
Words Words Words

MAY 1964 BRING FORTH a life of *Volksleier* Hendrik Frensch Verwoerd. We offer a title: *Verward-Verwader-Verwoerd*, the comparison of the Afrikaans adjective for "confused" stuck on to him by a hostile fellow Nat in the Doctor's *Transvaler* days. A thorough study of Verwoerd will explore the liberal Netherlands background, the involvements in Leipzig, Hamburg and Berlin in the mid to late nineteen-twenties, when rival groups of philosophy students were toying with the ideas that brought forth Nazism. It is time to assess the academic career, leading to the revealing Inaugural when he accepted the newly instituted chair of Applied Psychology at Stellenbosch; the building up of *Die Transvaler* under his editorship from 1935; the bitter wartime conflicts of *gesuiwerdes*, O.B.'s, the New Order, between Krugerism and its enemies, told so clearly in Roberts and Trollip's *The South African Opposition*. And the post-war years with the premiership as a constant goal. Is it true that on Malan's retirement, Dr. Verwoerd cabled Strijdom, who was holidaying in Europe, warning him to come back and take the premiership from Malan's nominee, Klasie Havenga, or he, Verwoerd, would take it? The biographer will know. How much Leipzig influence is there still? Or has its inner logic been destroyed by the needs of applying psychology to Nat politics and to the 106 nations who voted against his policies at UN? Certainly the "P.M.", as his English South African admirers call him, has said good-bye to the logic of his case for "separate development" under world pressure. 1964 should be a good year to assess the effect of this all-important break, of which Transkei "self-government" under a one-man-one-vote constitution was the most clear indication.

●

WE REGRET THE DEMISE of *Torch*, the Non-European Unity Movement weekly newspaper. Its stern and righteous incorruptibility had an absurd side, and the comic mixture of punning, high-sounding vituperation, and malapropisms in its style took any sting out of the weekly floggings it administered to all who differed with its hard-core position. An old *Torch*-ism for the deluded followers of the late Dr. Buchman was "morally re-armed reptiles", which was presumably not meant to be funny, where its well-founded gibe at the recent Transkei elections, "one-piss-one-vote", successfully was.

Joost de Blank

A Farewell Interview

Joost de Blank retired as Archbishop of Cape Town at the end of 1963. Before leaving for England he was interviewed by The New African.

THE NEW AFRICAN: During the past fifty years many people feel it's very difficult to say that there has been real progress. In fact, a leading Negro writer makes rather a depressing statement that "We human beings now have the power to exterminate ourselves; this seems to be the entire sum of our achievement." Would you say that this is a fair appraisal of the last half century?

DE BLANK: I don't think it's a fair appraisal of the last half century: I think it's perhaps the most important thing that has happened in that time. I think it is true that humanity now has the ability to exterminate itself and this ability of course has been secured chiefly in what we call the western world . . . All the powers of mass destruction have been uniquely a white man's preserve. And he has secured this and has done this, and the black man, I think, in America and elsewhere, feels this is of very doubtful credit to the western civilisation which is so strongly advocated. I don't think it's a fair appraisal; there are all sorts of things like surgery and medicine and the whole art of healing where there have also been tremendous strides over the last half century. It would be quite unfair to say that the *only* achievement of the last half century is the destructive one.

N.A.: The same writer also feels that Africans and Negroes have suffered so very much from cruelty and destruction that they may prove to be the redeemers of the twentieth century.

DE BLANK: I think that is a little bit extravagant. I think it's true that black people have suffered enormously — particularly Africa and the slave trade over the last four hundred years or so—I think they have endured a tremendous amount at the hands of both the Middle Easterners and the Westerners. I think that if they could rise to their true greatness they might act as the sort of mediatorial element in the world.

But I don't think this comes naturally, it isn't because of their suffering that it comes. It depends what a man does with his suffering—whether it makes him bitter and resentful and therefore angry, whether he's angry as your writer has been angry; or whether he becomes redemptive in outlook and believes that his experience, his agony, can be used to redeem a situation.

N.A.: The grip of Islam at the moment—do you think this will sharpen the distinction between black and white, and, if so, will it make reconciliation more difficult in the long run?

DE BLANK: . . . I don't think that Islam is necessarily anti-white . . . I think that in the near East, with the Manroft case in London, you do find a great Pan-Arab sense, but you don't find it outside the near East.

N.A.: Today there is much discussion about the secular effects of Christianity. What secular changes would you like to bring about the kingdom of God on earth?

DE BLANK: I don't think any of us believe that the kingdom of God can be established on earth in a convenient political programme way. What I believe the Church's job to be is to proclaim the Gospel which has to do with a man's *total* personality, which means his physical situation as well as his spiritual being. In this I imagine peace and unity are almost cliché words, which do, however, indicate what the Christian Gospel would like to see in effect in the world. It believes that peace with God is actually unachievable and is a *heresy* if it is divorced from trying at the same time to establish peace and unity with your neighbour. The two things hang and fall together. There's a text in the Bible which says that if a man says he loves God whom he has not seen, he's a liar if he doesn't love his brother whom he has seen. This seems to me to be absolutely axiomatic to Christianity. Christianity seeks to bring about a situation where

men are anxious to bring order out of chaos, and peace out of mistrust and suspicion, and unity out of division and separation. I believe that in this country the primary division is the racial difficulties in which we find ourselves. Fifty years ago in Britain it was an economic split; I believe that in the course of time we shall probably find that a great deal of the racial split is in fact an economic one. If we are really going to take our Christianity seriously it means we have to face the whole challenge of man's relationship to his fellow man, and make this as much a part of the Gospel as the creation of a private pipeline between himself and God.

N.A.: What do we mean by the brotherhood of man? There are certain Christian bodies which seem to lean rather more towards the fatherhood of God, and a rather fierce father at that, than towards the brotherhood of man. What can one say to such bodies?

DE BLANK: The fatherhood of God, which doesn't include as an essential element within this faith a belief in the brotherhood of man, is inadequate. By the brotherhood of man I believe fundamentally that you treat your fellow man as an end and not as a means to an end. He has a dignity and a significance in himself and you aren't allowed to use him as a tool to bolster up your state theories or your political ideologies. He has to be considered in the totality of his being; how best you can give him the freedom whereby he can achieve fullness of personality which we believe really is the end of man.

N.A.: I should think then that Christianity, thought of in this way, would be a very strong bulwark against any form of totalitarianism?

DE BLANK: I would have thought so, yes; and this was true in Hitler's Germany. Einstein said that he looked to the universities to show their opposition to Hitler and he found nothing; he looked to the newspapers with their great tradition of a free press and he found that they just crumpled up before Nazism, and he looked elsewhere to the philosophers and found that nothing happened. Then he found a group that he'd rather despised and ignored for years, a group of ordinary, rather pedestrian church-going Christians. And these were the people that, because of their faith, did stand up against Nazism.

N.A.: This has happened in South Africa too.

DE BLANK: To some extent, yes.

N.A.: What, briefly, is your answer to those who call you a political bishop?

DE BLANK: I believe that all churchmen are politicians. Politics has to do with human beings in society, and Christianity has to deal with human beings in society. I believe that you cannot love God, as I've said already, without loving your neighbour as yourself, and this means the whole society of human beings. In this modern world you

cannot deal with men in society without coming up against political theories and political opposition and political support. I don't think there's any way out of this. I don't think you're a *party* political bishop . . . The political attitude and actions of bishops in this country are very much to be preferred to those churchmen of other churches who have allied themselves to a thing like the Broederbond, which definitely tries to influence the country along a certain political line; and they get into trouble if they try and break that line. This is party political religion at its worst, Broederbond religion, which, I'm happy to say, Anglicanism is quite free of. I think very strongly that this country doesn't need a Suppression of Communism Act, it needs a Suppression of Broederbond Act. The Broederbond is actually the organisation which will bring Communism to this country more quickly than any other, in the same way as Hitler brought Communism to Eastern Germany more quickly than any other way.

N.A.: We've heard a lot recently about Christian National Education. Do you feel one can talk about Christian Education in a rather more positive way than in the way of indoctrinating the children of this country?

DE BLANK: I don't like Christian National Education, but it's exactly the same as the Christus Rex movement in Nazi Germany . . . This is just a form of Fascism which we don't tolerate. I think it is fair that, whether you are a Jew, or a Christian or a Moslem, you can bring your children up in a free educational system which has its roots in a Christian faith, or a Jewish faith, or a Moslem faith. I believe there is a difference, for example the person who goes to the University of Jerusalem will be different in the end from the person who goes to the University of Cairo. I think your religion does affect everything you do. I'm all for the freedom of religion . . . There is room for an educational system which tries to show people, or pupils or students, that Christianity is the highest form of human service in which a man can engage. I would say exactly the same thing for the Moslem or the Jew.

N.A.: This also comes back to the idea of the brotherhood of man, and tokens that one must have respect for people of other beliefs.

DE BLANK: Oh very important, yes; this is one of our problems in South Africa. As Christians we do find that we do not agree with the Moslem on his faith. On the other hand we find that in ninety-nine cases out of a hundred we are in full agreement with most of the ethical demands of his faith upon the situation today. And it has been extremely difficult and extremely important to keep the differentiation quite clear. But one can disagree about one's fundamental beliefs without in any way affecting this essential brotherhood about the things common to both.

N.A.: There is a quotation which is often

used by churchmen who try to support the idea of racial distinction; "Render unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's." What is the *real* significance of this?

DE BLANK: The Church has recognised that the state, the organised human society, has its job to do in the ordinary running of everyday life. I believe the state gets out of step with the divine plan when it arrogates to itself the making of laws which are contrary to God's laws. When you render unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's and to God the things which are God's, I'd say yes every time; but the danger is that you render unto Caesar the things which are God's. This is the real difficulty we are in. The moment you try to question this brotherhood of man, the fact that we believe as Christians that Christ died for every man and that therefore all men are brethren because of that, the moment you question that, then your whole law-making becomes positive law, relative law, it isn't real divine law at all. Like the Apostles at the time of their first persecution you have to say that in the end you have to obey God rather than men if there's any choice to be made. This remains true of the Church today as it did in the early centuries.

N.A.: Finally, I wonder if you, as an orthodox Christian, have any message for those of our friends who are in prison for political offences of a non-violent character?

DE BLANK: I'm sure this is both our duty, and our highest privilege, to do all that we can for those in prison, whether we think any of them are in prison justly or not. It is one of the hallmarks of Christianity that Our Lord said "I was in prison and ye visited me." And therefore everything we can do to ease the lot of the prisoner—the loss of his liberty, I think, is so great a punishment that anything that adds to that punishment is strictly barbarous and medieval—the loss of liberty which in itself is, in my opinion, frequently quite unjustified, is itself so big a punishment that having executed that punishment, whether rightly or wrongly, then everything should be done to make the lot of the prisoner as easy as possible. We should like the prisoner to feel that the Christian church would work for this, to do everything in its power to try and help the families of those who are in prison, and to show in every way that the Christian Gospel applies not only to those who deserve it, but to those who *don't* deserve it. One of the great priests of the Anglican church in London once left £500 in his will to the "undeserving poor." This is exactly right, this is Christianity, you don't ask whether the man deserves it or doesn't deserve it; the question is that he's in trouble and you try to help him.

N.A.: In other words, one has to convince the prisoner to feel that he isn't rejected, that he is still human?

DE BLANK: Yes, and from our point of view that he is still redeemable. Otherwise our Gospel of redemption would be completely nonsensical.