

## THE SADF-NATIONAL SERVICE GENERATION : THE QUEST FOR HEALING AND RECONCILIATION ?

*“We have built a new defence force out of the ashes of an apartheid force that was known for its aggression against neighbours in the Southern African region, where it sought members of the liberation movement and to intimidate governments of the Frontline States. It was a Defence Force that enforced every apartheid law, terrorising our people in the townships, in the hope of stopping the march to freedom” (Zuma 2014).*

### Introduction

Although the new democratic dispensation in South Africa is more than 20 years old, many ‘Afrikaners’<sup>1</sup>, including the former SADF-conscript generation<sup>2 3</sup> still has an unease regarding the past and present. It varies between a sense of guilt<sup>4</sup>, withdrawal, alienation from the current reality and governing institutions, frustration and anger and even hopelessness. Underlying reasons include the perceived loss in quality of life, prevailing levels of corruption, poor service delivery and killings, especially farm murders, as well as the implementation of the policy of affirmative action. Venter, former chairperson of the Afrikanerbond, sketches the situation by raising some questions (VAN DER MERWE 2010):

*“What state of mind can one expect from a community who are used to a standard of living compared to the highest in the world, who freely gave political power away 10 years ago, and whose combined political capability was lost due to disunity, who experiences the current tendencies as a threat to their cultural, material and physical survival and from who is expected to make the primary sacrifices for the sake of ‘transformation’. Should we be surprised that such a community displaying signs of hopeless frustration, uncertainty, loss of*

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<sup>1</sup> The term *Afrikaner* is problematic. Often new terms, like *Afrikaanses*, *Afrikane* or *Afrikaans-speaking (White) South Africans*, are preferred.

<sup>2</sup> Edlmann puts the total number of the conscripts in the period 1966-1989 at some 600 000, roughly 7,5% of Afrikaners

<sup>3</sup> For a fuller understanding of the local or national South African liberation struggle, the regional anti-colonial conflict in SWA/Namibia and the global Cold war (Angola) involvement of the SADF, see ESTERHUYSE, A. (2009). The strategic contours of the South African military involvement in Namibia and Angola during the 1970 / 1980s; BOTHMA, L.J. (2012) – *Vang 'n Boer: die stryd tussen Boer en Ovambo*; BREDENKAMP, I. en WESSELS, A. (2010) – *Die Suid-Afrikaanse kapelaansdiens en die beginsel van 'n regverdigte oorlog: die Namibiese Vryheidsoorlog, 1966-1989*; and SCHOLTZ, L. (2013) – *Die SAW in die Grensoorlog, 1966-1989*.

<sup>4</sup>Snyman (2005:335) struggles with the reality of being continuously reminded about both the past and identity: “*Am I a racist because Western hermeneutics are deeply racist? Am I what I am because of the past? How do I construct a new identity if the past is continuously brought up and rubbed in? Is the only solution here to disappear from the public scene altogether? Or is it a consciousness that needs to be cultivated in those interactions where race inevitably raises its head?*”

*confidence in current cultural, political and church structures and even shifts toward extremism? I am afraid that all these elements are currently present in the mind of the Afrikaner. There are also indications of division and a selfish inward turn and avoidance of common ideals, loss of patriotism and principleless materialism (Translated from Afrikaans)*

Some former conscripts, as discussed later, feel they have been used and betrayed by the old regime. Furthermore, some former SADF members still suffer from some form of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). This manifests whenever a trigger point of sorts is set off. Despite many having adjusted well to the new democratic dispensation, others however still harbour some negative sentiments. These have been highlighted especially in the so-called 'Boetman' debate discussed below.

### **Boetman debate<sup>5</sup>**

Wimpie de Klerk (W.A.), older brother of former president F.W. de Klerk, criticises in his book '*Kroes, Kras en Kordaat*' (2000) the actions of Afrikaners during apartheid and especially their attitude in the new era. In reaction to this Chris Louw<sup>6</sup>, a journalist, wrote a stinging letter to him which was published on 5 May, 2000 in *Beeld*. Louw's main criticism, according to him, is that Wimpie de Klerk propagated the same ideologies (apartheid, Christian-nationalism) he was criticising. The 'boetmanne' simply obeyed the orders and instructions of the 'ooms' (*uncles*), served in the security forces and literally bled for defending the ideology and feel betrayed at the hands of the current ANC government, amongst others as victims of affirmative action. The letter caused a storm in the media. The response confirmed unresolved issues related to this SADF generation. Louw (2001) highlighted the dispute in '*Boetman en die swanesang van die verligtes*'. The relevant issues are categorised below.

1	Emotions of frustration, anger and humiliation
2	Disillusionment in the former political, cultural and church leaders ( <i>ooms</i> )
3	Anxiety and fear during war and violent incidents, manifesting as PTSD
4	Shame and guilt regarding certain actions of members. Accusations towards the Boetmanne, especially the current government.
5	Perception that former SADF and SAP members were left at their own mercy by the former nationalist politicians
6	The SADF and SAP had to sort out the mess in the old dispensation but have become the scape-goats

<sup>5</sup> For a full discussion of the debate see Bezuidenhout, P.H.S. (*Die diensplig-SAW generasie en die soeke na heling, versoening en sosiale geregtigheid*. Unpublished dissertation. University of the Free State. 2015)

<sup>6</sup> Chris Louw served in the SADF. In 1987 he formed part of a delegation that held discussion with the then banned ANC in Dakar. He later became Executive Producer of *Radio Sonder Grense* (RSG); and committed suicide on 30 Nov 2009. He left notes that as yet have not been disclosed. In some of the articles he wrote during his last days he expressed disillusionment regarding unrealised expectations about the new South Africa. Crime in the area where he resided was rife; he counted amongst the victims.

7	Disillusionment regarding the current ANC dispensation with all it's contradictions. This causes conflict in the mind as well as concerns about the future
8	There is conflict regarding the past. People need to talk. They desire healing (closure)
9	Many struggle to adapt to civil life after experiencing traumatic events. This influences work as well as marital and family relationships
10	The conflict between the past and present cause a religious and faith crisis
11	Many feel alienated and detached from the prevailing dispensation and consequently withdraw
12	There is a quest for identity and truth and an alternative way of living
13	The experience of a generation gap between the 'boetmanne' and 'ooms' and the need to talk to one another in order to achieve healing, especially regarding the future

The irony of the debate is that both Wimpie de Klerk and Chris Louw realised the importance of change and the impossibility of continuing as usual. Both probably struggled with inner conflict regarding the past and present. One wonders whether they actually projected their own struggles, frustrations, guilt onto one another during this unpleasant debate. The present 2016 reality is that strong and very deep intense emotions persist regarding our past and present. This should be acknowledged when dealing with the conscript generation. In response to the situation an in-depth study was conducted to explore the SADF generation's perceptions and views.

### **Views of the former SADF generation: a quantitative study**

#### *Design*

The aim of the quantitative study was to determine the views of former SADF members in terms of both the past and present situation. A questionnaire with 129 questions<sup>7</sup> was categorised to gain data/information pertaining to the following: General information; Afrikaner experiences; Military experiences; Apartheid; Liberation movements; South Africa post 1994; Reconciliation and justice; Religious experiences; and the future of the SADF generation in South Africa. A pilot study was conducted to validate the relevance of the questions. Initially the snowball method (Maree & Pietersen 2007:177) was used, that is, to make contact with individuals of former fighting units which in turn would lead to other contacts. This proved unsuccessful. Fortunately social media, specifically Facebook, managed to reach target groups. Some 200 questionnaires were received back through Facebook groups and a further 100 via the 61 Mechanised Battalion Group Veteran organisation during August-Sept, 2013.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>7</sup> The questionnaire was compiled with help of the Department of Sociology, University of the Free State.

<sup>8</sup> The author is a member of the 61 Mech Bn Gp Veteran group. A presentation of the planned research was presented to them. Apart from the former 101 Bn, an Ovambo battalion, contact with other veteran groups was unproductive. As the questionnaire was in electronic format members could easily complete it online and submit it afterwards without the hassle of mailing it.

## *Results*

### General information:

Respondents primarily represented fighting units; between 40 and 80 years of age; served between the 1960's and 1990's; 87% did service in SWA/Namibia; 65% in Angola; 66% of them also deployed internally; 57% belong to veteran organisations; and 10% had migrated.

### Afrikanerskap:

Respondents confirmed that their '*Afrikanerskap*' played a role in their identity. They strengthened the perception that to an extent Afrikaners historically had to survive because Africa is experienced as hostile to them and that they are a minority group. At least 20% see emigration as an option; but contrary, 88% are willing to play a role in the new South Africa.

### Military experiences:

Most respondents claimed that training in the SADF was excellent and contributed to shape men out of boys. They were aware of the reason for the SADF to be present in Namibia and Angola as communism was a huge threat. Only 42% saw their role as upholding the apartheid regime. Perhaps the current negative connotation attached to apartheid may be cited as an explanation.

Respondents' attitudes are more positive towards their Generals than to politicians. Almost 80% hold the view that there had indeed been a 'total onslaught' on the republic. They acknowledge that the SWA/Angola conflict was part of the global Cold war conflict. There is a desire to make sense of the past (85%) and to get closure. Many feel strongly that those who bear emotional and/or physical scars should be supported. Half are of the opinion that it is sensible to make peace with former enemies; 25% were neutral in response indicating uncertainty or possible ignorance on the how this is to be achieved. They express the opinion that veteran organisations can play a useful and constructive role in the process.

### Apartheid:

Responses indicate a conflict amongst former SADF members' experiences regarding the policy of apartheid. Some regard apartheid as the result of a natural process; that the aim was noble and that separation was/is actually practised worldwide. They however condemn the practical consequences of the policy (e.g. economic discrimination). They acknowledge the fact that apartheid roots in colonialism (54%), but a majority (61%), however, hold that the USA exercised the greater influence in SA. One quarter (24%) are of the opinion that German influences played a part in the formulation

of apartheid ideology<sup>9</sup>. Respondents differed when asked whether apartheid was unjust on Biblical grounds - 38% agreed, whereas 34% disagreed; while some 28% were uncertain. This ambivalence should probably be understood as apartheid was initially justified and even propagated by the Afrikaner churches, only to be altered later. Almost two thirds (65%) think that the previous regime, *inter alia*, used the media to 'brainwash' Afrikaners to justify their policy.

#### Liberation movements:

Liberation movements like Swapo and the ANC are not viewed in a positive light. They see them as revolutionary communist organisations that wanted to violently overthrow the order. Some understanding for their struggle (62%) is shown, but they reject the affiliated violence (87%). Respondents however acknowledge the need to appreciate and comprehend one another's histories and perspectives. SADF respondents do not see liberation movements as well-trained and disciplined armies.

#### South Africa post 1994

A high degree of ambivalence exists in terms of the current dispensation. Some hold that communism is still a threat. A generally negative attitude persists regarding governance by the ANC. One of the reasons is reverse discrimination. Further, the new SANDF is not comparable to the old SADF.

#### Reconciliation, justice and peace:

In this category Biblical concepts of reconciliation, guilt, forgiveness, restitution and justice were elicited. Respondents agree that all people are created in the image of God; and that all should have equal opportunities, albeit that not all are the same and therefore of necessity will differ. They, however, doubt the inevitability to take hands with former enemies. The majority do not feel that there is something to confess towards God. Less believe there is anything to confess to one another. They acknowledge the fact that apartheid created inequality; affirmative action is however wrong and unjust; distrust is a hindering factor in reconciliation, but they are committed to help in the build-up of the country; pride, self-righteousness, crime and corruption strain reconciliation; and the

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<sup>9</sup> The author argues that German ideologies, especially before and during the Second World War, played a bigger role than normally acknowledged. For a full discussion see Bezuidenhout, P.H.S. (*Die diensplig-SAW generasie en die soeke na heling, versoening en sosiale geregtigheid*. Unpublished dissertation. University of the Free State. 2015:127)

Significantly 36% of respondents were neutral on this question, an indication of uncertainty and possible ignorance regarding the real influence (direct and indirect) it is believed German national-socialism had on the policy. For a discussion on this see the paragraph on Identity.

Truth and Reconciliation Committee are viewed negatively and judged as biased - it is not acknowledged and recognised as an effective partner in the reconciliation process.

#### Spiritual and religious experiences:

The Church as formal institution has lost credibility and is criticised amongst many former SADF members. Respondents, however, respect guidance from God. Although seemingly negative towards the Church it emerges that numerous conscripts, after their SADF involvement so many years ago, have actually a desire for help and direction.

#### Future of the SADF generation:

Responses show that that generation is willing to contribute positively to the country (93%). Experiences and knowledge gained while in the SADF can be utilised fruitfully. They are prepared to join hands with other organisations in addressing the country's needs. 70% believe that South Africa offers them a future; and even 67% are willing to fight for their country again.

### **Identity**

Understanding this generation who was in the forefront of the conflict demands establishing members' respective worldviews and identity

Firstly, it is generally accepted by researchers that the **history** of any given person or group plays a decisive role in identity formation. Goronchy (2013:1), quotes Eagleton (2000) who states:

*“Social identity is culture. Culture can be loosely summarized as the complex of values, customs, beliefs and practices which constitute the way of life of a specific group ... Culture is just everything which is not genetically transmissible ... Culture is the implicit knowledge of the world by which people negotiate appropriate ways of acting in specific contexts.”*

Researchers mostly agree that identity isn't static but has the ability to adapt and renegotiate itself in its relation with others and according to circumstances. Goronchy (2013:2) describes this fluidness by quoting from the *Faith and Order Paper* (WORLD COUNCIL OF CHURCHES 2006:9):

*“Ethnic and national groups may believe themselves to be ‘natural’ – belonging in some way to the order of nature – and fixed in form. But in fact all such groups are (whether consciously or unconsciously) ‘constructed’, in the sense that they result from the interplay of historical and cultural factors. Such identities are therefore fluid, constantly being ‘renegotiated.’ Because these changes often result from interaction with other groups, ethnic*

*identities are never pure; they involve multiple borrowings and adaptations, even when the sources of the changes have been lost in the mists of time."*

The prominent moments in **Afrikaner history** is, amongst others, the Slagtersnek's revolt, 1815 ('we are treated unjustly by the British'); Groot Trek, 1835-1846 (desire for self-determination away from the British; the constant conflict with groups re land, stealing of stock etc.); Battle of Blood River, 1838 (Divine intervention as sign of God's protection offered His elected people, forming of a laager in the midst of threats); establishment of two Boer Republics, 1852 & 1854 (realisation of desired independence); Anglo-Boer War, (strong anti-English sentiment due to injustices of British - e.g. concentration camps where many women and children perished; mockery of Afrikaans language; poor farmers who had to go to cities for work as result of scorched earth policy); South African Republic, 1961 (realisation of dream of independence); Bush war, 1966-1989 (laager, resistance once again in the midst of threats, capabilities of military). Divisions frequently occurred, such as during the Groot Trek, the Rebellion, 1914 (division amongst former Boer Generals regarding the British request to expel the Germans from Namibia which led to Boer fighting Boer) and lastly the division caused by the decision to support the Allies (British) during the Second World War, 1939-1945. The Ossewabrandwag (1939-1945) was consequently formed as a pro-German anti-English movement. Monuments depicting Afrikaner history include the Voortrekker Monument, Women's memorial and Taal monument to mention but three. It should further be noted that the original 'Afrikaners' were from European descent. As the dominant culture of the time they came into conflict with other civilisations in Africa, totally different from the European. Apartheid (Nationalist Party reign, 1948-1994) was the practical implementation of a desire for self-determination and separation, the upliftment of the Afrikaner, his culture and language. It also manifested in a superior attitude and discrimination by numerous discriminatory laws against other residents of the country.

Secondly, certain **theological influences** contributed to the identity and worldview of Afrikaners. J.D. du Toit (Totius, 1877-1957), a popular Afrikaner and leader was influenced by A. Kuyper (1837-1920), a theologian and politician from the Netherlands. He argued that Calvinism was the main success factor attributed to the accomplishment of Netherland. He used a term '*in isolation is our strength*' which has probably been misused by later South Africans to justify separation. He (Kuyper) however used isolation for *mission*, and not isolation for *survival* (Bosch 1983:27). As already indicated, the intention and call of Kuyper was for a revival of Calvinism. He, however, notably used terms/concepts such as "*sovereignty in one's own sphere*" and "*... that each nation's separateness was ordained by divine will.*" Each (1989:43) as quoted by Oliver (2011:78). Kuyperism has been adapted and applied in the South African context. Totius, one of the founding members of the Broederbond, wrote a publication in 1882, 'Progam van beginsels' where he argued that the Dutch

and Huguenots were the authentic inhabitants of the country. He further cited Nehemiah as parallel between the Afrikaners and Biblical Israel. The Afrikaners should refrain from mixing with foreigners which is a divine ordination. The Tower of Babel too was used to justify separation (Bosch 1983:28). The case for segregation was strengthened by the missionary policy (*'sendingbeleid'*) where the church proved to be a significant influence on the State. The well-known synod where, despite objections, a proposal was accepted for separate gatherings for other cultural groups because of the *'weakness of some'* (*'zwakheid van sommigen'*) (Crafford 1982:42). Further, despite never formulated as church doctrine, sentiment prevailed that other groups, like Ham, Noah's son who are cursed to serve, would never rise above manual labour (Stoop 1984:153).

Thirdly, other **ideological streams** also contributed to the identity and worldview. Colonialism in general induced a superior attitude and promoted separation, something which was started by the British in the country. National-Socialism, propagated by Germany before and during the Second World War played an important part in forming Afrikaners' views. It should be remembered that Afrikaners had a very strong anti-English sentiment. This caused them to lean towards the Germans as many Afrikaners are any case of German origin. During the 1914 Rebellion some tried to get help from Namibian (SWA) Germans. During the Second World War Radio Seezen broadcasted propaganda in Afrikaans from Germany to South Africa. The Ossewabrandwag, a pro-German movement had similar sentiments. One of its members, who was interned during the war, was John Vorster, who later became Prime Minister of South Africa. Neo-Fichtean Romanticism prepared the ground for Nazism (Bosch 1983:29). Fichte emphasised the unity of language, culture and self-determination as well as the purity of the Germans. It is noteworthy that prominent Afrikaners studied in Germany - theologians like Vorster and Potgieter, who at some stage declared apartheid as God's will (Liebenberg 2010:251); leaders like Verwoerd, seen by many as the architect of apartheid; and Diederichs who propagated nationalism as worldview. Piet Meyer, Chairperson of the Broederbond and later Chief of the SABC wrote: *"Purest manifestation in Italian Fascism and German National Socialism in 1941 Victory is imminent"* (Wilkins & Strydom 2012:76; See also Bezuidenhout, P.H.S. 2015:128). Even after the defeat of Nazism it is evident that this thinking continued as an intellectual framework and worldview.

It is clear how their history as well as certain theological and ideological frameworks contributed to their worldviews (identity). In this regard the church, school, cultural organisations and the secretive Broederbond played a role in promoting the identity and influence of Afrikaners.

## **Biblical perspectives**



### Psalm 85: Return to God:

Psalm 85, written after Israel's exile, encourages the people to turn to God. Wendland (2011:774): *"The faithful community was currently facing a serious threat to their very existence – whether this danger confronted them in the form of a drought, some severe pestilence or pandemic, attack by a foreign army, political, social, and moral disintegration, or some combination of these".*

Weiser (1975:574) refers to the justice of God which coincides with the Sinai tradition:

*"Heaven and earth meet in the proceedings of the cultic ritual just as the sun shines down from the sky and draws forth new budding life from the earth, so the 'righteousness' of God (this term embraces the saving will of God in all its aspects) evokes the faithfulness and the faith of men. God bows down from heaven, and the earth reaches up towards heaven, towards God, a vision whose grandeur and profundity are equally sublime."*

Coetzee (2009:561) states: *"The aim of the poet with these two verses can then be interpreted as personification of attributes both of God and of his people, with the land metaphor referring to the people, envisaging a state of wholeness and a relationship of love. The act of kissing (qvn – v. 11b [10b]) depicts deep affection between two persons (bodies), a relationship of unity and wholeness."*

Concerning 'social illnesses' Coetzee (2009:556) makes the following observations: *"In Psalm 85 we come across various reasons for the 'unwholeness' experienced by the societal body of Israel: The people's folly of the past to which they should not return is mentioned twice; the delayed complete salvation in the present is a cause."*

Wendland (2011:778) give specific insights regarding this Psalm:

*"... the failure to achieve this godly concord and orderliness within the community is dealt with in the first half of the psalm. Quite simply, all expressions of conflict and hostility are the inevitable result of human iniquity and sinfulness (v. 2) — chronic sins that are left unrepentant and unforgiven, hence also punishable by the LORD (v. 3). Such communal discord and wickedness within the fellowship of God's people may be coupled with widespread evil in the nation as a whole and thus provoke his wrath in the form of adverse political, social, economic, and physical consequences for them all. How can there be any peace if there is no righteousness in the land? And how can there be righteousness in society if there is no real repentance? Finally, how can there be genuine repentance if people habitually return to their former folly—their diverse forms of ungodly behavior (v. 8c)? Any hope of restoration and revival is quickly extinguished in a prevailing climate of sin and injustice, whether on the national or local level, or indeed, within the church itself. In such a corrupt environment, only the wrath of God may be expected (v. 5)."*

To an extent South Africa is also in a post-exilic period. A faithful commitment to God is the only guarantee towards sustainable economic, political and social 'shalom'.

#### Amos: Social justice is God's will

The prophet exposes oppression, bribery, corruption, hypocritical religious practices, violence, reliance on own military might, pride, arrogance and self-indulgent lifestyle. Stuart (1987:330) writes:

*“Samaritan society had over the years so thoroughly departed from the standards of the Mosaic covenant, standards of which Amos was a divinely appointed enforcer that its favored citizens would not know what those standards were. The standards adopted were instead the amoral Canaanite-Palestinian ones that allowed people to live selfishly and splendidly, to exploit others, to increase your holdings without limits, and to engage in virtually any personal or sensual pleasures. The Canaanites had no covenantal demands effectively on their personal or social morality and were religiously legitimate so long as they merely faithfully worshipped via the sacrificial system and financially supported the cult.”*

It is easy to envisage the similarities between the present-day South Africa and Israel during Amos's time. It should however be noted that oppression and discrimination occurred in the past. Many Afrikaners relied on the might of the military while the rest were in church not always understanding the effect of an unjust system.<sup>10</sup> The sad reality is that many of the elements that Afrikaners experienced at the hands of others they in turn simply repeated. Of course much good was done. They contributed greatly towards the well-being of the country; and performed missional work etc. Unfortunately, a system which harmed fellow South Africans in many ways was instituted. This pain should be acknowledged if any hope of permanent reconciliation may be hoped for.

#### Philippians: Paul's former and new identity in Christ

Paul stemmed from a people with rich customs, traditions and worldviews that formed his identity. He too was a teacher and Pharisee, from the tribe of Benjamin and seriously defended his worldview especially against Christians who he saw as a threat to his and his people's 'identity'. This changed dramatically during and after his encounter with Christ. He subsequently describes his newfound identity in Christ in a letter to the Philippians (3:5-10):

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<sup>10</sup> In an interview with a former MK soldier, who happens to be a Christian, noted that as a child he always wondered what the Whites were doing and saying in church, whereas he experienced discrimination from some of them and were not allowed to enter.

*“I was circumcised when I was a week old. I am an Israelite by birth, of the tribe of Benjamin, a pure-blooded Hebrew. As far as keeping the Jewish Law is concerned, I was a Pharisee, and I was so zealous that I persecuted the church. As far as a person can be righteous by obeying the commands of the Law, I was without fault. But all those things that I might count as profit I now reckon as loss for Christ's sake. Not only those things; I reckon everything as complete loss for the sake of what is so much more valuable, the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have thrown everything away; ... All I want is to know Christ and to experience the power of his resurrection, to share in his sufferings and become like him in his death” (GNB).*

Christians, without denying their specific cultural background, should clearly understand that in Christ a new identity is found and formed and should be continuously pursued. Walls have indeed been broken down and bridges been crossed, not from some humanistic conviction or curious interest but from a convicted heart that believers are from every tribe, race and tongue. The advantage that most South Africans have is that the majority profess to be Christians. This opportunity has not yet been fully seized. There are adequate Biblical principles that Christians from diverse backgrounds are able to engage to build sustainable justice, harmony and reconciliation. Those identities and worldviews which do not pass the Biblical test of a Christ-centred orientation should be left at the cross in humble obedience.

Smit (1983:148) commentary is: *“The same act that reconciles a person to God simultaneously incorporates him into a community in which people find their identity in Jesus Christ and not in their race, culture, social class or sex.”*

### **How could the SADF specifically and Afrikaners in general be ‘healed’**

Firstly, this study argues, they (i.e. both the SADF and Afrikaners) should pass through a spiritual process<sup>11</sup> where the past is acknowledged. They should humble themselves in brokenness before God and honestly reflect on their past and presence. Guilt should be confessed while remembering that Christ has indeed died for the shame and guilt of all. Confessed sin is indeed forgiven and the believer has the privilege to stand justified before God and men. Forgiveness should be sought and accorded to both victims and perpetrators. Biblical justice and restoration should be pursued. According to the **Book of Leviticus** an injustice and sin to your neighbour is an injustice and sin towards God. Furthermore, ‘idols’ of the forefathers should be destroyed as Gideon did with his father’s. Jesus crossed man-made borders. Afrikaners will have venture in faith by acquainting

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<sup>11</sup> A slightly adapted scheme of Van der Walt (2003) is used.

themselves with true God-fearing believers from other cultures. An unjust system prohibited both parties to meet and thereby contributing to the reality that misperceptions were formed. True reconciliation is only possible in Christ. As for the Afrikaner specifically and the precondition for a Christological orientation, Oliver (2011:76) comments:

*“Afrikaners need to identify for themselves where and why some of their views and those of the churches regarding history, theology and traditions are not in line with basic Christian principles. Only when this process is completed, there could be progression. The next step would be to recover our identity and integrity through the imperative lens of meta-memories from salvation history (Volf 2006a). All Christians share the same identity (a new identity given by Christ), regardless of their nationality, language or history. The Calvinist-born Afrikaner nation, displaying its true Christian (New Testament) identity, would repent for past sins by thinking and acting differently and becoming an influential, changing force to a better future for all living in South Africa.”*

Secondly, the legacy of violence and bloodshed has left South Africa with the unbecoming albatross of possibly being one of the most violent places on earth. This legacy must be challenged and transformed. All South Africans will have to listen to one another's stories. Similarities could prove revelatory! In the final instance all and sundry wish themselves and their children to have food on the table; a roof over their head; and a sound and equitable education. We are not each other's enemies as our ideologies predetermined. Afrikaners will have to be patriotic and loyal towards the prevailing South African democratic and constitutional dispensation. This does not dictate that any action which is detrimental, unjust, unlawful and morally unacceptable to citizens - inclusive of Christians - should be tolerated without appropriate counteraction. Too often Afrikaners are prone to criticise without making meaningful contributions. They have the skills and experience to effect positive change as has been illustrated by countless ex-South Africans living abroad.

Thirdly, soldiers from ancient times had need to be honoured for unselfish service and sacrifices. The current regime may be prejudicial to the former SADF. These soldiers, should nevertheless be embraced as fellow South Africans and disciplined soldiers that have skills which can contribute towards building a prosperous nation. This will assist them in not feeling alienated and undesirable in the new order. Members who are still struggling with issues and/or PTSD, some already for decades, ought to be aided.

Fourthly, the spiral model of Daniel Louw (2008:12) a very useful in analysing the inescapable situation of the SADF generation as dealt with here. In this he argues that often it is not possible to move back to the original state or experience (linear model). He suggests that the spiral model is

able to spiral upwards, that is, move a person to higher dimensions and levels despite crises, dislocations or loss. The success however depends on a person's maturity and attitude. Existential crises like anxiety, guilt, hopelessness and anger is normal but that the potential of faith can overcome most obstacles. One should however possess a critical self-reflection and self-confrontation which enables change and transformation. He (Louw, D.J. 2008:27) refers to the notion of power which often intoxicates relationships. Our new status in Christ has however been redeemed and transformed in Christ.

Relationships amongst people are known for the space or atmosphere between them. This space includes perceptions, world views, values, associations, as well as social and cultural structures of life. Most people are very sensitive towards attitudes, responses and reactions. He postulates four positions someone can take. 'Positive' positions (space) constitute grace, support, help, expectation and care whereas 'negative' positions consist of confusion, rejection, dislocation, detachment, withdrawal and ignorance. He suggests moving from position in order to effect healing (Louw, D.J. 2008:35). SADF members are required to move their entrenched position or standpoints. This demands a mental paradigm shift.

Fifthly, Churches need to take the lead in this regard. They have the capacity, skills and experience to guide Afrikaners to real healing, reconciliation and peace.<sup>12</sup> Everist (1992:347) discusses the American scenario which can easily be applied to South Africa with its obvious similarities. He argues,

*Perhaps most important, we must come together locally in churches and in the network of faith communities and talk, and listen, and dialog, no matter how difficult. People of color know a great deal about white America – they must in order to function in this country. Whites remain remarkably unaware of the lives, feelings and hardships of people of color. Oppressors, the white privileged in an exclusive civil ecclesiology, are usually the most ignorant, because it has been to their advantage to ignore and remain ignorant of the excluded and oppressed. So whites need to listen, not to judge, debate, defend, solve or critique, but simply to listen. And they need to believe what they are hearing.*

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<sup>12</sup> This study proposed a 40 Day of Healing for Afrikaners. During this time, facilitated by the Church, members will have the chance to expose themselves honestly to the light of the Word, confront and confess the wrongs, accept and give forgiveness, be transformed mentally (cf. Rom. 12:2) in order to be healed spiritually.

Sixthly, a possible confession by a former politician to the security forces is opportune. Van Zyl Slabbert<sup>13</sup> created a fictional scenario whereby FW de Klerk is asking the former security forces for forgiveness.

*"I ask the forgiveness of young people who died unnecessary for an undefendable cause, especially their parents...and the security forces in the police and defence force who had to stand at the forefront of this. We misled them immensely. Also to de Kock. We made it possible for him to become what he became...the security forces are furious regarding the betrayal and fraud committed against them. Especially politicians who confess that they were not aware."* (Van Zyl Slabbert 1999:112). (Translated from Afrikaans).

Who knows what healing outcome such a confession might have?

Seventhly, should they, the SADF conscript generation, accept that they are co-existent with other groups. Apartheid asked for segregation because of fear of assimilation and loss of identity. In a world of close on 200 countries, between 3000 - 5 000 different groupings are found. This implies that minority groups live in most of them. This isn't necessarily a threat to the specific identity of a people or group. Freedom of association and differentiation are very practical ways to preserve identity. Volf<sup>14</sup>, notes as follows:

*"... has it right when he argues for differentiation. The danger in inclusion without boundaries is that one can lose your identity. Exclusion is not an option 'because the prophets, evangelists, and apostles tells me that this is a wrong way to treat human beings, any human being, anywhere and I am persuaded to have good reason to believe them'"* (Volf 1996:68). *And further, "Instead we need more adequate judgments based on a distinction between legitimate differentiation and illegitimate exclusion and made with humility that counts with our proclivity to misperceive and misjudge because we desire to exclude" (Volf 1996:68) "... as Jesus said no food was unclean" (Mark 7:14-23) (Volf 1996:64,73).*

## **Conclusion**

This article highlighted the reality that many former SADF members still face many issues related to the past and/or present. These issues surfaced intensely during the 'Boetman' debate. There is undoubtedly a need to assist and guide those members who struggle with some psychological, emotional and/or physical issues related to both the past and present - unfinished business begs

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<sup>13</sup> He was an Afrikaner and former leader of the opposition, Progressive Federal Party. He resigned later and organised the Dakar event where some Afrikaners met with the ANC.

<sup>14</sup> Volf presents a very useful scheme to enhance reconciliation. Open the arms, wait, embrace and open the arms again. For a full understanding of this see Volf (1996), Cilliers (2012) or Bezuidenhout, P.H.S. (2015:63)

closure. The survey found that most members are willing to play a constructive part in the new South Africa. They acknowledge that justice needs to be done. However, they are understandably, like most South Africans concerned over the high levels of crime and corruption; they are divided (confused?) whether apartheid was Biblically justified or not; they harbour a largely negative perception regarding the current government; and are unsure whether interaction with former enemies is needed. Unfortunately, it seems as if most do not understand the real impact and pain the previous system of apartheid caused.

The study premised that an SADF member as Afrikaner went into war ingrained with a specific identity. This identity was shaped through the Afrikaners unique and particular history. It caused them to perceive themselves as somewhat superior and exclusive. They are inclined to experience a continuous battle for survival, and therefore would form a laager in the light of real or perceived threats. Historically they managed to stoically rise after the devastating Anglo-Boer War with the help of different organisations, institutions and initiatives. Theological and ideological frameworks backed the formation of a specific worldview and identity. The intellectual and ideological legacy of Neo-Fichteanism which manifested itself in Nazism left 'stains' on South Africa, specifically due to a pro-German stance taken before and during the Second World War by many Afrikaners; and the fact that many prominent Afrikaners visited Germany.

One could argue that the SADF generation is rapidly passing. However, many of their unresolved issues might rub off on their children. In that sense it is important to help and guide this generation to healing. In order to effect healing, a spiritual process is needed where Afrikaners honestly expose themselves in the light of God's Word. Humbly unbiblical views, dogmas and perceptions can be confessed and minds be renewed. Renewed guidance and inspiration about their specific calling and contribution to the country can be gained in such a process facilitated by the Churches. All South Africans will have to ask and offer forgiveness. The blame game needs to stop as believers are not victims *per se*. God is ultimately in control of people's lives. Bridges will have to be crossed, walls broken down, stories told and listen with insight to stories, and confront the prevalent high levels of violence. Too often violence becomes the default way South Africans try and resolve problems. It is better to listen and talk to one another to resolve challenges than to demonise each other.

The current government and powers that be must unconditionally accept and embrace this SADF generation. They were to a large extent children (youthful products) of their time. They did not make the political decisions. As soldiers, police men and security forces they too have a need to be acknowledged for service rendered. They indeed have skills - many studied while in the SADF - to benefit the country. Distrust is still an issue – frequently the 'other' are perceived through the

ideological lenses of the past. A change of position from victim, detachment, alienation and frustration to a position of expectation, care, involvement and hope is imperative.

Their somewhat one-sided identity of the Afrikaner should be Christologically reoriented. Van de Beek (2008:304) indicated that it is dangerous when people become the subject of their own history instead of God himself. People do not know what is good for them. Anything outside of Christ might be an idol and even dangerous and deceptive. Paul lovingly but strongly teaches the importance of this in 2 Cor. 10:4-5:

*‘The weapons we use in our fight are not the world's weapons but God's powerful weapons, which we use to destroy strongholds. We destroy false arguments; we pull down every proud obstacle that is raised against the knowledge of God; we take every thought captive and make it obey Christ.’* (GNB)

All the strong arguments, convictions, customs and perceptions which are against the will of God should be identified and left at the cross.

Perhaps the story of a former Recce during an operation in Angola is prophetic<sup>15</sup>. Over three successive nights during an operation a *cross* made an unexpected but significant impact on them. On day one they saw a life-size statue of Christ at a church which almost seemed unreal, like a vision (338). On the second day they saw a 30 meter statue of Christ with stretched arms overlooking the town. This was the Christo Rei, a smaller replica of the one in Rio de Janeiro (342). On their way back and in the process to navigate they saw the Southern cross which helped them find the route.

Any venture, action, plan, attitude, identity or worldview exclusive of Christ and the cross is treacherous, deceptive and destructive. May the cross once again show the way to Afrikaners, the SADF generation and the rest of the country.

*“There is no way to peace along the way of safety. For peace must be dared. It is the great venture. It can never be made safe. Peace is the opposite of security. To demand guarantees is to distrust, and this distrust in turn brings further war. To look for guarantees is to want to protect oneself. Peace means giving oneself altogether to the law of God, wanting no security, but in faith and obedience laying the destiny of the nations in the hand of the Almighty God, not trying to direct it for selfish purposes. Battles are won not with weapons, but with God. They are won when the way leads to the cross. Which of us can claim to know what it might not mean for the world if one nation should meet*

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<sup>15</sup> STADLER, KOOS. *Recce. Kleinspan operasies agter vyandelike linies*. 2015. Kaapstad: Tafelberg



*the aggressor, not with weapons in hand, but praying, defenceless, and for that very reason protected by a 'bulwark never failing'" (Dietrich Bonhoeffer quoted in Bosanquet, M. 1969:145).*

*'Afrikaners did have a tough time ... struggle ... remarkable comeback ... indisputably on top. Stop being arrogant and brutal at worst times. In their best moments no nicer people. But they have got to relax. It will have to come from within. Show a little maturity. That is one of the few genuine ways to create national unity. They can't get it with the basic attitude too many of them still cling too'* (Allen Drury in 'A very strange society' as quoted in Wilkins and Strydom (2012:449) while writing about Afrikaners in the 1960's)

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