# Aspects of the Role of the
# White Afrikaans Component
# in the Transition in South Africa

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## Introduction: Narrowing down the topic for discussion

There are only two possible approaches to our topic: either an empirical and descriptive treatment of recent political history or an interpretative and reflexive analysis of aspects of the phenomenon known as the Afrikaner. The latter is the more daunting, and in view of the future the more important of the two.

In attempting the latter course it seems best to enter into the problematic by focusing our attention on the implicit question in our topic which can, in a slightly exaggerated way, be stated as follows: *why did the Afrikaners not behave as predicted?* Who, for instance, expected them to hand over power in such a meek and mild way (or at all)? Why did they not fully use their military power (including the bomb)? And what has happened to universal predictions of a cataclysmic right wing uprising in South Africa?

There are two main reasons. Together they point to the need to progress beyond cartoonism.

## Beyond cartoonism

Firstly, the Afrikaner (real and imaginary) as an historical entity is so integrally interwoven with the South African saga of the 20th century that any focus on them immediately involves the entire

history. Abstracting the Afrikaner—or to be more precise aspects of research concerning the Afrikaner—of necessity, therefore, is likely to bring with it superficiality and accusations of one-sidedness. This is fully granted. This contribution must, therefore, be seen for what it proposes to do: to investigate an *aspect* of the dynamic phenomenon of the Afrikaner. How that aspect fits into the broader picture is the topic of another day and place.

The second reason needs to be amplified somewhat. Our implicit question above points to a need for those who have to or want to understand the South Africa dynamic, to revisit their conception of the Afrikaners. Somehow conventional wisdom does not allow confident predictions as to their actions.

The lack of sophisticated knowledge about Afrikaners is but a symptom of a general problem. Amid the flood of material and studies available on South Africa, the quantity of reliable insights and rationally founded knowledge is dangerously little. The fact is that—given the nature of the emotions evoked by apartheid, at home and internationally—the bulk of the intellectual discourse on the matter followed ideological and very often romantic routes[1]. We may not be number one, but we are very high up on the list of countries and regions in the world where decades of systemic propaganda has created its own virtual reality, conditioning even scholars into confusing slogans with truth, simply because of the frequency of their repetition. And in our case, as we all know, the internationalisation of the problem of South Africa, the globalisation, if you want, of Apartheid South Africa into the categories of the cold war, has limited the scope for sophisticated distinctions even more. Until recently politics in South Africa as well as international politics involving South Africa, hinged on creating and maintaining images and histories of caricatures, Walt Disney-like cartoon characters.

It is incumbent on the scholarly world to progress beyond cartoonism. The saga which is in progress in South Africa is much more essential and grave—both domestically and as a microcosm of the world in the next century—so as to relegate it to romantic

political cartoonism. But if we are to attempt to understand the dynamic in a more sophisticated way we will have to break through the conventional knowledge accumulated through decades of caricature creation.

## The Invention of the Boer
## (The myth of Afrikanerdom[2])

The inventors of the industry of political cartoonism in South Africa were none other than the Afrikaners! Nobody but Afrikaners are to be blamed for the invention of that political cartoon character which has come to be a household brand in the same way as cowboys and crooks: the *Boer*. One can justifiably to blame the international audience for uncritically accepting the story.

The invention of the *Boer* (i. e. of Afrikanerdom) is the product of the written and ideological output of a small group of politicians, intellectuals, poets and theologians during the first four decades of this century. There is no doubt that this group of people was exceptionally energetic. It was one of those instances in history where an explosion of virgin energy happened—an explosion, which was powerful enough to effect a mutation in the dynamics of an entire country and subcontinent for the next 50 years.

The explosion of energy took place at three levels at the same time: in politics, in commerce and in philosophy. We will concern ourselves with the latter. The philosophical reflections can be described as their quest for a metaphysical foundation for the socio-economic policies they sought to promote at the time. They discovered the building blocs for their metaphysical foundation in the then current notion of nationalism, continental style[3], i. e. with a touch, but only a touch, of socialism.

What they construed was a romantic little continental European clan in Africa.[4] A nation, closely knit by history, language and Schicksal, whose destiny was to bear the essence of European culture in Africa—upright (thus Christian), industrious (thus Calvin-

ist), bound to the soil of Africa, entrusted with the sacred assign-
ment to promote civilisation through moral and intellectual disci-
pline, and, finally, to defend these to the bitter end through life and
death. In short: the *Boer* nation.

They then restated the history of the previous 300 years as the
history of the coming of the *Boer*; and they went on to interpret the
present time as the moment of fulfilment of the *Boer* Schicksal. In
the process they succeeded in appropriating a rather loose adapta-
tion of Dutch and Malayu first spoken by imported Indonesian slaves
in the Western Cape and first written in Arabic script in the last
decades of the previous century, and turned this into a language
called Afrikaans, complete with grammar and lexicon. This was
primarily done through the translation of the Bible in 1932. They
galvanised the NGK into a solid power base in the early 1930's, and
at the same time founded their political party (the National Party—
NP) which was to come to power in 1948 (even though in a coali-
tion with less support than the opposition party of Jan Smuts). They
then set the machinery of state and education in motion to effect
the world of the Boer. Unfortunately Southern Africa was not vir-
gin land in which the world of the Boer could unfold limitlessly.
The compromise they settled for was to partition the land (apart-
heid) to make room for other nations too (Although all of this
made economic nonsense—which was the real ground for the total
disaster of apartheid). In the twentieth century at large the only
comparable mentality was that of communism where, equally, poli-
tics and statecraft was the mechanism to force fancy into reality.

When put in this way, the history of many decades appears in a
very cynical light. This immediately calls forward the question: Why
did they do it? What brings people to dream up worlds of fancy and
fantasy and then spur them on to transform reality into the images
they have dreamed up? Why do millions follow such lead?

Unless we are very careful, questions such as these are dismiss-
ive. They question the question away—and in doing so we too play
the game of fantasy. There will be many, including psychological

explanations I am sure. But such explanations cannot be employed to ridicule and then forget the question, for then we ridicule and forget the real history, which was unleashed by these fancies. For, even though the *Boer* never existed, the Invention of the *Boer* did— and as such exercised enormous influence.

However, to come to grips with that influence we need to understand the inner logic of such movements in history. That requires methodologies of understanding (social hermeneutics) which allow us to penetrate to a deeper level of human existence and cognition than do most of our present methods. We need to identify the values embodied in the outward complexion of fancy. Unless we penetrate to such values, the dynamic will elude us. A while ago I spent some time in an exercise to discover one such value operative in the time period under discussion. My question was precisely the one put earlier—how to understand, from the inner logic, the ostensible capitulation of the Boere to the ANC.

Let me take you through an abbreviated and a narrowed down version of that study.

The article investigated the use of the story of Babel in the theology of apartheid as propounded by the Afrikaner Churches at the time. This story functions in apartheid theology as a creation story. The significance of this fact becomes clear in the light of quite complex theory, courtesy of Kant, Berger, Kerenyi and others which allows us to read such creation stories as both powerful expressions of societal regulation and subjectively of existential *self-disclosures.*[5]

For the purposes of the article we focus on the second aspect. We are interested in the subjective dimension. The question is: what did the tellers of the story communicate about themselves (no doubt mostly unconsciously), rather than what they wanted to turn the world into? In pursuing this question the following is an extract from the article:

## The Use of Creation Stories in the Apartheid Myth

In surveying apartheid discourse since the 1930s, two types of creation stories can be found—one derived from Afrikaner history and the other from the Bible. The first is a secular story with religious overtones, the second theological.

Much has been written about the secular story of the creation of the Afrikaner nation. Called the myth of Afrikanerdom by some, the story explains how heroic farmers in Africa, infused with the spirit of Calvinist religion, came to form a new nation commissioned by God to further civilisation and Christianity in Africa. Through the sermon-like political speeches of Dr. D. F. Malan in particular, this story was used to garner popular support for the National Party. At times, especially around the ritual of commemoration of the sacred oath on 16 December celebrating the Voortrekkers' covenant with God, the myth of Afrikanerdom was deeply influential. Even so it never played as significant a role in Afrikaner politics as one would assume from the attention given to the myth by scholars over the years. Heribert Adam correctly dismisses it as an entry point into the politics of apartheid. Writing in 1978, he found the references to the sacred mission on New Year's Eve and on 16 December '... more a ritualistic assertion of group solidarity than guide to policy ...'[6] This judgement was already true in 1950 when a massive conference on the 'native question' was held in Bloemfontein under the auspices of the Dutch Reformed Church, at which all the major leaders of Afrikanerdom (including politicians, cultural entrepreneurs and members of the intelligentsia) were present. The cultural philosophy they formulated at this time subsequently became the basis for Verwoerdian apartheid. Yet, during the entire conference none of the constituent elements of the myth functioned as a frame of reference.[7]

At most the myth of Afrikanerdom can be considered as of secondary importance within the Afrikaner nationalist discourse. Indeed, entry into the inner logic of the Afrikaner dynamic through the myth of Afrikanerdom obscures crucial elements of continuity

in Afrikaner thought from the apartheid era to the present. The only people who fit the myth today are the small anachronistic right-wing fringe. But, although the international news media in particular have given them credence, they are ridiculed by main-stream Afrikaners. Their creation story—built upon notions of the God-fearing, noble Voortrekker nation—does not resonate with most Afrikaners, and it has not featured strongly in elite circles since 1950 insofar as policy decisions are concerned. Where, then, shall we find the creation story that comes from the heart of the Afrikaner dynamic?

It is the Afrikaner churches that articulated the primary focus of nationalist discourse, a discourse that strove to rise above the imme-diate and to express instead the 'fundamentals.' It is by examining this quest that the authentic expressions of the inner logic of the Afrikaner dynamic is to be found. Surveying the quite substantial volume of available literature from the early 1930s to the present, it comes as no surprise that in debates on social issues reference to Old Testament stories play a significant role. In particular, the first eleven chapters of Genesis, traditionally the most important source for cosmological reflection in Christianity, feature prominently, but only selectively. Only one part of the Genesis story occurs consistently throughout the decades and in all relevant documents. In fact no other reference to the Bible appears more regularly—indicating its pivotal importance. This is the story of the language confusion at the tower of Babel.

The first reference to Babel is to be found in a submission in 1938 by the Free State Synod of the Dutch Reformed Church (DRC) to the parliamentary commission investigating mixed marriages. The reference underpins the statement that "God had willed the exist-ence and survival of nations, each with its own character, vision and ultimate aim'.[8] From then on recourse to the story became more elaborate. Writing in 1947, the Reverend J. D. Vorster (brother of the later Prime Minister) gave the most explicit interpretation. He wrote (my translation tries to reflect his style of writing and

choice of language):

> ... we see that when the tower (of Babel) was being
> built humanity was still one in all respects. We there-
> fore conclude that God had created the human being
> in such a way that he had the potential in himself to
> form races in the same way as the acorn bears the
> potential to become an acorn tree. Every child bore
> genetic potentialities which, given the proper isola-
> tion and inbreeding, could lead to the birth of a sepa-
> rate race ... This only happened with the language
> confusion after the tower was built ... God kept to
> lineage and family ties. Therefore we read that the
> separation was effected according to lineage and lan-
> guage. It is through these language groups that God
> effected the necessary isolation through which inbreed-
> ing became possible.
> From one blood God made the nations of humanity.
> That is why races can enter into admixture, and it is
> always possible to regress to Babel. Through admix-
> ture the differences and the boundaries can be erased.
> This is exactly the ideal of communism and radical
> liberalism ... At Babel God had created separation
> and every attempt to unify humanity is not from God
> but from the unholy circle of Babel.[9]

To Vorster, Babel was not simply an illustration of a possible societal
configuration, but a graphic decree to subdivide humanity accord-
ing to national identities. As such, it functions as a creation story.
At Babel human life took shape for the first time as God intended.
Babel depicts the historical moment of the creation of humanity. It
is the story of the creation of the order of society.

   This interpretation carried the day—and many thereafter. But,
of course, it was not really an attempt at Biblical interpretation.[10] It
was in effect a metaphorical expression of a rather complicated idea.
When not writing in public journals (such as the one from which
the citation was taken) Vorster joined in a highly theoretical debate
on concepts such as uniformity, pluriformity, unity, diversity and the

proper balance between them.[11] Vorster's interpretation of the Bible story functioned as the metaphorical abbreviation of the intricate theories then under development.

It therefore does not come as a surprise that, in 1974 when the DRC, after decades of debate, finally produced a policy document on social issues,[12] a discussion of the story of Babel served as the biblical entry point into the theme. It was nothing but a rephrased version of Vorster's interpretation. In 1986 when a so-called comprehensive revision was published,[13] a slightly abbreviated version still remained central. Even in the re-revised edition in 1990 it plays a role, albeit not as prominent as before.[14] What then can we learn from this metaphor?

## The existential roots of the Babel-Interpretation

In stead of interpreting the above story for its social and political import, we now turn to an analysis based on a reading "from beneath".

It means discovering the existential grounds for telling this story. It also means discovering the *existential* motivation for telling the story in *this way*.

In doing so, it is crucial to note that the story of Babel as told in the Bible can by no stretch of the imagination be interpreted as a story about creation. Nothing came into being at Babel which did not exist before. It is a story about existing people who already speak languages. They came together to build a huge tower but all of a sudden fail to communicate and consequently disperse all over the world in groups whose members are mutually comprehensible. And that is it! No world, no person, no God, in fact not even a nation is created. Within the context of Genesis it is no more than another episode in the chain of events which together constitute human history. It is Vorster's interpretation which turns this into a creation story.

This observation gains in significance when we bear in mind

that the real creation story of Genesis (chapters 1—3) is hardly
referred to in apartheid theology in general. In Vorster's case it is
ignored. He borrows only the idea of creation and infuses it with his
interpretation of Babel. It is Vorster who tells the story as if the
beginning of all real human history was at Babel (and not in the
Garden of Eden as described in Genesis 1—3). Why then create a
creation story and bypass the given one? The answer, which imme-
diately presents itself, is expediency. The story could be used for
illustrative purposes. True as this may be in view of the outward
function of religion this does not explain what the subjective moti-
vation was for employing this, and not any other, story. Further-
more, it provides no compelling explanation why the illustration
had to be in the form of a creation story.

Going one step further, if the story of Babel does not in itself
constitute a creation story (though in Afrikaner discourse it func-
tioned as such) it is clear that the new meaning could only come
about by investing it with new elements or by infusing into the
telling of the Babel story a subjectivity that turns the story into a
creation account. In order to identify these added elements of sub-
jectivity, it is helpful to go back chronologically to 1935. In that
year, for the first time, the Dutch Reformed Church published a
policy document on missionary activities. For all practical purposes
it was a comprehensive statement of the church's praxis as well as
its cultural philosophy. For the next 30 years it remained the pri-
mary policy reference. Significantly, it was drawn up by the same
person—the Reverend J. G. Strydom (no relation to the later prime
minister) —who introduced the story of Babel into the theological
discourse on race matters in 1938.

In arguing in favour of the social separation of races the only
reason given is 'the *traditional fear* among the Afrikaner of equalisa-
tion of black and white ...' (my translation *and* italics). One hears
the same tone as in : 'black danger', *Roomse gevaar* (Roman Catho-
lic danger), and later 'red danger'. It was the Afrikaans historian
F. A. van Jaarsveld—coming from precisely this tradition—who first

collected evidence of the psychological dimension of the apartheid mind and pointed out the essential place of 'fear'.[15] If we read Vorster's interpretation carefully, bearing in mind the founding role of the 1935 mission statement, we discover the same 'bottom line' here as well.

The subtext of Vorster's interpretation becomes clear when he talks of 'proper *isolation* and *inbreeding*', of families as closed self-sufficient units, of separation as a creation of God and of the sinfulness of 'returning' to Babel. The language here suggests withdrawal and disengagement. What are the existential grounds for such a disposition? The answer is fear—fear of loss of identity and fear of incomprehension.

## Fear and insecurity

*Fear of a loss of identity* is immediately apparent. 'Out there' exists an alien world, a world which exposes one to 'otherness', both in the form of people and of ideas and customs. 'Out there' there are the communists, cosmopolitans and liberals (and the Roman Catholics and Big Business) whose aims are to manipulate the world into uniformity. To avoid this, people therefore had to return to their own, to turn inward, to isolate and to consolidate. In doing so they will find their identity—and with it their dignity. For, in the final instance, dignity is the reassuring solace of belonging.

*The fear of incomprehension* is less evident at first glance. But it comes to light when we reflect on the definition given to the 'lineages' and 'families' within which identity is secured. These are constituted by language. This means that the category of understanding is taken as the basis on which belonging is defined. Above all the 'families' and 'lineages' are islands of comprehension. They are communities of mutual understanding. Outside, however, confusion reigns. Outside the world does not make sense at all. Outside one is lost.

But this is not only a local subjective and individual condition. What applies to Afrikaners necessarily applies to all other people as

well. One can therefore state the same in an objective way: any world order outside of 'families' and 'lineage' is a lost world, an incomprehensible condition. For that reason it is a non-human world. In this way the subjective experience of fear can be understood as the flip side of objective, cosmic, reality.

The recourse to ethnicity, therefore, is in its very essence the result of a *cosmological self-understanding of fear*. It therefore had to be expressed in terms of a social cosmology. It was this self-understanding that was imported into the story of Babel, resulting in a very strange creation story. For, indeed, as told by Vorster, it is a creation story—the story of the creation of plural society. But, whereas creation stories normally depict the ideal, the original, this one is the story of the real but unwanted world. Plural society is experienced as a creation of human failure. The telling of this story is at the same time the lament of people who experience a loss of human dignity and a grip on life. It is the expression of deeply felt subjective experiences in terms of universal claims.

## The underlying existential assumptions

If the existential ground for Afrikaner appropriation of ethnicity was fear, what were the existential *assumptions* on which this was based? To determine this requires a study on its own. I will therefore indicate my understanding of it in a cursory fashion.

Undoubtedly, Vorster assumed that the ideal world is one which is static. In a static cosmos, societies are fixed, clearly defined and immutable. It is a cosmos in which the contingent nature of modern society is absent. In short, a thoroughly pre-modern[16] cosmology is presupposed by this reading of Babel. The subtext of Vorster's interpretation, therefore can be seen as echoing Afrikanerdom's agonising[17] in the wake of the rapid urbanisation which took place in the early decades of this century. It is by now well known that this process entailed a fundamental paradigm shift. Not only were Afrikaners rural people, they were also pre-modern and in many

cases even feudal in outlook. As a consequence of a confluence of many factors, they were confronted as if overnight with modernity[18]—in the form of the nation state (the Union of South Africa), capitalist production (particularly gold-based), liberal education, and a bewildering array of ideologies of European origin.

All of this was intricately intertwined with, and infinitely complicated by, the racial and cultural diversity of the population. Afrikaners were entirely unprepared to deal with the experiences of relativity and insecurity that followed their bewildering exposure to social, cultural, and moral plurality. For them, all known parameters had collapsed and they were subjected to the kinds of insecurity that people experience as they feel the shattering of their familiar world. A crisis of self-understanding developed. In their efforts to reconstruct their social cosmos, the combination of nationalist politics and a religiously constructed pre-modern social cosmology seemed to provide an answer.

The story of Babel was told as the primordial curse of cosmopolitan life, and reflects the context of social transformation and insecurity which Afrikaners were subject to. They saw in Babel a depiction of the confusion associated with plural existence, the crossing of lines as it were. They saw the creation of modernity. But at the same time they saw God's intervention. God was the anti-modern, the anti-cosmopolitan, the anti-plural force in this story. And Christians ought to be the same. In fact, Christianity was cast in the role of a value system which shielded one from the seductive overtures of modernity. The political equivalent for this disposition was deemed to be nationalism—understood as policies designed to restore an ethnic social order. When the emphasis was on the value system the same was called Christian nationalism—for which one should read: restoring a society in which pre-modern values are fundamental.

The creation story thus turns out to be negative in context. It is the story about the creation of an unwanted world and God's de-creation thereof. At the heart of this story lies the twin experiences

of insecurity and relativity as a consequence of exposure to a wide and plural world. The only safeguard is through a lifestyle of defence. In practical politics this lifestyle would eventually take shape in the form of apartheid. And in the years to come the lifestyle of defence would be entrenched through the growth of 'security legislation', a defence force culture, censorship and a doctrinaire education system.

## Conclusion

It has to be emphasised again that the above analysis does not claim to provide a comprehensive picture of the "soul" of Afrikanerdom[19]. It wants to describe only one aspect of that drive within the dynamic of the Afrikaner community which resulted in the invention of the *Boer* (and apartheid). Let us now conclude with a few systematic remarks based on the above analysis.

1. Afrikanerdom grasped at nationalism *not* because of dogmas of superiority, but because of insecurity born from exposure to modern plurality and the inadequate means available to cope with that experience. That could explain why the policies of apartheid—harsh and inhuman though they have been—never bore the overall character of extermination (even though some individual actions sometimes did gravitate in that direction). In general, apartheid policies were designed to *escape* responsibility rather than to dominate history. The massive social engineering which apartheid represented, was by and large designed to disentangle Afrikaners from a plural world. The ultimate aim was to restore a world of 'ownness' for Afrikaners. And if such an 'own' world could not be restored, then at least some 'own' areas—such as those who press for a so-called Volkstaat still believe possible to achieve—had to be preserved.

2. This means that Afrikaners were/are not nationalists in the pure

sense of the word. They—in the words of a non-academic, yet very wise, colleague who had to struggle for a democratic dispensation while living in the midst of 'Afrikanerdom' his entire life—are *survivalists*.[20] They were not truly *bittereinders* (diehards)—even though many chose to see themselves as such. The bravado of the real Boere (not the *Boer* of the myth) was not born from an immutable belief in the superiority of their race but from survival strategies. Theirs was the fanaticism of the lonely[21].

Once this becomes apparent, we have a key to understanding the sudden and massive change in Afrikaner political direction— a change which was in progress since 1976 but which came into the open only in 1990: *survivalists are arch-adaptationists.* To Vorster and his generation, survival was guaranteed only by de-pluralising society. With the initiative one would expect from people who see their survival threatened, they proceeded to implement de-pluralising policies. For a period, these policies seemingly served the purpose. But the rot set in.

From 1976 in particular, there was a widespread awareness that the policies of apartheid were failing. Precisely how and in what respect was not clear. In fact, after the landmark changes since 1990 it was said time and time again by the De Klerk government speakers that changes were necessary because 'it' had failed. When pressed on this issue they regularly failed to give clear answers. In the light of the above analysis it should be evident that the failure referred to was that the policies of apartheid and the theories of ethnicity had not produced the peace and tranquillity that had been promised. And so the majority came to reject it. Instead, political negotiations became the mode of survival.

3. The theory of "adaptionism" based on the above analysis can easily be understood as an attempt to absolve Afrikaners from their historical sins. Such an understanding of this paper and the analysis presented is, however, off the mark. If anything, the

theory of "adaptionism"—well understood—has the opposite effect. It shows why and how Afrikaners have made such major
value shifts in the past. But it also shows that those shifts were
not so much based on (contestable) notions of integrity but rather
on expediency.

The *Boer* is not as solid as its creators or its detractors have
fancied all along!

## Notes

1    This is particularly vividly demonstrated by the devastating effect the studies
of Andre du Toit has had on the scholarly conventional wisdom concerning
the pre-history of Afrikaners during the previous century. For the first time a
serious analysis was made of the texts on which the claims for the existence of
a self-consciously Calvinist community (Voortrekkers) claiming divine election for their advance into Africa were made. His research was published in
the following articles: Puritans in Africa? Afrikaner "Calvinism" and Kuyperian
Neo-Calvinism in Late Nineteenth-Century South Africa, in *Comparative
Studies in Society and History 27/2*, 1985; Captive to the Nationalist Paradigm:
Prof. F. A. van Jaarsveld and the historical evidence for the Afrikaner's ideas
on his' Calling and Mission, in *South African Historical Journal 16*, 1984; No
Chosen People: The Myth of the Calvinist Origins of Afrikaner Nationalism
and Racial Ideology, in *The American Historical Review 88/4*, 1983. Particularly the latter article has prompted a noted scholar like Irving Hexham to
revise his assumptions. The paper presented here assumes and is in full accord
with Du Toit's findings.
2    For an authoritative exposition of the concept of political mythology as well
as analysis of the myth of Afrikanerdom see Leonard Thompson, 1985, *The
political Mythology of Apartheid*. Yale University Press. Of particular interest is
pp. 25—68.
3    This borrowing was done rather eclectically and with no real fundamental
convictions too. Under the African sun the lines between Iberian, Italian and
German Fascism became quite blurred. So too between socialism and capitalism. During the war there was great support for Germany, but mostly on the
grounds that Germany was waging war against England. In 1942 D. F. Malan,
later the first Apartheid Prime Minister staked his entire political career on
purging his party from any Nazi trait. There was very little understanding of
the great problems Europe was grappling with. The purpose of the borrowing
was never to participate in the European debate but simply to provide legitimisation for a historic dynamic which was (almost) uniquely southern Afri-

can. Using European political, intellectual and theological concepts the inventors of the Boer were in reality participating in a socio-economic process which in many respects were foreign to the world of concepts and self-understanding conveyed by the concepts they were using.

4    The shared vocabulary made communication with the international community possible, but in effect curtailed any possibility of mutual understanding. After all one can not blame Europeans for interpreting South Africa in terms of their own historical experiences if the account of events and aspirations communicated to them from South Africa is done in the conceptual framework of European thought. Moreover one can not blame them for their recoil and abhorrence once it became clear to them that the policies in South Africa were an appropriation of norms and values which Europe had purged from itself through massive suffering and bloodshed. What they heard from South Africa was nation, race, superiority, etc. It was then only a matter of time before the European Armageddon was going to be repeated in Africa. And, may I add, that the same applies to the counter politics of the Struggle too. Only in that case it was the language of democracy.

5    See my "Social Cosmology, Religion and Afrikaner Ethnicity", in: *Journal of Southern African Studies 3/1994*, for further discussion of the theoretical aspects.

6    H. Adam and H. Giliomee, *The Rise and Crises of Afrikaner Power* (Cape Town, 1979)

7    See my "Theology of Separate Equality", in: Martin Prozesky (Ed.) 1990. *Christianity in South Africa*. Macmillan: London.

8    *Archival Evidence to the Commission of Enquiry* (Pretoria 1938), p. 752.

9    *Die Gereformeerde Vaandel*, August 1947, p. 5.

10   Vorster himself would undoubtedly disagree, but it is not difficult to show—and I witnessed this in person a number of times when he came to address us in our student days at Stellenbosch—that reading the Bible was the same as discovering one's own life experience reflected in it.

11   See J Kinghorn 1986. *Die NG Kerk en Apartheid*. Southern Publishers: Johannesburg. pp. 121—136. pp. 235—236.

12   *Ras, Volk en Nasie en Volkereverhoudingein die lig van die Skrif* (Bloemfontein, 1974), pp. 11—18.

13   *Kerk en Samelewing* (Bloemfontein, 1986), pp. 18—22.

14   Ibid., p. 16

15   F. A. van Jaarsveld, *Die evolusie van Apartheid* (Cape Town, 1979), pp. 24 ff. One of the many interesting quotations he gives comes from the newspaper *Die Transvaler*. In a leading article in 1936 it was stated: 'Johannesburg is the Sodom and Gemorrah where Boer traditions are laid on the altar of the modern infidelity; where the Boer is being mutilated, bodily and spiritually and where an Afrikaans Abraham will look in vain for ten of his own'.

16   For highly perceptive theorising in this respect, see A. Giddens, *Modernity and Self-Identity* (Cambridge, 1991), pp. 16—21.

17   At this point most commentators refer to the monumental work, published in

three volumes, under the joint editorship of Vorster, Potgieter and Stoker during the late 1930s under the title Koers in die Krisis (staying on course amid the crisis). Yet I know of no attempt to research and analyse the discourse represented in these publications.

18   Some useful sociological definitions are given by S. Hall & B. Gieben (eds), *Formations of Modernity* (Oxford, 1992) and J. Allen, P. Braham & P. Lewis, *Political and economic Forms of Modernity* (Oxford, 1992).

19   There is at least one other area which needs to be exhaustively researched before a balanced picture can be drawn—that of money and commerce. Forget not that the phenomenon of the Afrikaner stems from the commercial enterprises of Holland, and the dumping of Huguenots and poor Scots in South Africa—basically because they were considered economically superfluous in Europe and England. The Afrikaner is a post-mercantile social phenomenon.

20   See also S. Dubow, "Afrikaner Nationalism, Apartheid and the Conceptualization of Race", in: *Journal of African history, 33* (1992). pp. 234—235.

21   Does this explain why the Boere (real or mythological) have never won a war, ever since their assumed entry into history 150 years ago?

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