “What is it with you people that you can’t make peace with the English?” Wessels struggles to answer. He admits that “the Anglo-Boer War is still in my subconscious when I try to make sense of the present. The suffering and humiliation of the Boers during the Anglo-Boer War is etched into the psyche of the Afrikaner community.”¹ For all the power and energy poured into separate development, despite the successes of the Afrikaner movement and years of Afrikaner rule, despite republican independence, important historical roots of Afrikaner identity (as opposed to white racial identity) still seem rooted in recollection of British imperialism and resentment at the condescension of English-speaking South Africans – now black as well as white.

To some extent the Afrikaans language still remains a rallying-point, but there too English (and perhaps again “the English”) presents a problem, succinctly captured in Leon Wessels’ recollection of the late night words of an ANC constitutional negotiator in 1996:²

We are tired of you Afrikaners waging a language struggle against the English in the name of multilingualism. The other languages are always disrespected. Advance of other languages is a chimera to which you pay only lip service. The real issue is always Afrikaans. We don’t want to be part of the axe you continue to grind with the English. Afrikaans is an important language and it is understandable that you don’t want to allow English a special place in the Constitution. But you also need to understand that we cannot agree to allow the creation of a special space for Afrikaans.

¹ Leon Wessels, *Vereeniging: Die onvoltooide vrede* (Umuzi:Kapaastad, 2010), pp. 14-16

² Wessels, *Vereeniging*, p.329

Without state support, though, a local language like Afrikaans (and other native languages also, of course) necessarily struggles to hold its own against English as an international language.³ This is a practical rather than an ideological issue.

In contemporary South Africa, “Afrikanerdom” with its exercise of power and domination has disappeared into the night. What is left to Afrikaners (however one wishes to define them) is a history and a language, poetry, song and perhaps church life, although this too has been transformed. To use the terminology of Aletta Norval,⁴ the “Afrikaner myth” continues to echo among the ruins of the “apartheid imaginary.” Indeed, I would argue that the Afrikaner myth, as Afrikaner history reinterpreted in terms of what F.W. de Klerk called “the last trek,” provided moral and intellectual justification for the abandonment of Afrikaner power, polluted as Afrikaner power was by racist policies justified in cultural terms. Cultural arguments, rooted in the struggle of the Afrikaner movement, were completely discredited. That, though, raises a question: What is the situation now for Afrikaners when it becomes impossible to speak inclusively of or for “the” Afrikaner?

That is the topic of this paper, written as the first draft of an introduction for a new edition of *The Rise of Afrikanerdom*⁵. It has two parts. First, let me try to deal with the place of

³ Consider, for example, an anecdote from a recent lecture by Judge Louis Harms on “Law and Language in a Multilingual Society” at the Twelfth International Congress of the Internasionale Adademie vir Linguistiese Wetgewing in Bloemfontein on November 1st, 2010.

We recently had an important case raising matters of principle and possibly constitutional issues. The parties were Afrikaans. The evidence and argument was, too. So was the high court judgment. When it came to writing the judgment I had to make a choice: if I write in Afrikaans, the judgment would have no precedential value because not all our students, lawyers or judges would be able read it or to understand it fully. The Constitutional Court would have had to judge a translated judgment – a translation that I would not have seen and would not have known whether it was correct. The result of all this is that the practice has arisen in our court that judgments are to be in English unless the author is comfortable in Afrikaans, the parties and proceedings are in Afrikaans, and the case has no precedential value.

⁴ Aletta Norval, *Deconstructing Apartheid Discourse* (Verso, London & New York, 1996). Despite rather obscure theoretical language and some minor problems of historical detail to my mind this book constitutes one of the most thoughtful discussions of the moral dilemma of Afrikaner nationalism. Her conception of “the Afrikaner myth” conforms quite closely to what I have called “Afrikaner civil religion”. “The apartheid imaginary” (she quite correctly dubs it “impossible”) is what in this paper I call apartheid ideology. What her analysis gains in precision through post-Gramscian theory it tends to lose in general comprehensibility, however.

⁵ T. Dunbar Moodie, *The Rise of Afrikanerdom: Apartheid, Power and the Afrikaner Civil Religion* (University of California Press, Berkeley, 1975).

moral issues in the collapse of Afrikanerdom and, second, allow me to address the question of where Afrikaners now stand from a moral and intellectual point of view?

I

Despite the misery wrought by the twentieth-century South African state's pursuit of racial interests, the origins of apartheid ideology in what I have called "the Afrikaner civil religion" meant that there were always those who sought to justify apartheid's fundamental precepts in moral terms. However cruel apartheid was in its effects and however blind its adherents were to the suffering it caused, many Afrikaners (especially Afrikaner intellectuals) saw separate development policy as an attempt to deal with a moral dilemma rooted in their own experience of colonial domination.

From its inception, the application of apartheid policy engendered intense debate among Afrikaner intellectuals. 1960 and 1976 were fundamental turning points. During the crises of 1960, the policy elicited moral critique even from many supporters, but they were silenced. When the Soweto uprising in 1976 brought matters to a head again, Afrikaner critics of the system sought to reformulate the policy (often appealing to the anti-colonial roots of Afrikaner sacred history) to make a case for change. The accession to power of PW Botha in 1979 increased destabilization in bordering states and eventually occasioned internal states of emergency, but his regime also implemented constitutional reforms the so-called *verligte* intellectuals had been arguing since the late 1950s and urging since 1976. While those reforms failed completely to stem a welter of urban unrest and economic decline, FW de Klerk's "leap forward" in 1990 would have been inconceivable without them. Please note that this paper makes no attempt to argue that debates amongst Afrikaner intellectuals *caused* the transition of the 1990s (there were many much more concrete causes), but de Klerk clearly articulated (perhaps even formulated) his direction and marshaled his support along the lines of those debates.

Perhaps it is appropriate at least for me to list some of the external pressures that pushed P.W. Botha, F.W. de Klerk, the Afrikaner Broederbond and the National Party steadily toward

moderate reform. (Very few Afrikaner politicians or intellectuals seriously considered a universal franchise until the 1990s.) A case can be made that the most important pressure was simply demographic. From 1946 or so, a majority of urban South Africans were black. The notion that establishing and developing black “homelands” would turn the tide of black urbanization was simply a pipe dream (and an expensive one at that).⁶ Moreover, rapid economic growth during the 1960s, increased the “pull” of work in industry for urban migrants. Industrialization also raised the level of experience and skill necessary for factory labor. Replacing unskilled workers with others equally unskilled became increasingly impracticable. By the 1980s, homeland development and influx control had manifestly failed. Many employers, plagued by wildcat strikes, looked favorably on trade unions as a means of improving labor control. Eventually, pressure from unions, churches and other black voluntary associations, often inspired by black consciousness ideals (themselves developed in Bantustan universities), created levels of organized urban black opposition never before experienced in South Africa. At the same time, outside pressure from the anti-apartheid movement was steadily increasing.

Meanwhile, the majority of Afrikaans-speaking white South Africans were moving into professional and managerial positions. The civil service mushroomed. Afrikaner voters were becoming middle class. Pressure for reform came with the support of this new middle class. P.W. Botha could afford to lose Afrikaner voters to the Conservative Party and still push forward with his reform program – accompanied as it was by a military reaction to “total onslaught”. By the time de Klerk came to power in 1989 much of the formal structure of apartheid had been dismantled. De Klerk’s “leap forward” was largely political. The legislative work had been largely done by his predecessor.⁷ Moreover, P.W. Botha’s military build-up and his border conflicts required conscription. The personal impact of nasty wars on middle-class white youth (Afrikaans and English-speaking alike) was not entirely favorable to conservative interests, especially when the fall of the Berlin Wall brought home to everyone that the “total onslaught” long since fizzled out.

⁶ For an early and influential account of the evidence, see P. Smit and J.J. Booysen, *Swart Verstedeliking: Proses, patron en strategy* (Tafelberg, Kaapstad, 1981)

⁷ For a brief summary see Theresa Papenfus, *Pik Botha and his times* (Litera Publications, Pretoria, 2010) p.594

Such pressures on Afrikaner politicians and their intellectual support groups, in no way deny the importance of individual Afrikaner actors and the moral understandings. Structural pressures are mediated by human actors in social networks. This was particularly the case for Afrikaners in South Africa. It is striking how *internal* moral and political debates were to a narrow, ethnically defined, community of Afrikaans-speaking white South Africans. Moral debates amongst Afrikaners were referenced in the Afrikaans press and published in widely read collections of essays, but with little or no participation from English-speaking whites or from brown-skinned Afrikaans-speakers, let alone Africans. Such inwardness, compounded by the very effects of apartheid itself, probably closed off the majority of even morally aware Afrikaners from full comprehension of the suffering their policies had occasioned, but it also magnified the impact of moral and intellectual internal debates on those Afrikaners who exercised political power.⁸ It is to some central themes of these debates that I now turn.

II

Readers of *The Rise of Afrikanerdom* may remember that I criticized Piet Meyer's early conception of the Afrikaner "calling" as circular. "Afrikaners", I wrote,⁹ "are Afrikaners because of God's calling and God's calling means that they should be exclusively Afrikaner". In his final book, Meyer modifies his argument somewhat, concluding that "for our People it was never a matter of survival (*voortbestaan*) for the sake of survival (*oorlewing*), but to bring to fruition our divine destiny in Africa and in the entire world".¹⁰ The argument remains circular, however. Meyer never spells out a substantive content for Afrikaner divine destiny that extends beyond Afrikaner existence. What exactly *is* the Afrikaner calling?

⁸ I am writing here of Afrikaner intellectual networks. Both John Vorster and P.W. Botha were also subject to different sorts of moral and practical pressures from security networks which overlapped to some extent with those of the intellectuals but were also relatively independent. This is not the topic of this paper, but I should note that when he became President, many of de Klerk's biggest challenges came from security networks operating more or less independently of his authority. Welsh (2010) provides a good summary of de Klerk's dilemmas in this regard in the early 1990s.

⁹ Moodie, *Afrikanerdom*, p.164.

¹⁰ P.J. Meyer, *Nog Nie Ver Genoeg Nie* (Perskor, Johannesburg, 1985) p 185. All translations from Afrikaans texts are my own.

It is precisely in addressing this fundamental question that N.P. van Wyk Louw started his more mature reflections.¹¹ “The whole question comes to this”, he wrote: “How do we know so precisely the decision of God [about] survival or demise for our People?”¹² Afrikaner nationalism “has found no reasonable answer to the fundamental political question, ‘What moral right has a small nation to wish to survive *as a nation*?’.”¹³

His answer to this question in *Liberale Nasionalisme* was two-fold: national calling demands both that there be cultural values worth defending and that the realization of that calling should not oppress others. In the first place, Louw said, while people like Meyer are important, “active and faithful on the purely political level: good organizers, wide awake, going to meetings, voting when it is necessary to vote... [Nonetheless] defense on this front opens our flanks from other directions”. If this is all we do “then one day we will discover that we no longer wish to defend our city, because there is nothing valuable *within* that we want to keep”.¹⁴ This is why, for Louw, literature and art were so important. But he insisted that art and literature must be truly alive. While necessarily expressed through a national tradition and in a local idiom, ethnic art (*volkskuns*) must develop according to creative demands out of the fullness of human experience in all its moral complexity and tragic intensity. Doubt about national values arises, he wrote:

only when people have the right to feel that the spiritual life of their group is not enough for the individual to exist; when group life becomes a prison for the individual; when the

¹¹The occasional writings of N P van Wyk Louw are some of the most striking (and earliest) examples of an Afrikaner intellectual struggling with the moral predicament of Afrikaner nationalism. One of the deepest thinkers writing in Afrikaans, he himself had been an active and enthusiastic participant in what Aletta Norval calls “the Afrikaner myth” prior to providing an early and profoundly moral interpretation of “the apartheid imaginary”. In this sense he was both an exemplar and a pioneer in setting forth a powerful exposition of apartheid as a moral ideal for ethnic justice, rooted in the Afrikaner’s own sacred history. Again and again both critics and supporters of apartheid were to cite his aphorism – *nie voortbestaan sonder geregtigheid nie* (no survival without justice) – as justification for their policy arguments.

¹² N.P. Van Wyk Louw, *Versamelde Prosa I* (Tafelberg, Kaapstad, 1986), p 502.

¹³ Louw, *Versamelde Prosa I*, p.500.

¹⁴ Louw, *Versamelde Prosa I*, p 461. This is precisely the point I make in regard to Meyer. For him, as for the other Christian National ideologues, national calling had no content – except to *be* (and to be Christian National). One is irresistibly reminded of JM Coetzee’s great novel, *Waiting for the Barbarians*.

language offers too little to satisfy the hunger for understanding; when the accepted ideas of the People, petrified, isolate persons from the wide world outside.¹⁵

Soon after the 1938 Ossewatrek, he had expressed concern about the suffocating effect of “organization men” on Afrikaner cultural creativity.¹⁶

Important, indeed essential, as are social context and ethnic ties (the artist’s language and his or her People’s history) in the end for the artist these are but means. The end is to convey with integrity, movingly and powerfully, insight into the depths of the human condition in all its grandeur and its grubbiness, its horror, its glory and its pettiness – whether in crisis or in mundane everyday activity. That is the artist’s vocation. It coincides with the calling of the People. It provides the reason for their existence. When it is realized, then social context, language, ethnic aspirations and realizations are all enhanced. Only through such creative work can a People claim a right to exist.

For Van Wyk Louw, then, it was cultural creativity with its deep insight into the human condition that ensures a People have valuable assets worth preserving. In a 1946 article, he returned to the stress on creativity and its revelation of the essentially human through an ethnic medium. “Literature is central to the spiritual life of a People”, he wrote: “I do not believe that we will ever get people to understand, deeply and humanly, the heterogeneous mass of Peoples in South Africa without first having a rich and critically intelligent literature. Literature in the noblest sense is the propaganda weapon for humanity”.¹⁷ By the 1950s, he had expanded his conception of creativity to include “not only the creators of such assets – thinkers, scientists, artists, and so on – but also those who value them, guard them, propagate them – readers, critics, teachers, the best of journalists, smart technicians, economic leaders and many others; propagandists in the original and highest sense of the word”.¹⁸ Unless one can live a whole life, creative and fulfilling, within and from out of the traditions of a People, he concludes, that People cannot survive. If, in the end, a majority of Afrikaners consider it no longer worth the

¹⁵ Louw, *Versamelde Prosa I*, p 459.

¹⁶ Louw, *Versamelde Prosa I*, p.78.

¹⁷ Louw, *Versamelde Werke I*, p 507. He might have added mention of the fine arts and music.

¹⁸ Louw, *Versamelde Werke I*, p.462.

trouble to continue to exist as a People, Louw added, Afrikaans-speaking “individuals each will be able to continue – indeed, perhaps survive in prosperity – but they will no longer make up a separate People”.¹⁹

In the second place, Louw argued, the Afrikaner People will not survive “if a large part of the People are in danger of reckoning that we do not need to live in justice with our fellow Peoples in South Africa”.²⁰ He explicitly cited Stoker’s, *Stryd om die Orders*,²¹ condemning it for speaking of Afrikaners as “the People of South Africa”, rather than as “one of the Peoples of South Africa”. To guard its soul, its spiritual essence, the Afrikaner People is obliged to deal justly with the other Peoples of South Africa.

Suppose that a People has come into the narrows – finding that it must mount a life or death defense; it summons up all material and political powers, guards and marshals its spiritual, technical, intellectual assets, does everything it can to survive.... Then it comes before the last temptation: to believe that bare survival is preferable to *survival in justice*.... This is the lasting temptation awaiting a People in their desert days – the biggest almost mystical crisis before which a People can stand. I believe that in a strange way this is the crisis from which a People appear, reborn, young, creative. This “dark night of the soul” in which it says: I would rather perish than survive through injustice.²²

“How can a small People”, he concluded, “survive for long if it is something hateful and evil for the best within – and without – it?”²³ This is a theme to which Afrikaner intellectuals in the 1970s and 1980s would return again and again – and which they continue to ponder today.

There are shades here of Malan’s Christian aphorism, “when we lose, we win”, but with a much deeper (more Greek) sense of tragedy. “Even against power”, wrote Louw, “reasonableness (*redelikheid*) must be preserved, and precisely against power at its most

¹⁹ Louw, *Versamelde Werke I*, p 458.

²⁰ Louw, *Versamelde Werke I*, p 460.

²¹ Louw, *Versamelde Werke I*, p. 502. See Moodie, *Rise of Afrikanerdom*, pp 65-7.

²² Louw, *Versamelde Werke I*, p 462.

²³ Louw, *Versamelde Werke I*, p 463.

irresistible reasonableness must be most strongly maintained (*gehandhaaf*)... because to go under with *humanity* (*menslik*) is better than simply to go under”.²⁴ There is no hint here of Meyer’s “fixed path to which God has called us”. Louw’s world was much more in flux. There were no divine guarantees for *his* small People, despite a hint of Dr. Malan’s promise of restitution through suffering, the dark night of the soul.

Theoretically, Louw was enough of a Platonist to believe that there is *truth* out there. Indeed, he insisted he was not a relativist at heart. How could he be, with his commitment to beauty and justice? Indeed, in the 1930s he expounded an aristocratic ideal, in the artistic sphere but also in society, a ranking of commitment and ability. Practice, he came to see, particularly political practice, however, was another matter. Here democracy worked best, he was saying in 1952.

How is it possible to know a community, he asked:

The chaotic whirling of a great cohabitation: vital network (*lewenskring*) after network interbreeding and crossing over and thrown down together – an area of study of which the sociologist knows that he sees only mountain-tops sticking out above the mist; the primeval jungle of millions of individual struggles, ideals, deviations, in which the psychologist can hack only one or two paths; the struggle over values, value judgments, which give every humble philosopher bitter knowledge of his own limitations. Even more vexing; this chaos does not stand still and wait for our calm study. It is dragged along in *time*. Or better: it rumbles into the future with its own demonic inner power.²⁵

No wonder many concluded that the consequences for big decisions should be taken out of the hands of the ignorant masses and taken over by a smaller elite better able to judge. Louw himself had implied the same in some of his earlier writings. Now contrariwise he asserted:

No person and no group can truly see through the chaos of a large community and make proper decisions on its behalf; human partiality and murky insight clings to everyone – even the greatest spirits.... Precisely because all knowledge and insight is relative and

²⁴ Louw, *Versamelde Werke I*, p 509.

²⁵ Louw, *Versamelde Werke I*, p 484.

one-sided, the elite must eternally be pulled by the dull demands, the confused but different insights of the masses. Every human insight needs a corrective; and in the totalitarian state the insight of the dictator or dominant group never gets its necessary corrective.²⁶

Hence Louw insisted on the importance of democracy, especially of open polemical struggle, public argument, ongoing debate (*oop gesprek*).

He was opposed to simple majority rule, which is itself, he said, a form of dictatorship by the masses. Instead, he advocated majority rule within a framework of checks and balances (*remmende factore*) such as “a free press; party politics; established rights for subordinate bodies: provinces, municipalities, individual persons: an independent judiciary and relatively entrenched written laws”.²⁷ Compared to the supposed efficiency of totalitarianism, he wrote “democracy is more reasonable and humane. It accepts stupidity as one of our traits and has its own heavy sort of patience with it. It thus moves more sluggishly, but with a minimum of force; and it can afford to smile at our endeavors.... It believes that human efforts must go slowly; is perhaps a little skeptical of all utopias”.²⁸

Louw shared a distaste for unsavory party politics. Nonetheless, it was necessary for democracy. “The value of parties in a democracy”, he said, “lies not in their *purity*, but in their *existence*; the fact that they can stand against one another; in the fact that each thought can get corrected, however crudely.... The bare existence of more than one party gives to political life in a democracy something of a dull reasonableness (*redelikheid*): the possibility of an open debate before the People; the setting points of view against one another”.²⁹ In the final analysis, for Louw, the “spiritual blood circulation” of any body of people was “open discussion (*oop gesprek*) both within and between Peoples”.

²⁶ Louw, *Versamelde Werke I*, p 485.

²⁷ Louw, *Versamelde Werke I*, p 488. Even at this early stage, then, Louw was arguing for a constitutional state.

²⁸ Louw, *Versamelde Werke I*, p 489.

²⁹ Louw, *Versamelde Werke I*, p 490.

Already in the early 1950s, Louw thus had abandoned the conviction that the nation is an organic entity, even “the fulfillment of the individual life”. “A People is not *one being*”, Louw was insisting by 1952, “it has no unity of judgment, no unity of will; it does not make *one* decision. It exists out of countless individuals, and where it thus “decides” or “chooses” this is the result of countless judgments and decisions, half judgments and lame decisions”.³⁰ For all the passion of his commitment to his People, then, Louw’s liberal nationalism is at odds with primordial Afrikaner Christian Nationalism (whether Stoker’s neo-Calvinist or Diederich’s neo-Fichteian – or any other -- version).

Van Wyk Louw was nonetheless a devoted nationalist. He was deeply committed to an evolving interpretation of Afrikaner sacred history and to creative use of the Afrikaans language – indeed, to the survival of the Afrikaner People. For our purposes, however, he made three important points that would be picked up by Afrikaner intellectuals and politicians committed to reinterpretation of the civil religion. They were as follows: firstly, Afrikaner survival must be earned by inhabiting the local ethnic context but transmuting it to create genuinely moving insights into the human condition; secondly, ethnic survival without just relations with other neighboring cultures is empty (ultimately for him this amounted to a proclamation of the necessity for separate but equal development); and thirdly, both insight and justice are best served by open discussion guaranteed by checks and balances.

These are very general guidelines. They could be, and were, used in very different ways by Afrikaner intellectuals, politicians, and church and cultural leaders. How could one ensure both survival and justice, for instance, and what did “justice” imply in South Africa anyway? What does ethnic “survival” mean? What sorts of checks and balances made the best sense in Afrikaners’ own South African context? What were the implications of a single ethnic group having captured the state? Indeed, to what extent did the changing South African social and economic context set limits and create opportunities for Afrikaners?

One further point is perhaps worth making again here. After 1948, and even before that, debates about practical politics and moral ideas largely took place among Afrikaners. “Open discussion” amongst Afrikaners usually (but not in every case) excluded English-speaking

³⁰ Louw, *Versamelde Werke I*, p 455.

whites and Afrikaans-speakers of color and almost entirely excluded open and equal discussion with black Africans. As a result black South Africans could but assent or make themselves heard through protest. Such protests could be read by Afrikaners in different ways – and were -- but there was no open debate with Africans. Protest confronted power and Afrikaners debated intensely *among themselves* what it all meant with next to no *open* conversation across the fences set up by those in power. Indeed, the effects of apartheid physically impeded dialogue – and progressively so. As we shall see, however, open discussion, a public sphere, even amongst Afrikaners, was sometimes simply silenced – especially during the Verwoerd years.

III

With characteristic insight and aplomb, Van Wyk Louw was one of the first Afrikaner intellectuals to publically suggest the notion of “separate development” as a policy to accommodate the existence of all the Peoples of South Africa with justice. He argued in 1946 that liberal demands for justice threatened the survival of Afrikaner ethnicity. Liberal demands for individual rights could be realized only “over the dead body of the entire [Afrikaner] People”. The only alternative, he wrote, would be “the separate development of the different groups – with as final goal something other than the current centralized Union”. This argument or something very like it was the logical and moral basis for Verwoerd’s announcement early in his premiership that independent African homelands were to be established.

In the conclusion to my book I use the parliamentary speeches of Daan de Wet Nel to demonstrate the direct intellectual heritage of the Afrikaner’s own ethnic struggle in the proclamation by Verwoerd of Bantustan “independence”. I also try to point up the tension in Verwoerd’s thought and practice between racism and cultural pluralism.³¹ There is no more than the slightest trace of racism in any of Van Wyk Louw’s voluminous writings.³² This is not true, however, for NG church leaders who originally developed the idea of separate development,

³¹ *Rise of Afrikanerdom*, pp. 260-81

³² I take issue here with Sanders, *Complicities*, whose elision of van Wyk Louw with Geoff. Cronje is too facile. One should note, however, that Louw who was from the Cape, expressed concern about African (he said “black”) encroachment in that area. Sanders reads this as “racist” despite Louw’s embracing of so-called Coloured *bruin mense*. If so, this is indeed a peculiarly selective and “Cape-based” racism. As we shall see, it was rejected by racist popular opinion even in the Cape.

making frequent submissions to the UP government even before 1948 (consistently obsessed with the need to forbid racially mixed marriages) for both the racial principles of apartheid and the cultural necessity for separate development.³³

It is from this church concern for racial and cultural separation that SABRA was formed by the Broederbond in the late 1940s as a counter to the liberal Institute of Race Relations. SABRA's purpose was to investigate the practical possibilities of separate development as an alternative moral ideal. The Tomlinson Commission was a creature of SABRA's efforts to give practical implementation to separate development. As it turned out, the commission insisted that "survival with justice" along ethnic lines was going to be a costly affair if it could be realized at all. National Party control of South Africa was still tenuous and, as Minister of Native Affairs, Verwoerd seems to have calculated that it was a price white voters would not be willing to pay. That did not stop him adopting "separate development" ideology, however. Nor did it stop a burst of missionary activity *within* South Africa and amongst various "separate African cultures" by evangelicals in the NGK – with Verwoerd's personal support!

Verwoerd's mind seems to have operated at two levels; a political and pragmatic racial level and a moral and theoretical cultural level.³⁴ Thus, he oversaw one of the most ambitious township construction projects for Africans in South African history while at the same time convincing himself that African urbanization could be stopped in its tracks. While not racist in his personal behavior, he flatly refused to compromise the deeply discriminatory racial assumptions of "petty" apartheid in pursuing the cultural goals of "grand" apartheid.³⁵ At the same time that he constructed a massive empire – a state within a state based entirely on

³³ Kinghorn (1986) provides a careful discussion of the development of racial thinking within the NGK. See also JHP Serfontein, *Apartheid, Change and the NG Kerk* (Taurus, Emmerentia, 1982), pp 260-69. The Broederbond in the northern provinces was also party to such racial concerns. In *Rise of Afrikanerdom*, I identify this group with Geoff. Cronje (p 275). For church involvement in the development of apartheid theory, see also Hermann Giliomee, *The Afrikaners: Biography of a People* (University of Virginia Press, Charlottesville, 2003), pp 454-64. He also discusses Van Wyk Louw on pp 472-4.

³⁴ In a different context, Piet Cillie once noted that Verwoerd had "two brains" operating independently of one another. See J.C. Steyn, *Penvegter: Piet Cillie van die Burger* (Tafelberg, Kaapstad, 2002) p 123.

³⁵ For an account of Piet Cillie's support for "large" apartheid (separate development) but his attack on "small" apartheid (petty racial discrimination that simply became ammunition for South Africa's enemies, was inessential for separate development or simply transgressed sound common sense) – aimed directly at Verwoerd – see Steyn, *Penvegter*, 124-27. Cillie had the support of Willem van Heerden, editor of *Dagbreek en Sondagnuus* in this particular brouhaha. For the standard "thin end of the wedge" response, see A.P. Treurnicht, *Credo van 'n Afrikaner* (Kaapstad, Tafelberg, 1975), p 21-24.

authoritarian rule justified by cultural assumptions – in the department of Bantu Affairs, he pandered unashamedly to popular white assumptions of racial superiority. Immensely intelligent, he comes across as a combination of administrative competence, theoretical rigor and moral self-righteousness based on premises that shifted, apparently seamlessly, from culture to race depending on the context and the level of application. In theory, for Verwoerd, cultural assumptions were central, in practice, race trumped culture at every turn. One could argue that core disagreements amongst those who shared his inheritance centered on whether Afrikaner separate development policy should be focused on racial or cultural differences. One key to this ambiguity, it seems to me, was always to be found in how one addressed the question of Afrikaans-speaking Coloured people.³⁶

As an example both of Verwoerd's style of government and of his ideological ambivalence, then, we may consider his confrontation with the Cape Broederbond and Nasionale Pers on the question of Coloured representation in Parliament, which tends to get personalized as a confrontation with Piet Cillie, editor of *Die Burger*. (Other typical examples might include his confrontation with SABRA on the Tomlinson commission report – personalized as a confrontation with Nic Olivier³⁷ – or with the NG on Cottesloe – personalized as a confrontation with Beyers Naude.³⁸)

³⁶ See also, Norval (1996:189-97). An additional important indicator, although less certain because of its practical implications – and because they mostly spoke English and tended to adopt English ways -- was the question of urban blacks. Perhaps a personal caveat is on order here. I grew up in the Western Cape where it seemed “natural” to regard Coloured people as “ons derde stand.” Moreover, such status divisions were never presented to me as fixed. I was always reminded that my grandfather had been at Bishops “with a coloured fellow student.” However much they might have been made to suffer under apartheid, it seems clear to me on the basis my own personal experience, that culturally a majority of Cape Coloureds are (or certainly were) Afrikaners. Transvalers, including even Gerrit Viljoen, were much more ambivalent on this matter, but they had no convincing moral resolution of “the Coloured problem” either.

³⁷ For the decimation of SABRA and the attack on Nic Olivier, see John Lazar's paper in P. Bonner, P. Delius & D. Posel, *Apartheid's Genesis* (Ravan, Braamfontein, 2003) and P. Hugo (ed.), *South African Perspectives: Essays in Honour of Nic Olivier* (Pretoria, Die Suid Afrikaan, 1989), pp 3-48. As with the Coloured question, Van Wyk Louw also weighed in briefly on Tomlinson (*Versamelde Werke II*, Human & Rousseau, Kaapstad, 1986, pp 589-94).

³⁸ There are innumerable accounts of this affair. See, for example, Peter Walshe, *Church versus State in South Africa* (Orbis, Maryknoll, 1983) or A.H. Luckhoff, *Cottesloe*, (Tafelberg, Kaapstad, 1978). Because Verwoerd made overt use of the Broederbond, every expose of the Broederbond makes much of it.

Afrikaans-speaking, Dutch Reformed, sharing common everyday cultural practices, “brown people” were culturally Afrikaner. They even shared many aspects of the Afrikaner sacred history. In the words of D.P.Botha:

They fought alongside us, as members of the militia, as associates on the borders, as allies against Mzilikazi, as confidants at Blood River. They were fellow creators of our language and fellow educators of our children. They were our play mates in our youth and caregivers in our old age. They suffered together with us.... Their blood flowed for our communal freedom ideal. They were cut down with us:... more than two hundred by the Zulus at Bloukrans; at Hloma Amabutha the bones of thirty of them lie buried in one grave with the bones of Piet Rietief and his seventy. When we needed them, they were with us, even to the death.³⁹

Despite this common history, “brown people” were increasingly alienated from their white Afrikaner culture-mates. On Geloftedag 1949, for instance, while thousands of white Afrikaners were celebrating the opening of the Voortrekker Monument, the “Coloured” Dutch Reformed Church called for a day of prayer “to be freed from the trials of apartheid”. Next day, 900 people attended a gathering at the Cape Town City Hall at which apartheid was excoriated.⁴⁰ The timing was obviously intended to convey rejection of the racial implications of the Afrikaner civil religion.

National Party efforts to remove Coloured voters from the voters’ roll in the Cape after 1948 were initially inspired by a fear that their participation might threaten the NP’s narrow election victory. At about the same time that the Appeal Court threw out the disenfranchisement motion because it did not have two-thirds support, it had become clear to supporters of the Cape National Party that Coloured voters did not in fact pose a threat.⁴¹ It was Malan’s resignation and Strijdom’s election that provided the incentive to enlarge the Senate and thus push through the disenfranchisement bill. Cape nationalists were slightly embarrassed by this sleight of hand.

³⁹ D.P. Botha, *Die Opkoms van ons Derde Stand*, (Kaapstad, Human & Rousseau, 1960) p xv.

⁴⁰ Steyn, *Penvegter*, p 64.

⁴¹ Steyn, *Penvegter*, p 75.

The Sharpeville massacre in early 1960 and the march on Parliament in Cape Town elicited great concern in Afrikaner intellectual circles. The fact that Coloureds refused to participate in the unrest was noted with approval in Cape Broederbond and SABRA circles. Cape Afrikaner intellectuals embarked on a movement to grant political rights to Coloured people -- to have “brown people representing brown people on Parliament”.⁴² At a Broederbond meeting in Cape Town in April 1960, Verwoerd was distinctly cool to the idea, arguing that there could be no turning back on the path to racial separation. Writing in his political column Piet Cillie nonetheless floated the idea for “general consideration”. It was his impression, he said, “that the National Party was already more than half-way to supporting the principle [of Coloureds in Parliament representing Coloureds]. With strong leadership the Party could be completely won over”.⁴³

In the Cape, intense interracial discussions between representatives of “white and brown” occurred. Phil Weber, the managing director of the *Burger* wrote to Verwoerd on August 26th to reassure him about the ferment of thought that was happening in the Western Cape – especially in the Broederbond. “Here and there”, he wrote, “there is talk of ‘a genuine movement in Coloured policy’ and it is hoped that the country can get away from job reservation, the Immorality Act, apartheid rules in post offices, and so on”. Verwoerd was alarmed. He had no objection, he replied to Weber, to people sharing ideas in limited circles, but he “worried that our friends⁴⁴ will do our People’s cause harm...by seeking broader publicity for their ideas too quickly or at the wrong time”. He added that direct representation of “brown people” could only cause trouble – concessions would simply lead to more demands. Weber shared Verwoerd’s letter at the next Cape Town Broederbond meeting.⁴⁵

After the success of the republican referendum in 1960, Verwoerd had begun to make overtures to English-speaking South Africans. After all, despite the long Afrikaner cultural struggle against British imperialism, Afrikaner ideals had finally been realized. With the

⁴² Steyn, *Penvegter*, p 143.

⁴³ L. Louw (ed), *Dawie 1946-1964* (Kaapstad, Tafelberg, 1965), pp 182-3.

⁴⁴This is the term members of the Broederbond used to refer to one another.

⁴⁵ Steyn, *Penvegter*, p 145

achievement of this final Afrikaner political goal sealing Afrikaner power, the time seemed to be on hand, Verwoerd implied, for Afrikaners to join hands with English-speaking South Africans in a common South African citizenship. His efforts at rapprochement with the English had engendered hostility from culturally committed Afrikaners such as Albert Hertzog and other unreconstructed Christian Nationalists, however. Albert Hertzog also eschewed those in the Cape National Party who thought that Coloureds should be included in such reconciliatory moves. In fact in terms of ethnic nationalist logic, Cape Broederbonders argued, Coloureds had prior claim.

In October, D.P.Botha's book, *Die opkoms van ons derde stand*, appeared with a forward by Van Wyk Louw. Louw, who had grown up in the Karoo, did not know Piet Cillie well. He had returned from the Netherlands to take a chair at Wits so he was not in the Cape Broederbond circle, but he shared their most adventurous ideas and argued them passionately in the Emmerentia Broederbond circle (which included Piet Meyer). The cultural logic of separate development should not be applied to Coloured people, Louw wrote: "The brown people are our people, they belong with us.... I have a sincere desire – no, a passionate *will* – that my People, white and brown, and the language we speak, survive in this land.... In a wider context, I am concerned about all who represent *human* values in this country". He wrote of committed Afrikaner and South African nationalists spontaneously saying: "We have acted wrongly against the brown people; we have neglected, and indeed repulsed them; we must make right the wrongs that were done." He added: "Our leaders must take care to remain *au faix* with this turn in ethnic feeling; otherwise a wretched estrangement will ensue".⁴⁶

Verwoerd was livid. Racial apartheid was at stake, he said. Representation of brown people by their own in the white parliament would ultimately lead to racial integration – indeed, "biological assimilation". "I am not going down in history as the man who led the Afrikaner People to bastardization", he told his wife. The racial foundations of his conception of Afrikanerdom came adamantly to the fore. "The Government and the leaders must stand like walls of granite. The survival of a People is at stake", he declared.⁴⁷ Cape Afrikaner intellectuals

⁴⁶ Botha, *Opkoms*, pp v-vi.

⁴⁷ J.J. van Rooyen, *Ons Politiek van Naby* (Tafelberg, Kaapstad, 1971), p 103.

were shocked at the flat bleakness of Verwoerd's announcement. Opperman, the poet, wrote to a friend in Holland, that "all of Stellenbosch (the university) is strongly opposed to Verwoerd". M.E. Rothman wrote of "strong and wide dismay amongst Nationalists...even in such a conservative place as Swellendam".⁴⁸ Verwoerd nonetheless elicited unanimous support from the Cabinet – against the grain of ministers such as Donges, Paul Sauer and P.W.Botha. Letters to the editor of the *Burger* came in overwhelmingly, and often crudely, in favor of Verwoerd's appeal to racial attitudes.

Cillie was unrepentant. He warned publically against a "heresy hunt" against Nationalists who had supported the idea of Coloured inclusion:

The people who are sympathetic to the idea of direct representation for the Coloureds are a minority in the Afrikaner ranks, but they are not a small number. They are also not unimportant. Some of them have reached their position through deep thought and much remorse, some also through prayer. We may overrule and reject their ideas because we believe them not to be practical politics; but if we begin to abuse them as liberals, integrationists and supporters of "biological integration" – the hideous new euphemism for bastardization – then it will begin to be the end of our National Party.⁴⁹

Besides, he added in a separate editorial, Verwoerd's position was not official National Party policy. The official party line was simply that Coloureds should be represented by whites in Parliament. That could be subject to change or reform in changed circumstances "without it exposing anyone to automatic condemnation for treachery against Nationalist rule, the National Party or the white race".⁵⁰

Verwoerd could not let this point pass. It did not help that the Cottesloe declaration intervened at this point, insisting there could be no Biblical justification for apartheid. Verwoerd mobilized the full power of Broederbond connections on both fronts; in the church and in the party. All the NG provincial church synods rejected the Cottesloe declaration that apartheid

⁴⁸ Steyn, *Penvegter*, p 148.

⁴⁹ Louw, *Dawie*, p 199.

⁵⁰ Steyn, *Penvegter*, p 153.

could not be biblically justified. On January 21st, 1961, the Federal Council of the National Party unanimously and flatly denied as a matter of principle that Coloureds could be represented by Coloureds in Parliament. As Phil Weber noted in his diary at the time, however, the moral dilemma remained: “Coloureds have no homeland and restrictions on them ultimately mean repression”.⁵¹

The entire business disgusted Piet Cillie. He felt that Verwoerd had had an opportunity to display true moral leadership on the issue. Impractical and impolitic as the idea of Coloured representation might have been, given racial feelings in the Afrikaner rank and file, Verwoerd could nonetheless have engaged in “open discussion” (to use Van Wyk Louw’s terms) that would have led to further debate. Ordinary Afrikaners could have been educated in a way that would have left the door open for future decisions on the matter. Instead, Verwoerd had acted with crass, arrogant and overweening racism.

On December 13th, Cillie wrote to Phil Weber:

The past two weeks have been my most difficult since I have been at the *Burger*, and it was bitterly difficult to suppress my rage and indignation about what that man has done to our Afrikaner People, and my fear of what he can still do. You can see in the letters (to the editor) what hottentot-hate, dominee-hate, professor-hate and bourgeois-hate he released. He called up the Neanderthaler in our people against everything intelligent and searching, using the classical recipe by which a tyrant makes his power absolute by leading the rabble against their acknowledged leaders in every life arena.... I wonder if he is proud of the intellectual quality of the support he has obtained.⁵²

Verwoerd had enlisted the Broederbond to close down debate in Afrikaner circles. Race trumped culture and party politics overruled moral dissent in the Afrikaner churches after Cottesloe (despite editorial support for the dissidents from Cillie), in SABRA on serious development in the black homelands, and, as we have seen, in regard to the Coloured

⁵¹ Steyn, *Penvegter*, p 179.

⁵² Steyn, *Penvegter*, p 155.

representation. Both Cillie and Van Wyk Louw remained in the National Party, but of *ope gesprek* at this stage there could be no question.

The question of the *Afrikanerskap* of “our brown people” became the logical and ethical Achilles heel of the entire policy of separate development as justified by cultural differences. (It was joined by the question of the English-speaking urban African elite as rapprochement with English-speaking white South Africans got under way). There was no way of getting around it if culture were the basis for political rights. It seems that Verwoerd himself was aware of this. In the middle 1960s, when the South African legal team was defending separate development on grounds of culture as a policy for South West Africa before the International Court in the Hague they felt they could make a strong case that South Africa was helping the Ovambos, Hereros and so on on a road to independence. They asked Verwoerd (who was working closely with them): “But what about the Coloured people; they speak our language and share our culture, what logical reason can we supply for them?” Verwoerd said that there was no logical reason. What then, they asked: “Verwoerd paused for a moment and answered: ‘Eventually the Coloured will have to find his political future with the whites. But the time is not yet right’”.⁵³

So Verwoerd eventually acknowledged (at least in private) that Cillie was correct. In that case Cillie was also right that the debate about Coloured representation was truly a lost opportunity to establish a genuinely moral basis for separate development. If Verwoerd had conceded the point, even at a theoretical level, the cultural aspects of the policy would have been more defensible down the road. Perhaps Verwoerd was correct politically in the short term, given the racial attitudes of most of the white population at the time. But Verwoerd made no effort to educate his white supporters. Instead, he bludgeoned the Cape Broederbond into silence with adamantly racist arguments. Meanwhile, the policies of forced removal, the devastation of District Six, the international embarrassment of charges under the Immorality Act, and the humiliation of Coloured cultural, social and political leaders continued unabated. Even revelations of wide-spread economic and social misery by the Theron commission in the 1970s did nothing immediately to alter the policy of racial separation for the Coloured people. Claims to rights of citizenship rested firmly on racial rather than cultural foundations. Whatever moral

⁵³ Verwoerd, *Verwoerd*, p 132.

claims might be made for separate freedoms, as long as Coloured people were excluded from Afrikanerdom, the policy of separate development for different cultures remained racial apartheid.

Indeed, it seems to me that it was awareness of this moral dilemma (as well as other more political considerations) that led finally to the establishment of a Tricameral Parliament in 1983. As things turned out, this spelled the beginning of the end for the National Party regime in South Africa, not only because of the Conservative Party breakaway but also because it was much too late to placate international opposition to apartheid. Moreover the UDF opposition, inspired by black consciousness commitments, included Coloureds and Indians as well as Africans. They too now had a long history of overtly racial oppression. Apartheid policy had made them “black.” In addition, reforms in urban local government simply exacerbated opposition from African township populations. Despite post-Soweto *verligte* arguments that petty apartheid must be abandoned,⁵⁴ Afrikaner power was ultimately doomed. I doubt that de Klerk himself was aware of this when he made his “quantum leap” in 1990. There were many more pragmatic reasons for his decision to grasp the nettle, nonetheless the grim prospect of Afrikaner survival without justice was certainly on his mind.

IV

Andre du Toit argued as early as 1983⁵⁵ that, “paradoxically enough, Afrikaner nationalism and Afrikaner power, inseparably interwoven with the historical development of the apartheid order, have become a serious threat to the Afrikaner cultural struggle itself. For the sake of the future of Afrikaans language and culture it must necessarily be separated from this power base.” The question unanswered today is whether the Afrikaans language and culture, now firmly separated from its political power base can survive among the ruins of the apartheid order. Did F.W. de Klerk lead his people on their “last trek” too late to ensure their “survival” as a group with their own language and culture? Afrikanerdom, with its implications of Afrikaner

⁵⁴ Willie Esterhuysen’s book, *Afskeid van Apartheid* (Farewell to Apartheid) represented arguments from *verligte* elements in the Broederbond and the NGK as well as the National Party.

⁵⁵ Andre du Toit, *Die Sondes van die Vaders* (Rubicon, Kaapstad, 1983), p 72.

power, has unraveled at the seams. The concept itself no longer makes sense except in historical terms. What is at stake now is the future of Afrikaans and Afrikaners per se. The current question is: To what do we refer when we speak of “Afrikaners”? Is the language all that is left, so that Afrikaners are constituted as “all those who speak Afrikaans,” or are there other fragments of Afrikaner identity, a common history (a *volksgeskiedenis*), what I call a “civil religion” (maybe a *volksteologie*), that can be pulled together into a foundation for collective action? Should there be such an identity and what might now be its direction – beyond use of the language?

Dirkie Smit argues that, in the new South Africa, ethnicity is no longer relevant at all.⁵⁶ Nor are other wider social bonds or the old struggles for social justice. Individualism reigns supreme. Afrikaners no longer constitute a group. Not only apartheid but also Afrikaner collectivity itself has disappeared into the ruins of the old South Africa:

So, has there been any change? Yes, indeed, so much and so quickly that many people can hardly remember what apartheid was, and why it ever was so important. Who cares about Dr Koot Vorster or any other *ooms* and whatever they might have done? And about structural and institutional issues? About our past, and dealing with its legacies? We were facing a brave new world, on our own, colour blind, free at last, walking tall, *boetmanne* without much *boete*, in short, as self-sufficient individuals, sometimes with families, a few friends, and perhaps a few fellow *taalstryders*, at the most.⁵⁷

Smit himself was no slouch in the struggle against apartheid. In 1982, he drafted for the Dutch Reformed Mission Church the Belhar Confession, which mounted a direct attack on apartheid theology in the name of a Christian doctrine of reconciliation that rejects “any doctrine which absolutizes either natural diversity or the sinful separation of people.” The Belhar Confession also calls on the church to “witness against all the powerful and privileged who selfishly seek

⁵⁶ Wolfram Wiese & Carel Anthonissen, *Maintaining Apartheid or Promoting Change?* (Waxman Munster: New York, 2004:139-141)

⁵⁷ The Afrikaans in this passage is almost untranslatable. It is also wry and very clever!. *Ooms*, might be rendered “patriarchs;” *boetmanne*, “pals” or “chums” (this is a reference to a cross-generational dispute between Chris Louw and Wimpie de Klerk); and *boete*, “penance” or “penalty.” *Taalstryders* refers to those who continue to struggle for Afrikaans language instruction in schools and universities.

their own interests and thus control and harm others.” But the Belhar Confession also presupposes the church as a Christian community, indeed as a structure and an institution.⁵⁸

The theology of Oom Andries Treurnicht and Oom Koot Vorster was avowedly nationalist. They professed adamantly that the most basic human communities are national and that ethnic consciousness is a creation of God. In the words of Oom F.J.M. Potgieter, “ethnicity (*volkskap*) was given in the creation.... Each group thus received a separate ethnic consciousness (*volksbewussyn*) and became a separate People.”⁵⁹ The Belhar Confession is in many ways the most cogent critique of this point of view, buttressed as it is by synodical approval. Structural and institutional issues indeed are central to its standpoint. No-one becomes an individual without social networks. But social networks (and especially Christian churches) cut across national identities. Smit’s comments about change thus represent an ironical attack upon congregational practices in the contemporary postmodern NG Kerk which he clearly believes have drowned the baby in the bathwater, abandoning community itself in anodyne individualistic amnesia (perhaps conveyed with charismatic enthusiasm, although he does not mention the latter).

I myself have met Afrikaners who conform to Smit’s characterization, also even in the Gereformeerde Kerk. These are consumerist Afrikaans-speakers for whom language matters little and ethnicity even less. Theuns Eloff⁶⁰ summarizes their position in the new South Africa very neatly:

They are to be found typically in high income groups and accept readily the privileges which the economic policies of the administration have provided for them. They send their children to English schools (“in the interest of their futures, you understand”) and think secretly that it is just a matter of time before the country collapses (“just look at

⁵⁸ For the Belhar Confession, see G.D.Cloete & Dirkie Smit, *A Moment of Truth: The Confession of the Dutch Reformed Mission Church* (Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, 1984)

⁵⁹ J.D. Vorster, *Veelvormigheid en Eenheid* (Tafelberg, Kaapstad, 1978:107)

⁶⁰ Theuns Eloff, “Is daar ‘n ‘nuwe Afrikaner’ vir die ‘nuwe Suid-Afrika’?”, Lesing by FAK Prestigeaand, Potchefstroom, September 21, 2007. I have made extensive use of this little occasional lecture because of its striking insight. I have also had several conversations with Dr. Eloff.

what happened in Zimbabwe” they will say)... at which point presumably they make use of their passports.

From the point of view of Afrikaner identity, I suspect that this category of Afrikaners, in a curiously inverse way, may also overlap with those Afrikaans-speakers (also quite well-off) for whom apartheid and, for that matter *Afrikanerskap*, is a somewhat guilty memory. They are all too aware of apartheid and its legacies. Eloff describes them as follows:

[They are] those Afrikaners who do not feel very strongly about language and culture but strongly favor the new South Africa. They feel strongly about reconciliation and perhaps a little guilty that they did not stand up more strongly against apartheid. They want now to do their part and feel that an overemphasis on language and culture could possibly endanger essential unity and reconciliation. They are inclined to be rather politically correct.

Like the first group, however, they too, in Dirkie Smit’s terms, are “facing a brave new world, on their own, colour blind, free at last, walking tall, as self-sufficient [if mildly guilt-ridden] individuals.”⁶¹

Theuns Eloff, however, does not restrict his analysis to the two types of individualists described above. (He is, of course, vice-chancellor of the University of the North West and a Dopper, not a professor of theology at Stellenbosch, which I suspect is a hotbed of the above two types!) Eloff also describes two other types of contemporary Afrikanerness (he says he includes both “Afrikaners” and “Afrikaanses” in all his categories). The first of these other two types is militantly critical:

Such people typically exhibit active opposition to the new South Africa (a small minority would actually use violence), and also usually have a closed and exclusive conception of the (for them white) Afrikaners. And indeed by definition they close out other (according to them leftist) Afrikaners.

⁶¹ My (and Eloff’s) account of Afrikaners in this category perhaps seems somewhat condescending. It is not intended to be so. I am of course aware that ethnicity is not the sole basis for social networks and that “liberal” Afrikaans-speakers may be members of other types of groups and not merely isolated individuals. Work-groups, for instance, can be very important. Nonetheless, in speaking to individuals in this category it is not unusual to discover a sense of loss, of having been let down, perhaps of being a challenge to ruling groups and hence rejected. Von Holdt (2010) manages to get to some of the structural roots of such experience in his account of the hospital situation.

I met some such persons several years ago. Students at the University of the Free State who were members of Vryheidsfront Plus, they were firm and very clear that their duty as Afrikaners (they were insistent that being white was essential) was to oppose, not only the ANC, but the entire social structure of the new South Africa. Farm killings and racial affirmative action policies (in regard to university admissions and in job seeking) were clearly near the front of their consciousness. They found black fellow students both arrogant and offensive. They despised them for their perceived laziness and sense of entitlement. Although they were scrupulously polite, I nonetheless thought of them as angry Afrikaners – or at least resentful -- with a strong sense of loss. I suspect that their number is growing.

Recently, an Afrikaans-speaking friend and I visited Orania. I think we both expected something similar to Vryheidsfront Plus. Rather to our surprise, we found no resentment or anger. The people to whom we spoke were very clear about their commitment to the Orania project which they read as a contribution to the preservation of Afrikaner culture, but were completely without bitterness or resentment. Wynand Boshoff put their separatist position succinctly and clearly:

We represent a little supported ideal. I believe it is the only post-colonial alternative for Afrikaners, but most prefer a somewhat dangerous continuation of colonialism, and if that loses a bit of its lustre, a future elsewhere in the British Empire. As a community Orania is sustainable, but in present form not as a political alternative for a sufficient number of Afrikaners to guarantee our cultural survival. So we need to transform it into something more. Orania is a kind of invitation to Afrikaners. If some people from the lunatic fringe accept the invitation, I maintain that it doesn't imply that Orania is on the lunatic fringe. To prevent us from moving there, is an important task.

He believes that the Orania definition of “Afrikaner” should be expanded to include coloured South Africans who share Afrikaner culture. I get the impression that this is a fairly controversial position to be taking in Orania, however.

As Van Wyk Louw would have agreed, “cultural survival” is a difficult notion. In the sense of the old traditional civil religion, as I describe it in *The Rise of Afrikanerdom*, Afrikaner culture was fixed around a particular reading of South African history and a rather narrow set of practices and beliefs – not to mention an official language. Van Wyk Louw himself, however, confessed to feeling suffocated by the “organization men” of the Afrikaner movement. Culture is essential for authentic expression of human experience, Louw believed, but creativity (which keeps culture alive) must also transcend cultural limits even as it works through culture. I suspect Wynand Boshoff is aware of this, but I doubt everyone living in Orania is as open as he is.

For contemporary Afrikaners with a truly dynamic conception of their culture, we need to turn to Theuns Eloff's fourth type:.

They accept the concept of the new South Africa and a democratic and human rights dispensation, but are critical about how the country is being ruled and how minority rights are being neglected. They actively use the Constitution to realize a better dispensation for fellow-Afrikaners and other minority groups.... They are inclined in principle to take politically incorrect stands, just to make a point, and their position comes closest to what Van Wyk Louw called "critical solidarity."

As I read it, the argument is that Afrikaners of this ilk accept the definition of human rights spelled out in the new South African constitution but will use this definition to fight for minority rights, especially but not exclusively, as Afrikaners. Struggles for particular minority rights on behalf of Afrikaners must also be in the general national interest. A good example of such a position, I believe, would be the Solidarity movement, which has become much more than an Afrikaner trade union. Theuns Eloff's own position as vice-chancellor of the University of the North West would, of course, be another example. Eloff carefully insists, however, "that Afrikaners, in balancing unity and difference, must accept and live out equalization of rights as a principle. Afrikaans can be nurtured, for example, only in a multi-lingual context. And I cannot complain about my poor service delivery unless I am also worried about poor service delivery to my neighbor in a previously black township."

It was Nic Diederichs who said in 1937 of the old exclusive Afrikaner movement "if the worker is drawn away from our nation, then we might as well write Ichabod on the door of our temple"⁶² (1975:168). If Eloff is correct that applies now for Afrikaners to the wider South African population. The new Afrikaner struggle must be for rights that can be shared with all South Africans, for Afrikaner interests that are also general interests.⁶³ Ultimately, "separation" (even more than in the days of Afrikaner power) will spell collapse, not only for Afrikaners but for the country as a whole.

⁶² *Rise of Afrikanerdom*, p.168.

⁶³ Marx, of course, argued that the bourgeoisie merely *claimed* to represent universal interests while pursuing its own particular advantage. With its distinctly minority status and its appeal to minority rights a new Afrikaner movement may be in a position to push the rapidly expanding African bourgeoisie in the direction of following through on their claim to represent universal interests.

In terms of Eloff's argument, there is no place for an exclusive group of "true" (ware) Afrikaners. "The concept 'Afrikaner' includes a variety of political positions, beliefs and cultural positions."⁶⁴ Nor can there be a single Afrikaner leader. Afrikaners need to accept that different leaders emerging out of different social circles will need to work together on this Afrikaner "national" project. Moreover, Eloff adds: "It is also obvious for both political reasons and reasons of principle that there is no longer any place for 'race' in the debate -- and also not for hidden (*verskuilde*) racism." As I see it, the intent is to "bring together those who belong together" as a particular Afrikaner movement toward universal interests and constitutional values. Eloff is espousing a politics of reciprocity rather than a culture of exclusion. Principled positions must be taken and fought for on their merits as contributions to the wider South African society. Afrikaners must make alliances with other interest groups. Moreover, I would say, such alliances should cut across ethnic identities. There needs to be fluidity about being Afrikaner. As Van Wyk Louw argued, societies are not made up of tidy circles, shut off from one another by gates and fences. Afrikaners need to pitch in with the rest of us and sink or swim along with us.

While such a position may seem to be very far from the narrow politics (and culture) of Afrikanerdom in its classical mode, it does not seem to me to depart too widely from the principles set forth in Van Wyk Louw's passionate "liberal nationalism" of the 1950s, now in a new context in which Afrikaner survival implies justice for all. Without such a "new Afrikaner", Eloff argues, the new South Africa cannot succeed. South Africa needs a dynamic Afrikaner culture as much as Afrikaners need to survive and work as Afrikaners for overall minority rights. In the time-honored words of N.J. van der Merwe, "Daar's werk!"

⁶⁴ Eloff, in fact, includes all four of his types.