
Afrikaners in the SADF national service generation: The quest for healing and reconciliation?

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Opsomming

Afrikaners van die dienspliggenerasie wat in die vorige Suid-Afrikaanse Weermag gedien het, ondervind in 'n groot mate 'n identiteitskrisis vanweë twee faktore. Eerstens bestaan daar 'n nuwe bestel waar Afrikaners 'n minderheidsgroep is. Hulle voel vervreemd en selfs gefrustreerd en verward. Tweedens word hulle identiteit bevraagteken en sommige meen selfs dat dit misken word. Wat is hulle rol en nuwe identiteit in die huidige Suid-Afrika? Hulle het aan 'n oorlog deelgeneem en ook intern aan operasies binne 'n spesifieke plaaslike, regionale and globale konteks deel gehad. Hulle identiteit is deur hulle eie besondere geskiedenis gevorm, sowel as deur sekere teologiese en ideologiese wêreldbeskouings en raamwerke. Die response op 'n vraelys wat deur sommige van hierdie generasie voltooi is, vertoon 'n sekere mate van verwarring, verwondheid, onkunde en onwilligheid om veranderinge wat in die land voorkom, te aanvaar. Vanuit 'n missiologiese perspektief moet hierdie Afrikaneridentiteit (oortuigings, houdings en wêreldbeskouing), soos in die artikel aangetoon word, Bybels en Christologies hersien word. Die kerk is as 'n werktuig in die unieke posisie is om 'n geestelike proses te fasiliteer, waarin verantwoordelikheid vir sy deelname aan die verlede

en hede aanvaar word, en sy betrokkenheid daaraan te bely. Die proses van heling van die wonde van die verlede deur vergifnis kan ondervind word en die kerk kan in die posisie wees om 'n positiewe bydrae tot die land te maak. Sending beteken ook om 'n nuwe lewe te lei. Hierdie nuwe lewe in Christus is nodig in Suid-Afrika. 'n Geestelike proses kan bydra tot ware versoening in die land.

Abstract

The Afrikaners in the former South African Defence Force conscript generation are to a large extent experiencing an identity crisis, due to two factors. Firstly, there is a new dispensation where Afrikaners are a minority group. They feel alienated and even frustrated and confused. Secondly, their identity has been challenged and some would say defeated. What is their role and new identity in the current South Africa? They fought a war and participated internally in operations within a specific local, regional and global context. This identity had been formed through their own particular history as well as certain theological and ideological worldviews and frameworks. The responses to a questionnaire completed by this generation indicate a certain degree of confusion, woundedness, ignorance and an unwillingness to embrace the changes taking place in this country. From a missiological perspective this Afrikaner identity (beliefs, attitudes, worldview), as argued in this article, should be Biblically and Christologically reorientated. The Church as an agent is in the unique position to facilitate a spiritual process of taking responsibility of its part in the past and present, to confess to it and thus starting the process of being healed of the scars of the past, experiencing forgiveness and being in the position to bring a positive contribution to our country. Mission means also to live a new life. This new life in Christ is necessary in South Africa. A spiritual process can contribute to real reconciliation in the country.

Sleutelwoorde:

Suid-Afrikaanse Weermag; Afrikaners; Versoening; Belydenis, Genesing, Toekoms

Keywords:

South African Defence Force; Afrikaners; Reconciliation; Confession, Healing, Future

1. Introduction

Although the new democratic dispensation in South Africa is more than 20 years old, many 'Afrikaners',¹ including the former South African Defence Force conscript generation,^{2,3} are still uneasy regarding the past and currently it varies between a sense of guilt⁴, withdrawal, alienation from the current reality and governing institutions, frustration, anger, and even hopelessness. Underlying reasons include the perceived loss in the quality of life, prevailing levels of corruption, poor service delivery, murders – especially farm murders – as well as the implementation of the policy of affirmative action.

Some former conscripts, as is discussed further on, feel that 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 specific incident or event is experienced. Despite many having adjusted well to the new democratic dispensation,

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- 1 The term *Afrikaner* is awkward. New terms, such as *Afrikaanses*, *Afrikane* or *Afrikaans-speaking (white) South Africans*, are often preferred.
 - 2 Edlmann (2012) puts the total number of the conscripts in the period 1966-1989 at some 600 000, roughly 7,5% of Afrikaners.
 - 3 For a fuller understanding of the national South African liberation struggle, the regional anti-colonial conflict in SWA/Namibia and the global Cold War (Angola) involvement of the SADF, see Esterhuysen, 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. & Wessels, A. (2010) *Die Suid-Afrikaanse kapelaansdiens en die beginsel van 'n regverdige oorlog: die Namibiese Vryheidsoorlog, 1966-1989*; and Scholtz, L. (2013). *Die SAW in die Grensoorlog, 1966-1989*.
 - 4 Snyman (2005:335) struggles with the reality of being continuously reminded about both the past and current 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?"

others still harbour some negative sentiments. The question is how can the church be instrumental in bringing about a new situation of peace, reconciliation and justice. The challenges facing the Afrikaners of the former SADF/Conscription generation, as well as a scriptural reply to their views and challenges, should be researched.

2. A missiological approach

Mission does not only have the proclamation of the Gospel to unbelievers as goal, but bringing the fullness of the gospel message to all. The gospel touches every aspect of life. Reconciliation and justice touch the very heart and soul of people and mission should take this very seriously. Bevans and Schroeder (2006:286 ff.) especially explain that mission as constant in context also has to do with a prophetic voice: This should always be done in dialogue: "Mission, as participation in the mission of the triune God, can only proceed in dialogue and can only be carried out in humility (2006:348)." In this prophetic voice the church calls for reconciliation and justice : "Like the prophets of the Hebrew scriptures, and like Jesus' ministry in the New Testament, the church's mission is about cooperating with God in the call of all people always and everywhere, to justice, peace and the integrity of creation (2006:369)." The missional church (Newbigin, 1989:220) is also the church in mission dealing with the challenges of everyday Christian life. Research on the way in which the church should be instrumental in bringing peace and reconciliation is therefore of importance.

3. Views of the former SADF conscription generation: A quantitative study

3.1 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 questions⁵ was compiled to gain data/information pertaining to the following: General information; Afrikanership; 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

5 The questionnaire was compiled with the help of the Department of Sociology, University of the Free State.

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 could lead to other contacts. This proved unsuccessful. Fortunately, target groups could be reached using social media, specifically Facebook. Some 200 questionnaires were received through Facebook groups and a further 100 via the 61 Mechanised Battalion Group Veteran Organisation during August-September, 2013.⁶

3.2 Results

General information:

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

Afrikanership:

Respondents confirmed that their Afrikanership plays a role in their identity. They strengthened the perception that Afrikaners historically had to survive because Africa is experienced as hostile and they are part of a minority group. At least 20% considered emigration as an option, but contrary, 88% were willing to play a role in the new South Africa.

Military experiences:

Most respondents claimed that the SADF training was excellent and contributed to develop boys into men. They were aware of the reasons why the SADF had to be present in Namibia and Angola because communism was a massive threat. Only 42% considered their role as upholding the apartheid regime. Perhaps the current negative connotation attached to apartheid may be cited as an explanation. Respondents' attitude towards their generals is more positive than towards politicians. Almost 80% hold the view that there had indeed been a 'total onslaught' on the Republic of South Africa. 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 receive support. Half were of the opinion that it was sensible to make peace with former enemies; 25% were neutral in response,

6 The author is a member of the 61 Mechanised Battalion Group Veteran Organisation. 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 and submit it online without the hassle of having to mail it.

indicating uncertainty or possible ignorance on how this is to be achieved. They expressed the opinion that veteran organisations could play a useful and constructive role in the process.

Apartheid:

Responses indicated conflict regarding former SADF members' experiences of 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. However, they condemn the practical consequences of the policy (e.g. economic discrimination). They acknowledge the fact that apartheid originated from colonialism (54%), but the majority (61%), hold the view that the United States of America exercised a greater influence on South Africa. One quarter (24%) was of the opinion that German influences played a part in the formulation of the apartheid ideology. Respondents differed when asked whether apartheid was unjust on Biblical grounds – 38% agreed, 34% disagreed, and 28% were uncertain. This ambivalence should probably be understood as apartheid was initially justified and even propagated by the Afrikaner churches, only to be changed later. Almost two thirds (65%) thought that the previous regime, *inter alia*, used the media to 'brainwash' Afrikaners in order to justify their policy.

Liberation movements:

Liberation movements, such as South West Africa People's Organization and the African National Congress, were not viewed in a positive light. They were regarded as revolutionary communist organisations wanting to violently overthrow the order. Some understanding for their struggle (62%) was shown, but respondents rejected the affiliated violence (87%). Respondents, however, acknowledged the need to appreciate and understand one another's histories and perspectives. SADF respondents did not regard liberation movements as well-trained and disciplined armies.

South Africa post 1994:

A high degree of ambivalence was noticed in terms of the current dispensation. Some were of the opinion that communism was still a threat. A generally negative attitude persists regarding the governance by the ANC. One of the reasons is reverse discrimination. Respondents also did not believe that the new SANDF was 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 agreed 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 will therefore necessarily differ. They,

however, doubted the inevitability of taking hands with former enemies. The majority did not feel that there was something to confess before God. Fewer respondents believed that there was anything to confess to one another. They acknowledged the fact that apartheid had created inequality; affirmative action is wrong and unjust; distrust is a hindering factor in reconciliation, although they are committed to help building the country; and pride, self-righteousness, crime, and corruption strain reconciliation. They viewed the Truth and Reconciliation Committee negatively and judged it as biased – it was 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 was criticised by many former SADF members. Respondents, however, respect guidance from God. Although seemingly negative towards the church, it emerged that numerous conscripts, after their SADF involvement so many years ago, actually yearned for help and direction.

Future of the SADF generation:

Responses showed that this generation was willing to participate positively in the country (93%). Experiences and knowledge gained while in the SADF could be used fruitfully. They were prepared to join hands with other organisations in addressing the country's needs. Seventy per cent believed that South Africa offers a future to them and 67% were even willing to fight for their country again.

4. Issues regarding the challenges to Afrikaners in the former SADF conscript generation

Identity

Establishing members' respective worldviews and identity is important in understanding this generation, which was at the forefront of the conflict.

Firstly, researchers generally accept that the **history** of any given person or group plays a decisive role in forming an identity. Goroncy (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 is not static, but has the ability to adapt and renegotiate itself in its relation with others and according to circumstances. Goroncy (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** includes, amongst others, the Slagtersnek revolt, 1815 ('*we are treated unjustly by the British*'); Great 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 (believed to be Divine intervention as sign of God's protection offered to His elected people, forming of a laager in the midst of threats); establishment of two Boer republics, 1852 and 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 find employment in urban areas as a result of the scorched earth policy); South African Republic, 1961 (realisation of dream of independence); and the Border War, 1966-1989 (laager, resistance once again in the midst of threats, capabilities of military). Dissent frequently occurred, such as during the Great Trek, the Rebellion, 1914-1915 (division amongst former Boer generals regarding the British request to expel the Germans from Namibia which led to Afrikaner fighting Afrikaner), and lastly the dissent caused by the decision to support the Allies (British) during the Second World War, 1939-1945. The Ossewa Brandwag was consequently formed as a pro-German anti-English movement. Monuments depicting Afrikaner history include the Voortrekker Monument, Women's Memorial, and the Language 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, which were totally different from the European. Apartheid (Nationalist Party government, 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 an attitude of superiority and discrimination through 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. Kuyper argued that Calvinism was the main success factor attributed to the accomplishments of Netherland. He used the phrase *'in isolation is our strength'* which has probably been misused by later South Africans to justify separation. However, Kuyper used the term isolation for *mission*, and not isolation for *survival* (Bosch, 1983:27). As already indicated, Kuyper called 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 in 1918, wrote a publication in 1882, "Progam van beginsels" (programme of principles) in which he argued that the Dutch and Huguenots were the authentic inhabitants of the country. He further cited Nehemiah as a 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 being formulated as church doctrine, sentiment prevailed that other groups, like Ham, Noah's son who was 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.

5. 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". It must then be understood that the implication for the people in Psalm 85 is to return to God.

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.

This reference to Weiser helps to understand the task to reconcile. It must be agreed that the faithfulness to God includes justice.

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."* This means that the people of God should now live in the salvation.

Wendland (2011:778) gives specific insight 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).

It must be understood that Wendland's views are relevant. To some 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' 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.⁷ 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; performed missional work; etc. Unfortunately, a system which harmed fellow South Africans in many ways was instituted. This pain should be acknowledged if permanent reconciliation is 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 whom 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):

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

⁷ In an interview with a former uMkhonto weSizwe soldier, who happens to be a Christian, he 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.

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 that should continuously be 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 there are believers in every tribe, race, and tongue. The advantage that most South Africans have is that the majority profess to be Christian. This opportunity has not yet been fully seized. There are adequate Biblical principles that Christians from diverse backgrounds are able to engage in building 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's (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."*

6. How could the SADF conscript generation specifically and Afrikaners in general be 'healed'

Firstly, this study argues, Afrikaners of the SADF/Conscription generation should pass through a spiritual process⁸ where the past is acknowledged. In the research it is clear that many do not regard them as doing anything wrong. Guilt, where, applicable should, however, 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 of standing 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. 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

8 A slightly adapted scheme of Van der Walt (2003) is used.

history (Volf, 2006). 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 each other'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 to the 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 needed to be honoured for unselfish service and sacrifices. The current regime may be prejudicial towards 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 in them 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 supported.

Fourthly, the spiral model of Daniel Louw (2008:12) is very useful in analysing the inescapable situation of the SADF generation as dealt with here. In this he argues that it is often 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 are normal, but the potential of faith can overcome most obstacles. One should, however, possess a critical self-reflection and self-confrontation which enable 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 from 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.⁹

Sixthly, a possible confession by a former politician to the security forces is opportune. Van Zyl Slabbert¹⁰ 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 that 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, the SADF conscript generation should accept that they co-exist 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 3 000 and 5 000 different groupings are found. This implies that minority groups are present. This is not necessarily a threat to the specific identity of a people or group. Freedom of association and differentiation are very practical ways to preserve identity. Volf¹¹ notes as follows:

9 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.

10 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.

11 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 (2015:63).

“... 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).

7. Conclusion

This article highlighted the reality that many former SADF members still face many issues related to the past and/or present. 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 closure. The survey found that most members were willing to play a constructive part in the new South Africa. They acknowledged that justice needed to be done. However, they were understandably, like most South Africans, concerned about the high levels of crime and corruption; they were divided (confused?) whether apartheid was Biblically justified or not; they harboured a largely negative perception regarding the current government; and were unsure whether interaction with former enemies was needed. Unfortunately, it seemed as if most did not understand the real impact and pain the previous system of apartheid had caused.

The study premised that an SADF member, as Afrikaner, went into war ingrained with a specific identity. This identity was shaped through the Afrikaner’s 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 are honestly exposed to 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 listened to with insight, and the prevalent high levels of violence should be confronted. Too often violence becomes the default way South Africans use to resolve problems. It is better to listen and talk to one another in an effort to resolve challenges, rather than to demonise each other.

The current government and powers that be must accept and embrace this SADF generation unconditionally. They were to a large extent children (youthful products) of their time. They did not make the political decisions. As soldiers or as policemen, they too need to be acknowledged for services rendered. They indeed have skills – many studied while in the SADF – which can be applied to the benefit of the country. Distrust is still an issue – frequently the 'other' is perceived through the ideological lens of the past. A change in position from victim, detachment, alienation, and frustration to a position of expectation, care, involvement, and hope is imperative.

The somewhat one-sided identity of the Afrikaner should be Christologically reorientated. Van de Beek (2008:304) indicates 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.

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