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**Religious Competition, Creole Identities, and
Economic Development:
Foundations of Competitive Diversity in Early
Victorian Cape Town**

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Abstract

What kind of economic development trajectory can be expected in cosmopolitan cities that display a high degree of cultural, religious, ethnic and social diversity? Much can be gleaned from examining defined periods in their history that show a rapid transition in religious/cultural and socio-economic terms. Cape Town, a city that prides itself on its deeply rooted diversity and hybridity, and aspires to global status as a creative urban hub after having emerged from the rigidities of apartheid, appears not to be able to manage a breakthrough to sustained long-term development. An examination of the city's transformational period during the early decades of the nineteenth century may explain why this is so. Competitive diversity in religion, culture and business provided the template for a highly individualised development path with a short time horizon. This work uses the analytical tools of human development theory, cultural value analysis, the linkages between religion and economics, rational choice theory, urban development studies, and the study of identity formation and creolisation to construct a lens for the review of religious and socio-economic discourse in Cape Town during the first half of the nineteenth century. The period was defined by an explosion of proselytising activity by Christian missions and Islam, by a transition from the hierarchical Dutch colonial era to a globalising integration into British imperial policy and thought, and by a search for new identities by newly emancipated slaves and indigenous people. The result was the fostering of a competitive spirit in urban individuals who seized the opportunity of having choices, but were reluctant to consider planning for the long run. Public discourse of the period, examined through the debates observable in the newly emerging independent press as a public forum, reflected this mindset in both religious and economic behaviour, tempered by a pragmatism that oscillated easily between competition and short-term collusion. The historical case study confirms that a city which experiences both an intensive competition between religions, and a transformation into a creole, hybrid society of individuals, is unlikely to be amenable to a top-down systematic planning approach to development, but will thrive in informal, small-scale, innovative ways. Comparisons with other colonial port cities of the nineteenth century, and with present-day Cape Town experiencing religious competition from Pentecostalism and re-creating its creole nature, bear out this conclusion.

Table of Contents

Chapter One: Introduction		7
1.	Prologue	7
2.	The Hypothesis: Religious Competition and Economic Behaviour	12
3.	Theoretical Background	13
	The Theoretical Tools in a Nutshell	16
	The Human Development Framework	18
	Cultures and Religions Matter	21
	Secularisation Revisited	23
	Religion and Culture	24
	The Religion/Economics Nexus	26
	Rational Choice	28
	Competition and Regulation	32
	Religions in Regulated Pluralism	34
	Religions and Ethnicities	38
	The Urban Edge	39
	Merchants and Ports	43
	The Case for Diversity	45
	Identity Revisited	52
	Ethnicity and Identity	54
	Diversity and Economy	56
Chapter Two: Diversity, Religion and Economy at the Cape		59
1.	Early Nineteenth Century Transition and Religion	60
	Historical Origins in a Location of Migrants	61
	Creole Moments	63
	The Power of Language	69
	Popular Culture	71

Religion in the Mix	73
Missionaries and Imams	79
The Roots of Cape Islam	81
Sources of Christian Mission	87
Urban Religious Exceptionalism	96
Socio-Economic Impact of Missions	101
2. Imperial Impact	105
A City in the Empire	105
Religion, Ethics and Empire	110
The Evangelical-Abolitionist Axis	114
Christian Political Economy	118
Imperial Impact On the Cape	122
The Window of Cape Liberalism	127
3. The Cape Urban Economy	130
The Economy in Transition	130
Population and Economy	134
The Commercial Exchange	136
Competition and Monopoly	137
Banking on Commerce	138
Abolition Compensation and its Uses	141
The Infrastructure Conundrum	142
Municipal Order	145
Chapter Three: The Cape Public Discourse, 1820-1850	147
1. Discourse on Religion	148
Christians, Muslims, and Heathens	148
Cooperation and Competition	153
The South African College Debate	157
Competing for Emancipated Slave Souls	161
Christian Culture, Secular Law	166

Intra-Christian Friction	169
The Cape Against the World	171
2. Socio-Economic Discourse	173
The Competitive Instinct	173
Monopolists and Their Adversaries	176
City and Countryside	179
The "Labour Shortage"	182
Banking, Money, and Usury	186
Public Purse and Public Spirit	191
The Illuminating Case of Street Lighting	197
Chapter Four: Religion/Economy Linkages in the Nineteenth-Century Cape Discourse	199
Transition and Transformation	199
Diversity, Tolerance and Identity	201
Individualism and Self-Interest	203
Competition and Collusion	206
Trust and Suspicion	208
The Cape's Place on the Cultural Values Map	209
Human Development and Values	212
Chapter Five: Comparative Perspectives	214
1. Colonial Comparators	214
The Straits Settlements	216
The Americas	218
Colonial Parallels	222
2. Back to the Future: Cape Town Today	224
The New Religious Scene	227
Competition Revisited	230
A Service Economy of Individuals	233

The Religion/Economy Linkage Revisited	237
Chapter Six: Conclusions for Development Strategy	238
Selected Bibliography	242
List of Abbreviations in the Text	277

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Chapter One: Introduction

1. Prologue

Where there is not liberty of conscience, there is seldom liberty of trade, the same tyranny encroaching upon the commerce as upon religion. In the Commonwealth and other free countries one may see in a sea port, as many religions as ships. The same god is there differently worshipp'd by jews, mahometans, heathens, catholiques, quackers, anabaptistes, which write strenuously one against another but deal together freely and with trust and peace; like good players who after having humour'd their parts and fought one against another on the stage, spend the rest of their time in drinking together.

Although the Episcopalian and the Presbyterian are the two main sects in Great Britain, all the others are welcome and live quite well together, while most of their preachers detest each other with about as much cordiality as a Jansenist damns a Jesuit. Come into the London Exchange, a place more respectable than many a court....Here the Jew, the Mohametan and the Christian deal with one another as if they were of the same religion, and reserve the name "infidel" for those who go bankrupt.....Upon leaving these peaceful and free assemblies, one goes to the synagogue, the other for a drink; yet another goes to have himself baptized in a large tub....Some others go to their church to await divine inspiration with their hat on their head. And all are content.

If there would be only one religion in England, there would be danger of despotism, if there were two they would cut each other's throats, but there are thirty, and they live in peace and happiness.

Voltaire¹

For two decades after the world witnessed the simultaneous fall of Communism and Apartheid, South Africa and Cape Town have been exposed to the bracing winds of globalization and a liberal open economy. Cape Town, a historically multicultural and hybrid city with a political and social trajectory that differed from the rest of South Africa, should be thriving as one of the vigorously dynamic locations of a cosmopolitan global network of culturally and economically integrated cities.

It is not. On the map of a global network of interconnected cities, it is marginal at best.² Even Johannesburg, emerging into the post-apartheid era

¹ Quoted in Jerry Z. Muller, *The Mind and the Market* (NY: Anchor, 2003), 27-29.

² Peter J. Taylor, *World City Network* (London: Routledge, 2004), 8-30.

economically and financially stronger, albeit culturally less cosmopolitan, has only secured a precarious foothold at the margin of the system of "world cities", and its efforts to maintain that status are foundering on the rocks of social tension and poor governance. Rapidly growing urban GDP and concomitant linkages into a global network may propel cities in emerging economies (Mexico City, Sao Paulo, Buenos Aires, Mumbai, Istanbul, Singapore, Manila) into the top ranks of "world cities". Why is Cape Town "muddling along in eccentricity" instead of harnessing local initiative and innovation to grow economically?³

On the face of it, Cape Town has the ingredients: a vibrant ethnic and cultural mix, a rich and colourful history, a services-based economy heavy on tourism, creative art, the media, finance, insurance, and real estate, and all ancillary services. In a world where financial, advisory, and cultural services are the glue that connects the network of "world cities", these assets do not seem to be played to full advantage.

A historical parallel exists, having the advantage that a complete period of transition can be observed from its beginnings to the fading out of rapid change. Cape Town, together with its immediate hinterland, during the first half of the nineteenth century offers a useful test case of an urban, mercantile area, linked into the globalising British colonial network, and living with the results of the accumulation of races, cultures and religions during the preceding two centuries. Wedged between the static Dutch eighteenth century with its rigid social hierarchies and dominant feature of being a slave society on the one hand, and the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries with their hardening attitudes towards the issues of race and colour on the other hand, the window between slave and Khoi emancipation in the 1820/30s and the second half of the century was a laboratory of social and economic change. Social status and formal bondage had ceased to be the defining features, but race and colour had not yet congealed into the new dominant paradigm. The franchise was expanding, creolisation and the development of a hybrid "coloured" ambience were in progress in Cape Town. Conveniently, the nineteenth-century world from the 1820s onwards shows an emergence from mercantilism towards global liberal economics, driven by British imperial reach. Cape Town was integrating into the colonial network.

³ Judith February, "Muddling Along in Eccentricity: How Cape Town Does Things Differently, *Cape Times*, March 15, 2007, 9.

The boom of conversions to Christianity and Islam early in the century, driven by Christian mission and the emergence of a more visible, assertive Muslim community, had elevated religious identity to an important place in the plethora of multicultural identities at the Cape, joining race, social status, and cultural traditions. Various flavours of Christianity and Islam competed for souls in ways that were acceptable to the secular authorities of the day: a constraint that forced religious competition in the urban area into a market-oriented format. The consequence of non-violent competition was a collection of religious communities that had to learn how to get along with each other and with the powers that be, shaping their doctrine and practice to appeal to Capetonians in search of a spiritual home. In comparison, rural mission stations and rural settler churches enjoyed a measure of local spiritual monopoly, allowing them to design their parochial communities in something akin to sellers' markets, operating in neighbouring but independent islands of spiritual service provision.

The aim of this work is to examine the linkages between religious competition, the change of cultural values, the construction of identities, and socio-economic development at the Cape during this fluid period. Drawing on a variety of local sources of public discourse of the period, primarily the newly emerging forum of the press, as well as on secondary sources of scholarly work that has dealt in depth with elements of the transition, a picture emerges on how religious and cultural diversity interacted with social and economic development. If there is a link between religious *diversity* and human development, rather than only between single religions and economics, Cape Town by mid-nineteenth century shows it. The search is not for strict causality, always an elusive goal, but for compatibility in a fluid cultural environment.

Fluidity and a process of change are the key characteristics of the phenomenon we are after. The correlation is to be found in a dynamic environment, not in a static one. We could do worse than to adopt Charles Taylor's recent summary of the nature of the historical transition to a secular age: we are looking for the linkages appearing in the transition from a pre-modern hierarchical society with a pre-determined place for everyone, to a modern era of a society of individuals who determine the cultural and social structure of this society in "real time", secular time. Taylor's "abolition of the enchanted cosmos" is using Max Weber's now ubiquitous formulation, but goes

well beyond it. It is not the whole of society that shuffles to a new secularising paradigm – it is a mutation of the worldviews, still heavily religious, that enables new and different interpretations of humankind's place in the universe, and thus facilitates change. A "secularising" society does not abandon strong religious worldviews, it embeds them in a spectrum of other opinions, and makes them compete.⁴ Choice is the keyword of a secularizing transition, and the guiding principle of Cape Town in the early nineteenth century.

Lessons from this period of the first, British-led globalisation are applicable to Cape Town's ongoing transition at the beginning of the twenty-first century: from 1990 onwards, a formal “emancipation” from the race-based dispensation of the short twentieth century has taken place, the globalisation of liberal economics and free trade is embracing the city again, religious diversity is increasing with the growth of charismatic and Pentecostalist denominations, and the previous injection of Victorian liberal and humanitarian ideas is matched by the current influence of the “post-modern” spectrum of discourse, and the discourse of reconciliation and affirmative action.

The South African discourse on the cultural identities of the population groups classified rigorously by the apartheid regime is dipping its toes tentatively into this line of thinking, but is only slowly emerging from being enmeshed in the racially flavoured thought processes that dominated this fragmented society throughout the twentieth century. For the exploration of the self-image of major race-designated groups of South African society, such as Whites, Xhosa, Zulu or Indian, the centrality of ethnic and racial identity continues to be treated as conventional wisdom, leading to optimistic visions of a “rainbow nation”, a peaceable kingdom of many homogeneous ethnicities coexisting tolerantly in one state.⁵ Those whose ethnic description has been a largely negative one (“not white, not indigenous African”) do not easily fit into this template of a set of ethnic essentialisms, and are searching for definitions of their identities in the post-apartheid era, as they have done in the post-emancipation era of the 1830s. They have been liberated from the arbitrary catch-all “Coloured” label (ironically, a label that replaced the "slave" and "free black" ones in

⁴ Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age* (Cambridge MA: Harvard Univ. Press, 2007), 77, 95, 148-158.

⁵ A risky assumption that denies vigorous cultural mixing. See Zimitri Erasmus (ed), *Coloured by History, Shaped by Place* (Cape Town: Kwela, 2001), 20. More about this below.

Cape Town earlier), but have not been presented with a convenient alternative. In Cape Town, this hybrid condition is not limited to people of mixed racial origin only: an entire urban society has taken on the creole mode.

Confusion is the common reaction. “I am a mixed *bredie* [stew]” is the quoted statement of a mixed-race artist at the Cape, presumably delivered with a sigh of resignation.⁶ A “Coloured identity”, derived from the interplay of many races, religions, languages and customs, can not be rooted in a single coherent tradition. In fact, it may be impossible to define such a thing as a single “Coloured identity”. This is where the concepts of individual vs. collective identity, creolisation processes, and the simultaneous operation of various identities begin to be relevant. Rather than trying to construct a social group called “Coloured” and to assign a specific hybrid cultural identity to this group (the old apartheid fallacy), it may be more productive to take the lead from the unnamed “mixed stew” philosopher, and investigate how individuals in the colonial and post-colonial cosmopolitan environment of the Western Cape have negotiated and continue to negotiate their identities. They may be doing this again in a process of *bricolage*, a makeshift improvisation where “...real people negotiate their way through life, grasping, combining, and opposing different elements”. We are not looking at “complete systems of thought colliding”, but at individuals struggling to make sense of their place in society.⁷

This is what this work attempts to do, paying particular attention to identity-drivers other than the racial hierarchy that could be exerting a significant influence on identity formation and economic development. The orbits of religion, language, social status, occupational status, politics, and the colonial port city environment are explored for cultural impact. Cultural drivers such as religious diversity (various Christianities and Islam) or language had and still have a significant relation to the self-image, sense of belonging, and socio-economic behaviour of Capetonians. This may be so on both sides of the arbitrary pigmentation boundaries that try

⁶ Zimitri Erasmus, "Some Kind of White, Some Kind of Black", in Barnor Hesse (ed), *Un/settled Multiculturalisms* (London/NY: Zed Books, 2000), 199. An amusing illustration of the hopelessness of apartheid categorisation efforts can be found in Wilmot James, "Inside Out" column, *Cape Times*, March 20, 2008: DNA evidence jumbles all received wisdom of racial and cultural identities.

⁷ Richard Elphick, "Writing Religion into History", in Henry Bredekamp and Robert Ross (eds), *Missions and Christianity in South African History* (Johannesburg: Witwatersrand U. Press, 2001), 21.

unsuccessfully to separate “Coloured” from “White” on one side and from “African” on the other. Perhaps more importantly, the cosmopolitan nature and history of Cape Town, akin to other creole cities, militates against the use of clearly defined, exclusive collective identities, and calls for the recognition of autonomous individuals who find their place by using multiple identities. For each individual, different life situations may well require the use of different primary identities, notwithstanding the heavy historical burden of a race-dominated public discourse. Individualism comes up trumps.

This, indeed, is the concept promoted by Amartya Sen:⁸ despite the arguments put forward by racist, xenophobic, and sectarian hate preachers, individuals do not instinctively cleave to one primary and exclusive identity. They negotiate life by switching between identities, according to the current circumstances they find themselves in. In Sen's dispensation, identities claimed to be the dominant ones for a population group tend to be abused for the incitement of violence against others. Sanity in social and cultural life can only prevail if individuals are recognised as the owners of a whole portfolio of identities. Even benign, "multiculturalist" approaches will fail if they rely on classifying people in homogeneous groups. The "...diminution of human beings involved in taking note only of one membership category for each person (neglecting all others) expunges at one stroke the far-reaching relevance of our manifold affinities and involvements".⁹ The nineteenth-century Cape displayed the effect of exercising this choice of identities, and present-day Cape Town again shows what Kader Asmal has called "multiple loyalties" embedded in a "cosmopolitan multiculturalism".¹⁰

2. The Hypothesis: Religious Competition and Economic Behaviour

Cape Town during the pre- and early Victorian decades of the 1820s to the 1850s matches closely the model of a culturally and religiously diversifying, creolising, and cosmopolitan colonial port city in a vigorous state of flux, exposed to significant economic and cultural liberalising trends originating in the new colonial

⁸ Amartya Sen, *Identity and Violence* (NY and London: W. W. Norton, 2007), passim.

⁹ Ibid., 176/177.

¹⁰ Kader Asmal, "We Need to Create a Sense of Global Belonging", *Cape Times*, April 25, 2008.

metropolis. The overall economic development performance accompanying this major socio-cultural transition is comparatively sluggish, but individuals in trades, services, commerce and investment are doing well. The conclusion suggests itself as follows: vigorous competition among worldviews, religions, and identities, in a creolised community regulated by a secular government intent on preserving law and order within an ideologically liberal constitutional framework, is closely correlated with a high degree of economic individualisation, and with a lack of significant progress in sustainable economic development. The components of human development that emphasise individual autonomy, freedom of choice, innovation, and flexibility become more prominent than those that encourage long-term risk taking, an expansion of trust, collaboration for the public good, and investment for a more distant future. The short term view swamps the long term one, self-expression runs ahead of organised cooperation.

If this is so, there are conclusions that could be valid for a city like Cape Town in the current phase of again entering a liberalising, globalising world order, after a period of isolation during an era of rigid, racially defined hierarchy. The hope for sustained, well-planned economic development with a long horizon may be in vain in a location that prides itself on its religious diversity, cultural mix, and creole nature. The more suitable development path for such a city may be one that relies heavily on the quirky, innovative resources of its hybrid individuals.

3. Theoretical Background

Your Lord inspired the bee, saying "...Feed on every kind of fruit..." From its belly comes forth a fluid of many hues, a medicinal drink for men. Surely in this there is a sign for those who would give thought.

Qur'an 16: 68-69¹¹

The most important thing to learn is the value of impurity.

Salman Rushdie¹²

¹¹ N. J. Dawood (trans), *The Koran* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1956), 299.

¹² Quoted in G. Pascal Zachary, *The Diversity Advantage* (Cambridge, MA: Westview, 2003), 56.

Impurity has value? It is not intuitively obvious that it has. Mixing, hybridising, *bricolage*, *metissage*, syncretism, synthesis – are these features of behaviour that add value to or detract from socio-economic development? As with every existential question, strong opinions abound on both sides of this conundrum. But perhaps we should be asking a more basic question: Do strong cultural diversity and its consequences of rapid change and hybridisation have a noticeable impact on economic and social development at all? And if so, where does this dynamic take a community?

“I am a bastard child of history”, Salman Rushdie states provocatively, and goes on to explain that the underlying message in his oeuvre “...celebrates hybridity, impurity, intermingling, the transformation that comes of new and unexpected combinations of human beings, cultures, ideas, movies, songs. It rejoices in mongrelization, and fears the absolutism of the pure. Melange, hotchpotch, a bit of this and a bit of that is how newness enters the world”.¹³ Strong words, especially for essentialists and purists who like to see cultural matters ordered neatly and cleanly. But they encapsulate the key assertion that global contacts between elements of different cultures create local creole environments that are conducive to innovation and creativity¹⁴ Such contacts have been common throughout history between the colonizers and the colonized, between dominant expanding societies or ideas and those at the receiving end of this expansion. What is being celebrated here is the fact that cultural mixing is a never-ending process that throws up new cultural *faits accomplis* at every turn.

Perceptions of this mixing bowl, of course, vary with the location of the observer. The outside spectator tends to see the linkages between the different strands of values and identities, while the participant embedded in a hybridising community will cling to seemingly clear and consistent bits of truth as the core of the story. The inside/outside paradox has been summarised admirably by Sir Richard Burton (perhaps only an eccentric polymath could distil its essence in this manner):

All faith is false, all faith is true,

¹³ Quoted in Ulf Hannerz, *Transnational Connections* (London and NY: Routledge, 1996), 65/66.

Original quote from Salman Rushdie, *Imaginary Homelands* (London: Granta 1991), 394.

¹⁴ Hannerz, *Transnational*, 74

Truth is the shattered mirror strown
 In myriad bits; while each believes
 His little bit the whole to own.¹⁵

Kwame Anthony Appiah uses this image of the shattered mirror as a jumping-off point for his discussion of the elusive concept of "cosmopolitanism", a state of mind that empowers the hybrid individual to construct a workable value system that recognises the diversity around him or her, but stops short of embracing a meaningless relativism of innumerable incompatible truths.¹⁶ This complements Sen's concept of multiple identities, noted above, by recognising that the very process of negotiating a hybrid identity acknowledges that the individual is working with a portfolio of them.

The dynamics of a society full of such conflicted individuals is what we are after. This is not a question of a few "cosmopolitan" people cropping up in an otherwise homogeneous community (a universally common occurrence), but it is the case of an assemblage of diverse groups turning itself into a workable cosmopolitan society. Consequently, this work draws on several different traditions of scholarship that are related but do not always refer to each other's findings, ranging from socio-economic development and the analysis of urban spaces, through to the debate on identity, multiculturalism, and creolisation in open societies, and to the issue of coexistence and competition between religions. The broad arena of cultural and religious studies holds together this multi-disciplinary approach.

The method used to arrive at findings is closely related to that of selected works of "historical sociology", employing secondary literature from various disciplines where authors have explored niches of primary material in depth, and validating the linkages between them by investigating the nature of public discourse at the time.¹⁷ Rather than apply rigid social models to historical situations, or searching for clear causality between dependent and independent historical variables, the approach chosen here is akin to the "interpretive" school of historical sociology which

¹⁵ From Burton's "Kasidah of Hadji Abdu El-Yezdi", quoted in Kwame Anthony Appiah, *Cosmopolitanism* (NY: Norton, 2006), 5.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, passim.

¹⁷ See for instance Theda Skocpol (ed), *Vision and Method in Historical Sociology* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1984), particularly the conclusions 356-386.

identifies a set of key theoretical concepts that are then applied to a historical process to illuminate the linkages.¹⁸ Max Weber's general notion that religious and economic thinking can be closely intertwined is used as one of the planks in the platform on which this work stands. So is the contention of Georg Simmel that a society whose members are focused on the competitive process between individuals, rather than on grandiose collective goals, tends to become more tolerant and conciliatory: antagonistic tension between competitors brings with it greater understanding of the preferences of others, whether economic or religious.¹⁹ In this, Simmel echoes Adam Smith's observation that pragmatic, business-like dealings between individuals in a market, embedded in morality and the rule of law, make for a more peaceful society than the imposition of monopolies in politics, religion or the economy.²⁰ Finally, Ronald Inglehart's painstaking work to bring out the linkages between cultural/religious values and socio-economic development provides a framework and road map.²¹

The Theoretical Tools in a Nutshell

Before delving into the underlying theory in more depth, and illustrating it by referring to separate bodies of scholarship, a short outline of the set of theoretical concepts used in this work is in order.

- The “human development” concept, as refined over time by scholars of development, includes not only measures of economic growth and income levels, but also indicators of public health, levels of education, civil liberties, institutional soundness, and cultural and religious freedoms. Much of the process of “development” is a path towards more freedom of choice in all

¹⁸ Ibid., 368-374, referring to the methods of Bendix, Geertz, et al.

¹⁹ Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1976); Georg Simmel, *The Philosophy of Money* (London and NY: Routledge, 2004).

²⁰ Emma Rothschild, *Economic Sentiments* (Cambridge MA: Harvard Univ. Press, 2001), 52-71.

²¹ Ronald Inglehart and Christian Welzel, *Modernization, Cultural Change, and Democracy* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 2005).

areas of life, more autonomy of the individual to participate meaningfully in society, and a greater ability to construct a better life.

- The development process is inextricably linked to changes in individual and social values that have been shaped by past religious and cultural underpinnings of societies. The trajectory of human development is not linear or unique, but adapts to the cultural background and external environment of each community. The value changes that take place over time can be mapped in recognisable clusters that correspond to mainly religiously-shaped formative periods of societies. Max Weber's "protestant ethic" is only one example of attempting to link religion and economic growth to a specific time and place. In general, culture matters for the pattern of development.
- Urban areas have been drivers of change, cross-fertilisation and development, setting them apart from more slowly changing rural areas in the same nations and societies. Economic and social change takes place differently in cities, thus making it necessary to separate urban development from that in the remainder of countries. More generally, mercantile and trade-oriented communities show a different development path from agrarian ones. Ports embedded in an international trade and colonial network are similarly distinct. As economic and cultural analysis, constrained by data availability, commonly operates with national aggregate indicators, focusing on this urban/cosmopolitan difference requires the analyst to seek more area-specific information.
- Cosmopolitan cities connected to wider economic and cultural networks become locations of cohabiting and competing cultures and religions. Although the interaction also takes place between cultural and religious groups as collectives, changing them in the process, the key impact is on how individuals navigate the need to accommodate the multiplicity of potential identities. Religious, cultural, or ethnic worldviews lose their exclusivity in the presence of close coexistence. Secular authorities impose law and order, preventing any one cultural group from enforcing the permanence of

membership. Creolisation of a location enables individuals to construct new identities, and to switch between them as necessary. Competition between the religions and worldviews on offer encourages individuals to exercise rational choice in which ones to adopt, at what time.

- Locations that acquire a plurality of cultures, religions, and hybrid identities tend to shift their centre of gravity from a “collective” to an “individualistic” mindset. Identity becomes something that is acquired and used by choice and design, not by fate and birth. The process of individualisation brings with it the inclination to challenge, doubt, create, and take the initiative for change – an entrepreneurial but conflict-prone state.
- The development record of locations of this kind may be mixed. Religious, cultural, and ethnic diversity in an urbanizing space can go hand in hand with high creativity, competitiveness, and individual initiative. It can also lower social and economic stability, thus depressing steady economic growth. Community conflict is more likely than in a monocultural location, but competition in the market for goods, services, worldviews and ideas may compensate for this.

The Human Development Framework

Amartya Sen has redefined the concept of “development” into a new accepted paradigm, distilling its essence as the enhancement of human capabilities to seek and achieve a better life. This kind of personal capability needs to have aspects that bear on economic opportunities, political and social inclusiveness, a transparent institutional environment, and personal security.²² In this reading of the meaning of development, there is no asking whether certain political, institutional cultural, or religious features of a society are prerequisites for or consequences of socio-economic improvement in people’s lives – they are integral constituent components of the

²² Amartya Sen, *Development as Freedom* (NY: Anchor Books, 1999), particularly the introduction to the theme 3-11.

development process, forming a consistent development package. This is not an argument for a unique trajectory of change valid for all societies, but the recognition of basic universal human rights and liberties that are to be inscribed in a culture-specific package.

At the heart of this view of development is the expansion of personal freedom, particularly the freedom to choose among life's options. This again is a fundamental universal value, enhancing the individual's ability to participate meaningfully in a society based on mutual respect and dignity. This is an agent-oriented view of freedom, the freedom to act and to effect change. The capability to seize economic opportunities in the market, the ability to be heard in government and in civil society, the equality before the law regardless of gender or other identities, upward social mobility, and the assurance that one can freely select from cultural and religious options, or create new ones – all are linked to the freedom of choice among a wide range of opportunities. The existence of individuals or groups in a society whose capacity to influence this framework is limited is ample evidence of the need for further human development. Such change has to come from within a society. "Social capital", the many networks of human interaction and association that make up a complex society are the endogenous drivers of this process. When the networks, originally based on kinship, expand to create pluralism and decentralised authority, the radius of trust and cooperation widens, creating new freedoms to choose.²³ The concept of a comprehensive process of moving towards a society of equal opportunity and enhanced capabilities of individuals has attracted the attention of international development institutions. Both the World Bank and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) have embraced a holistic view of human development à la Sen, focusing on enhancing human capabilities towards more equality.²⁴

²³ Ibid., passim. See also Francis Fukuyama, *Trust* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1995); Jürgen Habermas, *Faktizität und Geltung* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1998); Jürgen Habermas, *Zwischen Naturalismus und Religion* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 2005). The basic argument has been rehearsed before in Karl Jechoutek, "Through the Eye of the Needle", in Augustine Shutte (ed), *The Quest for Humanity in Science and Religion* (Pietermaritzburg: Cluster, 2006), 276-310.

²⁴ World Bank, *World Development Report 2006* (Washington DC: WB and Oxford University Press, 2005); UNDP, *Human Development Report 2005* (NY: UNDP, 2005).

Ideally, the separate elements of this development package advance through their process of change in step, smoothly and simultaneously. As choices expand, the framework for exercising these choices expands with them, yielding a platform for balanced socio-economic development. Alas, reality does not conform to this desirable path, other than in the very long run: parts of the package move ahead of others, choice in one area of life blossoms while improvement in other areas stagnates. In the short run, we are left with fits and starts, discontinuities that make it difficult to see the direction the society is taking. Is the appearance of vibrant individual enterprise on a small scale an indicator of imminent economic growth and social inclusion, even if the institutional underpinning for economic and cultural freedom is still lagging behind? Is the emergence of religious diversity relevant for future development, even if civil and social liberties are not improving? These questions will occupy us in this work, and will guide the analysis of the Cape Town case. At this point, let us merely note that differential change among the components of the development package can be expected to be the norm, not the exception.

Deepak Lal has summarised the state of the art in recognising different speeds of change neatly.²⁵ He distinguishes between four equilibria that the process of change attains periodically, only to move on to another equilibrium position over time. Market equilibrium in economic exchange can be achieved relatively quickly, if supply and demand can adapt in a reasonably transparent market. A longer period is required in getting to a new equilibrium in "material culture", such as institutions, technology, scientific concepts, habits and objects, etc. Several generations must pass before a new equilibrium in "cosmological belief" (encompassing such terms as worldview and religion) is reached. Finally, equilibria in "evolutionary change" that alter basic human behaviour occur only within millennia. What we have here is a different rate of change from one paradigm to another, depending on the broadly "cultural" concept that is subject to the paradigmatic shift.

Increasingly, then, development theory and practice recognise the seemingly disjointed nature of change, and take into account the flavour imparted to this broad process by the cultural and religious heritage of a society. The "cosmological" cultural traditions embedded in a society tend to influence at what pace and in which

²⁵ Deepak Lal, *Unintended Consequences* (Cambridge MA: MIT Press, 1998), 5-18.

manner the more short-term components of development change over time. Similarly, the dynamics of change require the recognition that a movement towards cultural and religious liberty are key ingredients of the development package.²⁶ This realisation is fed by the distinct body of scholarship we turn to now.

Cultures and Religions Matter

What is now termed human development, has gone through many incarnations as the debate on “modernisation”, or the move between “traditional”, “modern” and “post-modern” worldviews, culminating in a more differentiated view of "multiple modernities". For purposes of this work, it is not necessary to delve into the definitional debate of these terms: the following discussion uses the term "modernisation" more broadly, as a proxy for the process of change from a traditionally structured society to a dynamic, more pluralistic one. Common to all interpretations of this process of change is the thought that there is a link between the cultural-religious paradigm of a society and its socio-economic performance in this transition. Early observers such as Max Weber and their contemporary followers seek to establish the flow of causality from religion and culture to economic change;²⁷ other current work is looking for causality running the other way, trying to establish whether socio-economic change influences cultural and religious values.²⁸ The direction of search tends to be influenced by the theoretical allegiance of the analyst,

²⁶ UNDP, *Human Development Report 2004 – Cultural Liberty in Today's Diverse World* (NY: UNDP, 2004); Vijayendra Rao and Michael Walton (eds), *Culture and Public Action* (Stanford CA: Stanford Univ. Press, 2004); Katherine Marshall, "Development and Religion: A Different Lens on Development Debates", in *Peabody Journal of Education*, Vol. 76, Nos. 3&4, 2001, 339-375; World Faiths Development Dialogue, *Cultures, Spirituality, and Development*, 2001, www.wfdd.org.uk; Sharon M. P. Harper (ed), *The Lab, the Temple, and the Market* (Ottawa: IDRC, 2000).

²⁷ Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1976); David S. Landes, *The Wealth and Poverty of Nations* (NY and London: W. W. Norton, 1999); Lawrence E. Harrison and Samuel P. Huntington (eds), *Culture Matters* (NY: Basic Books, 2000); Lawrence E. Harrison, *The Central Liberal Truth* (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 2006); Rodney Stark, *The Victory of Reason: How Christianity Led to Freedom, Capitalism, and Western Success* (NY: Random House, 2005).

²⁸ Both Marxist and Neoclassical Rationalist approaches are seeking causality in this direction.

be it materialist or idealist. The search for strict causality, however, may be a red herring. In the light of the holistic view of development discussed above, changes in all spheres of life may well move in the same direction, reinforcing the momentum along the way. The mere fact of linkage may be more important than the direction of causality. One fact, however, stands out. Simultaneous changes in cultural/religious values, socio-economic structures, and political patterns take place continuously along innumerable trajectories. There is no predetermined, linear path of "modernisation", but a meandering way of adjusting values and facts to each other, informed by local cultural heritage. The work of Ronald Inglehart and his collaborators in the World Values Surveys is a key contribution here, and their use of terms is applied in this work.²⁹

Different aspects of change move cultural value sets in different directions. One set of values moves between the poles of traditional, religiously informed authority and a secular-rational authority, illustrating the difference between a more static, zero-sum society, and a growth and accumulation oriented society – the classic image of “modernisation”. Another set of values oscillates between a survival mode with high group solidarity, and a mode of self-expression of individuals with the luxury of choice – the move towards “post-modernity”. Higher incomes tend to be associated with the secular and self-expression ends of the spectrum.³⁰ The “modernist” components of cultural values tend to be associated with a strong secular authority and less importance of cultural/religious identities, the “post-modernist” ones with decentralisation and cultural/religious pluralism.³¹ The cultural and religious heritage determines the mix between them.

These value structures inform our analysis below. What is of primary interest to us here, are two facts evident from the data, both cross-country and over time: first, the movements along the tradition/secular-rational and survival/self-expression axes

²⁹ A well-argued summary, consolidating the results of decades of empirical research, is Ronald Inglehart and Christian Welzel, *Modernization, Cultural Change and Democracy* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 2005). The clusters of values that underlie the survey work can be found on pages 48-76. See also the numerous country-specific publications yielded by the data generated in multiple waves of the World Values Surveys, directed by Ronald Inglehart at the University of Michigan, listed in www.worldvaluessurvey.org.

³⁰ Inglehart and Welzel, *Modernization*, 48-76.

³¹ Jonathan Friedman, *Cultural Identity and Global Process* (London: Sage 1994), 39.

do not go in one direction only. Societies can move back and forth, depending on changing circumstances or external shocks. Eastern Europe and South Africa experienced a temporary reversal of value trends, back to survival and tradition, after the fall of communism and apartheid. Second, the movements between tradition and secular rationality on the one hand, and between survival mode and self-expression on the other hand, can be correlated and sequenced in a typical manner, but do not have to be. In line with our observation above that components of the development package can move independently of each other, it is perfectly possible that a move towards "post-modern" self-expression races ahead of the society's trajectory towards "modernist" secular rationality, or vice versa.³² We will return to this phenomenon when discussing the case of Cape Town where it appears that an early change from a communalist group survival mode to more explicit individualism took place without a pronounced "cosmological" move from traditional religion-oriented stability to secular-rational growth.

Secularisation Revisited

The apparently parallel trajectories of "modernisation" and "secularisation" have given rise to the well-surveyed debate on whether a secularisation of global societies has been taking place or not. Scholars have oscillated between different views on this, and have changed their minds as events have unfolded over the decades.³³ Previously firmly held beliefs that a tidal wave of secularisation was sweeping away religion from the public sphere and ensconcing it in private corners of consciousness have given way to a realisation that public religious discourse is alive and well, and is even strengthening as secular trends grow more visible. The general history of the debate need not concern us here, with one exception: the definition of "secularisation" as the emergence of choice between religion and non-religion in a pluralist market of worldviews. Charles Taylor's magisterial treatment of this issue is

³² Inglehart and Welzel, *Modernization*, passim.

³³ Prominent examples of this are Peter Berger and Jürgen Habermas, see Peter Berger (ed), *The Desecularization of the World* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1999); and Jürgen Habermas, *Zwischen Naturalismus und Religion*.

a good starting point.³⁴ In a nutshell, the part of his argument that is applicable to this work is the realisation that secularisation trends and religious revival are not mutually exclusive but co-existing as choices that can be made by individuals and groups in a society that does not impose a single worldview. This shift from a cultural monopoly to a pluralism that allows both religious and secular worldviews constitutes "secularisation". Others have defined secularisation as the "combination of substantive religious pluralism with critical inquiry",³⁵ essentially another way of expressing the importance of expanding diversity along the path of modernisation.

What Berger terms "deseccularisation", and Habermas calls the "post-secular world" has also been labelled "secular re-enchantment"³⁶ It is understood not as a reversal of Weberian disenchantment of the world, but as an addition to it, providing multiple options to either be or not be religious.³⁷ This concept will occupy us when dealing with the actively pursued religious diversity at the Cape in the early nineteenth century.

Religion and Culture

At this point, having frequently invoked culture and religion in the same breath, we have to pause and consider the extant work on the connection between these two terms. If culture and religion were quite distinct concepts, it would be fairly easy to pick apart the separate impact of each on a society, and select one to focus on for purposes of the proposed work. The literature indicates overwhelmingly that this is not so. Whether "culture" is defined as a fundamentally individualized concept expressing rational self-determination in the sense of Humboldt and Kant, or as a social construct traceable to Herder and the tradition of social anthropology,³⁸ the

³⁴ Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age*, passim.

³⁵ Janaki Bakhle, "Music as the Sound of the Secular", in *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, Vol. 50, No. 1 (2008), 256-284.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 259. See also Ali Hassan Zaidi, "Muslim Reconstructions of Knowledge and the Re-Enchantment of Modernity", in *Theory, Culture and Society* Vol. 23, No. 5, 2006, 69-91; and Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *Religion and the Order of Nature* (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1996).

³⁷ See the discussion in Taylor: *A Secular Age*, passim.

³⁸ Andrew Sartori, "The Resonance of "Culture"", in *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, Vol. 47, No. 4 (Oct. 2005), 677-699.

overlap with religious concerns is significant. Clifford Geertz, describing culture as a “historically transmitted pattern of meanings embodied in symbols...the webs of significance man himself has spun”, continues to state simply that “religion is a cultural system” – one of the symbolic constructs of human societies.³⁹

Anthropologists, of course, are not the only ones who make the connection.

Theologians have wrestled with the linkage, from H.R. Niebuhr’s complex ways in which “Christ” and “culture” interact, to Kathryn Tanner’s view that “culture is the focus for engagement” and that “theology is part of culture”, and to Pope Benedict’s (then Cardinal Ratzinger’s) assertion that “faith itself is culture”⁴⁰. South African theologians maintain that “theology is the engagement vehicle of religion with culture”, and that “religion is inculturated, culture is imbued with religion”.⁴¹ Fazlur Rahman, Abdolkarim Soroush and other Islamic thinkers engaging with the “modernisation” debate insist that “religion is a concrete programme for a socio-political order in human society”.⁴²

Small wonder, then, that religious thought has been performing a “cultural turn” similar to other disciplines in the humanities.⁴³ While much of this fascination with reading cultural significance into everything may be due to intellectual fashions, it is undeniable that religion and culture have been woven together so densely to make it almost impossible to untangle them.⁴⁴ For purposes of this work, therefore, we can safely proceed on the assumption that cultural and religious identities and values can

³⁹ Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures* (NY: Basic Books, 1973), passim.

⁴⁰ H. Richard Niebuhr, *Christ and Culture* (NY: Harper & Row, 1951); Kathryn Tanner, *Theories of Culture* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1997); Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger, *Glaube, Wahrheit, Toleranz* (Freiburg: Herder, 2004), 56; see also Wolfgang Stegemann, “Religion als kulturelles Konzept”, in Stegemann (ed), *Religion und Kultur* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 2003).

⁴¹ John de Gruchy and Chirevo Kwenda, unpublished lecture notes, University of Cape Town, 2007.

⁴² Fazlur Rahman, *Islam and Modernity* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1982).

⁴³ See, inter alia, Richard B. Miller, “On Making a Cultural Turn in Religious Ethics”, in *Journal of Religious Ethics*, Vol. 33 (2006); Christian Strecker, “Turn, Turn, Turn, To Everything There Is a Season”, in Stegemann (ed), *Religion und Kultur*.

⁴⁴ See the interchangeability of the religious and cultural values concepts in Inglehart and Welzel, *Modernization*; and in Pippa Norris and Ronald Inglehart, *Sacred and Secular* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 2004).

be treated as overlapping to an extent that allows us, on occasion, to treat them as interchangeable.

The Religion/Economy Nexus

A somewhat different relationship exists between the concepts of “religion” and “economics”, a linkage that becomes important in the examination of the interaction between religious/cultural values and human development. Here we are not dealing with overlapping definitions, but with issues of correlation. Although Max Weber’s ghost haunts this body of scholarship as well, it consists mostly of work by economists searching for “instrumental variables” to explain economic behaviour, or by ethicists struggling to reconcile economic principles and moral theory. Luckily, Adam Smith prepared the ground well by writing not only “The Wealth of Nations”, but also the “Theory of Moral Sentiments”, thus making a case for the compatibility, or rather the inseparability, of economics and ethics.⁴⁵ Economists and philosophers have built on this foundation, formulating theories that allow a sound reconciliation of these disciplines.⁴⁶ As William Shea puts it, rather than plumping just for the empirical material side, or just for the culturally and morally essentialist one, a messy middle way in which conditionality runs both ways may be the best. “Material conditions, including economy, are real;...ideas, culture, and even religion are as real...both are products of the same human intelligence and the same human propensity to screw things up, and...this is so of all human economies and all religions”⁴⁷. The same point to dilute the strict analytical separation between "facts"

⁴⁵ See the thorough discussions of the "two Adam Smiths" in Emma Rothschild, *Economic Sentiments*; and Eun Kyung Min, "Adam Smith and the Debt of Gratitude", in Mark Osteen (ed), *The Question of the Gift* (London: Routledge, 2002).

⁴⁶ Major contributions are e.g. Amartya Sen, *On Ethics and Economics*, (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1987); Amartya Sen, *Inequality Re-Examined* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard Univ. Press, 1995); Emma Rothschild, *Economic Sentiments*; Daniel M. Hausman and Michael S. McPherson, *Economic Analysis and Moral Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1996); several relevant contributions (Turner, Akenson, Cummings et al) are also found in Jacob Neusner (ed), *Religious Belief and Economic Behavior* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1999).

⁴⁷ William M. Shea, "Professor Akenson: A Response", in Neusner (ed), *Religious Belief*, 44/45.

and "ideas" is made by Appiah, and, in the sense of the close linkages between cosmology and economics, by Lal.⁴⁸

The temptation to test Weber's loosely documented hypothesis is hard for economists to resist, particularly in the context of looking for drivers of economic growth. One of the key recent works on the matter is that of Barro and McCleary,⁴⁹ indicating that it is the incidence of faith itself, not the formal participation in religious institutions, that may be closely correlated to economic growth. As in all empirical studies, causality is difficult to establish, confirming the pragmatic view that religion and economic performance simply move in tandem – an admission that the development package of changes is interrelated, not sequential.⁵⁰ The best results that can be established appear to be circumstantial or eliminating: it has at least been shown that the hypothesis that religious affiliation and economic performance are uncorrelated can be safely rejected, and that religion (and particularly Islam) is not a drag on growth.⁵¹ In fact, new readings of the Islamic tradition of economic jurisprudence argue that the extant Islamic body of law encourages a competitive, transparent market as a manifestation of spiritual unity, and financial intermediation to ensure long-term prosperity. Muslim merchants spreading out from the early Muslim empires could well have conformed to Weber's definition of a capitalist spirit, a feature that bears on the discussion on Cape Islam below.⁵² All the above are not

⁴⁸ See Appiah, *Cosmopolitanism*, and Lal, *Unintended Consequences*. Lal, apparently inadvertently, makes a key point: his whimsical aside that "...as a good Hindu, I naturally believe that the truth lies somewhere in between [materialist and idealist theories]" (p.8) opens the door to the very fact that a certain religious background colours the individual's perception of socio-economic mechanisms in society.

⁴⁹ Robert Barro and Rachel McCleary, *Religion and Economic Growth*, NBER Working Paper No. 9682 (2003), www.nber.org. See also Robert Barro and Joshua Mitchell, *Religious Faith and Economic Growth: What Matters Most – Belief or Belonging?* (Washington, DC: Heritage Foundation, 2004), www.heritage.org.

⁵⁰ For a useful summary, see Sriya Iyer, "Religion and Economic Development", in S. N. Durlauf and L. E. Blume, *The New Palgrave Dictionary of Economics* (Palgrave Macmillan, forthcoming).

⁵¹ Marcus Noland, "Religion and Economic Performance", in *World Development*, Vol.33 (2005), No.8, 1215-1232.

⁵² See for instance Salah El-Sheikh, "The Moral Economy of Classical Islam: a Fiqhonomic Model", in *The Muslim World*, Vol. 98, No. 1 (Jan.2008), 116-144.

particularly robust empirical findings in statistical terms, but serve to confirm that the nexus between religion and economic performance should not be overlooked.

Rational Choice

A separate strand of analysis on the nexus between religion and economics uses economic analytical tools to establish the pattern of religious adherence.⁵³ This is useful in understanding the behaviour of religious institutions in situations where potential members have a choice in a “spiritual market” within which competition between faiths takes place. This “rational choice” approach identifies religious markets, and constructs a political economy of religion, assuming that the potential “consumers” of religious membership act rationally in selecting which faith to join. Religious groups act as suppliers in a functioning, perhaps regulated market that prevents the enforcement of exclusivity by coercion. In this context, the rational-choice school is a de facto subset of the voluminous religious pluralism literature,⁵⁴ only arguing the case for non-violent competition and cooperation in economic terms. Membership in religious groups emerging under such market conditions constitutes a “social good”, increasing the social capital of a society that is necessary for broad human development.⁵⁵

Rational Choice theory may have limited applications to religious behaviour in global terms, as many critical comments on the work of Stark, Bainbridge, Finke, Iannacone et al have argued.⁵⁶ Extrapolating from the relatively open and fluid

⁵³ See particularly Rodney Stark and Roger Finke, *Acts of Faith* (Berkeley, CA: Univ. of California Press, 2000); and Ted G. Jelen (ed), *Sacred Markets, Sacred Canopies* (Lanham & NY: Rowman & Littlefield, 2002).

⁵⁴ Work in this field that is relevant to competition issues includes Jay Newman, *Competition in Religious Life* (Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier Univ. Press, 1989); and Martin E. Marty, *When Faiths Collide* (Malden MA & Oxford: Blackwell, 2005). Marginally related is the interfaith dialogue and convergence work such as Paul F. Knitter, *Introducing Theologies of Religions* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2002).

⁵⁵ Norris and Inglehart, *Sacred and Secular*, 180-195.

⁵⁶ Steve Bruce, *Choice and Religion: a Critique of Rational Choice Theory* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999); Lawrence A. Young (ed), *Rational Choice Theory and Religion* (NY: Routledge, 1997); Stephen Sharot, *Beyond Christianity – a critique of the rational choice theory of religion from a*

market among Protestant denominations in the US is not easy, and soon runs into cultural traditions, ascriptions, and inertia that create more exceptions than would be desirable for a solid theory. Furthermore, the application of a simple rational-choice model to a complex cultural decision-making process suffers from the same shortcomings as any applied use of an elegant model to messy real-life issues.⁵⁷

Nevertheless, religion in pluralist societies is frequently observed to be tempted into advertising that mimics that for consumer products, indicating that in an environment of competition among faiths and worldviews, business techniques to influence consumer decisions are useful. In the current period of globalisation, the promotion of, say, fashion styles that appeal to Muslim senses of modesty is more successful when they are shown to be cleverly innovative and attractive to younger consumers.⁵⁸ Popular evangelical preachers and imams with their own TV shows unabashedly use advertising techniques of the consumer industry, echoing the marketing zeal of the nineteenth-century missionaries and *da'wa* promoters. The more demanding aspects of joining the faith are played down, the self-help therapeutic ones are presented prominently.⁵⁹ One could be forgiven if one would recognise this as a functioning market in spiritual services.

While it may be impossible to ever resolve the debate between the secularization theorists and the rational choice promoters whether increased pluralism and religious competition enhance or destroy religious vitality in general, the key principles of rational choice as vehicle for religious behaviour of individuals can be tested against specific circumstances. They can be summarized as follows, roughly following Stark and Finke's micro foundations of the religious market:

Weberian and comparative religions perspective, www.findarticles.com, August 2007; Peter Ellway, *Shopping for Faith or Dropping Your Faith?* www.csa.com, August 2007 (released May 2005 by ProQuest).

⁵⁷ See e.g. Amartya Sen, "Rational Fools – A Critique of the Behavioral Foundations of Economic Theory", in *Philosophy and Public Affairs*, Vol. 6, No. 4 (1977), 317-44.

⁵⁸ See the animated debates in the secular Western media on modest swimwear (the "burkini"), fashionably loose "Islamic" garments, or the stealthy introduction of colourful chadors into Iran.

⁵⁹ See the discussion in Mathias Zick Varul, "After Heroism – Religion vs. Consumerism", in *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations*, Vol. 12, No. 2, (April 2008), 237-255.

- People attempt to make rational choices in life, exhibiting individual preferences and seeking rewards.
- Otherworldly rewards (perhaps replacing unreachable this-worldly ones) can be supplied by religions, magic, etc. The rewards can be obtained by making a deal with God (or gods) as intermediated by formal religions.
- People seek to minimize the costs and risks associated with the deal. Degrees of commitment required by various religious institutions are part of the cost, the degree of communal support mitigates the risk.
- Both social capital (ie interpersonal attachments) and religious capital (ie the degree of immersion in a religious culture) will be conserved or increased.

Cape Town during the first half of the nineteenth century appears to conform to a pattern that fits the above criteria, especially as the mixed-race underclass emerged from the hierarchy of a slave society into the realm of defining personal identity. The criticism usually levelled against rational choice theory, namely that established patterns are perpetuated by cultural momentum and not subject to individual choice, may not be applicable here – we are dealing with a period of significant cultural change, exposing a large segment of the hitherto non-affiliated population to several options of religious belonging.

Randall Collins provides the underpinning for this line of argument.⁶⁰ Building on Weber's understanding that the search for salvation could be an expression of distress, he concurs that "socio-economic oppression is an effective source of salvation beliefs". This may well be the same as Stark's "compensators" that enable people to find solace and reward in spiritual matters. However, Weber does not focus only on the need of the underclass to seek salvation. The essence of the "Calvinist ethic" also means that the better-off need reassurance of the legitimacy of their happiness. In the Cape context, this would imply that popular Cape Islam and the

⁶⁰ Randall Collins, "Stark and Bainbridge, Durkheim and Weber", in Lawrence A. Young (ed), *Rational Choice Theory and Religion* (NY and London: Routledge, 1997), 171.

Methodist mission provided platforms for the spiritual needs of the underclass, while the Calvinism of the Dutch Reformed and Presbyterian churches catered to the anxieties of the commercially successful.

In fact, one could add the Islam of the well-established Muslims to the Calvinist category, as the devotee's commercial success can be seen as a satisfactory indication of godliness. This is not unknown in today's Turkey, where the area of Kayseri, the home of president Abdullah Gul, has been called the "home of Islamic Calvinism". The predominant strain of Islam in Kayseri places a high value on entrepreneurship, hard work, thrift, wealth creation, and investment in the future – a veritable Weberian spirit of capitalism in the Islamic ethic.⁶¹

Rational choice of religion by slaves and ex-slaves (half the population) in early nineteenth century Cape Town can be recognised by following the discussion on the motivations for this choice. Robert Shell has argued that the choice of Islam as preferred religion of slaves and the Cape underclass was a signal of deliberate cultural and social differentiation from the dominant Christian paradigm of the masters, and a result of the masters' resistance to accepting slaves as Christians.⁶² John Edwin Mason's counterclaim is that this choice of Islam has much more spiritual content than Shell suggests, being a genuine search for salvation among available alternatives.⁶³ Whether the true motivation is located more in social strategy or in spiritual considerations, or in a combination of both, it is clear that Cape slaves and free blacks in the early 1800s made conscious rational decisions about whether to strive against resistance for inclusion in the dominant Christian culture, or to opt for the more convenient and tolerated, but socially inferior path to Islam. The rationality of these decisions is not in doubt.

⁶¹ Deutsche Welle TV, Aug. 26, 2007.

⁶² Robert C.-H. Shell, *Children of Bondage* (Johannesburg: Witwatersrand Univ. Press, 2001), 330-370.

⁶³ John Edwin Mason, *Social Death and Resurrection* (Charlottesville, VA: Univ. of Virginia Press, 2003), 176-207.

Competition and Regulation

What the rational choice approach neglects to some extent is the degree to which the religious market needs to be regulated in order to function. A liberal, open and pluralist society may not need much of this regulation, except for a hands-off approach by government and an enforcement of religious tolerance. A society based on colonial or otherwise non-democratic rule, however, requires an active regulatory involvement of the authorities of the day, to prevent religious competition from slipping into communal violence. This was the case under British rule at the Cape, which placed a high premium on the maintenance of order and the rule of law, whilst tending towards the establishment of a degree of religious freedom, consistent with the ideology of the day in the mother country.

The kind of regulation encountered here resembles most closely Lessing's parable of the three rings in *Nathan der Weise*, granting the various suppliers of "religious goods" the freedom to compete, but in a way that is constructive and non-threatening to the common good. The analogy between the wise Saladin and the early British governors at the Cape may not be compelling, but the common elements are there. The importance of regulation in inter-religious competition has been highlighted by Jay Newman early in the debate about using economic concepts in the sociology of religion, and remains relevant if the rational choice concept is to be applied to non-US situations.⁶⁴

Competition in a regulated religious market, then, involves the demand side represented by individuals exercising choice, and the supply side, consisting of the various religious communities offering spiritual goods. The former has been well-covered by the Rational Choice theorists, the latter has been dealt with by the literature on religious pluralism. The pluralist school of thought is in two minds about the value of competition, fearing conflict and violence because of incompatible salvation concepts. The instincts of the pluralists, honed by centuries of religious strife, are to avoid outright competition and to advocate dialogue between religions

⁶⁴ Jay Newman, *Competition in Religious Life*, passim.

that seeks common denominators or common causes.⁶⁵ In the shape of a "pluralist theory of religion", this approach even seeks to uncover the core beliefs of all competing faiths, a sort of *philosophia perennis* that would make competition unnecessary.⁶⁶ The idea is that diversity reinforces faith and the recognition that no single dispensation can claim to have full understanding of the transcendent, and that every explanation or scripture renders only an inadequate approximation of the transcendent reality. This realisation channels the dialogue into the search for a "highest common denominator", exploring the common transcendental truth.⁶⁷ Acknowledging that dialogue may not always be a productive vehicle to achieve cooperation, the pluralists admit that a well-regulated competitive market may strengthen the role of faith overall. Marty calls this kind of pluralism an "active diversity in a conducive legal framework".⁶⁸ Newman notes that competition can be a force both for good and for evil, keeping faiths on their toes but also tending towards conflict, and thus must be regulated.⁶⁹

Modern plurality exists in a different political and intellectual environment from that of pre-modernity. This environment, outside authoritarian societies, is that of the liberal democratic order. Secularisation and the march of Enlightenment thought have produced a tribe of "detached observers" who engage in a phenomenological examination of various claims to truth. Equal political and human rights, coupled with freedom of speech and the principle of tolerance (embodied in the neutrality of the secular state towards religions) have created a habitat for open discourse and exchange of ideas. In short, the Habermasian "unfinished project of modernity" provides a strong incentive for an informed dialogue among equals, whether faith-based or secular. The modern paradigm is "unfinished" in the sense that it encourages a discursive hermeneutic circle: rights and accepted truths are not given *ex ante*, but are subject to constant public interrogation and discussion, leading

⁶⁵ See e.g. Martin E. Marty, *When Faiths Collide*; Paul F. Knitter, *The Myth of Religious Superiority* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 2005); Christian Danz and Friedrich Hermanni(eds), *Wahrheitsansprüche der Weltreligionen* (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 2006).

⁶⁶ See for instance Fritjof Capra, *Wendezeit* (Munich: Knauer, 1999).

⁶⁷ Perry Schmidt-Lenkel, "Warum es zur pluralistischen Religionstheologie keine plausible theologische Alternative gibt", in Danz and Hermanni, *Wahrheitsansprüche*, 25-27.

⁶⁸ Marty, *When Faiths Collide*, 67-123.

⁶⁹ Newman, *Competition*, 101.

to new agreements that again have to be validated publicly in the light of changing circumstances. What this amounts to is a “discursive validation” of a paradigm, and indeed a “recursive” one as it has to be renewed by continuous reassessment.⁷⁰

The deliberative environment implies a pluralism of values, providing fundamental liberties of expressing beliefs and opinions; a pluralism of interests that guarantees a procedure of discourse between opposing views; and a pluralism of modes of association that makes the discourse multipolar and interactive.⁷¹ The focus of the pluralist habitat is the process of interpersonal communication in order to arrive at knowledge, based on the two pillars of basic rights and inclusiveness – in Paul Knitter’s words, a “dialogical community”.⁷² The communicative praxis of such an environment, i.e. the exercise of “public reason”, empowers not only secular worldviews but also religious ones. The key process in the discourse is the learning curve of both “secular citizens” and “religious citizens”, who have to accept that public discourse about values can be conducted in different epistemological “languages”. The search for knowledge and mutual understanding involves the acceptance of each other’s language to describe concepts of truth.⁷³

Religions in Regulated Pluralism

This is not an easy thing for believing members for established religions, who have to deal with the accumulated tradition of scriptural interpretation, religious law, and developed doctrine, all of which militate against compromise and radical re-evaluation. To be sure, even the “secular citizen” has to struggle with the idea that a contribution to the values debate put forward in religious language is an argument worth listening to. But he is operating comfortably in an essentially secular model of pluralism, in which the very idea of competing ideas about the public and private good is an intrinsic one. The “religious citizen” (corporate or individual), on the other hand, has to overcome his disbelief that other truths than the own are conceivable.

⁷⁰ Seyla Benhabib, "Toward a Deliberative Model of Democratic Legitimacy", in Benhabib (ed), *Democracy and Difference* (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1996), 78/79.

⁷¹ Ibid., 73/74, 77.

⁷² Knitter, *Theologies of Religions*, 10.

⁷³ Habermas, *Zwischen Naturalismus und Religion*, 119-154.

What is more, the believer has to accept limits that are set on the free exercise of all requirements of his religion in the interest of others, and at the same time defend his right to be protected against the unlimited exercise of secularist and other religions' encroachments on his way of life. These boundaries have to be agreed in the very process of pluralist discourse.⁷⁴ In this process, truth ceases to be absolute and exclusive, and becomes contextual, socially and linguistically diverse, and interpretable in different ways – in short, dialogical and relational.⁷⁵ Furthermore, it becomes a matter of human choice. Muhammad Talbi, in noting the basic human right to be different and to exercise one's conscience, states that "Faith is a choice, and a choice is only a choice if it is a free and reasonable one".⁷⁶

Having one's own beliefs questioned with impunity is a sobering experience. Believers are forced to face the dilemma of whether to compete vigorously with other religions and the secular worldview, thus risking the slippery slope of violence and intimidation; or whether to cooperate and seek as much agreement as possible, risking a dilution of the beliefs and the creation of a cartel based on the lowest common denominator. Can both be balanced successfully? Can a well-regulated competition among worldviews be maintained?⁷⁷ The well-known categorisation of responses lists how adherents of religions have chosen to deal with this dilemma in a variety of ways:

- Outright rejection of the plurality of views, adhering to an exclusivist interpretation of truth contained only in the own scripture, in a specific interpretation. Only one way to salvation is accepted, often accompanied by efforts to undermine the liberal order, or manifested in a retreat into a fortress-type isolation. Christian and Islamic representatives of extreme purism occupy this category,⁷⁸ but elements of this reaction can also be found in the

⁷⁴ Ibid., 125.

⁷⁵ Leonard Swidler, *After the Absolute – The Dialogical Future of Religious Reflection* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1990), 8, 13.

⁷⁶ Quoted in Atallah Siddiqui, *Christian-Muslim Dialogue in the 20th Century* (Basingstoke and London: Macmillan Press, 1997), 146.

⁷⁷ See, for example, the discussion in Newman, *Competition in Religious Life*, 27, 50-52.

⁷⁸ The actual picture on the ground is, of course, more differentiated than this simple generalization would imply. This would include the ambiguous attitude of literalist Christians to the Hebrew canon,

pre-Vatican II Catholic church, or in the uncompromising stance of Karl Barth in dismissing any possibility of salvation outside a personal submission to grace through Christ, untainted by institutional religion.⁷⁹

- Self-confident inclusiveness, communicating with other faiths based on the agenda that the own truth is superior, and that eventually other worldviews will be brought into the fold of the own. This “new mission approach” has many faces, but it is particularly prominent in the Christian effort to seek the dialogue with Islam and Judaism, and to a lesser extent with Buddhism and Hinduism, on the basis that other revelations are possible and welcome, but that they are mere preparations for Christian salvation. The Protestant face of this complex form of communication is partly based on the theological work of Paul Tillich, and visible in the implementation of interfaith dialogue by the World Council of Churches. On the Catholic side, Karl Rahner’s concept of the “anonymous Christians” outside the church has informed the post-Vatican II outreach to other religions. Similar sentiments are apparent in some Muslim outreach efforts such as that of Seyyed Hossein Nasr. Proclaiming a self-assured but tolerant and open-minded position rather than adjusting its own basics is the preferred mode.⁸⁰
- Essentialism that treats all religions as limited outward manifestations of an underlying primordial absolute truth, drawing on deep spiritual resources to establish a mystical unity between believers in different faiths. The key in this response to plurality is the subjective piety and spiritual immersion of the individual, seeking the eternal essence of religions in a spirit of awe and fascination with the divine. Some Sufi, Hindu, and mystical Christian

or the different emphasis placed by Islamic scholars on the Abrahamic "people of the book" and the "unbeliever" polytheists.

⁷⁹ See the discussion in Glyn Richards, *Towards a Theology of Religions* (London and NY: Routledge, 1989), 14 ff; Knitter, *Theologies*, 19; Marty, *When Faiths Collide*, 150; Hans Küng, *Projekt Weltethos* (Munich: Piper, 1990), 105.

⁸⁰ Richards, *Towards a Theology*, 53-75; Knitter, *Theologies*, 33-79; Seyyed Hossein Nasr's contribution in Hans Küng and Jürgen Moltmann (eds), *Christianity Among World Religions* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark/Concilium, 1986), 3-11.

traditions have chosen this response of seeking the perennial philosophy and unity with the divine behind the visible religious cultures. The boundary between this reaction and the “inclusivist” one is fluid, as the essentialist believer may determine that the primordial truth looks very much like the one he or she is familiar with.⁸¹

- Indifferent relativism, concluding that all religions and worldviews have truth and validity, and seeking to attain knowledge and meaning through a syncretist assembling of suitable material. The communication between cultural and religious groupings becomes a conversation, a postmodern exchange of mutually tolerated views that primarily aims at understanding and accepts that there may be many equally valid “ultimate truths”, many historically shaped manifestations of the divine. Diversity and the act of discourse become goods in their own right, and a detached phenomenological approach is the epistemological vehicle of choice. “Comparative religion” helps to increase understanding, and the main effect of the dialogue is the establishment of a *modus vivendi* between potentially incommensurable views that avoids explicit conflict.⁸²
- Finally, there is the “dialogic” or “mutuality” response, arguably the most difficult reaction to a pluralist environment, but perhaps the one yielding the greatest epistemological benefit. It explicitly accepts the challenge of the communicative praxis that shapes the public sphere, and feels the greatest need to acquire new knowledge. While the other responses to plurality can get along with a minimal degree of gaining new knowledge, just enough to further the original own agenda, the truly dialogic response needs the maximum possible understanding of the other, to be able to reflect on the own principles and adjust them for the next round of dialogue.⁸³

⁸¹ Richards, *Towards a Theology*, 36-52.

⁸² *Ibid.*, 25 ff; Knitter, *Theologies*, 173-175; Küng, *Projekt*, 106/7.

⁸³ The Archbishop of Canterbury has contributed a number of recent thoughts in this mode, stressing that “pluralism” in a constructive dialogic sense needs to be understood as an interaction between faiths that recognize their real differences, but reach out to understand and seek common principles.

So dialogue obviously is a useful feature of interaction. Naturally, however, both competition and cooperation need to be evident in productive dialogue. The competitive element is present in the acceptance of fundamental differences of belief that are not to be swept under the carpet, but highlighted and acknowledged as legitimate incompatibility – an agreement to disagree. Talbi’s description of this state of affairs accommodates the “witnessing” of the own faith and the “Greater *Jihad*” of the inner struggle to live a life of faith within a competitive relationship. “Dissensual pluralism” is to keep the competition vigorous but dignified. “The more one is firm about the classical points that divide us, the better we know where we stand, and our discussion becomes surprisingly open and fruitful”. Pluralism enables self-interests of the faiths to produce common social values, which in turn enable subjective satisfaction within a faith – a translation of socio-economic competition and cooperation into the religious realm.

In the end, Adam Smith's dictum that competition among sects will lead to tolerance in a society, requires both rational choice and spiritual depth evident in individuals. The pragmatism and messiness of the Scottish Enlightenment, rather than the starkly illuminated contrasts of the French Enlightenment, are more likely to achieve equilibrium in the religious market.⁸⁴

Religions and Ethnicities

Further explanatory power can be achieved if one expands the horizon from purely religious groups that *offer* affiliation, to ethnic and cultural groups that *demand* affiliation. While often overlapping with religious categories, ethnic/cultural groupings can be independent competitors in the quest to become a primary identity

Interestingly, Archbishop Williams insists that a lived pluralism involves the strong participation of all faiths in the public discourse of a multi-religious civil society, injecting transcendental argument into an otherwise secular public environment. See Rowan Williams, "Islam, Christianity, and Pluralism"; and "Religious Diversity and Social Unity", both in *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations*, Vol. 19, No. 3 (July 2008), p.339-362.

⁸⁴ Walter Russell Mead, *God and Gold – Britain, America, and the Making of the Modern World* (NY:Knopf, 2007), passim.

of the individual. Although they are "inherited" or ascriptive (at least in the eyes of those who make these judgments), rather than potentially choice-based as in the case of the religious groups, these secular categories are real players in the identity market.⁸⁵

A recent paper applies this concept of broad religious/cultural competition in a pluralistic but rather unstable society to the nexus between religious diversity and economic performance in India.⁸⁶ Diversity is treated as a composite concept, embracing the religious pluralism, the ethnic and caste diversity, and the umbrella of the secular society enforcing the toleration principle. The interesting point here is that religious diversity and self-regulation may be necessary in a society based on weak secular authority that has trouble regulating both secular and religious markets, or enforcing laws. Religious, cultural and ethnic identities double as "regulatory tools" in economic competition, and vice versa. Specific occupational groups overlap partially with religious and ethnic categories. Religious family law, applied to adherents of each faith in the absence of a strong secular authority, has an impact on economic behaviour such as inheritance, property disposal, or commerce. The Indian urban locations examined resemble Sombart's "cosmopolitan towns",⁸⁷ but lack the wide circle of trust in the Fukuyama sense⁸⁸ that would enable them to embark on sustained industrialization. This urban emphasis gives us an entry point into defining the situation at the Cape in the early nineteenth century.

The Urban Edge

The interaction of economic and religious/cultural variables has been tested primarily by using national aggregates. Both historical and current data are available more readily for nation states than for sub-regions of a country. National statistics lend themselves to comparison between countries, resulting in broad classifications of

⁸⁵ Ibid, p. 192-215.

⁸⁶ Barbara Harriss-White, *India's Religious Pluralism and its Implications for the Economy*, Working Paper 82 (London: Queen Elizabeth House, Feb. 2002).

⁸⁷ Werner Sombart, *Die Juden und das Wirtschaftsleben* (Leipzig: von Duncker und Humblot, 1911).

⁸⁸ Fukuyama, *Trust*, passim.

societies as “historically Protestant”, “historically Confucian” etc.⁸⁹ This is a serious restriction, as the neglect of the internal variety of socio-economic and cultural-religious situations in a country tends to iron out any interesting results that could be obtained by focusing on specific local areas.⁹⁰ The aggregation flaw has been recognized by a number of analysts, primarily those looking for the conditions that are conducive to economic change. The key contributions have come from the field of urban economics, inspired by the seminal work of Jane Jacobs.⁹¹

Jacobs’ central argument hinges on the fact that, throughout history, cities have been the engines of innovation and economic change, carrying the rural areas of the same polity along with a considerable time lag. Economists since Adam Smith, writing at the time of the emergence of the concept of the modern nation state, have been tempted to take the easy way of equating an economy to a national political structure, thus losing the richness of intra-country diversity. Cities have been driving development based on spontaneous improvisation, say Jacobs and her followers, and deserve to be examined as initiators of growth and change. Furthermore, dynamic cities become parts of trading and communication networks that include other, similar cities, quite independently of the national states they happen to be part of. Historically, ports and entrepot cities have played this role: the pre-modern “transcontinental archipelago” of trading ports from Bruges to Canton, the German association of Hanse cities in the North and Baltic Seas, the seaborne empires of the Portuguese and the Dutch, the network of British colonial cities, and the modern business-based networks of cosmopolitan cities are relevant examples.⁹² Weber’s thesis on the Protestant/Catholic differences in economic performance has been tested econometrically for European networks of cities that were primarily of one or the other denomination during the early modern centuries, yielding significant correlations between religion and economics that have not been achieved for national

⁸⁹ See the discussion above, drawing on Inglehart and Welzel, *Modernization*, and Norris and Inglehart, *Sacred and Secular*.

⁹⁰ Ironically, Max Weber’s limited empirical observations in the “Protestant Ethic” are focused on the comparison of Protestant and Catholic education patterns *within* Germany.

⁹¹ Jane Jacobs, *Cities and the Wealth of Nations* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1986); see also Peter G. Hall, *Cities in Civilization* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1998); and Taylor, *World City Network*.

⁹² Taylor, *World City Network*, *passim*.

comparisons.⁹³ The results bear out Taylor's concept of "metageography", the close linkage between physical geography and metaphysical paradigms. Worldviews are closely related to geography.⁹⁴

An interesting illustration of this need to focus on urban locations rather than merely on national economic aggregates is provided by recent work on Latin America. Contrary to established conventional wisdom about the stagnation of post-colonial economies of Argentina and Brazil in the early nineteenth century, an analysis of wealth and economic performance in two major cities, Buenos Aires and Rio de Janeiro, shows that the urban economies appear to have been much more dynamic than would have been suggested by merely looking at the newly independent nation states. The evidence shows that "...the focus on the nation state as the unit of analysis obscures important trends....that can be profitably explored through a comparative analysis of the region's two major capital cities".⁹⁵ On the other side of the South Atlantic, Cape Town can provide similar lessons, albeit with a different result.

The very nature of the economic and cultural networks that cosmopolitan cities are embedded in constitutes the "innovative milieu", it is what makes them "cultural crucibles" that drive change.⁹⁶ To get on this bandwagon, we have to mute the orthodox discourse on colonial and post-colonial issues. The concepts of metropole vs. periphery, the Foucauldian notions of domination and power relations have to be put aside to get a better understanding of the voluntary nature of networks.⁹⁷ Networks within global empires are not one-way streets but show mutual

⁹³ See Ulrich Blum and Leonard Dudley, *Religion and Economic Growth: Was Weber Right?* (Montreal: University of Montreal, 2001), www.sceco.umontreal.ca. Compare the less conclusive findings based on national data in Norris and Inglehart, *Sacred and Secular*, 159-179.

⁹⁴ Taylor, *World City Network*, 180.

⁹⁵ Lyman L. Johnson and Zephyr Frank, "Cities and Wealth in the South Atlantic: Buenos Aires and Rio de Janeiro Before 1860", *Comparative Study of Society and History*, Vol. 48, No. 3 (2006), 634-668.

⁹⁶ Hall, *Cities*, passim.

⁹⁷ See the discussion in Andrew Thompson, "The Power and Privileges of Association: Co-Ethnic Networks and the Economic Life of the British Imperial World", *South African Historical Journal*, Vol. 56 (2006), 43-59; also in Saul Dubow, *A Commonwealth of Knowledge* (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 2006), particularly p. 14/15..

influences and "circuits of exchange": the colonial centre changes in a similar way as the colonies it networks with. These are not necessarily institutional networks, but often are linkages between individuals who engage in trade, colonial administration, religious contacts and cultural communication. The shared identity of those who are communicating make the flow of ideas and views possible and easy.⁹⁸ Trade networks and diasporas have always been centred on urban hubs, enabling the merchants to operate as a global community of like-minded individuals, bringing about a convergence of worldviews and cultural mixes.⁹⁹

Identities, as discussed with reference to Amartya Sen above, usually are multiple ones. A cosmopolitan location with a number of coexisting identities will also develop parallel networks that facilitate the embedding of individuals and groups in various global cultures. The early nineteenth century Cape displayed a number of simultaneous identities: the English-speaking merchant and administrative elite took their cue from prevailing trends in the British Empire. So did the Christian missionaries of various hues, focusing on different streams of thought. The remaining Dutch elite's lifestyle and worldview were still influenced by the legacy and connections of the VOC seaborne empire. The growing Cape Muslim community saw itself as linked to a South-East Asian slave and exile heritage, and to the worldwide *ummah* of believers that connected them to Swahili East Africa, Arabia, and Ottoman Turkey. The freed slaves and other mixed-race individuals aspired to a link with the dominant Anglophone imperial network. In short, a multiplicity of networks tied the Cape to the world. Dubow's analysis of the early nineteenth century at the Cape illustrates the strength of such colonial knowledge networks which used major strands of thought in the Empire to assert new liberal freedoms, promote humanitarian sentiments, and introduce new institutions of learning and research.

⁹⁸ Thompson, "The Power and Privileges", 43-46.

⁹⁹ See particularly Philip D. Curtin, *Cross-Cultural Trade in World History* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1984). A good illustration of a global urban cultural network was the trade diaspora of Armenian merchants centred in Isfahan and stretching from Western Europe to China, discussed in: Sebouh Aslanian, "The Salt in a Merchant's Letter", *Journal of World History*, Vol. 19, No. 2 (2008), 127.

Merchants and Ports

One additional feature is more characteristic of urban regions than of national averages, thus linking it to the following discussion: cities embedded in an international trading or colonial network are “merchant” locations that attract immigrants (forced or voluntary) of varied cultures and backgrounds. In fact, practically all of the inhabitants of early Cape Town were overseas immigrants, voluntary or forced.¹⁰⁰ The influx of cultures tends to cluster in the urban region rather than spreading evenly throughout a country or colony, making the city considerably more diverse than its hinterland. The early nineteenth century Cape is a good example of this phenomenon, as the spread of Islam happened primarily in the urban area, and the East African “prize negroes” landed at the Cape as a result of the capture of non-British slaving ships were assigned to live in or close to the town. Urban Cape Town rapidly differentiated itself culturally from its rural hinterland.

Significant differences in the pattern of value change and economic development are visible between merchant locations and the more hierarchic agrarian areas: the latter may show more stability and more steady economic growth, but may lack the autonomy, initiative, and innovation characteristic of the former.¹⁰¹ Cities that are open to the world develop a “worldview universalism” that facilitates the local competition for the validity of diverse worldviews.¹⁰² Urban diversity, then, matters.

Two aspects of merchant-oriented, cosmopolitan cities stand out: their colonial heritage, and their nature as port cities. Cape Town has this potent combination. The colonial aspect of the city embeds the European, Asian, and African immigrants of the urban area in the global imperial framework, and in the globalising world trade and communications system. While the Dutch or British

¹⁰⁰ In the words of the prime minister of Mauritius, “We all came on different ships from different continents, now we are all in the same boat”. *The Economist*, Oct. 18, 2008.

¹⁰¹ Inglehart and Welzel, *Modernization*, passim.

¹⁰² Robin Horton, *Patterns of Thought in Africa and the West* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1993), 380.

influence in creating the colonial city may appear to be generally secular,¹⁰³ the presence of a vibrant religious diversity in such cities (including both the dominant Christian denomination and other denominations and religions that are treated as second-class) would indicate that it is a "secularity" in the Charles Taylor sense, i.e. a pluralism of both religious and secular discourse. The day-to-day discussion in such locations is imbued with religious language, competing with non-religious argument. Practically all participants in the daily life of the colonial city are migrants from somewhere else, or their descendants, and have to build their own hierarchies. All relevant population groups, and their institutions, are imported into the colonial urban location. Racial interaction and racial mixing takes place, and new identities have to be found. In the transition of the colonial city from a slave society to a post-slavery one, the previously clear social distinctions fade, and residential separation on a racial or religious basis becomes necessary to maintain colonial hierarchies.¹⁰⁴

Many colonial cities started as ports, and this second feature reinforces the urban hybridity and diversity. How much a port function adds to the intensity of the cultural mix is difficult to quantify, but the port's very nature as a point of exchange radiates into the cultural makeup of the city. "Port functions, more than anything else, make a city cosmopolitan, a word which does not necessarily mean sophisticated, but rather hybrid....Races, cultures, and ideas as well as goods from a variety of places jostle, mix, and enrich each other and the life of the city."¹⁰⁵ Examples from Asia such as Colombo, Makassar, Melaka, Bombay, or Calcutta demonstrate that a vigorous religious and ethnic diversity and assembling of cultures took place throughout the colonial history of these settlements.¹⁰⁶ Islam, Christianity, Hinduism and Buddhism coexisted and interacted in an environment of open exchange, regulated by the need for public order. Upward mobility is a hallmark of such port cities, where being an *arriviste* is a badge of honour, allowing people of humbler origin to succeed

¹⁰³ Anthony D. King, "Colonial Cities – Global Pivots of Change", in Robert Ross and Gerard J. Telkamp (eds), *Colonial Cities*, (Leiden: Martinus Nijhoff, 1985), 17.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., 21-23.

¹⁰⁵ Rhoads Murphey, "On the Evolution of the Port City", in Frank Broeze (ed), *Brides of the Sea* (New South Wales Univ. Press, 1989), 225.

¹⁰⁶ Broeze, *Brides of the Sea*, passim; Dilip K. Basu (ed), *The Rise and Growth of the Colonial Port Cities in Asia* (Berkeley: Univ. Press of America, 1985); Nordin Hussin, *Trade and Society in the Straits of Melaka* (Singapore: NUS Press, 2007).

economically and socially. The port city becomes "...a cosmopolitan centre of ferment, social mobility, innovation and stimulus,...[engaging in] traffic in ideas and people as well as in goods."¹⁰⁷ Let us remember here that "...trade is not simply a movement of goods, it is also a social activity, linking individuals and communities in interlocking networks".¹⁰⁸

A key feature in the functioning of a port city is the existence of a legal order that protects private property, contracts, and the increase of wealth. Legal security of this kind is essential in an environment of transient traders, a diversity of cultures and ethnicities, and the absence of historically grown and established patterns of behaviour.¹⁰⁹ Without a clear perception that contracts can be enforced, and that property is protected against rogue elements of a hybrid society, the city will not develop its potential. We will see that this feature figures prominently in the society of the nineteenth century Cape, and twenty-first century Cape Town.

The Case for Diversity

Urban communities are prone to modernise and embrace change more easily than traditional, static ones characterised by homogeneity and a high premium on stability. The "consensual" traditional paradigm of rural areas is not the "competitive" urban one that has to live with heterogeneity and the dynamic interaction of cultures. Under the latter, predictability and stability decline, but individual autonomy and the urge to take control of events increase.¹¹⁰ The social pattern based on personal relations, rigid hierarchy and security gives way to a more anonymous, individualistic and egalitarian one – the social analysis at a very local level yields better insights into this process than the conflation of the urban and rural structures.¹¹¹ Horton argues that religion can well become an independent variable in

¹⁰⁷ Murphey, *On the Evolution*, 236/7.

¹⁰⁸ Heather Sutherland, "Eastern Emporium and Company Town: Trade and Society in Eighteenth-Century Makassar", in Broeze, *Brides of the Sea*, 104.

¹⁰⁹ Murphey, "On the Evolution", 238.

¹¹⁰ Horton, *Patterns of Thought*, 340-342.

¹¹¹ David J. Hess and Roberto A. Da Matta (eds), *The Brazilian Puzzle* (NY: Columbia Univ. Press, 1995), 23, 134.

urbanizing locations, influencing the society and economy when individualisation breaks down old hierarchies, and modernisation moves the urban population from polytheistic to monotheistic worldviews. In cosmopolitan urban centres, long-distance trade and economic specialization are associated with a "worldview universalism" that favours universalist religions such as Christianity and Islam. The natural competitiveness of a multicultural city enables the local competition among worldviews to be seen as normal, in contrast to parochial locations where competition is viewed with suspicion, and different worldviews belong to distant aliens.¹¹²

Anthropology, sociology, religious/cultural studies, and political theory have moved a long way along this analytical path, giving birth to the broad academic debate on multiculturalism, diversity, pluralism, and the question of identities. From this broad canvas, let us selectively pick out the topics that appear relevant to the work at hand. First, and most fundamentally, the rising importance of the individual as autonomous agent that accompanies modernisation and development. Individuals, of course, always are embedded in a social environment – the purist theoretical notion of a totally self-contained individual has been abandoned long ago. But all evidence of the process of modernisation indicates that the centre of gravity shifts from collective to individual identity construction.¹¹³ This emancipation of the individual from the collective has been interpreted as a key feature of a “new” modernity, distinct from the first push for modernisation that merely carries the society from a static traditional to a dynamic secular mode. What Beck calls the new, “reflexive” modernity, empirical sociologists such as Inglehart label “post-modern” features of cultural change – the fluid, self-correcting way of individuals to seek self-expression.¹¹⁴ We do not have to understand this in strictly chronological terms, associating the “post-modern” features with contemporary societies only – what matters here is the fact that different combinations of “modern” and “post-modern” elements of value change can be observed even in historically more distant periods.

¹¹² Horton, *Patterns of Thought*, 355-380

¹¹³ Ulrich Beck and Elisabeth Beck-Gernsheim, *Individualisation* (London: Sage, 2002); Ulrich Beck and W. Bonss, *Die Modernisierung der Moderne* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 2001); Zygmunt Bauman, *Identity* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2004).

¹¹⁴ Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, *Individualisation*, 12-16; Inglehart and Welzel, *Modernization*, 25-31.

Secondly, the question of identity formation by increasingly autonomous individuals. The fluidity injected into a modernising society has been described as “liquid modernity”, making identity construction an ongoing task rather than a steady state.¹¹⁵ Flexibility and adaptability become key assets, as relatively short-lived identities emerge and fade, like the figures parading across the dial in a mediaeval clock. Identity building is constant *bricolage*, a means-oriented process rather than one with a predetermined goal. Two limits to the freedom of identity choice must, however, be recognised: those inherited by descent, and those imposed by stronger members of a community.¹¹⁶ Racial identity, of course, has always been a visible, inherited marker that can not easily be jettisoned, unless mixed descent allows a range of identifications in a multi-racial society, or renders racial identity irrelevant. Cultural and “ethnic” identities ascribed by powerful others to individuals who are in no position to protest are similar obstacles that limit choice. Social weakness limits the opportunities for identity *bricolage* severely. Identity flexibility, therefore, varies along a spectrum ranging from those who have the luxury to re-arrange their set of identities at will, and those who have little say in their own identity preferences, being pushed into being stereotyped by others.¹¹⁷ Again, the key concept of the freedom of choice enters the consideration: human development includes the expansion of choice even in identity formation. This point is driven home forcefully by Sen, who notes that the mobilisation and identification of whole social groups on the basis of one dominant cultural, religious, or ethnic identity easily leads to violence and exclusivity. The simple act of recognising that each individual has a potential plethora of identities among which he or she should be able to choose freely according to circumstances, is a highly liberating one. Slipping from one identity into another is the privilege of the citizen of an open, egalitarian, liberalising society.¹¹⁸

Thirdly, the dialectic between multiculturalism and hybridisation in a community. It is all very well to say that the individual should choose among a wide range of identity options. But two things stand in the way: the strength of identity-promoting groups, and the tendency of identities to blend, mix, synthesise and

¹¹⁵ Bauman, *Identity*, 38, 47-52.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 38; Friedman, *Cultural Identity*, 28-37.

¹¹⁷ See particularly the discussion by Bauman.

¹¹⁸ Amartya Sen, *Identity and Violence*.

hybridise. First, the group issue. The literature on the recognition of diverse cultural groups in a society is vast, and has spilled over into everyday social and political concerns: who has not participated in a debate about the pros and cons of multiculturalism, however it may be defined? The key issue of relevance in our discussion is the extent to which one should focus on group identities and their need to be acknowledged as, for instance, separate cultural entities within a dominant culture (speaking on behalf of their members), or rather concentrate on how individuals navigate the treacherous path between group and personal identities. Key authors such as Will Kymlicka have carefully explored the middle ground, arguing that cultural, religious, and ethnic groups exhibiting strong collective identities are a reality that can not be ignored in the running of a society, but that universal liberal principles require that such groups do not suppress their members' ability to exit or to dissent from the group.¹¹⁹ Others have challenged this even-handed approach, claiming that the potential "internal illiberalism" of groups should shift the focus towards the needs of the individual. In this reading, the "mosaic multiculturalism" of separate but peacefully coexisting groups is an illusion that ignores the multiple identities of individuals. Rather than searching for a "modus vivendi" between rival single-identity groups, one should look for evidence of a "pluralistically enlightened ethical universalism" that affords space for individuals to express universal values in various cultural idioms.¹²⁰

Finally, the phenomenon of hybridisation and creolisation. Far from the concern with distinct groups imposing dominant identities, this argument states that individuals in cosmopolitan, multicultural locations not only switch between multiple identities and allegiances, but actually fuse and blend them into new hybrids. In the colonial context, this process has been described as creolisation – the creation of a new identity out of fragments of indigenous and imported ones. Creole cultural

¹¹⁹ Will Kymlicka, *Liberalism, Community, and Culture* (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1989); also Kymlicka, *Multicultural Citizenship* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995).

¹²⁰ See particularly Benhabib, *The Claims of Culture*, passim; also Chandran Kukathas (ed), *Multicultural Citizens* (St. Leonards: Centre for Independent Studies, 1993). The opposite claim for the existence of a modus vivendi, protecting members of a community from inter-group conflict, comes from authors such as John Gray, *Two Faces of Liberalism* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2000); or Jacob T. Levy, *The Multiculturalism of Fear* (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 2000).

fusion as agent of innovation: this concept is akin to the understanding of creole languages as gradually solidified new mother tongues of a culturally mixed population. The literature on the process and results of creolisation is substantial, driven by authors involved in the historical cultural fusions in the Caribbean, Brazil, West Africa, and South Africa.¹²¹ Creole elites tended to aspire to join the dominant colonial culture, thus drawing it into the anthropological “long conversation” that creolises the society as a whole. Such elites “believed in the possibility, indeed the obligation, of individual advancement through...education and...respectable leisure activities”.¹²²

Not all cultural interchange and adaptation results in a creole society. The global tension between the colonial centre and the network of empire results in innovation and diversity, and cultural hybrids.¹²³ It would be a mistake to look at this process only one-dimensionally as “oppression” and coercion: although inequality and social marginalization are key parts of the scene, the cultural arena in which the process takes place includes everyday life, the market, customs and rituals, and the aspirations of a local elite to become accepted and respectable in the colonial setting.¹²⁴ Taking the definitional cue from linguistics (*pace* the criticism that this is not a sound transfer of analytical tools), the early phases of this process consist of a rough imitation and a state of vernacular dependence, a sort of “pidgin” cultural stage where local populations adapt by necessity to the dominant colonial cultural features but remain loyal to their local roots. If the process is not sustained, this is where it stays, and perhaps fades away after the departure of the colonialists. There comes, however, a threshold: when it is crossed, the pidgin turns into a creole, a language and community that has created a new hybrid cultural form that is self-sustaining.

¹²¹ Vivian Bickford-Smith, "The Betrayal of Creole Elites", in P. Morgan and S. Hawkins (eds), *The Oxford History of the Black Experience of Empire* (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 2003); Leo Spitzer, *The Creoles of Sierra Leone* (Madison: Univ. of Wisconsin Press, 1974); Hannerz, *Transnational Connections*; Sarah Nuttall and Cheryl-Ann Michael (eds), *Senses of Culture* (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 2000); Barnor Hesse (ed), *Un/settled Multiculturalisms* (London and NY: Zed Books, 2000).

¹²² Bickford-Smith, "The Betrayal".

¹²³ Hannerz, *Transnational Connections*, 67

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*, 69

The previous haphazard pidgin vernacular has become the mother tongue of a new community, a new cultural entity has been born.¹²⁵

The new community is hybridised in many respects: it has a new language, derived from the dominant colonial one and other sources, that develops its own dynamics; it is characterized by racial mixing, including in the new urban community not only the descendants of the local population, of Europeans and of imported slaves, but a wide spectrum of ethnic identities, held together by the need to communicate and to operate a functional society. It is important to reflect at this point that it is not just a defined sub-group of the colonial environment that turns creole: an entire community such as Cape Town takes on the flavour of this new dispensation, as even the colonial masters are drawn into the way in which the society now communicates and lives together.

When this happens, the point of “entanglement” is reached: a point of no return after which it is useless to seek a pure past and one has to acknowledge a mixed history and multiple roots. Rather than search for a singular identity, one accepts fragmented origins, “returns to the point of entanglement and, from there, puts to work the forces of creolisation”.¹²⁶ Ambiguity is the key word here,¹²⁷ an ambivalence that permeates the creole community, as it contemplates its lack of a clear heritage and its origins from the actions of a dominant colonizer, but at the same time celebrates its ability to create something coherent from many sources. Creole identities are “the result of a complex dialectical relationship between racialization by dominant-class whites and self-definition... where such an identity has to make sense to those so described”.¹²⁸ A creole community understands itself as such, regardless of any efforts by authorities to press it into a homogeneous ethnically-based identity. Through the creative creolisation by individuals, post-colonial communities with

¹²⁵ David Crystal, *The Cambridge Encyclopedia of Language* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1987), 336.

¹²⁶ Erasmus, *Some Kind of White*, 202/203.

¹²⁷ Zimitri Erasmus, "Hair Politics", in Nuttall and Michael (eds), *Senses of Culture*, 388. See also Hesse, *Un/settled Multiculturalisms*, 226.

¹²⁸ Bickford-Smith, *The Historical Investigation of Creolisation and Identity*, unpublished seminar paper (University of Cape Town, 2003), 6. On the same theme of mutual influence between colonizer and colonized, see also John L. and Jean Comaroff, *Of Revelation and Revolution* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1997).

mixed ethnic characteristics can simultaneously engender a traditional sense of belonging, and be symbols of cultural fusion in a "post-modern" urban experience.¹²⁹ An individual transformation takes place, the changed person can no longer be slotted back into one of the original ingredients of the creole *persona*, Derrida's *différance* has taken hold.¹³⁰

Creole identities are anti-essentialist by definition, and depend on the context of the moment.¹³¹ They jockey for pole position in the consciousness of the individual, who can assign equal importance to his or her membership of a mixed-race group, of a religious community, of an occupational category, of a resistance movement, of the fellowship of a leisure activity, or, indeed, to being a member of a creole community. The creole mind "lives across the grain of cultural differentiation, ...traversing several cultural idioms".¹³² The creolised community uses the discourse methods of the dominant groups, but "domesticates" them, popularises them, and employs irony to mock them. To type-cast this character in a film, central casting could do no better than pick a mixed-race Capetonian.

The term "creolisation", of course, is a much-used and much-criticised one in a range of disciplines from linguistics to cultural anthropology. Recent critical reviews have stressed that the term, originating in Caribbean studies, has undergone an unwarranted inflation, and has been applied inappropriately to any instance of cultural mixing and fusion.¹³³ Rather than enter into the raging academic debates on whether there is any rigorous theory underlying the concept, or whether the linguistic construct is transferable to cultural analysis at all, this work adopts the entirely pragmatic definition of creolisation as a proxy expression for the gradual hybridisation of coexisting or competing identities in the context of cultural pluralism in a defined colonial or post-colonial location.

¹²⁹ Hesse, *Un/settled Multiculturalisms*, 221

¹³⁰ *Ibid.* 227

¹³¹ Bekker and Prinsloo, *Identity?*, 83/84

¹³² Crain Soudien, "District Six and Its Uses in the Discussion About Non-Racialism", in Erasmus, *Coloured by History*, 126-128

¹³³ See the particularly thorough review of creolisation literature by Stephan Palmie, "Creolization and Its Discontents", in *Annual Review of Anthropology*, Vol. 35 (2006), 433-56. Palmie argues for a cleaning up of the discourse on creolisation, because of the difficulty to pin down the term with any rigour, and because of its many colloquial meanings.

Identity Revisited

Given the vast body of literature on cultural identity, creolisation processes, and the uses of ethnicity, it is prudent to select a combination of templates that serves the topic of Western Cape identities best. The composite that shows the best fit is one that deals explicitly with the interplay between coloniser and colonised, acknowledges the emergence of a recognizable hybrid elite and underclass, focuses on the emergence of identities of choice such as religious ones, and embeds ethnicity in a broader cultural and religious context.

The protracted question on how to distinguish between group identity and individual identity is the first one that needs to be tackled. The communitarian tendency of the former, and the focus on liberated individualism of the latter are not always easily reconciled in a democracy. How much dissent and fragmentation can there be in a group before it becomes meaningless? How independent of collective conditioning can the individual be?¹³⁴ These abstract questions become clearer when seen against the global structural processes that bracket a historical series of cultural encounters, from colonialism to the spread of Western tradition and to the global information explosion. Cultural identities, in this context, are closely linked to the dynamics of these encounters: the whole spectrum of identities, whether inherited physical ones or those learned in the community, is affected by the meeting and mixing of alien cultural elements. The colonial dynamics place the Western concept that individuals have their own cultural identity into the same marketplace of ideas as the traditional indigenous concept (say, Khoisan or Xhosa) that it is the group which has the primary identity.¹³⁵ Where local commercialised societies already existed prior to the colonial impact (such as in Dutch East India), this precondition is added to the mix as a non-traditional but still hierarchically organized mode of thought.

Friedman's typology of cultural identities¹³⁶ is a useful tool in this context. It is placed along a continuum of societies that range from those with a very light "cultural content" in their formal structure, to the holistic traditional ones heavily

¹³⁴ Hesse, *Unsettled Multiculturalisms*, 236

¹³⁵ Jonathan Friedman, *Cultural Identity and Global Process* (London: Sage, 1994), 29

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*, 34/35

informed by such content. In this context, “cultural content” can best be imagined as a bundle of concepts of belonging, including ethnicity, religion, language, common tradition and history. The extreme ends of this spectrum (the culture-neutral Western state consisting of equal citizens with political interest group identities on the one hand, and a simplified archetype of the traditional hierarchical and socially inclusive indigenous society on the other hand) do not help us much in the search for the identity conundrum in a hybrid Cape Town. The middle ground is more promising. What we find there are two prototype societies, both still within the range of “Westernized” cultures: one, designated “ethnic” in the sociologist’s shorthand, tends more towards the heavier cultural content and is characterized by an exclusive ethnic pluralism in which individuals are seen primarily as parts of defined ethnic groups. Ethnic mythology is important, individualism is controlled by informally or formally enforced loyalty to the ethnic group, ethnic identity is a prime organizing principle of the state and society, and claims to a historical heritage are clothed in racial and ethnic essentialism. South Africa in its twentieth century colonial and apartheid incarnations (or, indeed, the totalitarian period in Germany) fits this paradigm reasonably well. The other type, more towards the lighter cultural content and higher value of individualism, is dubbed the “lifestyle” society where the autonomy of the individual creates a cultural pluralism that is not enshrined in fixed ethnic categories, and where any existing ethnic identity easily dissolves into creative combinations of identities. This category could well describe the ideal type of cultural environment for a Cape Town person of mixed heritage who is emerging from a hierarchical paradigm, enabling an informed personal choice of the prime locus of belonging.

This dichotomy puts its finger on the dilemma that the new South Africa finds itself in. The headlong rush for a “rainbow nation” neglects the key fact that a multi-cultural society that tries to emerge from an “ethnic” one still maintains several distinct ethnic cultures within the same society. Each one is celebrated as homogeneous and valuable, the individual has a dual identity within the ethnic group and within the multi-cultural state, and the only difference to the old authoritarian ethnic hierarchy is that the ethnic groups now coexist on a democratic footing.¹³⁷ Not a negligible difference, by all means, but the obsession with equal rights for ethnic

¹³⁷ Hesse, *Unsettled Multiculturalisms*, 212

groups keeps the *individual* from breaking free of ethnic loyalties. This kind of liberation is exactly the tonic needed for somebody who can not easily fall back on a straightforward ethnic heritage, as is the case for the mixed population of the Cape.

Ethnicity and Identity

At this point, it is useful to step back and reflect on what the concept of “ethnicity” really implies. It definitely is not limited to race. While the idea of “race” itself has many elements of a political and social construct,¹³⁸ it is woefully inadequate as a biologically-based definition to describe cultural differences. Staying with the Western definition of “ethnicity” as a compartmentalized cultural identity of the individual rather than the traditional holistic group identity,¹³⁹ we can see ethnicity as a “perception that a person has of having common ancestry or permanent cultural ties with one collection of people, one ethnic group, rather than another or others... Ethnicity will be conferred or enhanced by informal or formal education as well as by shared activities and symbols”.¹⁴⁰ Note that this is not just a physical, innate concept but a perception by the individual and the group that there is cultural togetherness. This thread of thinking that collective identities are shaped by individual perceptions runs from Max Weber’s notion of common descent and culture, through Geertz’ concept of cohesive, holistic cultures shaped by descent and custom, to the post-modern idea of ethnicity as a regulator of intra-group social relations. A collective ethnic identity is a “consciously crafted ideological creation”, resulting from the “search of the individual for psychological security through group membership, not only through individual attainment”.¹⁴¹

Combine this with the notion that “identity” is a fleeting thing. Sociologists and historians have arrived at the conviction that cultural identity is multiple and unstable, not eternally fixed as would be demanded by the concept of racial identity. Identities are polymorphous, contradictory and inconsistent, and “always demand

¹³⁸ Ibid., 222.

¹³⁹ Friedman, *Cultural Identity*, 30.

¹⁴⁰ Vivian Bickford-Smith, *The Historical Investigation*.

¹⁴¹ Rachel Prinsloo, *Identity and Community in the Western Cape*, conference paper (Cape Town: UWC, 1997), 3-5.

specific and strategic calculation of their effects".¹⁴² They are changeable and have to be built in the interplay between the individual and different cultural groups: "The construction of identity...involves the construction of opposites and 'others' whose actuality is always subject to the continuous interpretation...of their differences from us".¹⁴³ On top of all this, the post-modern paradigm implies that the individual can easily be "several things at once", indulging in a multiplicity of identities simultaneously.¹⁴⁴ Each one of these layered identities is "one among a number of identities which an individual will or can articulate, depending on the circumstances".¹⁴⁵ Part individual choice, part circumstance and environment, the cultural identity adapts to the life situation as it is experienced. This cultural flexibility is essential for all players in circumstances where a dynamic alien colonial presence irrupts into a traditional indigenous society, and at the same time imports individuals from third societies, alien to both: this is the mix experienced at the Cape right from the beginning of European settlement.

Hybridity, then, appears to be closely related to individualisation and innovation. The individuals in such a society are anathema to Adam Smith's "man of system", who "...seems to imagine that he can arrange the different members of a great society with as much ease as the hand arranges the different pieces upon a chess-board. He does not consider that...in the great chess-board of human society, every single piece has a principle of motion of its own."¹⁴⁶ Whether we are talking about changeable (in the sense used by Sen) or fused (creole) identities, the thrust of a community composed of such flexible individuals may be characterised by change, the search for new solutions, risk-taking, and adaptability. Indeed, arguments have been put forward that only this kind of hybridity and multiculturalism at the micro level can enable a society to participate fully in global development, and that a "schizophrenic" life defines normality for successful individuals in cosmopolitan

¹⁴² Soudien, "District Six", 116.

¹⁴³ Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (NY: Vintage, 1994), 332.

¹⁴⁴ Simon Bekker and Rachel Prinsloo (eds), *Identity?* (Pretoria: HSRC, 1999), 72.

¹⁴⁵ Shamil Jeppie, "Reclassifications", in Erasmus, *Coloured by History*, 82.

¹⁴⁶ Quoted in Rothschild, *Economic Sentiments*.

locations.¹⁴⁷ Not only contemporary societies, but even early modern ones are considered to have benefited from these features: Amsterdam and other Dutch cities during Holland's "Golden Age" turn out to have been more hybrid than commonly assumed, thus making it possible to attribute the rise of Dutch capitalism not just to the "Protestant ethic", but also to the fact of diversity.¹⁴⁸

Diversity and Economy

Some empirical sociological work on the process of change in cultural values towards diversity and individual self-expression opines that economic development and income security have to precede this kind of "post-modern" manifestation of individuality.¹⁴⁹ This makes sense in general, as only economically secure communities may be able to afford the risk of diversity and cultural/religious competition. However, causality is an elusive thing. "Post-modern" and diversity/hybridity values can creep even into societies that have not reached a significant threshold of wealth or "modernisation", particularly in historical situations that throw together cultures and religions in pre-modern but cosmopolitan locations. Poly-ethnicity and cultural diversity have been quite normal features of societies throughout history before the emergence of the homogeneous nation state,¹⁵⁰ and it would be surprising if this social structure would not be accompanied by a quite distinct set of values and economic thinking. The discussion on the Cape Colony below will deal with this in more detail.

¹⁴⁷ G. Pascal Zachary, *The Diversity Advantage* (Cambridge, MA: Westview Press, 2003); Zachary, "The Hotel Africa", in *The Wilson Quarterly*, Vol. 30, No. 3 (Summer 2006), 48-55; Michael M. Phillips, "A Suburban Dad's African Kingdom", in *Wall Street Journal*, June 2006.

¹⁴⁸ Zachary, *The Diversity Advantage*; Charles H. Parker, "Paying for the Privilege – The Management of Public Order and Religious Pluralism in Two Early Modern Societies", *Journal of World History*, Vol. 17, No. 3 (2006). Other historical periods and multireligious locations have been examined, such as the Balkans during the Ottoman Empire, and colonial West Africa. See Noel Malcolm, *Bosnia: A Short History*, (NY: NY Univ. Press, 1994); and Lamin Sanneh, *Piety and Power: Muslims and Christians in West Africa* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1996).

¹⁴⁹ Inglehart and Welzel, *Modernization*; Zachary, *The Diversity Advantage*.

¹⁵⁰ William McNeill, *Poly-ethnicity and National Unity in World History* (Toronto: Univ. of Toronto Press, 1986).

Attacking the topic from the other direction of causality, econometric analysis has tried to establish whether multiculturalism and religious and ethnic diversity have an impact on economic performance, with decidedly mixed results.¹⁵¹ Some of the results seem to indicate that heterogeneity induces conflict and therefore instability and poor economic growth performance, compared to homogeneous societies. Other work yields the conclusion that it is religious and ethnic polarisation and conflict, not just diversity, that has a (negative) impact on economic development. The limited enlightenment we obtain from these cross-sectional exercises is that conflict in a community, driven by cultural and religious identities, is detrimental to steady socio-economic development – not a surprising result. What we do not learn is whether diversity always results in damaging communal conflict, or whether there are instances when diversity and hybridity take place in a managed environment that encourages entrepreneurial behaviour. Creole locations such as Brazilian examples have been identified as exhibiting a constant negotiation of traditional and modernist paradigms in the mind of each individual, an ambiguity that mediates everyday situations between the personal and the rules-based modes.¹⁵²

In a simple shorthand, we can conclude that there are both economic costs and benefits associated with cultural and religious diversity. The costs of a multicultural society can be defined as high social and economic transaction costs: customs and languages of the different cultural backgrounds and worldviews make it more difficult to transact business than in a homogeneous society. Misunderstandings and frictions are frequent, leading to conflict that raises the cost of everyday exchange. On the other hand, the benefits of a mix of cultures include the efficiency-raising complementarity of socio-economic skills in the economy (making a modernising division of labour easier), and the tendency to innovate and create new ways of

¹⁵¹ Gerald W. Scully, *Multiculturalism and Economic Growth*, NCPA Policy Report No. 196 (Dallas, TX: NCPA, 1995); Jose G. Montalvo and Marta Reynal-Querol, "Religious Polarization and Economic Development", *Economics Letters*, No. 80 (2003), 201-210, www.elsevier.com; Montalvo and Reynal-Querol, "Ethnic Diversity and Economic Development", *Journal of Development Economics*, Vol. 76 (2005), 293-323, www.elsevier.com; Fondazione Eni Enrico Mattei, *Economic Growth, Innovation, Cultural Diversity* (FEEM, 2003), www.feem.it.

¹⁵² Hess and Da Matta, *The Brazilian Puzzle*, 8-14.

conducting business.¹⁵³ This is where we need to turn to the case of the Cape, to gain more insight into this correlation between diversity and economic performance.

University of Cape Town

¹⁵³ E. P. Lazear, *Culture and Language*, NBER Working Paper No. 5249 (London, 1995).

Chapter Two: Diversity, Religion, and Economy at the Cape

At this point, a juxtaposition of the main points of the body of theory and empirical evidence discussed above, and the peculiar historical circumstances of the Cape Colony is useful. Putting together the strands of extant work, we find that:

- Human development encompasses both socio-economic and cultural-religious features, forming a holistic package of change based on enhancing choice.
- Cultural and religious values matter in defining the path of development, the trajectories of change are recognisably shaped by cultural and religious heritage. Discontinuities in the trajectories of individual components of the development package are common.
- Religion and economic behaviour are linked in many ways, not least in situations of competition for both material and spiritual resources.
- Economic and cultural change happens most easily in urban locations that are linked into international trade and colonial networks. Cosmopolitan cities attract a diversity of worldviews.
- Locations that attract a variety of cultures and religions develop into places of innovation and experimentation, but also conflict and friction. Identity formation becomes an individual project, based on choice.
- Individual identities in culturally diverse places can be multiple ones, to become primary according to circumstances, or hybrid, fused ones that create a creole society.
- Diversity and creolisation can generate friction in a community, but can also enhance qualities of individualisation and innovation. Economic behaviour may mirror this mindset.

1. Early Nineteenth Century Transition and Religion

How does the peculiar history of the Cape of Good Hope fit into this template? And is it relevant? Let us look at the broad sweep of events over time. Until the early nineteenth century, Cape society under VOC administration and early British rule had the recognisable characteristics of a slave society, although with important qualifications that set it apart from slave-based societies in the Americas or in the Arab world. A rich literature on the features of the slave and settler society at the Cape has developed, identifying unique features such as (a) the unusual variety of geographical sources around the Indian Ocean littoral from which slaves were imported, (b) the fact that imported slaves, indigenous serfs and masters from a variety of ethnic and cultural backgrounds were thrown together in small polyglot groups, not in homogeneous plantations or estates, and (c) the reality that Cape Town was a colonial trading and resupply station since its inception, while the sparse communities in its wide-spread hinterland were leading a quite separate existence.¹ The literature indicates that social position in the spectrum of free persons and slaves was the key component of identities, providing a fairly stable hierarchy. Despite the plethora of cultural, ethnic, racial, and religious groupings within the society of the port city, including thorough mixing and miscegenation that resulted in a broad spectrum of ethnic definitions, a cultural alternative to the social stratification was unlikely to be permitted while the society understood itself as slavery-based.

The loosening of the informal bondage of the indigenous Khoisan population by virtue of Ordinance 50 in 1828, and the formal emancipation of the slaves in 1834-38 sealed the ongoing transition from a slave society to a more open, egalitarian one,

¹ The literature is substantial, including key contributions such as: Richard Elphick and Herman Giliomee (eds), *The Shaping of South African Society, 1652-1840* (Cape Town: Maskew Miller Longman, 1989); Robert C.-H. Shell, *Children of Bondage* (Johannesburg: Witwatersrand Univ. Press, 2001); Nigel Penn, *The Forgotten Frontier* (Cape Town: Double Storey, 2005); Robert Ross, *Cape of Torments* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1983); Robert Ross, *Beyond the Pale: Essays on the History of South Africa* (Johannesburg: Witwatersrand Univ. Press, 1994); J. S. Marais, *The Cape Coloured People* (Johannesburg: Witwatersrand Univ. Press, 1957); Nigel Worden and Gerald Groenewald (eds), *Trials of Slavery* (Cape Town: Van Riebeeck Soc., 2005); Nigel Worden and Clifton Crais (eds), *Breaking the Chains* (Johannesburg: Witwatersrand Univ. Press, 1994); John Edwin Mason, *Social Death and Resurrection* (Charlottesville: Univ. of Virginia Press, 2003).

at least *de jure*. A window opened for the construction of identities not circumscribed only by social status. Although the *de facto* status of the previously bonded population did not immediately improve perceptibly, the mere opportunity to break out of the previous paradigm created a ferment of change. As all necessary ingredients for a cultural *melange* had been in place for some time, merely awaiting the release from the slave-society straitjacket, the way was open for a vigorous shake of the kaleidoscope. The Cape Colony's 70,000 burghers of primarily European stock were now confronted by an amorphous group of 80,000 legally free people, consisting of newly freed ex-slaves, indigenous Khoisan aided by missionaries in asserting their independence, and mixed-race descendants of all population groups in the Colony. The expansion of the number of Christian denominations and the spread of Islam accelerated dramatically, taking advantage of the new freedom in the search for identity. Experimentation with new creole identities accelerated in line with the fading of the old certainties of social hierarchy: the emergence of a "coloured" set of identities was taking shape, taking advantage of the temporary confusion of social classification accompanying the emancipation of the underclass. A society looking for workable social distinctions was experimenting with different social techniques, without yet casting racial exclusivity in stone. The expansion of the municipal non-racial franchise lasted precariously for the second half of the nineteenth century, before being submerged in racial restrictions.² By the end of the century, the window of egalitarianism and a liberal order had begun to close, as racial and ethnic background began to dominate the discourse. Schools were segregated by 1905, the Coloured franchise in Cape Town was ended by 1910. But let us look back at the basic ingredients for the creation of a hybrid society.

Historical Origins in a Location of Migrants

Ancestry in a hybrid environment is notoriously difficult to trace. The pot has been stirred, the ingredients have dissolved in the melting pot. Nevertheless, the sheer weight of the historical discourse on what it means to be an inhabitant of the Cape demands a mention of origins. The more than 60,000 slaves imported over time up to

² Vivian Bickford-Smith, "South African Urban History, Racial Segregation and the Unique Case of Cape Town?", in *Journal of Southern African Studies*, Vol. 21, No. 1, March 1995.

the end of the slave trade in 1808 consisted of four about equal segments: those from the Indian subcontinent (primarily southern India and Bengal), those from the Indonesian archipelago, those from Madagascar, and those from East Africa (primarily Mozambique).³ The records of origin, of course, do not specify whether the slaves transported from an area actually were locals or whether they were just captured, purchased or loaded there. Nevertheless, about half of the original imported slave population had a Southeast Asian background, and a good part of the rest a Malgasy one that retained strong elements of Asian heritage and language. Within this Asian-flavoured total, the range and variety of traditions, appearance, and language must have been formidable. Added to this mix was (1) the Cape population of indigenous Khoi and San, who by the early 1700s had already lost their traditional autochthonous identity under settler pressure and had become a bonded dispersed rural labour force; (2) the undesirable resisters of Dutch rule in the East Indies who were shipped to the Cape as exiles; (3) “Prize Negroes” dumped at the Cape after being taken from non-British slavers; and (4) the European settlers and adventurers.⁴

Descendants of this mixed underclass took on the status of their mothers, resulting in a growing population of Cape-born slaves who had lost the immediate link to their origins and identified with their Cape home. Gradual manumission of slaves created a group of urban “free blacks”, relations between Khoi, farm slaves, and settlers generated a mixed rural underclass. Despite this progressive creolisation, Cape Town in the eighteenth century and well into the nineteenth must have had a distinctly Asian atmosphere, duplicating the Batavian model in the Dutch empire. The trademark conical hat of Muslim slaves with Asian heritage was not phased out until the mid-nineteenth century when the fez was introduced under Ottoman influence.⁵ Asian cuisine entered Cape eating habits through slave dominance of that “crucible of colonial identities – the kitchen”.⁶ The Asian, or more generally, Indian Ocean basin heritage remained a strong cultural marker in the consciousness of the

³ Robert C.-H. Shell, "The Tower of Babel", in Elizabeth Eldredge and Fred Morton (eds), *Slavery in South Africa*, (Pietermaritzburg: Univ. of Natal Press, 1994), 15.

⁴ Elphick and Giliomee, *The Shaping of South African Society*, passim.

⁵ Yusuf da Costa and Achmat Davids, *Pages from Cape Muslim History* (Pietermaritzburg: Shuter & Shooter, 1994). See also selected exhibits and materials of the Bo-Kaap Museum, Cape Town.

⁶ Shell, "The Tower of Babel", 11.

Cape Town population, explaining the resilience of the “Malay” label that was casually affixed to all (or, more accurately, to the Muslim) members of the urban mixed-race group,⁷ and existed as a sub-classification through most of the twentieth century (rural mixed-race people, where Khoisan heritage was more dominant, were aggregated under the “Hottentot” label).

Creole Moments

The clash of cultural concepts in the complex colonial situation at the Cape was formidable, and cultural flexibility by all parties was necessary for survival. The cultural melange of the European contingent at the Cape during the VOC era already included Dutch, German, French, Scandinavian, and southern European ingredients. The traditional herder and hunter-gatherer societies of the Khoi and San indigenous inhabitants of the Western Cape had to come to terms both with the aggressive European presence and with the early introduction of Asian and other Indian Ocean slaves from a range of cultural backgrounds. The beginning of the British period added a further European element in the form of British settlers and merchants, as well as a stronger interaction with the Nguni-speakers of the East and Northeast. Chinese, Arab, and Jewish arrivals added complexity, a kaleidoscope of seamen, adventurers, migrants and visitors transformed the port city and its immediate hinterland. As in other teeming colonial cities of the European empires, a process of cultural mixing, miscegenation, and improvised identity formation was taking place – the origins of a creole society.

So how do we put the forces of creolisation to work in unravelling the cultural allegiances and everyday behaviour in the Mother City? It is instructive to review the twists and turns of the search for identity after the demise of the VOC paradigm with its separation of society into the social groups of administrators, settlers, imported and Cape-born slaves, “free blacks”, and bonded indigenous Khoisan labourers. The “coloured” concept has a colourful history, but fits well into the paradigm of a creole community where the part of the population with a more visibly mixed heritage feels a close cultural kinship with the dominant, less visibly mixed group, but also keenly

⁷ Bickford-Smith recounts an 1897 report of the Victoria jubilee parade in Cape Town that featured “Malay hadjes and gimcracks” as exotic touches of imperial orientalism.

feels that it is not accepted as kin. A love-hate relationship envelops the continuum of the White/Coloured community, opposition is voiced from the darker end of the spectrum but at the same time, aspirations to join the status of the lighter end are strong. Right from the symbolic beginnings of the marriage of the Khoi chief's daughter Eva/Krotoa to one of Jan van Riebeeck's officials, and the mixed European/Indian parentage of governor Simon van der Stel,⁸ the Cape mixed-heritage community has been labouring under the prejudices expressed in the hoary joke that "God made the White man, God made the African, but Jan van Riebeeck made the Coloured".⁹ A sense of embarrassment about past miscegenation, outrage about rape and sexual abuse of slave and serf women by settlers, is counterbalanced by the knowledge that the culturally closest community remains the white one. The Coloured image is a slightly darker and lower-class version of the White.

The early nineteenth century brought with it uncertainty about social status. The regulated VOC social system where everyone knew where he or she stood even in an increasingly creolised Cape community, was fading away fast. Already in the late eighteenth century, "moments of creolisation" were becoming more frequent, as locally born slaves started to outnumber imported ones.¹⁰ No clear "slave culture" had developed at the Cape as it had on plantations in the Americas – the origins of slaves in any given Cape location were too diverse, and the small numbers of slaves in any given household or on a farm were below the critical mass.¹¹ Nevertheless, the shared experience of bondage had already started to create a feeling of common status between enserfed "Hottentots", formally owned slaves, and manumitted slaves struggling to become economically and socially independent. The coalescing of these groups into an ambiguous "Coloured" category was accelerated dramatically by

⁸ Soudien, "District Six and Its Uses in the Discussion About Non-Racialism", in Erasmus, *Coloured by History*, 114-130.

⁹ Mohamed Adhikari, *Continuity and Context: An Overview of Coloured Identity in White Supremacist South Africa*, PhD thesis, University of Cape Town, 2001, 44.

¹⁰ Robert C.-H. Shell, "The Tower of Babel", 17.

¹¹ Extensive discussion of this can be found in the literature on Cape slavery, particularly the work of Robert Ross or Nigel Worden. See also Vivian Bickford-Smith, "Slavery, Emancipation, and the Question of Coloured Identity, With Particular Attention to Cape Town 1875-1910", in *The Societies of Southern Africa in the 19th and 20th Centuries*, Seminar Papers, Vol. 19, No. 45 (Univ. of London, Institute of Commonwealth Studies, 1992), 19.

Ordinance 50 of 1828, granting the Khoisan theoretical legal equality with whites and freedom of movement, and by the emancipation of slaves throughout the British Empire in 1834/38. In the vacuum left by the dismantled legal hierarchy, the reaction by the dominant European-stock elite was to reject the incorporation of this freshly independent client population in its circle, and to assign to it the label "Coloured". The label was imposed, but also accepted by the affected groups.¹²

The coloured lower stratum of society was by no means the only one that was experiencing changes in identity. "During the first half of the nineteenth century", Kirsten McKenzie summarises her findings on the Cape and Sydney, "colonists attempted to re-invent themselves and their society as respectable according to British cultural models that were themselves in flux, and to throw off the legacies of slavery and convict labour that marred their reputations".¹³ Indeed, as we shall see later, their reputations in Britain were quite poor, putting them in the company of incompetent and crude country cousins. All this took place within the network of British colonial cities that was channelling British ideas, goods, and people throughout the empire: "The imperial network was above all a network of information. It was held together by the movement of people and paper: publications from throughout the empire, private letters and endless official documentation. What was gossip in Cape Town could soon become gossip in Sydney, Calcutta, or London".¹⁴ This was not trivial for identity formation: members of Cape society at all levels were forced to constantly strive for recognition and upward mobility, to avoid being excluded by the layer of society they were aspiring to. Colonists of Dutch and other non-British ancestry were attempting to overcome the bias against them that was voiced by the British contingent in the society. Frequent British barbs about the boorish nature of the Cape Dutch and their "creolised" Dutch language prodded the urban Dutch community into throwing in their lot with the new British dispensation, from building and fashion styles, to leisure pursuits and local politics.¹⁵ Creolisation moments even within the ruling elite proliferated rapidly.

¹² Ian Goldin, *Making Race*, (London/NY: Longman, 1987), xxv.

¹³ Kirsten McKenzie, *Scandal in the Colonies* (Carlton: Melbourne Univ. Press, 2004), 5.

¹⁴ *Ibid.* 7

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 56-58

At the time of slave emancipation in 1834-38, an explosion of marriages to formalise hitherto informal cohabitation practices of the Cape underclass¹⁶ threw into sharp relief the high degree of inter-ethnic mixing that was taking place. Muslim marriages took some time to be fully recognised by the authorities, but where the newly emancipated had a chance to obtain a Christian marriage, the picture in Cape Town was one of a *melange* of Asian, African and European stock. The mixing reached into the higher levels of society, as slaves during the fading years of slavery at the Cape were emboldened to accuse masters of sexual improprieties and to openly claim rights for their children allegedly fathered by their owners. Similarly, members of elite families could easily be drawn into the travails of their domestic slaves and servants, and thus run the risk of a loss of reputation. The creation of a public scandal, placing respected members of the elite in embarrassing positions they had to explain away, drew all segments of the society into the creole melting pot.¹⁷

It is worthwhile noting here that at the time of slave emancipation, the Nguni-speaking Xhosa, Sotho/Tswana, and Zulu societies to the East and North of the Colony (the "Caffer", "Zoola", "Bechuana", later "Native" or "Bantu" categories in the colonial racial dispensation) were, with a few exceptions, still outside the Cape polity. For purposes of social differentiation within the Cape Colony, "White" and "Coloured" was all that was needed to keep ex-slaves, Khoisan and descendants of "free blacks" in their place. "Black" in this context merely meant "non-European". As the Colony and white settlement expanded eastwards and northwards through settler encroachment, frontier wars and treks, new indigenous African societies were incorporated, but their individual members only slowly found their way to the Cape. Similarly, the trickle of "prize Negroes", mainly African slaves on non-British slaving ships that had been captured by the British navy after the abolition of the slave trade in 1808 and settled at the Cape as "apprentices", added to the population mix gradually.¹⁸ Until the late nineteenth century, neither the Colonial authorities and the white establishment, nor the non-white population saw any reason to discard the convenient Coloured designation for the non-white underclass. At the Cape, in contrast to the post-Trek Boer republics of the North, the franchise and a role in

¹⁶ Ibid., 109

¹⁷ Ibid., 121-141

¹⁸ Elphick and Giliomee, *The Shaping of South African Society*, 120.

representative government was granted to this underclass by mid-century, so that for a time, racial discrimination was informally social and cultural rather than overtly political. Subgroups of the large Coloured population found religious niches, such as the fast-growing Muslim community that started to be described as “Malay” in remembrance of its slave past,¹⁹ or the Christian communities of Khoisan and displaced ex-slaves at Moravian and LMS mission stations in the interior.²⁰ During this period of the nineteenth century, we can see the beginnings of various creole identities taking shape, not necessarily defined strictly by race but also by other cultural influences.

In fact, race was not a determining marker of social status in early nineteenth century Cape Town. In the transition from the hierarchy of a slave society, where the distinctions were clearly between free and slave, the differences were increasingly articulated in terms of income and religion. The all-important status marker of morality and marriage was linked primarily to these two variables, making racial origin, if not too obvious, a secondary issue. Innuendo about being "off-colour" did not necessarily impede upward mobility for the determined ones who were economically successful. It was until well into the late decades of the nineteenth century that Capetonians with a significant non-white heritage could still "pass for white" if they could demonstrate cultural affinity, the right marriage, and sufficient income: "many people slightly but still unmistakably off-coloured have made their way into the higher ranks of society and are freely admitted to respectable situations and intermarriage with respectable families".²¹ While intermarriage between various races was primarily a phenomenon of low-income groups in Cape Town (free blacks, slaves, poor whites, and indigenous Khoi mixing freely and both legally and informally), it was acceptable for persons with a mixed-race heritage but already good social status to marry members of the white elite. Hamilton Ross, an ambitious

¹⁹ Vivian Bickford-Smith, "Meanings of Freedom", in Worden and Crais (eds), *Breaking the Chains*, 298.

²⁰ Henry Bredekamp and Robert Ross (eds), *Missions and Christianity in South African History* (Johannesburg: Witwatersrand Univ. Press, 2001), 97-112.

²¹ Quoted from *Het Volksblad* 1876, in Vivian Bickford-Smith, "South African Urban History, Racial Segregation, and the Unique Case of Cape Town?" in *Journal of Southern African Studies*, Vol. 21, No. 1 (March 1995), 71.

newly-arrived British captain who rose to become one of the pre-eminent merchants of Cape Town, married Catharina van den Bergh, the great-granddaughter of an emancipated slave and member of an established Cape family.²²

While lifestyle and similar economic status blurred the differences between slaves and free citizens at the bottom end of the income ladder, religion created new combinations there. The rise of Islam as an alternative to the dominant Christian dispensation (see below) threw together slaves and free, Asian and black in a local *ummah* of believers that provided mutual support in terms of accepted marriage ritual, support for the indigent, and a path to education otherwise closed to the underclass. Within a decade after 1810, only 86 slaves had been baptized at the Cape despite vigorous Christian mission, but more than 1300 slaves had converted to Islam, bringing the Muslim population of Cape Town to 3000 in 1822, and to almost 6500 in 1839, a third of the urban population.²³ Muslim slave owners were perceived as more benign than Christian ones towards their Muslim slaves, and the chance for manumission was greater. The ownership of slaves, as well as other property such as small businesses and real estate, propelled Muslim free blacks into the lower middle class of Cape Town, on an equal footing with others. Similarly, skilled slaves who were allowed to hire themselves out could earn the same wages as free white or coloured specialists in the same craft.²⁴

The creolisation occurring by the rise of Islam counteracted to a certain extent the creolisation brought about by similar economic status in the same income group. While the work and leisure activities of all lower-income ethnic groups tended to converge, alcohol consumption and street entertainment being the common ways to relieve the stress of manual work, the Muslim community tried to promote sobriety, education, and a pious life.²⁵ The mixed-race slave or free labourer had common economic and recreation interests with the white sailor on shore leave, and the Khoi rural labourer visiting the town, but as a mixed-race Muslim he adhered to the same

²² Pawel Stempowski, "Choosing Respectability: the Social Mix of Cape Town Between 1795 and 1840", *KLEIO*, Vol. 31, No. 1 (2006), 65.

²³ *Ibid.*, 51.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 53-57.

²⁵ Andrew Bank, "The Erosion of Urban Slavery at the Cape 1806 to 1834", in Worden and Crais, *Breaking the Chains*, 90/91.

principles of the faith community that the "Malay" imam proclaimed. Multiple creolizations and identity formations were taking place in a time of change.

The Power of Language

At the Cape, the early dominance of the Dutch colonial presence and the strong Indian Ocean origins of the slave population determined the birth of a creole language *par excellence*, Afrikaans. Attempts by purist white linguists of the late nineteenth century to cleanse this language of its creole features and re-invent it as a quaint Flemish dialect could not disguise the fact that it originated as a *lingua franca* of a polyglot colonial environment, and that it owes its early development primarily to slaves.²⁶ It was only in the post-apartheid era, after the white supremacist bias in linguistics had been removed, that research into the creole roots of Afrikaans was fully recognised. "True Afrikaans... was the language of the Coloureds in the first half of the nineteenth century",²⁷ the result of a creolisation process that had started much earlier. It takes its place alongside other Dutch-based Creoles, such as the *Negerhollands* or *Papiamentu* of Curacao.²⁸

Between the fifteenth and eighteenth centuries, a Portuguese-based Creole was the common trading language throughout the Portuguese empire, a feature that earned it the distinction as a possible common source of all Creoles. In the Indian Ocean littoral, the source of most Cape slaves, it was accompanied by a Malay Creole or Melayu, or meshed with it as Malayo-Portuguese. Both were introduced at the Cape with slave shipments.²⁹ Specific languages of the Indonesian archipelago (Buginese, Macassarese, Javanese) were not of much use for the slaves dispersed in small polyglot groups in Cape households and on isolated farms. The communication between master and slaves, and between slaves, had to take place in a medium that could be understood by all. As there was no escape from the situation that all parties to the master/slave relationship found themselves in, a distinctive identity, driven by

²⁶ Marius F. Valkhoff, *New Light on Afrikaans and Malayo-Portuguese* (Louvain: Edition Peeters, 1972), 81.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 7

²⁸ Shell, "The Tower of Babel", 28.

²⁹ Valkhoff, *New Light on Afrikaans*, 32, 85ff.

language and social status, was born of necessity among the non-whites.³⁰ From fragments of Portuguese Creole, Melayu, Malay dialects, Khoi languages, and the household Dutch/German of the masters, a common pidgin language emerged.³¹ The master's family was drawn into the use of this language by the need to give instructions, understand problems, and keep up with the slave household. This proto-Afrikaans as pidgin is already recorded around 1700, and had developed fully as an independent Creole by the 1750s, spoken as a vernacular across the colour spectrum.³²

Naturally, High Dutch remained the official language at the Cape up to and well into the British era, but apart from official business, the population communicated in a range of Creoles, i.e. in High, Country, Malay, Khoi, and Nguni versions of Afrikaans. *Kaapse Afrikaans* and *Oosgrensafrikaans* were in evidence since the early 1700s, and *Oranjerivierafrikaans* had reached the northern frontier by 1800.³³ Apart from the blood bonds between settlers, slaves, and indigenous people, a linguistic bond had developed that set the whole Cape population apart from the colonial centre: the identity of the creole location was forming. Typical Malay forms of syntax, Khoi-isms in vowel changes, Arabic forms in religious language, and the use of Indonesian fable metaphors are evidence of early creolisation of the Dutch base.³⁴ The new Creole was useful in reinforcing the identities of sub-groups as well: the Muslim community had retained Arabic for the Qu'ran and Malay for religious instruction, but as the new creole Afrikaans took over public discourse, it was used to translate Arabic and Malay religious texts, and was recorded in Arabic script. The earliest written Afrikaans documents in Arabic script date from around 1800, and are frequent around mid-nineteenth century, well before the efforts from the 1860s onwards to "clean up" Afrikaans as a white language.³⁵

³⁰ Dennis Papi Makhudu, *Is Afrikaans a Creole Language?*, Thesis, Southern Illinois University 1984 (Ann Arbor: Univ. Microfilms International, 1994), 40.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 49. See also Valkhoff, *New Light on Afrikaans*, 11

³² Valkhoff, *New Light on Afrikaans*, 46-48.

³³ Christo van Rensburg (ed), *Afrikaans in Afrika* (Pretoria: J.L. van Schaik, 1997), 38.

³⁴ Hans Kahler, *Studien über die Kultur, die Sprache, und die arabisch-afrikaanse Literatur der Kap-Malaien* (Berlin: D. Riemer, 1971), 64-68; Valkhoff, *New Light on Afrikaans*, 19.

³⁵ A detailed discussion of the "*Kitaab-Afrikaans*" of religious books can be found in Achmat Davids, *The Words the Slaves Made* (Cape Town: UCT, 1992), and Hans Kahler, *Studien über die Kultur*.

Popular Culture

The memory of slavery and emancipation left a deep mark in popular tradition and culture at the Cape. The slave ancestry was commemorated by ex-slaves and their descendants in parades and festivities in December, the time of emancipation. Gratitude for the British role in the abolition of slavery expressed itself in Anglophilism, the shared memory was a key identity driver that recalled the similar social status of slaves, Khoisan, and free blacks. The New Year celebrations, similar symbolic occasions to commemorate the liberation from bondage, grew into a popular manifestation of a creole culture that rejoiced in its slave heritage.³⁶ District Six of Cape Town, the archetype of the creole location, eventually became the fount of these celebrations of a hybrid, cosmopolitan and inclusive outlook on life, recalling the marginalized slave past and simultaneously absorbing new entrants into the creole mix like a sponge. It needs to be noted that this was not merely an escape mechanism to forget the daily social exclusion from “respectable” Cape society: it was and again is an outward signal that identity formation is going on by popular choice.³⁷ This combines elements of racial mixing, syncretism in renegotiating traditions, an amalgam of European, African, and Asian heritage, fusion music and fusion cuisine, a polyglot patois, and an explicit resistance against imposed identities, expressed by puncturing presumptions of superiority.³⁸

A good example of the absorptive capacity of the creole community is the integration of American “blackface” minstrel entertainment into the Cape Town *genius loci*. Since 1848, American minstrel groups toured the Cape to much acclaim, spawning imitators who eventually metamorphosed into the “Cape Town Coon” clubs who became the central part of New Year parades and competitions. Notwithstanding the fact that minstrel shows and the word “coon” itself have long been eliminated from acceptable American popular culture as insulting and highly politically incorrect, the Cape creole community cheerfully accepted them stripped of their historical baggage as a vehicle of identity and pure entertainment. The original

³⁶ Bickford-Smith, “Slavery, Emancipation”, 19-21. See also Denis-Constant Martin, *Coon Carnival* (Cape Town: David Philip, 1999), passim.

³⁷ Soudien, “District Six”, 122.

³⁸ *Ibid.* 124.

nineteenth-century American caricature of the “coon” as a laughably awkward or cunning black slave was not only an insult, but also a deeply ambiguous figure used by the black community for self-ridicule and introspection. The Cape Coon has retained some of the ambiguity and self-ridicule, but has also turned the concept into a vehicle of pride in own achievement against the odds.³⁹ Music, dance and song have been traditional outlets for those in bondage, and at the Cape they served to create common identities from the early Khoisan flute players observed by Vasco da Gama at Mossel Bay in 1497, through slave orchestras and farm dances of the eighteenth century, to the Karoo guitar players and Cape Town jazz virtuosos of today.⁴⁰ We will look in vain for purity: *boeremusiek* of the descendants of Dutch settlers is related to the *krontjong* of Java, Cape Muslim “Malay Choirs” in western suit and Turkish fez sing old Dutch *nederlandseliedjies*, punctuated by Asian-inspired *karinkel* vowel modulation, and elements of South Indian and Bengali music and dance are discernible in the work of Cape creole *ghoema* musicians.⁴¹ Popular culture shaped identities powerfully.

Is all of this popular music secular, or does some of it reflect religious roots? The elements of Indian music in the Cape kaleidoscope undoubtedly have origins in sacred classical music. Similarly, the Cape Malay choirs saw themselves as informed by the Muslim popular tradition of the Cape. Unscrambling the multiple sources of the creole popular culture of Cape Town that was taking shape in the nineteenth century may prove to be impossible, but it illustrates the post-Weberian mix of secular and religious, disenchanting and re-enchanting culture. The mere fact of choice and syncretism in the culture of the Cape street defined a society in flux, a “secular” framework in the Taylor sense that embraces multiple entwined expressions of the secular and the religious.

³⁹ Martin, *Coon Carnival*, 77 ff.

⁴⁰ Ibid. 57-63.

⁴¹ Achmat Davids, *The Words the Slaves Made*, 3. See also ongoing research by Michael Nixon at the UCT School of Music (presentation at the University of Cape Town, April 2008).

Religion in the Mix

The nineteenth century era of formation of identities in Cape Town, largely coinciding with the early Victorian era in British imperial terms, has attracted its share of academic attention, focusing on the various manifestations of “coloured” identities and how they influenced the Cape society as a whole.⁴² Much of the literature is preoccupied with determining whether “race” or “class” were the dominant drivers of this period of social and cultural change. What has been neglected here to a certain extent is the role of religion in the mix. An understandable omission, perhaps, as the Dutch eighteenth century at the Cape was characterised by a relatively insignificant role of the monopolistic Dutch Reformed Church, which was restricted to the colonial elite and subservient to the VOC. However, the explosion of Christian missionary activity and Islamic conversion from the turn of the century onwards changed the cultural environment considerably, to the extent that the South African Commercial Advertiser could editorialise in 1836 that “the main distinction in Cape society is religious”.⁴³ Around 1840, Cape Town’s 15,000 Dutch Reformed adherents were living together with about 9,000 assorted other Protestant denomination members, and

⁴² The literature includes, *inter alia*: Vivian Bickford-Smith, "Slavery, Emancipation, and the Question of Coloured Identity, in The Societies of Southern Africa in the 19th and 20th Centuries", in *Seminar Papers*, Vol. 19, No.45 (Univ. Of London, Institute of Commonwealth Studies, 1992); Nigel Worden, Elizabeth van Heyningen, and Vivian Bickford-Smith, *Cape Town – The Making of a City* (Cape Town: David Philip, 1998); Erasmus (ed), *Coloured by History*; Worden and Crais, *Breaking the Chains*; Mohamed Adhikari, *Continuity and Context*; Adhikari, *Not White Enough, Not Black Enough* (Cape Town: Double Storey, 2005); Shula Marks and Anthony Atmore (eds), *Economy and Society in Pre-industrial South Africa* (London: Longman, 1980); Wilmot G. James and Mary Simons (eds), *The Angry Divide* (Cape Town: David Philip, 1989); Katherine Dawn Elks, *Crime and Control in Cape Town 1830-1850*, Thesis, University of Cape Town, 1985; Shirley Ann Judges, *Poverty, Living Conditions and Social Relations: Aspects of Life in Cape Town in the 1830s*, Thesis, University of Cape Town, 1977; W.M. Macmillan, *The Cape Colour Question* (Cape Town: A.A. Balkema, 1968); Marais, *The Cape Coloured People*; Goldin, *Making Race*; Gavin Lewis, *Between the Wire and the Wall*, (Cape Town: David Philip, 1987); and others. This section also draws on my summary of the search for Coloured identity and its drivers, "Mixed Bredie in the Creole Cuisine", unpublished seminar paper, University of Cape Town, 2003.

⁴³ Quoted in Judges, *Poverty*, 156.

with about 6,500 Muslims.⁴⁴ By mid-century, a sizeable Jewish community had also established itself, the first synagogue being built in 1841. Several authors have conceded that work on the nexus between culture/religion and socio-economic patterns should be examined more closely, and that focusing on race and class issues alone is not enough to provide a fuller picture of the nineteenth century.⁴⁵

The literature that has dealt with the evolution of the pattern of faiths at the Cape has mostly concentrated on the narrative of each faith, and on the issue of competition in the spiritual market between various flavours of Christianity, Islam, and indigenous worldviews. Little is available in the secondary literature on the potential relationship between this process and socio-economic development during the nineteenth century.⁴⁶ Given the rapid expansion of various religious allegiances

⁴⁴ Worden et al, *Cape Town*, 123.

⁴⁵ See for instance the gist of Richard Elphick's essay, "Writing Religion into History", in Bredekamp and Ross, *Missions and Christianity*; Robert Ross has noted that cultural explanations are needed to round out the picture, and John Edwin Mason has devoted a chapter in *Social Death and Resurrection* to the importance of faith and conversion in the early nineteenth century. He takes issue with Robert Shell's assertion that conversion was primarily an act of social strategy, and argues that spiritual needs entered into the process significantly.

⁴⁶ Several contributions in Bredekamp and Ross, *Missions and Christianity*, deal with socio-economic developments accompanying the mission effort; other work focusing on the emergence of the Cape religious mix includes J. du Plessis, *A History of Christian Missions in South Africa* (Cape Town: C. Struik, 1965); Achmat Davids, *The Mosques of Bo-Kaap* (Cape Town: SA Institute of Arabic and Islamic Research, 1908); Davids, *The Words the Slaves Made*; Davids, *Muslim-Christian Relations in 19th-century Cape Town 1825-1925* (Cape Town: UWC, 1992); Yusuf da Costa and Achmat Davids, *Pages From Cape Muslim History* (Pietermaritzburg: Shuter and Shooter, 1994); John W. de Gruchy (ed), *The London Missionary Society in South Africa* (Cape Town: David Philip, 1999); Richard Elphick and R. Davenport (eds), *Christianity in South Africa*; Abdelkader Tayob, *Islam in South Africa* (Gainesville: Florida Univ. Press, 1999); John Edwin Mason, "A Faith for Ourselves", in *South African Historical Journal*, Vol. 46 (May 2002), 3-24; Suleman E. Dangor, "The Establishment and Consolidation of Islam in South Africa", in *Historia*, Vol. 48, No. 1 (May 2003), 203-220; Auwais Rafudeen, "A Parallel Mode of Being", in *Journal for the Study of Religion*, Vol. 18, No. 2 (2005); David Chidester, *Savage Systems* (Cape Town: Univ. of Cape Town Press, 1996); Bernhard Krüger, *The Pear Tree Blossoms* (Genadendal, 1966). Recent research that includes results on contemporary religious identity formation includes e.g. Simon Bekker and Anne Leilde, "Faith in Cape Town: Identity, Cooperation and Conflict", unpublished paper, 2003; Rachel C. Prinsloo, *Identity and Community in the Western Cape*, conference paper (Cape Town: UWC, 1997); and Simon Bekker and Rachel Prinsloo (eds) *Identity?*.

during the early decades of the century, it would be surprising if there were no connection between this and other processes of change taking place simultaneously. We will note the correlation between religious and economic behaviour when dealing with the public discourse at the Cape below.

The eighteenth century had prepared the ground for the expansion. While the established Dutch Reformed Church had not seen outreach to the Khoisan and slaves as a priority, early Moravian mission work was resurrected at the end of the century, and pursued vigorously, soon to be followed by the London Missionary Society (LMS) and other non-Dutch-Reformed denominations. Apart from the establishment of mission stations among the rural Khoi and on the eastern frontier of the Colony, the LMS and others attempted to penetrate the slave and free black population in Cape Town itself. Here, however, Christian mission efforts met an expanding Muslim community that had quietly existed in the circles around the imams exiled from the Dutch East Indies, and had built up a critical mass among the non-white population in the city. Settler resistance to converting slaves to Christianity was strong, as late eighteenth-century regulations implied that Christian slaves could not be resold, an incentive for the slave owners to push slaves towards Islam instead.⁴⁷ The arrivals of senior Muslims exiled from the East Indies since the seventeenth century had created cells of Islamic knowledge around respected imams such as Sheikh Yusuf around 1700, or Tuan Guru in the late 1700s, but slave conversions to Islam only started taking off around 1800, when the urban concentration of Muslims in the Bo-Kaap district necessitated the establishment of an Islamic school and mosque.⁴⁸ As a result, Cape Town in the early 19th century experienced a race for slave and free-black souls, acted out in the competition between Muslim and Christian educational institutions.⁴⁹ By the 1840s, 25 LMS mission schools were operating in Cape Town, side by side with an increasing number of Muslim *madaris*. Religious diversity had arrived in time to attract the spiritual drifters seeking identity after the threshold decade of emancipation 1828-38.

⁴⁷ Robert C.-H. Shell, "Between Christ and Mohammed", in Elphick and Davenport (eds), *Christianity in South Africa*, 268; Bredekamp and Ross, *Missions and Christianity*, 49-64.

⁴⁸ Da Costa and Davids, *Pages from Cape Muslim History*, passim.

⁴⁹ Davids, *Muslim-Christian Relations*; and Helen Ludlow, "Working at the Heart", in de Gruchy, *The London Missionary Society*.

This threshold period set off an influx into the two faiths at the Cape, as the destabilized “Coloured” citizenry was seeking cultural identity and spiritual security. Islam still had the better image among ex-slaves in the urban area, as there was a record of reasonably benign regimes and frequent manumissions by Muslim slave owners. Christian missions outside Cape Town made up for lost ground, however, and the rural mission stations became known as havens of dignity that provided some protection for the Khoi against rapacious settlers.⁵⁰ In Cape Town proper, the strenuous efforts of the London Mission Society, and the more modest ones of the South African Mission Society were countered by strong cohesion in the Muslim community, reducing the missionary effort to a “general mission to Coloured people”, focusing on East African prize negroes, and heavily relying on educational establishments. By the 1840s, a Coloured LMS congregation was operating in Cape Town.⁵¹

While the rural expansion of Christianity at the Cape had the character of planting homogeneous new communities as a single local escape option for the indigenous Khoi who had been enserfed by and excluded from the religion of their masters, the urban dynamic was quite different. In Cape Town, a variety of British Protestant denominations vied with the surging Muslim community for recruits and pupils among the slave and free black population. This vigorous competition was conducted in a quite orderly manner, subject to the oversight of the colonial administration. A number of features of this process make it likely that we are dealing with a form of rational choice in religious adherence. Undoubtedly, the nature of the competition between the faiths indicates that the targeted individuals were asked to decide rationally which religious affiliation they would choose. Secondly, the potential consumers of spiritual benefits were not only looking for social comfort, but were also seeking a genuine set of spiritual rewards that would ease their difficult lives.⁵² Third, they were weighing carefully the costs involved in joining a faith community, and the benefits that would accrue to them in genuine community support in times of hardship: the Muslim community offered a clearer

⁵⁰ Helen Ludlow, "Groenekloof After the Emancipation of Slaves", in Bredekamp and Ross, *Missions and Christianity*, 127-130.

⁵¹ Helen Ludlow, "Working at the Heart", 106-113.

⁵² Mason, *Social Death and Resurrection*, 176-207.

prospect of active help by their co-religionists than the white-dominated Christian denominations. Education of their children was a strong variable, leading to the peculiar phenomenon of a hybrid education, where knowledge of basic secular subjects was acquired in secular or Christian schools, after which pupils were switched to Muslim religious schools for a cultural finishing education. The social and religious capital that was to be accrued was assessed carefully.

The Dutch Reformed Church (NGK), having come to the party rather lately, had also had some success in capturing the post-emancipation spiritual drifters, starting the future close link between the “Coloured” group and the Dutch Reformed tradition. Nevertheless, it managed to alienate them rapidly, as segregation within the church started early. Separate communion led to separate buildings and services, and to the spinning off of the Coloured membership into the “Mission Church” (NGSK) in 1880⁵³. As the social and political status of “Coloureds” deteriorated at the Cape, the NGSK membership, financially and pastorally dependent on the NGK, watched helplessly as the NGK became the champion of increasing public segregation.

Those who had chosen Islam had no such loyalty problems. The Muslim community thrived on its construction of coinciding identities of faith, Malay tradition, slave heritage, and Afrikaans language. The spiritual and ethnic identities had served as mutually reinforcing separatist vehicles, distancing the life of the slave and ex-slave from dependence on the white masters’ culture. There even was the quiet satisfaction that the masters’ language was actually shaped by the slaves’ early Islamic literature. The early gains of Islam in the nineteenth century were eventually erased by a vigorous Christian mission freed from the association with slavery,⁵⁴ but Islam was in Cape Town to stay. During the early expansion, unorthodox Muslim rituals were used as promotions of Islam among the urban creole population that was easily distracted by other identity drivers: *Ratiep (Khalifa)*, a sword and trance dancing ritual to drum rhythms probably derived from Southeast Asian sufi practices, and the *Rampie-Sny*, a ladies’ event of cutting orange leaves in the mosque on the birthday of the Prophet, made some impression even on the white urban population, but eventually could not reverse the deterioration of an exclusive identity in a creole

⁵³ Chris Loff, *Racism, Economic Dependence, and the Family of Dutch Reformed Churches* (Cape Town: UWC, 1984), 4/5; Al J. Venter, *Coloured* (Cape Town: Human & Rousseau, 1974) 381.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.* 276; Helen Ludlow, “Working at the Heart”, 113.

environment.⁵⁵ Muslim sobriety had always been valued by slave owners, employers and prospective spouses,⁵⁶ and served to maintain a community spirit that insulated the community against the more raucous features of cultural mixing in the Mother City.

In a creole environment administered by a colonial elite, the choice of religious affiliation is of course a socio-political act, as well as one arrived at after spiritual reflection. Choosing Christianity was an “assimilationist” statement, expressing the aspiration to join the respectable end of the colonial spectrum, similar to the choice of English as main idiom.⁵⁷ Conversely, choosing Islam can be interpreted as a deliberately “non-assimilationist” act that demonstrates the desire to differentiate oneself from the colonial masters, as is the continued use of Kaapse Afrikaans, derived from the early lingua franca of the slaves. So was the choice of religion just a social strategy for the newly emancipated and enfranchised urban underclass? Not necessarily. Family traditions, peer influence, and rational comparison of the spiritual goods on offer were likely to be other components in individual decisions.⁵⁸ Both the social and spiritual motives probably were at play in the conversion competition at the Cape. In Cape Town itself, the Bo-Kaap, distinct from the kaleidoscopic Kanaldorp (later District Six), solidified its self-understanding as a Muslim community, dubbed “Malay” by outside observers. Both religious paths, Christian and Muslim, promised some upward social mobility: Islam had potential as an asset of a desirably sober and industrious potential spouse or employee, and as a cohesive, egalitarian community; a Christian education, whether Dutch Reformed or British, could open doors to an improved social standing and to upward mobility in Colonial society.

⁵⁵ Da Costa and Davids, *Pages*, 62ff.

⁵⁶ Lady Duff Gordon commented that even “emigrant girls from England get husbands who know not billiards and brandy – the two diseases of Cape Town” (Martin, *Coon Carnival*, 56)

⁵⁷ See the discussion in Leo Spitzer, *Lives in Between* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1989), 28-33; also compare on language assimilation Adhikari, *Straatpraatjes*.

⁵⁸ See the debate in the SA Islam discourse between R. C.-H. Shell, *Children of Bondage* and John Edwin Mason, *Social Death and Resurrection*; and John Edwin Mason, “Some Religion He Must Have”: *Slaves, Sufism, and Conversion to Islam at the Cape*, SERSAS Fall Conference (Savannah, GA, Oct. 1999).

Missionaries and Imams

We need to step back at this point and consider the nature of the religious protagonists and their targets in the early nineteenth century Cape. The fervour of the European Christian revivalism of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries swept into an unstable spiritual environment, ready for new stimuli. Informed by the Enlightenment, by a reconsideration of basic values of personal Christian belief, by the focus on individual liberty and equality emanating from the American and French revolutions, and by the globalisation of the Imperial world economy, Protestant churches had launched a missionary wave to the colonies. Where they encountered traditional societies that had preserved a modicum of stability and independence (such as the Xhosa or the Tswana), the early missionary effort proved to be slow and difficult. In the Western Cape, however, the fading away of the traditional indigenous Khoi and San cultures (Khoisan as a handy anthropological shorthand), and the lack of a unifying slave culture provided a fertile and receptive ground,⁵⁹ although contested by Islam in the urban area.

Within the spectrum of roles that the early Christian missions found themselves in, the role as a helping hand to survive in the new environment turned out to be the dominant one. While many missionaries, in the spirit of the times, may have pursued their activity driven by the desire to “civilise the natives”, they nevertheless managed to equip many Khoisan and post-emancipation slaves with the skills they needed to survive in their new world. Whether deliberately or unwittingly, the missionaries enabled the disenfranchised of the Cape to use the missions’ offerings wisely, selectively and productively to build a life within the parameters of early nineteenth century colonial society.⁶⁰

On the receiving end, the Khoi of the beginning nineteenth century were merely a shadow of their former selves. If not absorbed in the colonist expansion, they were pushed to the periphery of the colony, fighting a rearguard action against superior adversaries.⁶¹ Atomised into settler society as farm labourers, they had lost

⁵⁹ Bredekamp and Ross, *Missions and Christianity*, passim.

⁶⁰ Ibid., particularly the discussion by Elbourne.

⁶¹ Extensively covered by the discussion in Elphick and Giliomee, *The Shaping of South African Society*.

the spiritual anchor of traditional religion and community ritual. Not that their religious traditions would have helped them much in the new environment: the more cyclical, nature-driven Khoi and San religion that was well adapted to the ebb and flow of seasons, hunting/gathering, and transhumance,⁶² was no match for the linear, eschatological philosophy that drove the colonists. Recollections of the key elements of the Khoi religion (a benevolent supreme being, a devilish counterforce) and San beliefs (a trickster god, shamanism) would later make the acceptance of Christianity easier. In the meantime, before the advent of the main mission impact, a spiritual void opened up for the uprooted Khoisan community: although they were casual observers of the simple settler Christianity on the farms, they were discouraged from penetrating into the community of believers. Docile and spiritually rootless labour was preferable from a master's point of view.

The slaves at the Cape found themselves in a similar spiritual limbo. Thrown together from a wide variety of cultures around the Indian Ocean, and parcelled out into units that did not have the critical mass for establishing a common identity, there was little opportunity to get spiritual satisfaction before Islam made an impact. As it was not in the interest of masters to encourage a strong spiritual bedrock among the slave population, and as it was perceived to be increasingly difficult to sell slaves that had been baptized, Christianity made little headway. Exceptions were master-slave sexual relationships that led to baptism and manumission of slave women and the children of such unions, and the VOC policy to baptize children of women in its slave lodge. Resentment of their bondage position prevented slaves from embracing the master's religion, and made the emerging force of Islam more attractive. Large-scale and in-depth conversion of slaves to Christianity would have to wait until close to emancipation.

Off to the side, observing the missionary effort with some apprehension, were the established authorities of the day, and the established European colonists. The VOC, and after 1795 the Batavian and British administrations, placed high priority on the maintenance of the maximum possible degree of law and order – not an easy task

⁶²R. Yates, in M. Hall and A. Markell (eds), *Historical Archaeology in the Western Cape, SA* Archaeological Society Goodwin Series No. 7 (University of Cape Town, 1993); Boonzaier et al, *The Cape Herders*.

in a colony dominated by a rowdy port of call and by rebellious settlers in both the agricultural and ranching sections of the territory. In trying to subdue the indigenous population, the imported slaves, and the more unruly colonists, the authorities welcomed assistance from missionaries who preached an obedient and industrious life, but looked askance at loose-cannon “turbulent priests” who questioned the colonial paradigm of a subservient and disenfranchised local population. Legitimacy and continuity of the established order was also uppermost in the minds of the free burghers, who reacted angrily to any challenge to the convenient status quo in labour relations. An illiterate working population without much access to redress of injustice appeared to be preferable to any social outreach.

The Roots of Cape Islam

Two features set Cape Islam aside from the Islam as practiced in Muslim-majority societies of the Middle East: (1) the origin of the people and ideas that arrived at the Cape in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries; and (2) the nature of Islam as a minority religion in a diverse urban area. Both have contributed to a flexible, adaptable popular version of Islam that is not burdened by the responsibilities of established religion, and that focuses on the spiritual rather than on the legal. First, the origins. As we have seen above, Islam was carried to the Cape by slaves and exiles imported by the Dutch authorities from the Indian Ocean littoral, the main sources being the Malay/Indonesian archipelago, Bengal, and the Malabar and Coromandel coasts of southern India (collectively, the origin locations of about 50% of foreign-born Cape slaves).⁶³ Early leaders of the Cape Muslim tradition such as Sheikh Yusuf and Tuan Guru were distinguished imams exiled from the Indonesian archipelago. While this fact, and a backward extrapolation from the nineteenth century usually yields the claim that Cape Islam has been built on a predominantly Shafi'i basis, the variety of geographical sources suggests that early Cape Islam may also have had strong Hanafi and even syncretist components. Slaves from Bengal, later prominent in the Cape Muslim community, may have been formed more by

⁶³ Shell, *Children of Bondage*, 40-43.

Hanafi and even Shi'a schools of Islamic thought.⁶⁴ Diversity seems to have been more likely than uniformity.

Overall, a strong Sufi flavour imbued Islam at the Cape. Saints and holy men played a big role and their shrines encircling Cape Town are much visited even today. Non-political and pietist Sufi orders such as the Chistiyya and Qadariyya had a large following, and syncretist mystical rituals were popular.⁶⁵ The *ratiep* ritual of trance dancing and self-piercing, much commented on by baffled European observers, has its origin in the Indonesian Sufi practice associated with the Rifa'iyyah *tariqa*.⁶⁶ The geographical origins of Cape Islam explain this. Indonesian and South Indian Islam was built by Arab and north Indian (Gujarati) merchants setting up trading posts in the coastal towns of the eastern Indian Ocean from the thirteenth to the sixteenth century, not by conquest.⁶⁷ The time of the expansion coincided with the rise to prominence of Sufism in the Muslim world, thus spreading a less austere version of the faith than that prevailing in the Muslim heartland. Travelling traders and Sufi sages could not impose an Islamic legal framework on the societies they encountered, but had to establish a foothold to practice their religion. Conversion of local leaders and the general population came gradually and voluntarily, not by imposition and authority as had happened in northern India conquered by Muslim armies. This pragmatic "merchant religion" was superimposed on a strong Hindu-Buddhist cultural base, aided by the readiness of the Sufi *tariqas* to absorb other mystical traditions. "In Indonesia, Islam did not construct a civilization, it appropriated one".⁶⁸ In addition,

⁶⁴ Robert C.-H. Shell, *Islam in South Africa 1653-2001*, paper presented at the seminar on Slavery and Political Exile, Cape Town, March 2005, 12.

⁶⁵ Mason, *Social Death*, 185-189.

⁶⁶ Mason, "A Faith for Ourselves", 22/23.

⁶⁷ Good background analysis of the spread of Islam through the Indian Ocean can be found in: Ira M. Lapidus, *A History of Islamic Societies* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 2002); M. C. Ricklefs, *A History of Modern Indonesia Since 1300* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1993); Ahmad Ibrahim, Sharon Siddique, and Yasmin Hussain (eds), *Readings on Islam in South-East Asia* (Singapore: Institute of South-East Asian Studies, 1985); Clifford Geertz, *Islam Observed* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1968); and Hans-Dieter Evers, *Modernization in South-East Asia* (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1973). On the importance of Indian Ocean Islam for the Cape, see also Shamil Jeppie, "Leadership and Loyalties – the Imams of 19th Century Colonial Cape Town", in *Journal of Religion in Africa*, Vol. 26, No. 2 (1996), 140/41.

⁶⁸ Geertz, *Islam Observed*, 11.

the Islam arriving in the Indonesian archipelago had already been filtered through India, acquiring the pragmatic features of the Indian merchant class and a strong Sufi flavour. The indigenous elite combined the Indic tradition with a mystical version of Islam, the peasant population incorporated Islam into their long-standing "Southeast Asian folk religion", and the multicultural traders in the ports produced an Islam "not quite doctrinal enough to be Middle Eastern, and not quite ethereal enough to be South Asian".⁶⁹ In a nutshell, "the Islam of Indonesia has been full of heterodoxy and heresy",⁷⁰ if viewed from the Middle Eastern bastions of orthodoxy. South Indian Muslims in Malaya, as well as the Buginese and Acehnese in the islands (key origin areas of Cape Muslims), developed an Islam based on their disciplined and rational approach to business, drawing on the Qur'anic injunction that a man who succeeds to acquire wealth through honest and diligent effort is favoured by God. The economic ethic was one of striving for success.⁷¹ This was the syncretic Islam that arrived at the Cape with Indonesian/Malay exiles and slaves on board Dutch ships.

In India as well, Sufism was the dominant way of expanding Islam.⁷² Sufi orders such as the Chistiyya *tariqa* taught a non-established private faith, and Sufi mystics promoted a hierarchy of saints and the veneration of their tombs. The Sufi master Ibn al-Arabi's principle of the "unity of being" informed Indian Islam, fostering the belief that spiritual attitude trumped laws and practices. A mixed Hindu-Muslim culture enveloped the practitioners. Only by 1600 AD, with the entrenchment of widespread Mughal dominance over northern India, did the syncretist and mystical influence recede, to be replaced by the more established and *shari'a*-minded reign of the *ulema*. Nevertheless, Sufi features remained important in Indian Islam. "In India, the various forms of *ulema* scholarship, worship of saints, and reformist tendencies remained in open competition with each other,....the legacy of pre-modern Indian Islamic organization was not state control of doctrine...nor a history of well-established schools of law and *ulema*, but one of numerous autonomous and

⁶⁹ Ibid. 13.

⁷⁰ Ricklefs, *A History*, 11.

⁷¹ Syed Hussein Alatas, "Religion and Modernization in South-East Asia", in Evers, *Modernization*, 160/161.

⁷² Lapidus, *A History*, 361-382.

competitive Muslim religious movements".⁷³ In Bengal, Sufi writers used Hindu literature to create a fusion of faiths.

It was from these locations of diversity, syncretist beliefs, merchant pragmatism, and the awareness of competing worldviews that the pioneers of Cape Islam arrived. The religious principles they handed on to their successors contained these same features, giving Cape Islam its unique flavour.⁷⁴ Shaykh Yusuf, exiled from Batavia in the late seventeenth century, introduced the Ash'arite principles of predetermination, the will of God trumping the "acquired" human free will, and the primacy of personal piety. This basis enabled the eighteenth and nineteenth century Islam at the Cape to survive pragmatically and discreetly in the colonial society it was embedded in. The Ash'arite dogma and Shafi'i legal school were further entrenched at the Cape by Tuan Guru of Tidore whose religious texts became standard reading from the end of the eighteenth century onwards. The principles promoted were "rational-traditionalist" ones, conducive to Islam becoming a private religion of the individual: submission and piety were key, man's station in life was predetermined, private choice between good and evil was the norm. Change was to be achieved by an appeal to God, not by radical action. The only resistance to secular authorities that was encouraged was against secular rules that would inhibit religious practices. The Cape Muslim community by and large adhered to these rules until the twentieth century.

By the early nineteenth century, the Muslim community in Cape Town numbered about 6,000 persons, rising to perhaps 12-14,000 by the 1860s.⁷⁵ In 1822, about 85% of free blacks in the urban area, and almost 20% of the slaves, were Muslims. Being the religion of slaves, labourers and skilled craftsmen who did not have the means to communicate or travel internationally, Islam at the Cape was isolated from the centres of Muslim learning and perpetuated itself by informal transfer of knowledge between generations of home-grown imams. Few of them

⁷³ Ibid. 379, 382

⁷⁴ The following historical summary draws on da Costa and Davids, *Pages from Cape Muslim History*, 48-55. The historical background to the Ash'arite and Shafi'i basis of Islamic scholarship at the Cape has been summarised in Karl G. Jechoutek, "The Politics of Reason" (unpublished seminar paper, University of Cape Town, 2004).

⁷⁵ Shell, *Children of Bondage*, p. 357; Jeppie, "Leadership and Loyalties"; Maximilian Kollisch, *The Mussulman Population at the Cape of Good Hope* (Constantinople: Levant Herald, 1867), 15.

managed to complete the *hajj*, the obligatory pilgrimage to Mecca.⁷⁶ The original forms of popular Islam were preserved much as they were imported from South and Southeast Asia. Imams were often only part-time leaders of the community, earning their livelihood as craftsmen, fishermen, or small traders, and distinguishing themselves by a clearer understanding of Qur'anic learning than others, or by descent from earlier imams. As guides of a minority religious community, and a subservient, marginal one at that, the Muslim leaders at the Cape learned to play the colonial system to their advantage, sidelining the establishmentarian and legal aspects of Islam, and stressing the ethical and moral precepts that would guide believers in the colonial environment. Since the eighteenth century, Cape Islam was a "ceremonial", non-political private religion, more an expression of a cultural identity than a formal institution.⁷⁷

The insularity of Cape Islam was broken occasionally by contacts with the Swahili coast, and by travel to Mecca to perform the *hajj* for those who could afford it. In 1820, it was reported that "several distinguished Arabs from the island of Joanna" (Anjouan island) were visiting Cape Town and received an official welcome by the Cape government and by the local Muslim community. In 1841, the newspaper reported that the "sons of Duke Abdallah Abbas of Johanna" were stranded at the Cape. Their father's onward journey had been financed by the Cape government, but the paper appealed to the Cape merchants to finance the sons' passage to Mauritius. The fact that these dignitaries were Muslims was irrelevant.⁷⁸

By the 1850s, contacts with the Ottoman empire had increased: de Roubaix, the champion of the Muslims in the colonial administration's Legislative Council at mid-century, had established good contacts with Istanbul, and arranged not only for monetary contributions but also for imam Abu Bakr Effendi to be deployed to Cape Town to try to sort out the infighting in the Muslim community. As a result, the Ottoman Sultan enjoyed great popularity among Cape Muslims as guardian of the faith and of their interests, and his birthday was celebrated boisterously, city employers granting a day off for their Muslim employees. In return, the Sultan sent

⁷⁶ Jeppie, "Leadership and Loyalties", passim.

⁷⁷ Da Costa and Davids, *Pages from Cape Muslim History*, 47.

⁷⁸ South African Commercial Advertiser (from here on: SACA), Nov. 10, 1841; P. W. Laidler, *The Growth and Government of Cape Town* (Cape Town: Unie-Volkspers, 1939), 322.

word to the Cape that Muslims should "estimate the advantages of British rule under which they so happily live". The Muslims, about half of Cape Town's population at mid-century, followed this instruction: they were considered to be highly loyal citizens with a "Europeanized" culture, and were praised for having volunteered to defend the government of the day (Dutch or British) from the Napoleonic wars to the Xhosa wars on the Eastern Frontier. Muslim weddings and youth initiation ceremonies at the mosques were routinely attended by Christians, who also joined in the celebrations of the Sultan's birthday. English girls were happily converting in order to marry Muslim spouses. From the beginning, the Muslims and Christians of Cape Town had found a *modus vivendi* to compete but live side by side.⁷⁹

Pragmatism and flexibility to adapt to the religiously competitive circumstances was the order of the day, an approach that was winning converts among the Cape underclass rapidly. A large number of "free blacks" and higher-skilled slaves were Muslim, giving the community a higher status than mere labourers. Already in the first decade of the 1800s, the Cape Town fire brigades were manned exclusively by about 350 free Muslims.⁸⁰ Among the 5,000 or so "prize negroes" landed and apprenticed at the Cape after the ban on the slave trade in 1808, Islam fell on fertile ground, and by the 1820s they constituted perhaps half of the Muslim population of Cape Town.⁸¹ Similarly, education in the new *madaris*, the Qur'an schools established by the imams was a strong drawing card for families. Islam gave the Christian missionaries a run for their money, and was significantly more successful in proselytizing in the urban area. The leadership knew where to draw the line, however. When the *khalifa* rituals came to be seen as a public nuisance and an alarmingly exotic feature of Cape Islam by the 1850s, the imams first tried to petition the government to allow a continuation. Negotiations mediated by the ever-present de Roubaix, however, resulted in a supremely pragmatic ruling by the imams that the ritual was not really an essential part of the faith, and thus could be abandoned. The Sultan conveyed his approval. Face was saved all around, and everybody could return

⁷⁹ Kollisch, *The Mussulman Population*, 8-10, 21-22, 30-34; Laidler, *The Growth and Government of Cape Town*, 322.

⁸⁰ Davids, *Muslim-Christian Relations*.

⁸¹ Shell, *Islam in South Africa*.

to the "quiet regularity of life" prized by all Capetonians.⁸² Islamic orthodoxy, or long-established rituals, would not stand in the way of accommodation.

Sources of Christian Mission

Occupying the spiritual market as monopolists since the inception of the colony, the Dutch Reformed Church (NGK) saw its primary role as ministering to the officials and colonists, rather than in missionary outreach. However, recent analysis⁸³ seems to indicate that the NGK practice at the Cape deviated significantly from the hypothetical concept of a "rigid Calvinism", and even from the more relaxed and inclusive version practiced in Batavia. A case can be made that a somewhat haphazard and messy interpretation of Calvinist doctrine was prevalent at the Cape, resulting in fairly liberal baptismal practice that created token Calvinists among whites and non-whites, but restricting proper church membership to a small and exclusive fraction of the white population. Nevertheless, a simplified version of traditional Calvinist doctrine prevailed among the colonists, who missed the boat of the Continuing Reformation strand of Calvinism in the Netherlands: this, eventually victorious theology allowed for all humankind to be eligible for grace and salvation, if personal faith was credibly demonstrated. In contrast, the Cape populist Calvinism stuck to the "thousand-generation covenant" that implied an automatic salvation of an original stock of believers and their offspring, and an equally automatic exclusion of the local "heathen" population. This entrenched equivalence of "Christian" and "settler" landed the colonists in a dead-end branch of the Dutch Reformed movement, and the Khoisan and slaves in the permanent "heathen" category.

Early attempts at conversion, such as the one of Krotoa/Eva, Van Riebeeck's Khoi intermediary, failed because of this mindset. NGK outreach was not accepted as valid by the settlers, and only half-heartedly pursued by the clergy. Only towards the end of the eighteenth century, individual NGK pastors made an effort to reach out to

⁸² Laidler, *The Growth and Government*, 325; Kollisch, *The Mussulman Population*, 29.

⁸³ G. Schutte, "Between Amsterdam and Batavia: Cape Society and the Calvinist Church Under the Dutch East India Company", *Kronos*, No. 25 (1998/99), 17-49; Elphick and Davenport (eds), *Christianity in South Africa*.

the local population – earlier NGK behaviour, supported by the establishmentarian-minded VOC administration, was characterized by a jealous guardianship of its limited turf vis-à-vis all comers from other denominations. However, late eighteenth century Cape Town already had a significant number of non-white baptized persons. Groenewald's research on illegitimacy during the late VOC period⁸⁴ has shown that Cape Town at the end of the eighteenth century was becoming very different from the rest of the colony. The process of creolisation and cosmopolitisation started to result in a less controllable populace with a large component of free black women, more anonymity, and consequently a stronger anxiety among white women about the maintenance of intact marriages. This perceived risk, together with the presence of a regiment and a steady arrival of sailors in town, led to a surge of "immorality" cases before the councils of the Dutch Reformed Church. Non-white baptized women who desired to marry in church or whose lifestyle had been brought to the attention of the church elders were questioned more closely about their illegitimate offspring, dominating the urban church processes leading to censure. The church records in rural districts show a more balanced case load, less focused on illegitimacy.

In the early days of the colony, the only competition for the Dutch Church had come from Huguenots and Lutherans, both operating within the white immigrant population and easily co-opted into the Dutch Reformed mainstream as compatible philosophies. Starting in the eighteenth and intensifying in the nineteenth century, other competitors proliferated, and performed a quantum jump in targeting the hitherto neglected underclass. Rather than bother with the white population or the urban and master-controlled slaves, the European Protestant evangelical movements leapfrogged the NGK and went straight to the indigenous population in rural areas and at the frontier. First off the mark were the Moravians (the *Unitas Fratrum*, or Unity of the Brethren), the Protestants with the longest pedigree in Europe. Under the leadership of the pietist Count Zinzendorf, the originally Hussite *Unitas Fratrum* reconstituted itself as the Moravian Church in Herrnhut in Saxony in 1727, and almost immediately launched a missionary effort to the West Indies. The centrality of education and global outreach in the Moravian faith ensured that its mandate to minister to the "heathen" was almost a given, leading them to be among the first

⁸⁴ Gerald Groenewald, "Een Spoorloos Vrouwspersoon – Unmarried Mothers, Moral Regulation, and the Church at the Cape of Good Hope, c. 1652-1795", unpublished draft paper.

Protestant missionaries in the Americas and Africa. By 1760, they had sent out already more than 200 missionaries, and had stimulated missionary thinking among Baptists and Methodists (Bishop Nitschmann crossed the Atlantic in 1736 together with John Wesley). Moravian thinking influenced the formative stages of the London Missionary Society.⁸⁵

The Moravians stressed hard work, diligence, personal discipline, strong personal faith, and self-sufficiency. This “religion of the heart” earned them the nickname “the Saviour’s happy people”, practicing a radical simplicity. To avoid personal biases, many actions and appointments (even marriage partners) were decided by lot, a remnant of the Hussite interpretation of biblical texts. Most of their missionaries were artisans of low social status, biasing their work towards the building of manual skills in pious communities, but also stressing literacy in the Protestant mode of an individual’s direct access to God through scripture. This philosophy appeared non-threatening to the VOC and the NGK, and ensured them an early welcome at the Cape. For a few years around 1740, Georg Schmidt, the first Moravian missionary in the Western Cape spread the message of aggressive self-improvement and personal piety to the Hessequa Khoi from a rural base at Baviaanskloof, the later Genadendal mission station.⁸⁶ He soon ran into the roadblocks of local settler resentment and, more importantly, the fervently defended but little used baptism monopoly of the NGK, which put an end to his missionary activity. The Moravians were undeterred and, after a decent interval, made a second try at Genadendal in 1792.⁸⁷ This time it stuck, and the enterprise expanded to eventually branch out into additional mission stations such as those at Groenekloof and Elim. Genadendal became the prototype for the “mission station” model respected by the authorities for its orderliness and discipline, if not by the local colonists who saw their Khoisan serfs draining away to the greater dignity and personal safety of the station. Despite their adherence to the introspective, self-

⁸⁵ *Christian History*, Vol. I, No. 1, 12-13. This section draws on Karl G. Jechoutek, "Saviours or Agents of Colonialism", unpublished seminar paper, University of Cape Town, 2001.

⁸⁶ G. Schmidt, *Das Tagebuch und die Briefe von Georg Schmidt* (Bellville: Wes-Kaaplandse Instituut vir Historiese Navorsing, 1981).

⁸⁷ H. Marsveld, D. Schwinn and J.C. Kühnel, *The Genadendal Diaries* (Bellville: UWC Institute for Historical Research, 1992).

reforming and skill-building model, the missionaries soon found themselves in the role of advocates for and protectors of their resident Khoisan disciples. The radical idea of creating a residential community of Khoisan who discarded both their pre-colonial pastoral and their colonial forced-labour lifestyles in favour of the European village model, brought with it the need to defend this idea against proponents of the *status quo ante*.

Entering the fray from a different angle with a more deliberate combative spirit, the London Missionary Society (LMS) soon was enmeshed in the local politics as well. Deriving their theology from a multi-denominational Protestant background in Britain, the leading personalities of the LMS drew heavily on a combination of the “Scottish Enlightenment” and the roots of John Knox’ teaching in the sixteenth century. While fundamentally Calvinist in nature, the Knox theology contained the theory on the right of commoners to rebel against unsuitable authority.⁸⁸ This presented a basis for challenging the local policy of Khoisan impoverishment and slavery at the Cape, de facto outflanking the NGK Calvinists. The LMS was able to lay claim to a purer Calvinism, in line with the more inclusive “Continuing Reformation” strand that the established Cape Calvinists had neglected. The LMS started its activity at the Cape in 1799 with this militant approach, represented by the colourful personality of Johannes Van der Kemp, a radical millenarian who used Calvinist language skilfully to establish the right of the Khoisan to resist enslavement. Moving straight to the turbulent eastern frontier, the LMS plunged into the frictions between the colonial administration, the settlers, the remaining Khoi, and the Xhosa. In the atmosphere of the 1799-1802 border war, the Khoi clans that were squeezed between the advancing colony and the determined Xhosa response were addressed by the LMS. A mix of Gonaqua Khoi, Xhosa-dependent Khoi, “Bastaard-Hottentots”, and other dispossessed people responded to this call. Van der Kemp and his collaborators such as James Read linked themselves to the dispossessed by marriage, and set out to break the settlers’ monopoly on Christianity, dislodging the automatic equation between “settler” and “Christian”. Taking their cue from the Moravians at Genadendal, the LMS used mission stations such as Bethelsdorp to create refugia for the Khoisan, in which they could park their families and livestock, acquire skills, and

⁸⁸ D. S. Bax: *The Presbyterian Church of Southern Africa* (Cape Town, undated).

get legal protection by the missionaries in charge. More than the generally acquiescent and reactive Moravians, the early LMS missionaries engaged in deliberate and proactive confrontation with the settlers and the colonial administration, agitating for Khoisan equal rights. Although toned down and less radical later, constant LMS pressure at the Cape and in London contributed to the promulgation of Ordinance 50 that liberated the Khoisan, and to the implementation of slave emancipation 1834-38.

Not surprisingly, this challenge to orthodoxy generated a strong backlash, particularly among the settlers who recognized a challenge to their absolute authority when they saw one. Even around peaceful Genadendal, settlers threatened their Khoi servants and confiscated their stock when they wished to move to the mission station, and lobbied the authorities to stop the missionaries. Similar tactics were employed against LMS stations, ranging from the spreading of rumours to outright attack and sabotage. Interestingly, the mission stations were also attacked by resistance-minded Khoisan, who saw the Westernized station culture as a sell-out to colonial interests. Despite the difficulties, the LMS succeeded in attracting a significant following of Khoisan, and used Khoisan intermediaries and lay preachers liberally to spread the word. The first converts and intermediaries tended to be outsiders in both colonial and Khoisan societies, such as women, and people in subservient client situations. Eventually, the mission stations attracted the mainstream Khoisan population to an extent that a Xhosa description of the Khoisan in the 1830s labeled them “the people brought to life by the word of God”. After the initial high, the LMS experienced some disarray until the arrival of John Philip at the Cape, a Congregationalist imbued by the Scottish Enlightenment, philanthropic sentiment, and by liberal economics, who was determined to generate social uplift among the Khoisan by acculturating them as rapidly as possible, and make them rational economic and social actors in a Western sense. This was to empower them to hold their own and be taken seriously in colonial society. While there may have been only partial success in turning the Khoisan and emancipated slaves into members of a free labor force in the nineteenth century liberal mode, the LMS effort helped to create a level playing field, and a corpus of legal rights to resort to.⁸⁹ Philip became a dominant, albeit controversial figure in the colony and a first stop for all new missionary groups.

⁸⁹ Elphick and Davenport, *Christianity*, passim.

Mission outreach to the Western Cape urban slaves proved more difficult than the establishment of the rural Khoisan missions, explaining the early missionaries' preference to bypass Cape Town and start in the more promising rural areas, where things were clearer than in the confusing urban secular and disjointed subculture. The latter was hard to penetrate, and the masters' legally sanctioned direct control over all aspects of the lives of the slaves stood in the way. Most importantly, Islam had started to attract significant numbers of urban converts among slaves and free blacks in Cape Town. Philip succeeded in establishing the Union Chapel in Cape Town as a centre and service point of the LMS missionary effort throughout the colony, but the city itself remained largely outside the main sphere of LMS proselytising. Partly, this was because vigorous intra-Christian competition in the town.

To counteract the Islamic competition in urban areas, the South African Missionary Society (SAMS) had started work in Cape Town in 1799 (later also in Stellenbosch and Paarl), stimulated by Van der Kemp's arrival at the Cape, and had its first, somewhat dubious, marketing success after lobbying the British Administration to pass legislation in 1812 that made clear that slave owners were not required to manumit baptized slaves.⁹⁰ Despite this official boost, mission in Cape Town was an uphill battle in the first decades of the nineteenth century, Islam registering most converts. Slave owners and apprentices' masters feared that religious instruction and conversion may lead to de facto emancipation of their charges, and make them into illiquid, non-tradable assets. We will return to a more detailed review of the public discourse at the Cape on this issue below. In this difficult market, the early LMS effort in Cape Town, led at first by the Presbyterian George Thom, encountered the resistance of the Dutch Reformed-dominated SAMS which claimed its right to compete for the non-white population, and by the Anglican clergy guarding its British flock. The SAMS was particularly insistent on monopolising the Dutch-language conversions, which effectively limited Thom to a negligible anglophone audience and excluded him and the LMS from access to mass conversions.⁹¹

Slave emancipation in the 1830s brought a boost in conversions, as the missions were able to cater to a pent-up demand for baptisms among slaves newly

⁹⁰ Shell, in Elphick and Davenport, *Christianity*.

⁹¹ Elisabeth H. Ludlow, *The Work of the London Missionary Society in Cape Town 1812-1841*, BA (Hons) thesis, Univ. of Cape Town 1981.

empowered to make their own spiritual decisions. Nevertheless, the hopes of Philip and Read of the LMS to make significant inroads into the market of more than 5,000 newly freed urban slaves were not fulfilled: Islam proved more resilient and nimble than expected.⁹² The poor overall Christian record in urban conversions can partly be attributed to the early participation of the NGK in the SAMS, which introduced the ambivalent approach to mission of the Dutch Reformed movement, although the growing involvement of other Protestant denominations gave the SAMS a more egalitarian and inclusive flavour later.

From 1829 onwards, the second wave of pietist German missionaries reached the shores of the Cape. In contrast to the humbler artisan origins of the Moravians, the missionaries of societies such as the Rhenish Mission Society and Berlin Mission Society (Rheinische Missionsgesellschaft, and Berliner Missionsgesellschaft) were men of standing in an increasingly assertive Prussian society. This is not without importance, as a paternalistic streak and desire for a well-ordered society would bias the missionaries towards acquiescence with the established order. Notably, the RMS precursors were influenced by Moravian thinking since the 1780s, and the mission impetus came from contacts with the LMS in 1799.⁹³ From this time, the various strands of mission emphasis began to merge, as the early differences between pietists and radical reformers started to blur in an environment of increasing respectability and status of mission work. The early RMS, however, still clearly distanced itself from John Philip, whose activist approach to liberation of indigenous people appeared too aggressive to the cautious pietists. They sought their niche in the northwest of the colony, founding the mission stations of Wupperthal (led by Leipoldt) and Ebenhaezer, and ministering in outstations of the towns of Stellenbosch, Tulbagh and Worcester. Their approach to mission was a gradualist one, not rushing into conversions but patiently teaching, building skills and habits, and leading by example. In parallel with the regime on Moravian mission stations, discipline and a Christian way of life was mandatory, neat housing was to be maintained (a fact approvingly noted by official observers, but deplored as absent at the LMS' Bethelsdorp base), and gardening and craft skills had to be developed. The role that knife production had

⁹² Ibid.

⁹³ E. Strassberger, *The Rhenish Mission Society in South Africa 1830-1950* (Cape Town, 1969).

played at Genadendal in establishing a reputation for quality craftsmanship, was filled by leather shoe production at Wuppertal. What this represented was a kind of “hands-on acculturation”, clearly distinct from the legal and political battles for equality conducted by the LMS. The eventual integration of the South African RMS mission stations into the Dutch Reformed mainstream was relatively unproblematic.

An early attempt at making inroads into the conversion of urban slaves and free blacks was made by the young Presbyterian Church at the Cape.⁹⁴ Since 1813, an anglophone "Calvinist Society" was catering to the spiritual needs of Scottish soldiers stationed at the Cape, using the SAMS chapel in Long Street. After John Philip had transformed the loose association of Reformed faith communities into a Congregationalist-dominated institution in Union Chapel in the 1820s, the new, purely Presbyterian, Scottish Church of St. Andrew's was established in Cape Town in 1829. During the apprenticeship period of the slave emancipation 1834-38, the Presbyterians realized the potential for converts in the one third of the town's population that was being released into freedom. St. Andrew's was the first church in Cape Town to admit non-whites as full members, although services for them were held separately and in Dutch. One of the motives for the effort was to stem the advance of Islam in the town: the reverend James Adamson, the leader of the Presbyterian community 1828-41, was keen to report to the Governor about the church contributing to the "...establishment of of a steadfast and almost unexpected barrier to the prevalence of Mohammedanism among the emancipated slaves".⁹⁵ The number of communicants at St. Andrew's rose from 45, all whites, in 1838 to 202 in 1841, of whom 140 were non-whites.⁹⁶ Most of these new recruits, however, were freed slaves who had not had any religious affiliation before, not converts from Islam.

The urban mission effort became more ecumenical over time, as NGK and Lutheran ministers joined the mission outreach, drawing about 1,000 adults into

⁹⁴ The following discussion draws on Bax, *The Presbyterian Church of Southern Africa*; F. Quinn and G. Cuthbertson, *Presbyterianism in Cape Town* (Cape Town: St. Andrew's, 1979); and G. C. Cuthbertson, "The Impact of the Emancipation of Slaves on St. Andrew's Scottish Church, Cape Town 1838-78", in C. Saunders and H. Phillips (eds), *Studies in the History of Cape Town*, Vol. 3 (1984), 49-63; and Ludlow, *The Work of the London Missionary Society*.

⁹⁵ Cuthbertson, "The Impact", 51.

⁹⁶ Quinn and Cuthbertson, *Presbyterianism*, 26.

attending the services. After 1842, this broader effort had split off from the core St. Andrew's congregation after clashes between strong clerical personalities, and the coloured, mainly Dutch-speaking members had formed the new St. Stephen's church which later integrated into the NGK. St. Andrew's continued its own mission to Cape Town's non-whites, operating parallel congregations for white anglophone and coloured Dutch groups, until the coloured component split off again after 1848. Competition between the Reformed churches in Cape Town was every bit as vigorous as that between Christian denominations and Islam.

Looking askance at the efforts of the Reformed churches were the adherents of the Church of England, enjoying the status of imperial established church after the British takeover of the colony. Anglican mission society efforts had increased throughout the empire since the end of the eighteenth century, dividing the enterprise between the older Society for the Propagation of the Gospel (SPG), focused on establishing ecclesiastical structures and hierarchies in the colonies, and the more evangelical Church Missionary Society (CMS), concentrating on individual conversions.⁹⁷ The first Anglican church in Cape Town was erected with private contributions and pew rentals in 1830, and its urban mission outreach model was patterned on the British domestic urban missions to the underclass, based on a parish template. Observers in the 1830s noted wryly that the operation of St. George's Church was a businesslike affair: "Jews and atheists" were included in the group of shareholders, drawing dividends from the offerings.⁹⁸ As in the case of the other Christian denominations, the Anglican urban missionaries' main preoccupation was the resilience of the "Mahometan religion" in town. They blamed this partly on the maltreatment of slaves by Dutch owners, partly on deep-seated prejudices against inferior races, and partly on the attractiveness of a faith entirely uncoupled from the dominant European paradigm. The tendency to split congregations when disgruntled members felt that their concerns were not addressed was also evident in the English Church: in 1846, white members of St. George's church left to found the Holy Trinity congregation. The arrival of Bishop Gray in Cape Town in 1848 brought a burst of renewed Anglican mission efforts to the urban Muslims with dedicated new staff, an

⁹⁷ The discussion draws on D. A. Pratt, *The Anglican Church's Mission to the Muslims in Cape Town During the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries*, Thesis, Rhodes University, 1998, 20-60.

⁹⁸ C. Pama, *Bowler's Cape Town* (Cape Town: Tafelberg, 1977), 50.

area of prime concern for the bishop. But it was an uphill struggle, and very few Muslim converts could be notched up by the missionaries who had to be content to convert the "heathen", i.e. non-Muslim non-whites.

Numerous other mission groups entered into missionary activity in the colony in the early 1800s, among them the Baptist Missionary Society, the American Board of Commissions for Foreign Missions, the Wesleyan Methodist Society, the Societe des Missions Evangeliques, and many others. Overt participation in politics was avoided, expectations were modest, horizons were long. Gaining social independence through education was the long-term aim. The mission stations were ready to expand in response to external events such as slave emancipation: by 1848, 22% of the Western Cape "coloured" population was to be found on the mission stations, with more dependents linked loosely to them.⁹⁹

Urban Religious Exceptionalism

While the rural areas of the colony saw the influx of dispossessed Khoi and emancipated slaves into Moravian, LMS and other mission stations to form religiously inspired collectives, the urban development in Cape Town was characterised by a more individual search for a social and spiritual location. Urban slaves and free blacks, fusing after emancipation into a fluid "coloured" population, had already engaged individually in artisanal and commercial activities before the 1834-38 abolition period, and were selecting Christian or Muslim forms of religious adherence. The trends of British economic, political, and religious thinking may have influenced the Cape white elite more directly, but they created the environment for the non-white population to establish an economic and social presence. The socio-economic and religious schools of thought may have nicely reinforced each other: on the one hand, the British liberal-commercial philosophy encouraged a merchant, entrepreneurial attitude of a "society of striving individualists" in Bayly's diction; on the other hand, the religions that had assembled at the Cape contributed to a similar individualising and entrepreneurial trend. The Dutch Reformed denomination

⁹⁹ Elphick and Davenport, *Christianity*, passim.

displayed some of Weber's "worldly asceticism"; the Congregationalist, Presbyterian, Anglican, Methodist and other Protestant traditions brought with them the pragmatism and individualism of the commercially oriented mother country; as we have seen above, Islam in Cape Town was derived from South and Southeast Asian traditions that were strong on Sufi elements of individual spirituality, had been spread to Asia originally by merchants rather than by conquest, and did not carry the pre-Islamic Arab cultural baggage that contributed to the eventual rigidity of Islamic orthodoxy. All had to contend with the fact that other worldviews were on offer to an audience of determined individualists within a compact urban space.

In Cape Town proper, it was Islam that dominated the market in providing a spiritual home to thousands of newly emancipated lower-income people.¹⁰⁰ The immediate groundwork had been laid by Tuan Guru (imam Abdullah ibn Qadi Abdus Salaam) at the end of the 18th century. The exiled scholar and prince from Tidore authored the main textbooks that were used to systematise Cape Islam, providing guidelines for the life and belief of Muslims, and a theological defence against Christian mission. Education was the competitive tool of choice. In 1793, the first Muslim school (associated with an early mosque) was established as the Dorp Street Madrasah, enabling slaves and free blacks to bypass the Christian establishment while extending their knowledge, and immersion in Islam. The early British administrators at the Cape noticed with alarm that almost 400 students assembled regularly at the school, and urged the Christian missionaries to increase their efforts. In response, the SAMS established a competing Christian school in Dorp Street where both secular subjects and religion were taught. As both Christian schools and Muslim *madaris* proliferated in the first half of the nineteenth century, the competition was vigorous, but early successes of the Christian mission, particularly immediately following the emancipation years of 1834-38, were more than matched by the Muslim efforts. In 1848, the new Anglican bishop of Cape Town rushed to persuade the Governor not to provide subsidies to Muslim schools, an equal-access policy sought by the Muslim leadership that would have been unobjectionable to the secular authorities.¹⁰¹ The Presbyterian elementary day school for coloured children reported about 80 or 90

¹⁰⁰ The following discussion relies on Davids, *Muslim-Christian Relations*, 10-20.

¹⁰¹ Pratt, *The Anglican Church's Mission*, 47.

children from Muslim families in their total attendance of about 350.¹⁰² A successful Muslim strategy allowed the participation of children in the Christian "infant" (elementary) schools, to acquire secular skills, then switched them to the *madaris* rather than the Christian "juvenile" schools in order to focus on Islamic studies and not be lost to the Muslim community. The hopes of the Christian missionaries that early exposure of children of Muslim families to Christian education would snowball into adult conversions were not realised.

It is noteworthy that this competition between religious communities was conducted rationally and peacefully, under the watchful eye of the British authorities. The Christian and Muslim missionary efforts in Cape Town acted in what they both saw as a promising market, not as a battlefield, the martial missionary language notwithstanding. Both religious communities had an interest in not alienating the other one too much, to preserve the right to proselytize freely and to prevent a heavy-handed official intervention by the colonial authorities. It is perhaps typical that the most contentious early nineteenth century issue in the race for souls, only emerging in 1847, was one of the use of language in recruiting students. The Dorp and Barrack Street Christian schools introduced evening classes in Arabic and Melayu, including the reading of Christian scripture in these languages, in order to attract more students from the Muslim community who may not have been fluent in Dutch. While Muslim leaders discouraged their flock from attending these classes, they later imitated this strategy by establishing classes in secular subjects, and the teaching in Dutch and English, in the Muslim schools.¹⁰³ A good marketing strategy soon spread to all participants. Combined with other attractive features of Cape Islam compared to Christianity, such as the better social reception by their co-religionists enjoyed by lower-class members of the faith, and the better chances at manumission for a Muslim slave of a Muslim owner, the education thrust of Islam gained adherents.¹⁰⁴ Pragmatism triumphed in the Cape Town competitive environment.

The pragmatism and the playing down of parts of the faith doctrine that may have damaged the mission outreach had its other side in the phenomenon that the main controversies between and within religions were acted out as personality

¹⁰² Quinn and Cuthbertson, *Presbyterianism*, 17.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, 18-19.

¹⁰⁴ Ludlow, *The Work of the LMS*, 41.

clashes. Strong leaders in the Christian and Muslim camps had difficulty in tolerating other strong personalities in their own flock of believers. Splits were the common result: Presbyterians under George Thom and his successors preferred to be separate from the SAMS and the Congregationalists of Read and Philip, coloured Presbyterians followed the reverend Stegman in seceding from St. Andrew's, and a bitter dispute about who was to be the rightful successor to Tuan Guru to lead the mosque split the Muslim community.¹⁰⁵ The proliferation of competing places of worship, conversion and religious education, led by ambitious individuals, characterized the religious environment of Cape Town.

As the religions actively on offer were primarily versions of Nonconformist Christianity or Islam, a striking difference between the rural hinterland and Cape Town becomes evident. Both religions were focused on deriving legitimacy exclusively from their scripture, either the Bible or the Qur'an and Hadith (Anglicans and Roman Catholics, less active in the early stages of mission, were more contextual and intermediating through ecclesiastical structures). The individual's direct interface with God was stressed as paramount. Where only one of the scripturalist religions had the local field to itself, such as Reformed Christianity in the rural areas where mission stations for the Khoi farm labourers were established from scratch, the exclusivity of the scripture-focused truth was not challenged by competitors, providing a fertile ground for a communitarian and exclusivist view of society. Cape Islam remained an urban phenomenon. In contrast, the competitive atmosphere of the urban environment placed the concept of exclusive truth in doubt: both religions had to step back from being "trapped in scripture", and become more pragmatic in dealing with individual choice. While the rural mission stations created a more collectivist, ascriptive "bonding social capital", the urban competitive environment forced the religions to create "bridging social capital" that catered to the proclivity for individual choice of association.¹⁰⁶ Creativity, autonomy, and individualism were the hallmarks of the urban worldview that militated against a strong collective identity and favoured the maintenance of bridges between different individual identities.

¹⁰⁵ See the detailed discussion of the dispute in the Muslim community in Davids, *The Mosques of Bo-Kaap*, 88-91, 208-220.

¹⁰⁶ For the use of these terms, splitting the concept of social capital into separate strands, see Richard Florida, *The Rise of the Creative Class* (NY: Basic Books, 2002).

A comparison between the predominant cultural paradigms in typical rural mission stations¹⁰⁷ and in Cape Town illustrates the different structures of identity formation. The Moravian station of Genadendal and its offshoots were organised on a patriarchal basis where members of the community were to obey the set rules of behaviour and activity, and discipline was dispensed by the authority of the missionaries. Economic activity was planned to be craft-based, supplemented by farm labour, and conducted in a corporate manner. Small individual production of poultry and dairy products was incidental to supply the local market. The missionaries monitored the commodity prices available for cash crop production, and tried to maximise the autarky of the station.¹⁰⁸ The identity formed was primarily that of a member of a homogeneous religious community. In comparison, LMS stations such as Bethelsdorp were organised more loosely in a more egalitarian way, and derived their internal solidarity from an effort to assert themselves against hostile settlers and colonial administrators. The identity of the members was primarily that of a group struggling jointly against the ever-present danger of individual enslavement. Both types of rural mission stations were largely insulated from the larger economy and from long-distance trade, trying to be self-supporting communities or "closed settlements", where the retailing of goods was in the hands of the station administrators. Until the later nineteenth century, periodic debates erupted on whether individual land title was to be granted to the inhabitants, or whether to maintain all land ownership in the hands of the missionaries.¹⁰⁹ In contrast, Cape Town was exposed to cheap imports and an open market in goods and services, and real estate was either held through individual title or rented. Urban crafts, retail trade and wage labour had to compete vigorously against both local and international competitors. Economic and religious competition promoted individualisation and a relaxed attitude towards multiple identities.

¹⁰⁷ See the detailed work of Robert Ross on the mission stations in *Beyond the Pale*, and his contributions in Worden and Crais, *Breaking the Chains*, and in James and Simons, *The Angry Divide*.

¹⁰⁸ *Nachrichten aus der Brüdergemeinde*, series of bound volumes (Gnadau, 1800-1899), Genadendal Museum Archive.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 1856-99.

Socio-Economic Impact of Missions

What was the net result of all these strenuous efforts in competitive mission, both in Cape Town and in its rural hinterland? Let us consider the counterfactual. Projecting the socio-economic trend evident by the early nineteenth century, one would expect that the dispossessed population, deprived of education and status in the interest of white colonial society, would be forced to adopt aspects of the dominant culture haphazardly. As full integration was out of the question, and the higher-quality aspects of the European cultural spectrum were closed to Khoisan, slaves, and most descendants of mixed unions, the parts of the dominant culture adopted by them would have been the less desirable ones. As was already evident at the close of the eighteenth century, the adoption of alcoholism, a culture of domestic violence, and bigotry had pushed the underprivileged into a “proletarian” existence, with no release except risky escape, crime, drink, or sullen submission and petty sabotage. Small local rebellions were easily subdued.¹¹⁰ The members of the non-white subculture who chose peaceful co-existence, soon ran into the glass ceiling of social exclusion. The vicious circle was likely to continue, as the “insolent” image of the non-whites would have been confirmed by passive and active resistance. It is difficult to imagine an alternative *deus ex machina* that would have turned this around. A change could have come simply through economic transformation, as the new global economy brought with it the need to compete within an expanding trading zone in the wake of the British imperial drive. All inhabitants of the Cape, white and non-white, would increasingly be subjected to making themselves more competitive individually, and as communities. Economic transformation alone, however, although perhaps being the rising tide that floated all ships, would not have mitigated the vast social and income differentials that existed.

This is where both Islam and mission Christianity filled a gap, providing self-esteem, identity, and skills. Whether they intended to have this effect or not, the missionaries recognized that a clinging to the vanishing indigenous cultures would not help the Khoisan and slaves to survive efficiently in the inevitable new imperial world

¹¹⁰ See, for instance, the discussion of the 1808 uprising in Nigel Worden, *Armed With Ostrich Feathers*, presentation at the War, Empire and Slavery Conference, Centre for 18th Century Studies, York, May 2008.

order, and thus set out to acculturate their disciples into the dominant mode of social and economic behaviour. The Moravian and other German pietists were motivated by lifting the converts from what they saw as morally and spiritually inferior lifestyles to a superior, Christian plateau – in the process, they managed to enable them to use new skills, modes of behaviour, and literacy to establish themselves as independent actors in a monetary market economy. The LMS, despite its periodic romantic efforts to restore Khoisan culture in a Christian context, mainly focused on empowering its clients legally and economically, aiming to make them participants in a free labour force and in small enterprise. Muslim leaders encouraged social cohesion of a lower-class community in a socially and economically competitive environment, and the skills to survive in the colonial context.

On the whole then, the discipline and education inculcated at the mission stations and in urban religious schools, although often patronizing and based on the European background of the missionaries, or informed by the Southeast Asian orientation of Cape Islam, had a number of positive effects. Far from creating gullible victims of "cultural imperialism",¹¹¹ the moves to Christian and Muslim worldviews were:

- Enabling the hitherto excluded and despised groups to deal with the dominant society on its own terms, teaching modes of behaviour and social discourse that would at least guarantee them a hearing and a chance to regain respect as recognisable members of a Europeanised society;
- Providing artisan, farming, and entrepreneurial skills that would offer the opportunity to participate in the modern market economy that was emerging;
- Encouraging initiative in a competitive society, through the vehicles of lay preaching, small enterprise etc.

¹¹¹ A useful refutation of a blanket concept of missionary "cultural imperialism" is contained in Andrew Porter, "'Cultural Imperialism' and Protestant Missionary Enterprise 1780-1914", in *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, Vol. 25, No. 3 (Sept. 1997), 367-391.

- Establishing a private sphere with its inherent dignity and pride, which was lacking in slave and serf relationships, and fostering the stability of private lives through the concept of the nuclear family in its own house;
- Regaining a lost spiritual anchor, which enabled Khoisan and slaves to reconnect with the destroyed religious component of their lives;
- Establishing cultural pride and easier access by “indigenising” religious texts, i.e. translating them into the Creole versions of European languages spoken by Khoisan and slaves, and into selected indigenous languages; Bible translation into the vernacular, and the rendering of Muslim texts in the proto-Afrikaans of the early nineteenth century was an important component of destigmatising the remaining aspects of an indigenous culture, and establishing cultural self-understanding;
- Finally, protecting the converts against official and private abuse, by offering reasonably safe *refugia*, recognised religious leaders as spokesmen, and some legal redress.

In important ways, the contest for the ownership of Christianity between the dominant white population and the missionary-supported underclass had been won decisively by the latter by the mid-nineteenth century. Although this was not immediately obvious in social relationships, an important principle had been established: full membership in a Christian community was an equal right of all inhabitants of the colony, a concept that had been strenuously denied before the onset of mission activity. It leveled the playing field, at least in theory, prevented a complete slide into a proletarian existence, and helped to prepare non-whites for the contests ahead. Similarly, Cape Islam had succeeded in shaping a community of

believers that felt comfortable as a self-sustaining faith in the midst of a Christian colonial environment. The religions had been successfully "creolised". Bible translations into the vernacular had contributed significantly to the creation of ownership of religion among the converted, as had the early renderings of Muslim texts into Malayo-Portuguese and proto-Afrikaans. The Nonconformist evangelical missions were particularly adept at "inculturating" Christian texts, including not only the Bible but also supporting literature such as the enormously popular "Pilgrim's Progress" by John Bunyan. The very translatability of Bunyan into other cultures and the universality of the story made it a key text for mission, as the figure of the striving pilgrim could be embraced and identified with by the pool of potential converts. In Isabel Hofmeyr's terms, Bunyan became "portable" throughout the empire, spreading the idea of the pious individual overcoming doubt and difficulty to achieve salvation and character improvement.¹¹² The Muslim equivalent, used to make the same point, may well have been al-Ghazali's story of a journey through the Seven Valleys on the way to paradise.¹¹³ Texts such as these were instrumental in implanting and "indigenizing" different religious traditions at the Cape simultaneously.

Religious diversity and a degree of choice in religious affiliation, then, were facts of life in early nineteenth century Cape Town. Among the various identities available to a creole population, the religious ones were important, and had significance well beyond the aspect of personal spirituality. Did this matter, beyond trivia such as the fact that the editor of the influential *Commercial Advertiser* was the son-in-law of John Philip, the towering Congregationalist missionary figure of the time?¹¹⁴ There is a stronger nexus between this market of worldviews and the pattern of socio-economic development in this cosmopolitan community. We need to examine the impact of this local diversity on the way the Cape economy was developing, in relation to the global fact that Cape Town was a cog in the machinery of Empire, linked to a network of multicultural cities and entrepôts. This feature is what we turn to now.

¹¹² Isabel Hofmeyr, *The Portable Bunyan* (Johannesburg: Wits. Univ. Press, 2004).

¹¹³ Idries Shah, *The Elephant in the Dark* (London: Octagon Press, 1974), 44-49.

¹¹⁴ Worden et al, *Cape Town*, 129.

2. Imperial Impact

A City in the Empire

Following the settlements at the Congress of Vienna in 1815 (including the final agreement on Britain's ownership of the Cape colony), enough international political stability was established to allow a long-term expansion of trade and commerce, and a burst of international mission activity of the strengthening evangelical movements. Britain, as earliest industrialising nation and pre-eminent trader, drove these processes and focused the trade expansion on commodities and manufactures, radically diminishing the previously important slave trade which was outlawed by Britain unilaterally in 1807. By the mid-century, international trade was expanding rapidly, customs tariffs were falling, transport costs decreased, and the first commercial globalisation was under way. Colonial cities such as Cape Town were swept along by these trends, absorbing the philosophy of free trade, the pragmatic liberalism of the Scottish Enlightenment, the abolitionist concerns for the liberation of slaves and enserfed locals, and the evangelical fervour for atonement and salvation through the creation of the "industrious individual".

The early nineteenth century fell into the period commonly described as the "birth of the modern world", the transformational time between the 1780s and the 1850s. Moreover, the 1820s and 1830s can be considered to be the key period when attitudes, politics, economic thought, and religious-cultural views were shaped into the beginning of the "Victorian" age, well before the accession of Queen Victoria in 1837.¹¹⁵ This amalgam of political, economic, and cultural change marked the transition from the eighteenth-century societies based on status and caste to societies which formed new identities and social networks. The transitional period started to solidify in the later nineteenth century, when nationalism, racial differentiation, and class thinking took over. In between, the ferment of modernisation, innovation, industrialisation, urbanisation, and religious mission drove the "first globalisation" of

¹¹⁵ C.A. Bayly, *The Birth of the Modern World 1780-1914* (Malden: Blackwell, 2004); Paul Johnson, *The Birth of the Modern: World Society 1815-1830* (NY: HarperCollins, 1991); Martin Hewitt, "Why the Notion of Victorian Britain Does Make Sense", in *Victorian Studies*, Vol. 48, No.3 (Spring 2006), 395-438.

the modern world. By mid-century, the basis for the first liberal international economic order was in place that was to last until the World Wars of the twentieth century.¹¹⁶

This surge of free trade and globalisation was in marked contrast to the pre-1815 imperial attitude towards trade: until then, a narrow mercantilist and protectionist approach was typical for trade policy, a view that was vigorously attacked by Adam Smith and his disciples for being counterproductive to British economic interests.¹¹⁷ The Corn Laws were protecting British agriculture, the Navigation Acts reserved colonial trade for British ships and limited manufacture in the colonies. European trade policy was heavily protectionist. By the 1820s, however, David Ricardo and Richard Malthus had published extensively, and were turning the tide of official policy. The emergence of Britain as the dominant power after its early industrialisation and its victory after the Napoleonic wars had made it unnecessary to resort to protectionism to secure global dominance. On the contrary, free trade and an open global economy were the best guarantees to maintain Britain's leading position.¹¹⁸ In the 1820s, skilled British workers were allowed to emigrate for the first time since 1719, a fact that would become significant for the settler society at the Cape.¹¹⁹ By mid-century, the agricultural protectionist interests had been defeated, Cobden had succeeded in having the Corn Laws repealed, and the Navigation Acts had been abolished. Free trade had established itself as the primary principle of the international economic order. During the sustained trade boom, Britain's trade needs drove the transport of cotton from Egypt and Bombay, wool from Australia (and later from the Cape), wine from the Cape, and palm oil from West Africa. British dominance of global trade extended well beyond the formal colonies: after Latin America had achieved its independence in the 1820s, it absorbed a significant proportion of British exports, giving rise to what has been called the "informal empire" that enabled Britain to intervene occasionally with armed force to keep the trade channels open, without actually claiming colonial outposts. Buenos

¹¹⁶ Deepak Lal, *In Praise of Empires* (NY:Palgrave, 2004), Chapter 4.

¹¹⁷ Johnson, *The Birth*, 862/3

¹¹⁸ Bill Nasson, *Britannia's Empire* (Stroud:Tempus, 2004).

¹¹⁹ Kevin H. O'Rourke and Jeffrey G. Williamson, *Globalization and History* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2000), 36/37.

Aires and Montevideo were temporarily occupied early in the nineteenth century, Britain intervened in the disputes about the Parana, and brokered a settlement between Argentina and Brazil.¹²⁰ We will see below that the concept of a global political and economic interest of the empire slowly penetrated the discourse at the Cape, and moved it from a parochial to a global one.

In this environment of rapidly increasing international trade, port cities thrived worldwide. While the old aristocratic inland cities were losing importance, the new cosmopolitan coastal centres of exchange and trade mushroomed, becoming hybrid locations in the process. A network of port cities encompassed the European and American Atlantic gateways, Alexandria and Beirut, Bombay and Calcutta, Shanghai, Buenos Aires, and Cape Town. Commercial growth, not only industrialisation, drove the development of these cities in the early decades of the nineteenth century.¹²¹

From the 1830s onwards, steam navigation made freight and passenger transport significantly more efficient and reliable, and the telegraph was patented, contributing to the perception that "distance could be dissolved" and the Empire would become a homogeneous unit.¹²² By 1820, British waterways had quadrupled in length since 1750, cutting transport cost to less than half that of road transport. Transatlantic steamer service was introduced in 1838, providing fast transport for passengers and high-value goods, while Asian trade around the Cape was still dominated by sail. Starting around 1840, international shipping freight rates fell continuously, making it ever cheaper to trade internationally. The rotary steam press and the reformed British postal service made it easier for the colonial populations to benefit from the faster information flow between Britain and the colonies. Colonial networks could operate far more efficiently in the new environment, and the political

¹²⁰ The discussion on the informal empire and the "imperialism of free trade" of the 19th century (all referring to a seminal article by J. Gallagher and R. Robinson in 1953) includes Robert Johnson, *British Imperialism* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2003); David McLean, "Trade, Politics and the Navy in Latin America", *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* Vol. 35, No. 3 (Sept. 2007), 351-370; Martin Lynn, "The Imperialism of Free Trade and the Case of West Africa c. 1830-1870", *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, Vol. 15, No. 1 (1986-87), 22-40; P.J. Cain, *Economic Foundations of British Overseas Expansion 1815-1914* (London: Macmillan Press, 1980).

¹²¹ Bayly, *The Birth*, 186-189.

¹²² Ibid. 125-132; Duncan S. A. Bell, "Dissolving Distance", in *The Journal of Modern History*, Vol. 77 (Sept.2005), 523-562.

and economic discussions in Britain could be followed and participated in by the colonists.

The globalising effect of transport and communication advances was the signal for settler colonies in Australia, Canada and South Africa to become more politically aware of political debate in Britain, and to participate actively in the discussion on self-rule in the colonies. They observed liberalising change in Britain, while colonial administration was still conducted in an authoritarian mode. This was no longer limited to the colonial elite, but triggered a rise of the middle class paralleling the developments in Britain. Increased literacy of the emerging bourgeoisie, better affordable housing and clothing, and the proliferation of small businesses, libraries and civic associations boosted the self-confidence of the middle class and encouraged the move to a broader franchise. The British Reform Act of 1832 enfranchised a wider spectrum of the population, and brought politics closer to a representative democratic model. This "wave of political modernisation" included the Poor Law Act in 1834, the Municipal Corporations Act in 1835, and, importantly, the full Catholic Emancipation by 1829. The impact of these changes reverberated in the colonies, giving rise to heated debate and raising expectations. For the slave-holding parts of the empire, the act to emancipate the slaves in 1833, leading to the apprenticeship period 1834-38 and full abolition of slavery, was a key event that triggered drawn-out resistance among settlers in the Caribbean, and an exodus of Afrikaner colonists from the Cape colony.¹²³

While the ferment of change visible in Britain did not fully penetrate into continental Europe until the revolutions of 1848, the Ottoman Empire experienced a similar burst of reformist activity. Importantly for the later impact on Cape Muslims, the *Tanzimat*, the administrative reform process of the 1830s initiated by the Ottoman authorities, was patterned on Western reform models and accompanied the emergence of a commercial middle class in Turkey and its dominions.¹²⁴ The ideas brought to Cape Town from Istanbul at mid-nineteenth century by Abu Bakr Effendi, the imam requested by the Cape Muslim community to straighten out their internal disputes, were informed by the reformist environment he came from.

¹²³ Bayly. *The Birth*, 114-120

¹²⁴ Ibid.

To disseminate the knowledge about the economic and political change taking place in Britain, the networks of empire served a vital purpose. As mentioned earlier, the Cape benefited from a multiplicity of parallel networks, but the ones extending to the new colonial power were the most vibrant. In political terms, the British officers involved in the peninsular campaign during the Napoleonic wars maintained an *esprit de corps* as they were deployed as administrators throughout the empire. Merchants worked their international trade connections to good advantage, and the businessmen at the Cape understood the value of having good contacts in Britain and in other colonies that could smooth their transactions. Political and economic behaviour converged as a consequence: as recent literature has pointed out, "the co-ethnic networks spawned by the empire were a powerful engine of convergence, and worked with rather than against the grain of the globalising forces in politics, economics and culture".¹²⁵ The networks facilitated interdependence between the spread-out parts of the empire, led to shared lifestyles and consumption habits, diffused knowledge efficiently, fostered international entrepreneurship and risk-taking, and created international "virtual communities" that could relate better within their orbit than with the locations their members found themselves in. Capetonians had more in common with their international network counterparts than with the rural parts of the colony. In the course of the nineteenth century, more books were shipped to the Cape from Britain than to anywhere else in the Empire. By the late nineteenth century, there was a network of cosmopolitan imperial cities around the littoral of the Indian Ocean, forming an "Indian Ocean public sphere" and engaging in cultural and knowledge exchange.¹²⁶ The addition of cultural to the political and economic networks is significant for the exploration of the Cape discourse, as it was the impact of the "humanitarian network" that made a strong impression during the early decades of the 19th century. This is the strand of thought we turn to now.

¹²⁵ Thompson, *The Power and Privileges*, 46.

¹²⁶ Isabel Hofmeyr, *Gandhi's Printing Press*, paper presented at the workshop on "Written Culture in a Colonial Context, 16th to 19th Centuries", University of Cape Town, Dec. 2008.

Religion, Ethics, and Empire

Being a port city in the imperial network did not have only economic and political consequences for Cape Town. Perhaps more importantly, the interwoven strands of philosophical, religious and socio-economic thought that emanated from Britain and circulated through the imperial networks had a profound impact on the discourse at the Cape. Before 1800, the predominant pattern of thought throughout the empire had been focused on social hierarchies and established status. After the Napoleonic wars, the focus shifted to a moral, evangelical and more liberal discourse, driven by a belief in social and economic progress, in the move towards equality by education and conversion, and in the abolition of slavery and serfdom. The liberal and humanitarian "colonial reformers" envisaged settlers to establish liberal societies in the colonies, mixing with and thus "civilising" the locals, and creating a federal, locally self-governed empire. By the mid-nineteenth century, disillusionment with egalitarianism and liberalism had started to set in, as colonial rebellions in India, the Caribbean and the eastern frontier of the Cape Colony dented the optimism about the subject peoples, and scientific racism appeared. Towards the end of the century, racial and ethnic prejudice had become important, and the industrial and mining development in the colonies had brought the issue of class to the fore. We are primarily concerned here with the transitional period of the first half of the century, when economic and knowledge globalisation channelled the reforming ferment in Britain through the empire, generating change in all locations touched by it.

The change was perceptibly rapid. Starting in the 1820s and 1830s, economic development, technological progress and population growth accelerated, and cultural transformation became visible to the contemporary observer. Britain's population doubled between 1800 and 1850, an unprecedented change. "We have been living the life of three hundred years in thirty", noted Thomas Arnold, the headmaster of Rugby School in 1832. John Stuart Mill observed in 1831 that the "spirit of the age" was only perceivable because change was taking place so fast¹²⁷ This consciousness that things were changing, and should be doing so, informed the discourse of the early Victorians in Britain and at the Cape.

¹²⁷ David Newsome, *The Victorian World Picture* (New Brunswick: Rutgers Univ. Press, 1997), 1-3.

An important feature of this period was the synthesis between British identity, progress, and evangelical piety,¹²⁸ a linkage that will occupy us below when exploring the concept of "Christian political economy". The essence of Britishness was considered to be a basic pragmatic social decency based on the rule of law, parliamentary government, civil rights, and individualism, bolstered by the ethics of Protestant Christianity that was ready to spread the gospel and the British worldview throughout the world. The process of "civilization" would inculcate these desirable features in all societies, encompassing technological progress, cultural refinement, lawful governance, and a high degree of self-discipline and ethical behaviour.¹²⁹ On the whole, the foundation for this holistic paradigm had been laid very early in the century, by "founding fathers of the Victorian age" such as Walter Scott, Jeremy Bentham, William Wilberforce, Coleridge, and Cobbett, covering different aspects of the multifaceted and often contradictory Victorian worldview.¹³⁰ By the 1830s, the picture had settled into a recognizable pattern.

It should not be overlooked that the British Empire during the first half of the century was also subject to the *Zeitgeist* of Romanticism, dominating European thought at the time. German and French versions of this mindset that melded the "mind and the heart"¹³¹ may have been more pronounced, but Britain did not escape its reach. Moving on from the pure rationality promoted by many of the previous century's Enlightenment thinkers (Adam Smith being an exception), the concepts of passion, love, compassion, feeling, and awe were re-integrated into the human condition as acceptable, indeed desirable key elements. Philosophy, literature, religion, and social thought became imbued with the celebration of feeling. French thinking followed Rousseau, while in Germany the emerging romantic literature of Goethe and Schiller made its impact. Schleiermacher popularised the notion that religious feeling was an intensely introspective and individual effort, giving rise to pietism and the Christian sense of individual obligation to help others see religion in this way. The evangelical wave of the urge to share intense individual religious

¹²⁸ Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 394.

¹²⁹ Ibid.

¹³⁰ Newsome, *The Victorian*, 8.

¹³¹ See the stimulating discussion in Jacques Barzun, *From Dawn to Decadence* (NY: HarperCollins, 2000), 465-518.

experience with others was gaining speed. The Byronic hero of tragedy and passion became an ideal to be admired.¹³² In Britain, reform movements informed by romanticism pushed prison reform and Benthamite improvements of criminal law, improvements of female and child labour conditions, the humanisation of orphan houses and of the administration of the Poor Laws. Benevolent societies to help the helpless were blossoming. Driven by romanticist notions of compassion and fairness, and by religious outrage at social inequality, major legislative reform works were achieved, culminating in the emancipation of slaves throughout the Empire in 1834-38. Hegelian Idealism and a sense of history as steady progress via a struggle of ideas had gained currency in Britain as elsewhere.

Friction between the emerging liberal humanitarianism and a romantic nostalgia for tradition was inevitable, and was reflected in the discourse of the time. A romantic belief in the civilizing process, an open economy, and the power of moral argument to liberalize society clashed with an equally romantic conviction that both evangelical Christianity and the industrializing liberal economy were liabilities that needed to be overcome in favour of a less pietist impersonal deism and a return to more heroic, less economic principles of public life. Carlyle represents the traditional Tory backlash against the alliance of evangelical fervour and industrial modernity,¹³³ extolling instead the virtues of heroic leadership in the classic aristocratic mould. Others took up the other side of the debate with gusto. The wave of Whig radicals calling for liberalization and emancipation at all levels of public life included towering figures such as Sydney Smith, the founder of the *Edinburgh Review*, followed later by Walter Bagehot, backbone of *The Economist*. Liberal magazines such as these helped to spread the thought of reform and eventually contributed to the decline of traditional Toryism.¹³⁴ Hesitantly, the Tories in the new mode of "liberal Toryism" embraced the free market and a more open society of personal choice, although the nostalgia for a traditionally ordered world lingered.¹³⁵

¹³² Ibid. 476/77, 485/86.

¹³³ Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 378-380.

¹³⁴ Barzun, *From Dawn to Decadence*, 529-534, 581-582.

¹³⁵ David Eastwood, "Tories and Markets, Britain 1800-1850", in Mark Bevir and Frank Trentman (eds), *Markets in Historical Contexts* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 2004), 70-89.

This continuing strand of traditionalist thought preserved itself in the perpetuation and evolution of British paternalism. Although markets were opening up and political emancipation and civil liberties were making progress, the underlying social concept of a benign authoritarian order informed the thinking of reformers and traditional Tories alike, albeit to different degrees. Tempered by the achievements of civil liberty and independent courts, paternal authority was naturally assumed to be exercised by the elite when dealing with the lower orders of society who could not be assumed to be able to make decisions as rationally as their superiors. The unquestioned authority of the Victorian *pater familias* demanded obedience, but also carried with it obligations towards those under its rule. The duties of those in authority included the care for the welfare of the subjects, and efforts to improve the moral and social soundness of their lives. Children, the poor, law-breakers, and "inferior races" were to be guided, educated, and helped to lift themselves out of a benighted existence.¹³⁶ This feature of paternalism, the responsibility to elevate the less fortunate, drove the thinking of missionaries and liberal reformers, who gave rise to what became known as "patronizing British liberalism".¹³⁷ On the other hand, the obligation of the ruled was to exercise discipline and deference to authority. This more static element of paternalism, stressing hierarchy, the prevention of social mobility and the preservation of a traditional social structure, inspired the opponents of the reformers and liberals. The British debate was mirrored faithfully in the urban, well-connected part of the Cape, where the forces of tradition under Lord Somerset clashed with the reformers eager to liberalise. Both, however, stood on the common cultural platform of a paternalistic view of society.

The improvement of the lower orders, however, was not only to be accomplished through a top-down, paternalistic policy. A bottom-up approach was evolving through the self-help movement among those of humble origins aspiring to upward social mobility. Although pursued collectively in the form of membership in "mutual improvement societies", this was an essentially individualistic endeavour. Mass magazines promoted the idea that "every individual, as individual, could both consume and produce knowledge", implying the right to the "universal accessibility of

¹³⁶ David Roberts, *Paternalism in Early Victorian England* (New Brunswick: Rutgers Univ. Press, 1979), 1-9.

¹³⁷ Nasson, *Britannia's Empire*, 107.

a mental culture".¹³⁸ The voluntary societies of young men often were formed as subgroups of church congregations, looking for a combination of intellectual achievement and moral uplift, and as a way to set oneself apart from the less ambitious members of the working class. Eventually, the training in social interaction and debate inculcated in such societies created a wider pool of participants in civil society.¹³⁹ As a later echo, this self-help philosophy and focus on individual development in a market economy are visible in the Pentecostalist and charismatic church groups active at the Cape from the late 20th century onwards.

The Evangelical-Abolitionist Axis

Of particular importance for the Cape Colony was the emergence in Britain of Abolitionism and Evangelicalism, twin aspects of the faith-fuelled urge to improve the lives of individuals that became integral parts of the humanitarian wave of thought lapping against the shores of the colonies. The first half of the nineteenth century, commonly known as the "age of improvement", has also been described as the "age of atonement". Improvement and progress, viewed through the religious lens, had to be understood as only one of many experimental paths towards salvation.¹⁴⁰ In certain ways, a Weberian inner-worldly asceticism permeated the mentality, seeing the rational pursuit of material success and probity as efforts to distinguish oneself as suitable for salvation. Human nature was not an asset but a liability, and eschatological pessimism about the misery of earthly life demanded that atonement and deep inner conversion were necessary to prepare humankind for the future kingdom. We have seen above how this mindset drove the explosion of missionary activity by Protestant groups throughout the empire, including the Cape. How did it inform the outlook on life in general?

¹³⁸ Anne Baltz Rodrick, "The Importance of Being an Earnest Improver", in *Victorian Literature and Culture*, Vol. 29, No. 1 (2001), 39-50.

¹³⁹ Ibid.

¹⁴⁰ See the discussion in Boyd Hilton, *The Age of Atonement* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988). A good discussion of the origins of the British evangelical missionary movement and its impact on the Cape is contained in Elizabeth Elbourne, *Blood Ground* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's Univ. Press, 2002), 25-70.

Fervent evangelicalism, manifested in proselytizing Nonconformist preachers and domestic mission activity among the poor, had graduated from the suspicious subversive activity of the eighteenth century to an established part of the life of the middle classes. The heirs of Wesleyan Methodism and revivalism had made scripture the guiding principle of their private and public lives without offending the authority of the day. Still viewed with some apprehension by aristocratic and traditional Anglican circles, the evangelical movement provided a spiritual underpinning for an ordered society in a period of rapid change. The removal of Nonconformist civil disabilities brought Dissent and evangelicalism into the mainstream, leading to a "synthesis of religion, politics, and social attitudes along with an unprecedented influence on national culture" from the 1830s onwards.¹⁴¹ Established Anglicans and Scottish Presbyterians made evangelicalism respectable, and turned it into a philosophy of the upper middle classes that were achieving political and economic importance at the time. Middle-class piety combined with public morality, humanitarian instincts, frugality, and financial rectitude to bring forth such forceful personalities as William Wilberforce and the rest of the Clapham Sect, or Thomas Chalmers, who shaped public discourse for decades.¹⁴² The evangelical emphasis on individual salvation infected other parts of life, and Samuel Smiley could preach the gospel of self-help and self-improvement of the lower orders with considerable success. The individualising tendency of evangelicalism reached the Cape exactly during the period when new post-slavery identities were being formed.

Abolitionism was a powerful offshoot of the new piety and of the mindset that every human being had a right to the pursuit of individual salvation. A humanitarian network of missionaries in the field and anti-slavery lobbies in Britain had developed significant clout since the late eighteenth century. With the onset of rapid economic, political and cultural change in Britain, this alliance found the opening for its argument that slavery was no longer acceptable for a society and an empire that was transforming itself into a more open and liberal mode. An international network of evangelicals, missionaries and other religious groups became efficient in promoting abolition: English Nonconformists and international Quakers and Baptists conducted a lively exchange. Between 1800 and the 1830s, a rapid rise in Methodist,

¹⁴¹ Hewitt, "Why the Notion", 421.

¹⁴² Hilton, *The Age of Atonement*, 7.

Congregational and Baptist membership coincided with an equally steep increase in anti-slavery petitions in the Anglo-American sphere. By the 1830s, more than half of abolitionist petitions were sponsored by evangelicals.¹⁴³ The concept of slavery as sin gained ground, and carried the day against the slave-owning lobby in the 1830s. Evangelical humanitarianism promoted the image of the converted non-white slave, being raised from a benighted heathen existence to become a moral, Christian and industrious individual. As in the case of the domestic poor and the Irish Catholic peasantry, humanitarianism advocated a gradual education and uplifting process for colonial slaves and enserfed indigenous populations that would slowly bring them closer to the standards of civilization enjoyed by the British elite and rising middle class. While paternalistic, this approach was often diametrically opposed to the colonial settler interests who would have preferred the maintenance of the status quo.¹⁴⁴

This conflict played itself out in parallel in the Cape Colony, where missionary spokesmen like Philip and van der Kemp, and secular liberals like Fairbairn and Pringle confronted the interests of the governing aristocracy allied with the rural agricultural settlers. Cape Town merchants with colonial business interests associated themselves with the humanitarians, as the new liberal economic order called for the free movement of labour rather than the old static system of slaves being tied to masters. The global humanitarian/evangelical thrust had linked up with the new globalizing economy to create what came to be called the "Cape liberal tradition".¹⁴⁵ We will return to this below.

Did this necessarily imply a simple conflict between missionary/commercial and imperial agendas? The engagement seems to have been more complex than that. In the British settler colonies, missionaries, liberals and humanitarians (all three features often combined in single persons), treaded a fine line between opposing the autocratic colonial administration of the day and the agricultural settlers intent on

¹⁴³ Seymour Drescher, "Two Variants of Anti-Slavery", in Christine Bolt and Seymour Drescher (eds), *Anti-Slavery, Religion, and Reform* (Folkestone: Dawson, 1998), 45-49.

¹⁴⁴ On the nexus of the evangelical, humanitarian and abolitionist networks, see in particular the informative set of papers in Bolt and Drescher (eds), *Anti-Slavery*; also Nasson, *Britannia's Empire*, passim; Laidlaw, *Colonial Connections*, 27-29; Lester, *Imperial Networks*, 23-28.

¹⁴⁵ Lester, *Imperial Networks*, 27-35.

keeping labour captive on the one hand, and cooperating to maintain their rights to proselytise and increase local self-rule on the other hand. They were trapped in the "liberal's dilemma". Andrew Porter notes that liberal missionaries often were moved to oppose the local independence of settler communities in order to preserve rights of the indigenous populations, calling for imperial intervention to control unruly settlers' subjugation of the "natives". Colonial alliances shifted and changed, as colonial liberals joined settlers in pushing for self-rule and freedom from the heavy hand of imperial administration, but at the same time promoted abolition and a better treatment of the natives in concert with missionary humanitarians.¹⁴⁶ As we have noted in the specific case of the Cape above, the argument that the missionary effort had the beneficial effect of preparing indigenous people for a participation in the inevitable integration into a globalising market economy also holds in general for the imperial context as a whole. The recipients of the missionary effort had an interest in expanding their spiritual portfolio, for a variety of motives. In the sense of Robin Horton and John Edwin Mason, conversions to both Christianity and Islam at the Cape were driven by the felt need for a more efficient spiritual anchor in a modernising society, and by the perception that there was a social gain involved in the action. The cultural exchange between proselytisers and the converted reshaped them both, supporting the transformation of a traditionalist, hierarchical society into a developing, market-oriented one with a modicum of social mobility.¹⁴⁷

Urban commercial interests in the empire tended to align themselves with the *mission civilisatrice* and with the spread of Christianity, in order to promote a broadly open society of citizens who were able to participate in commercial progress and support international trade. Conversely, the international missionary network considered the improvement of all rights of subservient populations to include the right to participate freely in a market economy: a key basis for such participation was

¹⁴⁶ Andrew Porter, *Religion versus Empire?* (Manchester: Manchester Univ. Press, 2004), 66-90; see also the discussion in Andrew Porter, "'Cultural Imperialism' and Protestant Missionary Enterprise 1780-1914", in *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, Vol. 25, No. 3 (Sept. 1997), 367-391.

¹⁴⁷ This is brought out by the discussion in Porter, *Religion versus Empire?*, 316-325, following the argument about the differential impacts of mission and imperial conquest in Lamin Sanneh, *Translating the Message: the Missionary Impact on Culture* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1993).

to be the introduction of secure rights to own land, and the acquisition of land titles. At the Cape, John Philip's international network to promote these goals included not only British missionary societies, but also American, German and French ones, an ecumenical lobby for counteracting any collusion between authoritarian colonial government and local settlers.¹⁴⁸ This alliance between commerce and mission reflected the mindset of the emerging "Christian political economy" in Britain.

Christian Political Economy

Even while Britain was engaged in the Revolutionary and Napoleonic wars, two distinct schools of thought on the new subject of "political economy" emerged. Building on the Scottish Enlightenment thought of David Hume and Adam Smith, later continuously refined in the *Edinburgh Review*, both strands promoted free trade and open markets, either as principle of the new science of economics, or as a moral principle grounded in Christianity. One, following Ricardo (building on the pragmatic, rationalist aspect of the Enlightenment) and promoted in the *Westminster Review*, asserted the classical liberal position of free markets and individual liberty leading to a division of labour and subsequent economic and income growth. The other, taking its cue from Malthus and his perceived "limits to growth" (informed by the Romanticist movement), took the path of Christian concerns about over-indulgence and over-investment, seeking atonement for sinful greed. Paradoxically, both ended up endorsing free trade: the Ricardian school as a vehicle for growth, the Christian/Malthusian school as an instrument of reining in a protected, monopolistic "excessive production". Secular political economy relied on the argument of enlightened self-interest; religious political economy employed self-discipline against the danger of avarice. The result of this double-action push was the promotion of a

¹⁴⁸ Porter, *Religion versus Empire?*, 91-115, 125-132. A useful summary of the nature of the Anglo-American network of missionary efforts, particularly between the LMS and the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions (ABCFM), and Philip's role in it, is contained in Andrew Porter, "North American Experience and British Missionary Encounters in Africa and the Pacific c. 1800-1850", in Martin Daunton and Rick Halpern (eds), *Empire and Others* (Philadelphia: Pennsylvania Univ. Press, 1999), 345-363.

liberal order, abolitionism, and an egalitarianism of free individuals, pursued within Britain and in the colonies.¹⁴⁹

The progress-promoting school of secular economics adopted a positive, growth-oriented outlook, and saw competition and free markets leading to growing demand, a division of labour, and increasing prosperity by "growing the pie". In contrast, the Malthusian school was beset by anxieties about the limits to growth, and about the frailties of a human nature prone to excess and exploitation of others: a "zero-sum" outlook. Both schools were represented at the Cape, and it is worthwhile to examine the roots of the Christian one that added a peculiarly early-Victorian twist to an economic discourse otherwise dominated by the secular antagonism between free trade and protectionism.

In response to the optimism of the Christian utilitarian William Paley, the evangelical pessimism about human nature was expressed in the key texts of William Wilberforce (*A Practical View of Christianity*) and Malthus (*Essay on the Principles of Population*) in the last years of the eighteenth century. Sin and human weakness featured strongly in this outlook, redemption to be achieved by a clear individual turn to Christ, the exercise of self-denial and restraint, moderation and abstinence. Speculative activity was to be avoided, and the moral uplift of the underclass was to be promoted by example and guidance. Contrary to the Tory traditionalists such as Coleridge and Carlyle, Christian political economists did not dismiss the new science of economics but merely questioned its secular and optimistic mode. Chalmers and Whately brought this line of thinking into the mainstream in the 1820s, adding virtue and harmony to the competitive spirit in order to reconcile profit-oriented economics with the concepts of the Christian virtuous life and of divine purpose and grace. Competition was interpreted as inadvertent cooperation for the common good, and thus embedded in a religiously sound framework. Economic growth, including the mercantilist obsession with export growth, was thought unnecessary, as a society would be happiest in a static state of balance. The concept of wasteful "oversupply" was considered to belong to the mindset of speculation and excessive production for

¹⁴⁹ Hilton, *The Age of Atonement*, 115-125.

anticipated growth, and was to be avoided by resorting to free and open markets that would prevent the over-investment likely to happen in a protected market.¹⁵⁰

The alliance of Christian theology and political economy only lasted for the first half of the nineteenth century, until the remnants of the eighteenth-century hierarchical society were removed, and the theoretical yoking together was no longer necessary to achieve the transition.¹⁵¹ As soon as the theory alliance had achieved its goal of defeating the old hierarchical order, the secular and religious components parted ways again to pursue their own paths as secular economic science on the one hand, and Christian theology and social thought on the other. After mid-century, Christian social movements focused on the moral aspects of economic life and the protection of the weak, and were no longer inclined to use the toolkit of classical economics to make their point. Catching up after having ignored the secular Chartist movement in Britain, social consciousness and empathy were the tools of choice for Christian theoreticians, and competition and self-interest became anathema.¹⁵²

What is of particular interest here is that this temporary transformational alliance in Britain coincides with the period of profound change at the Cape that we are concerned with. It injected a religious component into the economic discourse, and infused Christian thinking with ideas about the benefits of competition and free markets, as we will see below in the discussion of the predominant discourse at the Cape. The early Victorian mindset of the Christian political economist articulated by the influential Thomas Chalmers in the 1820s combined moral paternalism with economic individualism and laissez-faire, a combination quite distinct from those including economic paternalism or moral libertarianism.¹⁵³ Superimposed on the individualising culture at the Cape, where individuals were fending for themselves while seeking spiritual homes, this contributed to the compatibility of religious and economic behaviour. The alliance of economic individualism and evangelical fervour uncannily resembles the role of Pentecostalism in contemporary South Africa.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid. passim; also compare the discussion on Christian Political Economy in A. M. C. Waterman, *Revolution, Economics and Religion* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1991).

¹⁵¹ Ibid. 10/11

¹⁵² Alec R. Vidler, *The Church in an Age of Revolution* (London: Penguin, 1961), 90-100.

¹⁵³ Waterman, *Revolution*, 222.

The overlapping cultural currents of early nineteenth-century Britain thus included a heady mix of orthodox and liberal theology, secular political economy, philosophical radicalism, whiggism, and romanticism. Christian political economy found its temporary place in this kaleidoscope as a combination of economics, religion, and liberal Whig thought,¹⁵⁴ and was reflected in the literature of the time. Readers of novels and educational tracts, circulating in the empire, were treated to representations of the intersection of economic and ethical concepts, exploring their compatibility or conflict. No author was more single-minded in the pursuit of popularising the new economics than Harriet Martineau. Building on the work of Adam Smith, Malthus, and James Mill, Martineau translated the principles of political economy into narrative form, and promoted her *Illustrations of Political Economy* as texts for the layman throughout the empire in the 1830s. Embedded in the period's conventional wisdom of the existence of a ladder of development for "inferior races" towards civilization, her novellas set in colonial and British environments are didactic tools to explain principles of economics. The complementarity of labour and capital, the disadvantages of monopoly and the benefits of competition, are illustrated in works of fiction. Martineau's promotion of political economy as a significant tool for understanding society was pitted against traditionalist sceptics such as Carlyle, and against social reformers who focused on the poor condition of industrial labour.¹⁵⁵

Strong voices criticizing the darker sides of the emerging British industrial economy were also coming from the Tory side of literature. Charlotte Elizabeth Tonna, editor of the *Christian Lady's Magazine* in the 1830s and 1840s, and author of novels dealing with the plight of working women and children, applied her pre-millenarian evangelical background to economic issues. Spiritual urgency, related to the expectation of an early coming of Christ, informed her literary campaigns for improvements in factory conditions and for a general recognition of social crises. The traditionalist Tory anti-capitalism of writers such as Tonna was engaged in constant debate with the promoters of the new political economy, secular or Christian. The reformist policies of Whig and "liberal Tory" governments were attacked by the

¹⁵⁴ Ibid. 200-202.

¹⁵⁵ Critical reviews of Martineau's use of political economy are contained in Claudia C. Klaver, "Imperial Economics", and Jonathan V. Farina, "Characterizing the Factory System", both in *Victorian Literature and Culture*, Vol. 35, No. 1 (2007), 35, 21-56.

traditionalists, and supported by the political economists.¹⁵⁶ From another angle, Victorian fiction authors explored the interface between gift exchange and commercial exchange, anticipating the twentieth-century academic discussion on this subject initiated by Marcel Mauss. In George Eliot's mid-Victorian novels, the conundrum of generosity and obligation versus economic action plays out in the conflicts between the traditional gift economy and the new commercial economy.¹⁵⁷ Her writing uses the Victorian ambiguity between valuing business success and criticizing ruthless profit-taking, striving for the ideal figure of the "honourable merchant" implicit in Adam Smith's twin concepts of benign self-interest (in the *Wealth of Nations*) and moral virtue (in the *Theory of Moral Sentiments*). The fiction writing exposes the blurred boundaries between gifts and market transactions, and makes clear that both contain elements of reciprocity, trust, irrationality, control, and symbolism.

Imperial Impact on the Cape

Much of this mix of religious, ethical, and economic discourse that characterized the economic transition in Britain reached the Cape, as it reached other parts of the empire. How much of this was really absorbed by an informed reading public in a colony that had been known during the Dutch period as not prone to intellectual discourse? During much of the eighteenth century, the few individuals at the Cape who could boast of book learning were the ministers of the Dutch Reformed church, who mostly used their access to intellectual capital to keep it from others, and to defend the status quo. It was only in the 1780s that the increasingly pietist

¹⁵⁶ A thorough discussion of the literary Tory backlash against the new political economy can be found in Kathryn Gleadle, "Charlotte Elizabeth Tonna and the Mobilization of Tory Women in Early Victorian England", in *The Historical Journal*, Vol. 50, No. 1 (2007), 97-117; and in Ella Dzelzainis, "Charlotte Elizabeth Tonna, Pre-millenarianism, and the Formation of Gender Ideology in the Ten Hours Campaign", in *Victorian Literature and Culture*, Vol. 31, No. 1 (2003), 181-191.

¹⁵⁷ Well covered in Kathleen Blake, "Between Economies in 'The Mill on the Floss': Loans versus Gifts", in *Victorian Literature and Culture*, Vol. 33, No. 1 (2005), 219-237; Marguerite Murphy, "The Ethic of the Gift in George Eliot's *Daniel Deronda*", in *Victorian Literature and Culture*, Vol. 34, No. 1 (2006), 189-207; Silvana Colella, "Gifts and Interests", in *Victorian Literature and Culture*, Vol. 35, No. 2 (2007), 397-415.

background of newly arriving Dutch Reformed ministers allowed them to recognise the value of a widespread reading culture, thus preparing the ground at the Cape for the reception of the avalanche of British written ideas in the early nineteenth century, and for the diversity of thought that came with it.¹⁵⁸

Knowledge flooding in from the Empire was absorbed into a rapidly changing society. Saul Dubow notes that "...from the 1820s to the early 1850s, ...knowledge and knowledge-based institutions formed part of a drive to establish a middle-class civic order at the Cape that resisted autocratic colonial rule and asserted the rights owing to respectable citizens of a British colony of settlement", before settling into a mode of self-government later in the century.¹⁵⁹ Participating in the universal progress of scientific and other knowledge was a desirable feature of the self-improving, educated citizen. In the 1820s and 1830s, the knowledge pumped out throughout the Empire by the "Colonial Reformers" had a strongly liberal and humanitarian tinge, spreading a "positive" view that liberal societies were to be established wherever settlers arrived, and that self-government within a global civilizing confederation was a worthy aim. Even marrying the colonized locals was frequently seen as part of the civilizing mission, as the LMS missionaries demonstrated in practice at the Cape. From the middle of the century onwards, rebellions in Jamaica and India, and the interminable Xhosa wars on the eastern Cape frontier tipped this optimism into disillusionment and a more "negative" view that dissent had to be suppressed in the colonies. The European revolutions of 1848 also served as a sobering reminder that the rank and file of the citizenry could not be trusted with the business of governance. Straight settler colonies with negligible indigenous population content could continue to indulge in liberal experiments, but others were to be kept in their place by authoritarian means. At that time, Cobden even worried that the authoritarianism in the colonies would feed back into British society. But before this period of disillusionment, the early nineteenth century flow of ideas from the imperial network into Cape Town was a liberal one.

¹⁵⁸ Gerald Groenewald, *On (not) Spreading the Word, Ministers of Religion, Reading and the Enlightenment at the Cape of Good Hope During the 18th Century*, paper presented at the workshop on "Written Culture in a Colonial Context, 16th to 19th Centuries", University of Cape Town, Dec. 2008.

¹⁵⁹ Dubow, *A Commonwealth of Knowledge*, 12.

In general, the Cape was not actively driving the imperial discourse, but was a taker of ideas and follower of events that were at best marginally related to local conditions. More important parts of the Empire, such as the Caribbean plantation colonies, the Australian convict colonies, India, or Canada were providing the issues of the day, and influenced policies. The abolition movement in the Empire was driven by the conditions on the sugar plantations of the Caribbean, making the Cape a "free rider" in the resulting system of financial compensation to slave owners. The energy of the evangelical revival and the mission efforts emanated from Britain. The issue of emigration to the settler colonies was focused on Australia and Canada, rather than on the Cape. Liberal ideas were spread by the British reformers and the reform acts, including the Catholic emancipation, the Irish settlements, and the lobby against the Corn Laws, all transported to the Cape through enlightened administrators, literature, and commerce. British settlers in the 1820s and 1830s brought with them a sense of upward mobility and the rise of a middle class of merchants and entrepreneurs, transforming a previously static colony of administrators with an agrarian hinterland. Significant numbers of British colonial administrators and military officers serving in India spent long periods of recreational leave at the Cape (choosing this as a temperate location where they could still draw colonial pay), earning themselves the local sobriquet of "Nabobs" and "Hindoos", or simply "Indians", indicating their spending power and good connections with the Cape colonial authorities, and injecting broader imperial views into the local discourse. "Indians" financed worthy local causes, and were consulted by the governors of the day. The British commission of inquiry of 1822, probing into the governor's autocratic style of governing the colony, succeeded in triggering a change of regime at the Cape that was in line with the transition from mercantilism to liberal free enterprise, and from authoritarian rule to liberal governance with an independent judiciary.¹⁶⁰ Clearly, the imperial dog was wagging the Cape tail in many respects, as events at the Cape closely followed the trends in Britain and the Empire between 1820 and the second half of the century.

An example of a policy that was not home-grown, but introduced into the Cape by the rotation of colonial administrators within the Empire, was that of using

¹⁶⁰ Ibid., 23.

convict labour for public works.¹⁶¹ In the early 1840s, a new colonial secretary in Cape Town, John Montagu, brought with him the system of using convicts for construction work from his previous posting in Van Diemen's Land. Although this coincided with a long local public discussion in Cape Town about an alleged "labour shortage" in the colony after slave emancipation (see the discussion about Cape economic discourse below), it was a straightforward transfer of administrative method from another colony. Furthermore, it had to be seen to be benign and humanitarian because of the omnipresence of British religious, humanitarian and liberal lobby groups that monitored the humane treatment of convicts. The policy's success almost turned the Cape Colony into a destination for transporting convicts, avoided at the eleventh hour only by a popular uprising by the irate citizenry of Cape Town in 1849/50.

Key personalities that shaped the Cape discourse were primarily those who arrived at the Cape during this time of transition, bringing with them the strands of thought that were informing the Empire. The reverend Philip was the main carrier of the message of evangelical mission, uplift of the indigenous population, and abolitionism. Thomas Pringle and John Fairbairn, creators of the Cape print media tradition, arrived with the heritage of the Scottish Enlightenment, Whig liberalism, local democracy and the concept of a free press as the forum of public opinion. William Porter, the long-serving attorney general of the time, injected Irish liberalism, humanitarianism, tolerance, and a Unitarian sense of religious freedom. Lord Somerset, the long-term governor of the colony in the early 1800s, represented the old guard of unreconstructed authoritarian Toryism, but kick-started some of the economic innovations at the Cape. Newly arrived British merchants such as Ebdon, Pillans, and Ross became mainstays of the emerging commercial elite of the town, with close ties to the rest of the Empire. Thomas Bowler, a self-made artist and art instructor, established a niche for the upwardly mobile lower middle class. The influx of innovative thought was channelled through the arrival of new individuals.

A clear trend is observable running from the 1820s to the 1840s: while the public discourse at the Cape at the beginning of the period is still dominated by local

¹⁶¹ Nigel Penn, "'Close and Merciful Watchfulness': the Origins and Nature of John Montagu's Convict System in the Mid-Nineteenth Century Cape Colony", unpublished draft, University of Cape Town, 2008.

news, local issues and local opinion, the end of the period is characterized by a heavy focus on news from the Empire as a whole, international issues, editorials on global matters, and a relative neglect of the parochial matters that occupied much of the early debate. The imperial issues of local government, convict and poor youth transportation, and matters of international diplomatic and military conflict dominated the news read in Cape Town in the late stages of the transitional period.

By being compelled to participate in the “Great Experiment”, slave emancipation in the British Empire during the early decades of the nineteenth century, the Cape Colony reaffirmed its nature as a part of the global reach of British imperial policy. By the 1830s, the time of accession of Queen Victoria, Cape Town was turning itself into an integral part of the network of British imperial cities, being pulled along by ideas, trade, customs and habits emanating from London. Both the liberal ideas of free trade, free speech and civil liberties, and the resistance to this trend by traditional aristocratic interests, were copied from the British colonial centre. The British Victorian preoccupations with the dangers of an unruly urban underclass and with the improvement of moral and social standards of the populace found their equivalents in early Victorian Cape Town. The dynamics of change in the city were reinforced by its nature as port of call for a variety of merchants, sailors, soldiers, and transients, all following the flows of trade and politics within the global Empire. London-based as well as Cape-based merchant families emerged, founding their fortunes on imperial trade. Professional and occupational diversity mirrored that of the colonial metropolis. The eighteenth-century status of Cape Town as a hinge between Holland and Batavia had been expanded to that of a cosmopolitan British colonial city strategically located between the British domains of the Atlantic and the Indian Ocean.¹⁶²

Cape Town itself was increasingly becoming different from its rural hinterland. In the thinly settled countryside and small communities, local hierarchies and cultural monopolies perpetuated a traditional worldview. At the urban Cape, as in other British settler colonies of the time and in Britain itself, a middle class was rising that aspired to literacy and education, better housing, small commerce development,

¹⁶² Dubow, *A Commonwealth*, chapters 3 and 4. See also Asa Briggs, *Victorian Cities* (Harmondsworth: Pelican, 1968); and Kellow Chesney, *The Victorian Underworld* (Harmondsworth: Pelican, 1972).

and franchise expansion and home rule. The evangelical flavour of British society injected a sense of morality and mission to improve the lot of others, and of uplifting “inferior” races and orders of society. In early 1841, a group of Australian Quakers who had just completed an eighteen-month tour of the mission stations of the Cape colony, issued an extensive report that highlighted the differences between urban centres and the rural areas.¹⁶³ They noted with approval the impressive “stage of civilization” achieved at the rural mission stations, praising not only the Moravians and the LMS, but also the Wesleyans, the Dutch Reformed and the French efforts. As they observed, the missionaries “...must forget the colour of their own skins, and look upon those among whom they laboured as their fellow creatures,...and that therefore no one distinction should be made respecting them in spiritual things”. On the other hand, they deplored the situation in the urban areas of Cape Town and Grahamstown, where alcoholism was rampant among the underclass, driven by the “dop system” of labourers’ wages being partly paid in liquor. Both British and Dutch urban employers resorted to this practice, the former apparently even more readily than the latter. The urban social fabric was much less stable than the rural one.

The Window of Cape Liberalism

An interesting dialectic played out during the first half of the century, the British settlers being torn between liberal/egalitarian principles that called for home rule with a broad non-racial franchise (echoing British representative government of 1832) plus free commerce, and their self-interest in preserving social status and political dominance vis-à-vis the non-white population of the colony. “Christian economics” and “orthodox liberal economics” overlapped to a certain extent, but the Christian evangelical mission entered into a complex engagement with the imperial authorities and the local settler interests. Liberal humanitarians at the Cape such as John Philip and John Fairbairn were practicing the same delicate balance as their contemporaries in other settler colonies, supporting local political rights and independence, but also realising that a strengthening of home rule would mean less

¹⁶³ SACA, Jan. 9, 1841.

imperial protection for the indigenous population. We will observe this conundrum when dealing with the political and social public discourse below.

But what exactly was the basis for this dance between "Cape liberalism" and paternalism that flavoured the debate during the early decades of the nineteenth century? This question has been researched to a significant extent by Andrew Bank, Stanley Trapido, Lalou Meltzer and others, and we do not need to delve into it more than necessary for our purposes here.¹⁶⁴ The British strand of secular thought that continued the tradition of liberal and utilitarian thinking influenced Cape Town at the same time as the humanitarian and evangelical strand of Christian thought did. Both focused on fairness, justice, and equal rights, rather than on democracy and self-rule. On the other hand, the line of argument that promoted local self-rule and democratic independence from a colonial centre did not necessarily imply that all inhabitants of the local jurisdiction were equal before the law: on the contrary, the franchise and therefore the power to participate in decisions was to be reserved to the more politically mature members of society, defined by having accumulated a minimum amount of assets. Others were to be guided gradually towards social and political maturity by education and religious discipline, over a long period of a civilizing process. Unsurprisingly, those professing adherence to both liberal humanitarianism and to democratic self-government were in a quandary, in the same way as British liberal democrats who had to contend with how to deal with the Irish and labouring underclass.

For some time, the fragile equilibrium in the minds of the decision-makers at the Cape could be sustained with a distinctly liberal flavour. This window coincides with the first decades of the nineteenth century British period, the time of transition we are concerned with. By 1836, Cape Town had acquired a non-racial municipal franchise, based on the relatively modest wealth threshold of £ 25, and by 1853 this

¹⁶⁴ See for example the extensive discussions in Jeffrey Butler, Richard Elphick, and David Walsh (eds), *Democratic Liberalism in South Africa* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan Univ. Press, 1987), particularly the contribution by Rodney Davenport; Stanley Trapido, "The Friends of the Natives", in Marks and Atmore (eds), *Economy and Society*; Andrew Bank, "Losing Faith in the Civilizing Mission", in Daunton and Halpern (eds), *Empire and Others*; Lalou Meltzer, "Emancipation, Commerce, and the Role of John Fairbairn's Commercial Advertiser", in Worden and Crais (eds), *Breaking the Chains*.

kind of franchise was extended to the colony's self-government as a whole. This, however, proved to be the high point of the convergence between egalitarianism and self-rule. As increasing numbers of non-white populations were incorporated into the colony with the steady advance of the eastern frontier into heavily settled Xhosa areas, white liberals who valued self-government more than equal rights parted company with those whose primary interest was to protect the rights of indigenous people. Secular autonomists pointed to the mid-century rebellions in the Empire, and to the experience of Chartist insurrection in Britain, and succeeded in pushing the franchise threshold up to £ 75, including a literacy requirement, by the late nineteenth century. The evangelical humanitarians pursued a course of championing and uplifting the underclass, even if that meant undermining colonial self-rule by the elite. Missionaries, at the Cape as in other settler colonies, would oppose movements towards settler independence that may damage indigenous rights, and would call for imperial intervention on the side of the natives to control the ambitions of the settlers.¹⁶⁵ Many disillusioned liberal humanitarians, Christian and secular alike, adopted a harder, more paternalistic attitude towards the indigenous and freed slave population. After mid-century, the window of convergence between non-racial egalitarianism and local democratic self-government had closed, and overlapping racial and economic stratification was taking hold.

Nevertheless, the short-lived period of convergence provided a heady mix of liberalism and change that shaped Cape Town culture deeply. Identities were being formed rapidly, and socio-political transformation was aided by the emerging independent journalism of the day, radical evangelism, and indigenous activists. Long-serving liberal government officials such as William Porter, the Attorney General, put an official stamp on the liberal mindset: in Porter's case, informed by Irish Enlightenment and a benign Unitarianism. Most importantly, new arrivals in the colony introduced the idea of an independent press and a printed forum for public opinion. Thomas Pringle arrived with the 1820 British settlers at the eastern frontier, but soon drifted into Cape Town, where the cultural and religious ferment was felt more keenly: British merchants were increasing their influence and established the Commercial Exchange as a symbol of the importance of trade and commerce;

¹⁶⁵ Porter, *Religion vs Empire*, 66-90. Andrew Bank, in "Losing Faith", has also reviewed the decline of the convergence during 1840-60, based on published opinion.

churches were being built, and the mission efforts were taking off; and, despite his generally reactionary instincts, the governor Lord Somerset had taken initiatives to bring about change, such as introducing sheep and horse breeding, pushing English as official language, putting master/slave relations on a more formal footing, starting schools, and introducing Scottish ministers into the Dutch Reformed church. Allied with other pupils of the Scottish Enlightenment such as George Greig and John Fairbairn, Pringle confronted the official resistance to independent publishing and engaged in several years of infighting with the governor about the need for a free press. The actual arrival of the freedom of the press at the Cape had to wait until 1827, after the removal of Lord Somerset.¹⁶⁶

Importantly, the divergence between Cape Town and the rural areas of the colony became more pronounced. Cape Town absorbed the innovations of imperial thought into its new Anglophone and established but anglicizing Dutch elite, and the upwardly mobile Muslim community. Concepts of socio-political liberalism, the free market, free wage labour, and competition among individuals were taking hold. In comparison, the hinterland, dominated by traditional Dutch settlers and the dependent Khoi, practiced socio-political conservatism and an effort to preserve old hierarchies. Coercion was more prevalent than wage contracting, and competition manifested itself as conflicts between cultural collectives, not individuals.¹⁶⁷ The Cape liberal window, with all its effects on Cape identities, was mostly evident in the urban area.

The set of ideas circulating in the empire superimposed itself on the increasing religious and cultural diversity of the Cape Colony, and on the urban economy that was integrating into global trade. The latter is what we turn our attention to next.

3. The Cape Urban Economy

The Economy in Transition

"Good Hope" for this good land yet,
If we would but dare and do,

¹⁶⁶ Jane Meiring, *Thomas Pringle, His Life and Times* (Cape Town: A.A.Balkema, 1968).

¹⁶⁷ Stanley Trapido, *The Emergence of Liberalism and the Making of 'Hottentot Nationalism' 1815-1834*, undated.

If we would but stand with ready hand,
 To grasp ere the blessings go.
 "Good Hope" for this good land yet,
 If we would but cease to hope
 That the rain will drop and bring a crop,
 While we idly sit and mope.
 "Good Hope" for this good land yet,
 If we work e'en while we wait,
 For the sun and rain to ripen grain,
 We have sown, then left to fate.¹⁶⁸

The chief clog to any government at the Cape always has been – and probably will long remain – the numerous mixed races with which it has to deal.¹⁶⁹

For the poor Cape, left to its own resources, it is a very sad condition, a slovenly, sleepy, retrograding place, no steamers, no Indians, no nothing...¹⁷⁰

Comments such as these, despairing of the willingness and ability of the Cape citizenry to pull itself together to generate political, economic, and social progress, were typical of the nineteenth century. By 1841, an editorial noted sadly that there seemed to be no shortage of capital in the colony for consumption purposes, but: "It is only in things useful, in things solid and lasting, in things that require foresight, public spirit and combination, that a want of capital is felt. There is abundance of capital, but it is diffused and inert. The real want in this respect is a want of real objects on which capital may be concentrated and employed for the capitalist. Great public works, for instance, in which capitalists, great and small, can by the purchase or sale of shares employ or withdraw their capital at pleasure."¹⁷¹ Modern theorists of development could not have put it better: short-term thinking trumped the long-term view.

The mid-Victorian era, the "great plateau bounded on either side by deep ravines and dangerous precipices", the "age of equipoise", was the platform for the

¹⁶⁸ W.R. Thompson, "Good Hope" (1867), quoted in Laidler, *The Growth and Government*, 334.

¹⁶⁹ Kollisch, *The Mussulman Population*, 20.

¹⁷⁰ Emma Rutherfoord, quoted in C. Pama, *Bowler's Cape Town 1834-1868* (Cape Town: Tafelberg, 1977), 37.

¹⁷¹ SACA, Nov. 27, 1841.

pax Britannica and a global expansion of a liberal economy.¹⁷² Self-confidence and a belief in progress propelled industrialisation and economic growth, along with the conviction that a linear path to development had to culminate in a British-style society. Some of this dynamism rubbed off on Cape Town and its hinterland, but perhaps not as intensively as one might expect. Banks and merchant houses were established, and the international transport infrastructure improved dramatically, but the traditional patterns of trade through the city, in wine, wool and grain, were changing only slowly. Rather than showing accelerated industrialisation in the wake of the injection of slave compensation capital in the late 1830s, the city economy remained dominated by artisans and small workshops, complemented by investors focusing on trading, construction, or mining. Economic fragmentation seemed to prevent vigorous participation in the Victorian economic boom, as well as any industrial investment to compensate for weakening commodity prices under free trade.¹⁷³

The first two decades of British rule at the Cape after the second and permanent occupation in 1806 may have injected a significant political and social stimulus into Cape Town society, but appeared to have left the stagnating economy to its own devices.¹⁷⁴ Catering to passing ships and their passengers, supporting military

¹⁷² Asa Briggs quoted in W.E. Mosse, *Liberal Europe – The Age of Bourgeois realism 1848-75* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1974); see also the substantial body of literature on the British Empire in the mid-Victorian era, such as Niall Ferguson, *Empire* (NY: Basic Books, 2004); or E. J. Hobsbawm, *The Age of Capital 1848-75* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1975).

¹⁷³ See the discussions in Charles H. Feinstein, *An Economic History of South Africa* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 2005); and in numerous contributions by Stanley Trapido, Nigel Worden, Vivian Bickford-Smith, Alan Mabin, and Robert Ross in edited volumes such as James and Simons, *The Angry Divide*, and Shula Marks and Anthony Atmore (eds), *Economy and Society in Pre-Industrial South Africa* (London: Longman, 1980). See also the general discussion in Worden et al, *Cape Town*, 159-170, and Denis Judd, *Empire* (London: HarperCollins, 1996), 112/113.

¹⁷⁴ The following discussion draws on the body of economic historiography of South Africa, including John Iliffe, "The South African Economy 1652-1997", in *Economic History Review*, Vol. 7, No. 1 (1999), 87-103; A. Atmore and S. Marks, "The Imperial Factor in South Africa in the Nineteenth Century", in *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, Vol. 3 (1973-75), 105-139; Lalou Meltzer, "Emancipation, Commerce and the Role of John Fairbairn's Advertiser"; and Robert Ross, "Rather Mental than Physical – Emancipations and the Cape Economy", both in Worden and Crais, *Breaking the Chains*.

units stationed at the Cape, and trading in the grain and wine produced in the immediate hinterland provided sustenance to a low-growth urban economy. A brief boom in wine exports to Britain, driven by British tariff concessions, fizzled after the concessions were withdrawn again. What revitalised the commercial life of the town was the windfall of British government compensation money that accrued to Cape slave owners after the formal emancipation of their human assets 1834-38.

Mortgages with slaves as collateral could be repaid, and additional capital was available for investment. About £ 1.2 million, minus the hefty discounts charged by London and Cape financial agents to repatriate the funds to the Cape, constituted a huge injection of capital for a small economy. Alas, no lasting productive value was created by the windfall. The funds were invested primarily in Cape real estate, often designed to provide cheap rental housing for the emerging coloured underclass that made Cape Town its home after being freed from bondage. Apart from the slowly growing wool export trade generated by the introduction of Merino sheep farming on the Eastern frontier, commercial activity in Cape Town remained structurally what it had been before the windfall.

Consequently, Cape Town business by mid-century was still dominated by a wide spectrum of wholesale and retail merchants, who constituted the main drivers of the urban economy. The spectrum ranged from the mercantile elite, strongly British oriented with commercial networks in the empire and the Cape administration, and focusing on international trade in wine and wool plus imports of consumer goods, through the growing group of local white merchants of both British and Dutch stock with interests in the local retail economy and property market, to the large group of coloured (both “Malay” and other) small traders, fishermen, and artisans. All were engaged in the wholesale or retail trade of commodities, consumer goods or services, the longer-term focus of investment being limited to real estate. The rapid industrialisation characteristic of the home country of the empire was largely missing, as investment at the Cape was not channelled into sustainable industrial production. Only part of this phenomenon can be explained by the sheer economic weight of the imperial centre, and the marginality of the Cape Colony in the imperial scheme of things, forcing the colony into mere commodity supply – Canadian, Australian, and Indian cities picked up industrialisation faster. Artisanal and commercial skills were readily available at the Cape, but were channelled primarily into the service economy.

Before the minerals boom of the 1870s and 1880s, the Cape Colony was the “Cinderella” of the empire,¹⁷⁵ known for its diversity-driven individualism and fractious society.

Population and Economy

Within this economically stagnant colony, the urban centre of Cape Town showed even less dynamism. While the colony's population more than doubled from about 60,000 in 1800 to 150,000 in 1840, Cape Town grew only from 17,000 inhabitants in 1805 to 21,000 in 1840.¹⁷⁶ Rather than attracting a growing labour force by generating new economic activities as urban theory would lead us to believe, the town remained an administrative and commercial centre without significant growth potential. Statistics in 1841 still showed only 2,500 houses in Cape Town, despite the upheavals of the slave emancipation aftermath after 1838. The town's population structure, however, remained similar to that of the colony as a whole: the colony in 1800 had about two non-whites (slave or free) for each white inhabitant; by 1840, the proportions were almost equal, as the white population increased faster through immigration and reproduction, while the natural growth of the slave population had been slower. Cape Town showed a similar structural change over the same period, indicating that no significant labour influx from the hinterland had taken place that would have boosted the non-white population.¹⁷⁷ The town remained a service economy, with a proliferation of retail establishments, and a large number of skilled craftsmen. Even when excluding the slaves in an 1820 survey of occupations, the significant numbers of carpenters, masons, tailors, fishermen, embroiderers, seamstresses, cobblers, coopers, or laundresses would have guaranteed a keen competitive atmosphere in a smallish town. Room hire and wine sales were of course

¹⁷⁵ Atmore and Marks, "The Imperial Factor". See also the brief discussions of the economic marginality and lack of manufacturing development in Robert Ross, "Structure and Culture in Pre-Industrial Cape Town", in James and Simons (eds), *The Angry Divide*, 40-46; and Vivian Bickford-Smith, *Ethnic Pride and Racial Prejudice in Victorian Cape Town* (Johannesburg: Wits Univ. Press, 1995), 16-18.

¹⁷⁶ Elphick and Giliomee, *The Shaping of South African Society*, 524; Worden et al, *Cape Town*, 89.

¹⁷⁷ SACA, Sept.9, Dec. 23, 1829; Jan.9, 1830; Aug. 28, 1839; Jan. 16, 1841.

among the prime business models in the "tavern of the seas".¹⁷⁸ After slave emancipation in the 1830s, the numbers of independent skilled craftsmen and unskilled labourers would have swelled even more, all trying to make a living in a limited and only slowly growing economy.

Rather than using the potential for economies of scale, individuals tried to make a living in a crowded market. Any manufacturing tended to be small-scale, and catered to the needs of the urban population. A steam mill was in operation since 1818. In the 1820s, a pottery kiln and several silversmith and copper/tinsmith operations were established. During the 1830s, iron foundries appeared, and joined water mills, two steam mills, tanning operations, breweries, candle makers, snuff producers, one hat and one soap manufacturer, brick kilns and whale fisheries. More sophisticated equipment and consumer goods were imported, and sold at auctions and special sales coinciding with the arrival of ships.¹⁷⁹

An economy of this kind did not loom large in the trade flows of the empire. Compared to the volumes of trade with the West Indies and other colonies, the share of the Cape in imperial trade was minuscule, well under 1% of British imports. Nevertheless, trade volumes in and out of Cape Town grew rapidly from a low base, as the city integrated itself into the British imperial network. Between the 1820s and the 1850s, exports grew from about £ 200,000 per year to about £ 1.7 million, the growth being mainly driven by raw materials such as the newly introduced wool business. Imports grew at a similar pace. However, the structural impact on the urban area was small, compared to the hinterland. The exodus from the colony of about 12,000 mostly Dutch farmers in the 1830s and 1840s in the wake of the emancipation of forced labour changed the countryside significantly, bringing in British and German replacement settlers, the wool industry, and new growth areas in the Eastern Cape and Natal. Wool gradually replaced wine as main export commodity, after the preferential British tariffs for Cape wine were abolished. Much of the export growth was due to re-exports through Cape Town, acting as an entrepot centre for the Cape trade route, and channelling trade to Mauritius and Reunion.¹⁸⁰

¹⁷⁸ Worden et al, *Cape Town*, 94-96.

¹⁷⁹ P.W. Laidler, *The Growth and Government*, 250, 338-350.

¹⁸⁰ Charles H. Feinstein, *An Economic History of South Africa*, 27-31; D. W. Rush, *Aspects of the Growth of Trade and the Development of Ports in the Cape Colony, 1795-1882*, MA thesis, University

We seem to be observing a paradox, where the urban area was not the one that led the economic change, but followed the changes in the rural areas. Cape Town was catering to the changing trade flows and hinterland trends, using the flexibility of its competitive and entrepreneurial individuals, but not generating new business models that would create employment beyond the needs of the urban area.

The Commercial Exchange

One of the most successful business models that suited the circumstances of Cape Town in the early British period was that of the wholesale merchant with international connections. As merchandise trade through Cape Town was growing robustly, this was a potentially lucrative enterprise with relatively modest investment and manpower needs, and sufficient flexibility to switch between traded goods if the market changed. The trading houses that had sprung up in the first decades of British rule at the Cape did well out of wine exports, but had no trouble shifting their attention to wool exports as demand for Cape wine plummeted in Britain. A steady demand for consumer goods at the Cape provided a regular profit base from imports, and transshipment of goods in Cape Town for re-export continued regardless of the local demand and supply situation. Risk was diversified, and financial commitments were linked to predictable trade patterns.¹⁸¹

The symbol of the importance of this business was the Commercial Exchange. From the small beginnings of a "commercial coffee house" under the first British occupation of the Cape, and the "Kamer van Commercie" under Batavian rule, the Cape Town merchants succeeded in gathering enough subscriptions to lay the foundation stone of an impressive building in the centre of town in 1819, which should become the hub of commercial and public discourse known as the Commercial Exchange. The names of Hamilton Ross, Ebden, Pillans, Thomson, Bergh, Christian, Chiappini, Rutherford, Hertz, Murray, Collison and a number of others, prominent merchants at the Cape and involved in the early days of the Exchange, occur with regularity in the commercial, social, and political annals of the colony. They were the

of Cape Town, 1972, 23-28. See also the discussion on economic background of the colony in Ross, *Beyond the Pale*, 15-23, 93-95.

¹⁸¹ R.F.M. Immelman, *Men of Good Hope* (Cape Town: Chamber of Commerce, 1955), 71-80.

voices driving much of the discourse, the raisers of funds for a variety of charitable causes, schools and private infrastructure, and the initiators of petitions and representations to the colonial government. Eventually, they would be well represented on the first councils that led to self-rule at the Cape.¹⁸²

The Exchange grew into a centre of information and knowledge for the commercial elite, where journals, newspapers and books could be consulted that had been obtained from passing ships, and public discourse could take place that was relatively independent of the government of the day. During the 1830s, a division of labour developed between the Exchange and the newly established knowledge institutions of the South African Library and Museum, the Exchange focusing on more current published material that was of relevance to the business at hand. Similarly, the emergence in the late 1820s of a free press in the form of the South African Commercial Advertiser, the culmination of the efforts of Greig, Pringle and Fairbairn, took over much of the functions of the public forum.¹⁸³

Competition and Monopoly

While imbued by the spirit of free enterprise, free markets and competition, the merchants were not beyond lobbying for their own interests even if this meant a possible curtailment of competition. We will see below how the public debate about removing the Far Eastern trade monopoly of the East India Company was conducted in high free-market dudgeon, while at the same time numerous petitions were fired off to ask for a restoration of the preferential tariffs for Cape wine. On the whole, the Cape merchants certainly favoured a sweeping away of monopolies in the interest of the growth of free trade, in line with the principles of political economy emanating from Britain. Nevertheless, when established privileges were threatened, protectionism was tolerated. High principles were put aside with pragmatic ease, in order to ensure the smooth continuation of business.

The dispute about the East India Company's formal monopoly in the empire's trade with China and other eastern sources of goods occupied much of the Cape merchants' time. The trade in tea was the focal point, as this was a highly visible item

¹⁸² Ibid., 29-42.

¹⁸³ Ibid., passim. See also Dubow, *A Commonwealth of Knowledge*, 24-39.

consumed at the Cape. Since the early 1820s, the merchants who were to form the core of the Exchange argued that the Company's monopoly was making tea much more expensive than necessary, and that supplies were deliberately limited to keep prices high. Similarly, they petitioned the Cape and British governments to allow non-Company merchants to trade freely between China and Britain, without having to seek permission from the Company. Using their imperial networks and their London champions, the Cape of Good Hope Trade Society, the merchants lobbied the British government vigorously. It was only during the 1830s, however, that Cape merchants were first allowed to use a loophole in the Company's charter, and import tea from England independently. The remaining privileges of the East India Company were eventually removed, but well into the 1840s, the Cape's potentially lucrative entrepot trade in Far Eastern and non-Empire goods was limited by British trading restrictions. Despite the best efforts of the independent merchants, a more open trade regime had to wait for the more comprehensive liberalisation in the empire around mid-century, enabling Cape Town to act as a free port.¹⁸⁴

Despite the free-trade tenor of the political economy discourse of the time, much echoed at the Cape, the commercial realities of trade were much more limiting, hampered by protectionist regulations. Taking their cue from the trade theorists, however, the Cape Town traders used the arguments of the free-traders to chip away at the edifice of protectionism. Small successes were pocketed pragmatically, loopholes were accepted as reasonable second-best solutions.

Banking on Commerce

Given the heavy reliance of the Cape Town economy on trade and commerce, both wholesale and retail, the availability of credit was of paramount importance. The absence of private banking at the beginning of the nineteenth century hampered not only the commercial activities of Cape Town merchants and retailers, but also the businesses of the wine and grain farmers in the hinterland. Adding to the transaction costs in the colony was the fact that at the beginning of the century it was a multi-

¹⁸⁴ Immelman, *Men of Good Hope*, 81-85; Rush, *Aspects of the Growth*, 29-35. See also the discussion in Lalou Meltzer, "Emancipation, Commerce & the Role of John Fairbairn's Advertiser", in Worden and Crais (eds), *Breaking the Chains*, 169-171.

currency economy: apart from the gradually appearing pound sterling, transactions were conducted or accounted for in the prevalent basic Dutch colonial rixdollars, schillings and stuyvers; Indian rupees and "star pagoda" coins; Dutch guilders; Spanish dollars ("pieces of eight"); and Portuguese money. Exchange rates between these currencies varied over time, and merchants and consumers were kept on their toes to identify whether they were paying and receiving correct amounts. Lady Anne Barnard's shopping records for her extensive household and entertainment at the Cape are instructive. A purchase of 246 lbs of meat from a local supplier was quoted at 2 Dutch schillings per lb, billed for a total of £ 24/12s/0d, and paid in 98.5 Spanish dollars. 460 bottles of claret were imported for a total cost of £ 50. As no bank credit was available for such bulk purchases, customers ran up credit with the supplier until they obtained currency to settle. Lady Anne's account ran for five years before it was settled.¹⁸⁵

To address the shortage of credit and of money in circulation, the Dutch authorities had already established a government-owned Lombard Bank before the turn of the century, providing mortgaged credits. It was succeeded by a Lombard and Discount Bank in 1808, still government-owned, which took deposits from the public at 5% and discounted bills at 6%, issuing paper money. An inflation of paper rixdollars ensued, leading to a weakening of the rixdollar exchange rate against the pound sterling from the original 4s to 1s 6d in 1825. The lack of credibility of the government bank lending, and the difficulty of obtaining bills of exchange, led to a boom in private lending by local individuals, commonly backed by assets of the debtor. For the first four decades of the century, until the first private bank was opened in 1837, the window for private lending entrepreneurs was lucrative.¹⁸⁶

The van der Poel family was representative of this type of lender. Starting in 1804 as the widow of a wealthy burgher, Susanna van der Poel used her inherited estate of more than 112,000 Dutch guilders (about 37,000 rixdollars, or over £ 9,000) to provide long-term financing at 6% per annum against collateral. With inflation at 2% at the time, a real interest rate of 4% constituted useful income for a widow. By

¹⁸⁵ Lady Anne Barnard's Cape Town, in *Quarterly Bulletin of the South African Library*, Vol.1 (1946-47), 33-36. See also Immelman, *Men of Good Hope*, 112.

¹⁸⁶ Pierre Morgenrood, "A Woman of Substance at the Cape", *Quarterly Bulletin of the National Library of South Africa*, Vol. 55 (2000-01), 7-15, 85-93, 123; Immelman, *Men of Good Hope*, 112.

the 1840s, her son administered her estate of about 450 outstanding loans, ranging from 5,000 to 35,000 guilders equivalent. Loans were extended mostly to members of Cape Town's Dutch community, many for mortgages with real estate as collateral.¹⁸⁷

Not all loans by private lenders were backed by real estate: slaves were a useful asset for collateral, and could be sold when liquidity was required. At the beginning of the century, Mirza Abu Taleb Khan sold his slave for 500 rixdollars, approximately comparable to the going rate of £ 125 for an average slave as reported by Khan's acquaintance Lady Anne. By 1823, more than 4,000 slaves were mortgaged, and by the time of emancipation half the slave population of the colony was alleged to have been used as collateral.¹⁸⁸

Work by Meltzer and others has established that urban private lenders, primarily the major merchants of Cape Town, exhibited different creditor strategies than rural lenders or the government bank. Real estate and slaves, offered as collateral by agricultural debtors, apparently was too cumbersome for the urban merchants. Recovery of the collateral in the case of default may not have offered the speed and flexibility needed for the urban economy. Only the urban wine merchants, closely linked to the Cape wine industry, joined large farmers and government agencies in providing loans secured by land or slaves. Merchant lenders tended to extend credit on the basis of bills of exchange, although some private creditors, such as the van der Poel family, preferred real estate as security.¹⁸⁹

By the 1840s, the era of independent private lenders was coming to an end. The Cape of Good Hope Savings Bank was established in 1831, taking deposits from the public. In 1837, the first joint stock bank, the Cape of Good Hope Bank, was launched by a group of merchant shareholders to smooth the provision of commercial credit and liquidity, followed later by the South African Bank and several others. We will see below how competition manifested itself in the taking of different positions on the issues of interest rates, paper money, and credit policy in the public debates of the time.

¹⁸⁷ Morgenrood, "A Woman of Substance".

¹⁸⁸ Meltzer, "Emancipation, Commerce", 178/9.

¹⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 179-181.

Abolition Compensation and Its Uses

The Cape squandered its big opportunity to use a financial windfall wisely. The compensation money for the loss of human assets through slave emancipation, worth more than £ 1 million in London, found its way to Cape slave owners during the late 1830s. Rather than looking for long-term productive investment, the Cape recipients of the compensation for the loss of their slaves poured the windfall funds into repayment of debts, consumption, and real estate. Bankruptcies declined during the years of the influx of the compensation money after 1834, and imports jumped dramatically. Merchants were accepting compensation claims in lieu of payment for imports. Conversions of land held in long-term leases into freehold land rose significantly, indicating that much of the compensation money went into land. The sudden glut in the money supply depressed interest rates, as the government bank could not identify enough demand for the financing of major investments. Nevertheless, it did not seem to have led to significant inflation: beef in 1800 was reported to cost 2.5-4p per pound, but was still listed at 3p per pound in 1852. Unskilled labour wages in Cape Town in 1800 averaged 1s 6p per day, and a comparable 43s 9p per month in 1847. Skilled tradesmen were paid 3s per day in 1800, and a range of 2s 6p to 7s 6p in 1847.¹⁹⁰

The only observable rise in production activity was in the construction of housing: the number of brick kilns more than doubled within a few years, and urban and suburban plots were subdivided to allow the construction of small-scale houses for the newly freed labourers and craftsmen. On the whole, the compensation windfall brought about a temporary boom in consumption and real estate development, without leaving a legacy of productive investment that would sustain long-term growth.¹⁹¹

This short-lived boom at the Cape stands in stark contrast to the world economy of the time. From the 1820s onwards, until the acceleration of global economic growth around 1870, the world economy showed slow but steady growth, driven by Europe, Latin America, and particularly the British settler colonies other

¹⁹⁰ "Lady Anne Barnard's Cape Town"; "Emigration to the Cape a 100 Years Ago", *Quarterly Bulletin of the South African Library*, Vol. 2, No. 4 (June 1948), 112-117.

¹⁹¹ Meltzer, "Emancipation, Commerce", 181-190.

than the Cape. The settler colonies, including the by then independent USA, benefited not only from a strong rise in population due to immigration, but also from a significant increase in output per capita. The latter could only come about as the result of sustained investment with a long time horizon, something that seems to have been absent at the Cape. Global foreign trade 1820-1870 rose four times as fast as economic output, reflecting the liberalisation of world trade under British pressure, and the rapid integration of the world economy into the first global system. Compared to this trajectory, the Cape shows a strong increase of foreign trade over the period, much of it due to the increased wool exports after the successful introduction of Merino sheep, but indicates stagnating output in other production after reaching a kind of natural limit of the absorption of its own agricultural products after the 1820s. The steady growth of output per capita seen in other settler colonies is not evident, indicating a lack of significant manufacturing investment.¹⁹²

The Infrastructure Conundrum

One of the obstacles to investment was the chronically poor infrastructure at the Cape. During the first half of the nineteenth century, it was by no means clear that government had an obligation to invest in major infrastructure works. Although flagged as one of the basic functions of the state by Adam Smith much earlier, the discussion was still in progress during the early 1800s: roads were established and maintained by those over whose land they passed, urban water supply was private or cooperative at best, and urban lighting was up to individual initiative. We will see below how vigorous the public discourse was on this matter in Cape Town.

Among the reasons of the government's reluctance to get involved, besides the issue of principle, was the tenuous financial situation of the public purse. During most of the period examined here, up to the 1840s, the colonial administration could barely cover recurrent expenditures, mainly government salaries, from its budget. In 1830, only 6% of public expenditure in the colony were spent on capital projects, while the rest went for recurrent spending. Three quarters of the budget were devoted

¹⁹² Angus Maddison, *Monitoring the World Economy 1820-1992* (Paris: OECD, 1995), 61-64; the Cape comparison is derived from Ross, *Beyond the Pale*, 15-23, and Rush, *Aspects of the Growth*.

to the salaries of the civil service.¹⁹³ Large amounts of debt were incurred just to stay afloat; considerations of major capital expenditure, excepting public buildings, were out of the question. The continuing issue of paper rixdollars depreciated the Cape currency against sterling, and sterling loans had to be obtained from Britain. It was not until the 1840s, under the colonial Secretary Montagu, that a concerted effort was made to reduce the colony's huge debt burden. Selling of government land, collection of tax arrears, selling convict labour, and the imposition of stamp duties helped to stabilize the colony's public finances.¹⁹⁴

The first public sector infrastructure entity, apart from military investments in roads and harbours, was the Central Board of Commissioners of Public Roads that was established in 1834, the year in which a Legislative Council that included colonists and senior officials to advise the governor, was created. But it was not before the 1840s that government investment in roads and passes took off, making transport and travel between Cape Town, Stellenbosch and the communities beyond the encircling mountain chains less risky and more efficient. Only from the 1860s onwards, the government started to invest in harbour and railway infrastructure.¹⁹⁵ The first water supply pipes and public fountains for the urban population of Cape Town were constructed during the first British decades, but had to be supplemented by the establishment of private bath facilities in the 1830s. In 1840, shortages became severe, and the control of the water supply was handed over to the municipality. A private water supply company was formed, but failed. Eventually, in the 1850s, the municipality managed to finance and construct the first reservoirs to maintain a steady supply.¹⁹⁶

During the early decades of the 1800s, infrastructure investment was a matter of collecting funding pledges from private investors until enough resources were committed to start the construction of a road or a jetty, which had to promise a return to the investors. Putting together these consortia for project finance was tedious, as

¹⁹³ SACA, 9 Jan. 1830.

¹⁹⁴ Pierre Morgenrood, "Public Sector Capital Expenditure and its Funding in the Cape Colony", *Quarterly Bulletin of the South African Library*, Vol. 48, Nos. 3 and 4 (1994), 156/7.

¹⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 97-101.

¹⁹⁶ Pama, *Bowler's Cape Town*, 33-35; Jose Burman, *The Cape of Good Intent* (Cape Town: Human & Rousseau, 1969), 98-99.

the public discourse demonstrates. The obstacles encountered in raising funds for infrastructure projects were the same as those for collecting funds for schools, hospitals, and churches, exacerbated by the need to guarantee a return. Nevertheless, small projects could be implemented in this manner, and the optimists were envisaging opportunities for private financing of major transport links to make the Cape economy more competitive internationally. After a petition in the 1820s by merchants to ease the timber shortage in Cape Town by dedicating a government ship to the transport of timber from the Eastern Cape was denied, the private Good Hope Steam Navigation Company was established in 1836. A ship was purchased and used profitably, and was replaced after it sunk in 1840.¹⁹⁷ This was by no means unusual at the time: public/private partnerships, or fully privately financed infrastructure projects were imperial realities during the first half of the nineteenth century. Government matching funds often were available if enough private funding had been committed. Much acrimonious public discussion and negotiation preceded such projects, a fact that brings us back to the nature of the debate at the Cape, explored below.

The harbour of Cape Town is a good case in point. Table Bay and its approaches are vulnerable to sudden storms, and the creation of a protected harbour was constantly under discussion. As public funds were scarce, repeated efforts were made since the beginning of the century to put together financing for a breakwater or stone pier project. In 1833, one was started but abandoned because of bickering between the Council and the investors. Instead, several "dwarf jetties" at significantly lower cost were constructed as public/private partnerships. The public construction of a breakwater to create a protected harbour had to wait until the 1860s, finally reducing the high volume of shipwrecks in Table Bay. Gas street lighting, which had been introduced in London around 1800, did not appear in Cape Town until the 1840s, when Baron von Ludwig established a private Gas Light Company which gradually started to install street lighting.¹⁹⁸

¹⁹⁷ Laidler, *The Growth and Government*, 263/4.

¹⁹⁸ Pama, *Bowler's Cape Town*, 25, 32-33.

Municipal Order

In an urban space such as the early nineteenth-century Cape, the centrifugal forces of individualisation militated against the maintenance of an orderly municipality. Observers during the first two decades of British rule after 1806 noted the "lax manner in which powers were used", and directions were carried out. A rudimentary policing service was in existence since 1819, the first building codes and regulations appeared in the 1820s, dealing primarily with proper residential construction standards to avoid fire hazards. A proper municipal administration, however, had to wait until the late 1830s: in 1836, permission was granted to form municipalities by meetings of householders with a minimum rental or tax payment record. The householders were to elect municipal commissioners to administer the community, and wardmasters (an already existing local office) to monitor the neighbourhoods. In 1839, Cape Town as seat of government was created as a municipality by ordinance, drawing its main revenue from property taxes.¹⁹⁹

The main concerns of the urban administrators were the maintenance of order and cleanliness, the control of commercial anarchy, and the apprehension of criminals. Maintenance of the few public amenities was attempted valiantly: public water furrows running along the streets were kept clear, footbridges over them were constructed, and the canal walls were repaired. Residents crushing the water furrows by driving coaches over them into their driveways were a constant source of concern. So was the state of the Roggebaai beach in Table Bay, focus of the small fisheries business, after a new butchers' shambles was approved to be located there in 1821 and promptly polluted the entire beach area. Wealthier residents moved further out to Green Point to escape the filth accumulating on the beach. By 1840, the canals and ditches in town were covered to improve sanitation and appearances.

The police force was improved gradually, and after much discussion. From the early simple watchman service, the force expanded and acquired a police superintendent (also responsible for fire-fighting). By the 1840s, a dispute had erupted about the whether the jurisdiction of the police was to include the monitoring of the steadily deteriorating urban cleanliness and sanitary standards. Complaints

¹⁹⁹ Ibid., 9-10; Laidler, *The Growth and Government*, 213-218.

about the inefficiency of coordination between the municipal administration and the police proliferated, as did concerns about the safety of the Grand Parade square.

Having reviewed the confluence of the Empire-driven religious, cultural, political, social, and economic transitions at the Cape, let us turn to the public discourse dealing with these matters, to validate the linkages between religious diversity and economic behaviour.

University of Cape Town

Chapter Three: The Cape Public Discourse, 1820-1850

Whether looking at the developments in the religious/cultural sphere, or in the social/economic one, the importance of public debate in settling just about anything in Cape Town at this time of transition is glaringly obvious. A community of individualists seeking their identities and their positions in the social tapestry needed the public sphere to air grievances and arrive at workable solutions. The voice of a weak civil authority with limited financial resources was drowned by the clamour of a myriad competing interests.

Starting in the late 1820s, the emergence of a free press and the increasing assertiveness of the Cape Town educated population created a growing public space of discourse. The concerns and arguments of the community came into the open, and the platforms of newspapers and public meetings increased the circle of participants in the debate. Political, economic, social and cultural decisions by the authorities and by institutions became subject to public scrutiny and criticism. It is this public discourse which we will now examine for indicators of any correlation between religious and socio-economic mode of argument. The attitudes that emerge in the observed public debate contain value judgments and cultural premises that are relevant to the question at hand: namely, whether the urban diversity of religions and ethnicities, flavoured by the British imperial strands of thought and economic realities, indicates a particular path of development at the Cape.

The cultural paradigm that underlies the stream of public opinion can be read in relation to a set of yardsticks that are drawn in simplified form from the much more detailed survey questions of the World Values Surveys designed by Inglehart and his co-authors. The assessment where on the spectrum of values the gist of public discourse is located is a qualitative one: it is sufficient to record, for example, whether the confidence in religious institutions is high or low, or whether respect for authority is pronounced or weak, or whether trust in dealing with unrelated people exists to a significant extent or not. The values help to locate the Cape Town urban society of the early nineteenth century on the Inglehartian cultural map in which one axis plots the location between the poles of traditional static authority and modernist

dynamic secularity, and the other axis defines the place between communitarian survivalist solidarity and individualist self-expression. They serve as rough guide to the location of the society on a development path that meanders within the coordinates of the traditional/secular-modernist and the collective-survival/self-expression axes. What this location tells us is what kind of socio-economic development is correlated with the diversity-driven religious/cultural environment at the Cape.

The time period examined starts with the first major transition from serfdom to personal independence, Ordinance 50 in 1828 (coinciding with the introduction of a free press as public forum of opinion at the Cape), and runs through to circa 1840/41, the years immediately following the slave emancipation period 1834-38. This transformational period is characterised by rapid social change, a mass search for new identities, integration into the British global economy, and the injection of evolving British religious, social and economic thought into the colony. While the public discourse of the time naturally includes the concerns of the whole colony, we focus here primarily on the attitudes expressed by Capetonians, and relating to matters of urban interest. Nevertheless, the broader issues of rural mission, Eastern Frontier conflict and British settlement there, and the economy of the colony as a whole feature in Cape Town public opinion, and illustrate the prevalent views of society. Values and attitudes were derived from (1) reported news items, (2) detailed renderings of public meetings and court proceedings, (3) editorials, and (4) letters to the editor or open letters printed in the press. The main forum of public debate and publication of record from the late 1820s onwards was Fairbairn's newspaper, the "South African Commercial Advertiser" (SACA). These findings were checked selectively by reference to contemporary descriptions, diaries, and narratives, and archival records.

1. Discourse on Religion

Christians, Muslims, and Heathens

The emancipation of the Khoi and Free Blacks to a theoretically equal status before the law through Ordinance 50 in 1828 triggered an assessment of the status of

Muslims in Cape Town. Although the open and formal practice of Islam had been tolerated by Batavian and British authorities since 1804, editorial opinion in 1828 noted that "an industrious and peaceable class of inhabitants whom an enlightened policy would have cherished and perfected, were up to 3 July 1828 treated with the utmost harshness and ignominy....They could not hold landed property nor remain in the Colony, though born there, without special permission and ample security....They were liable to arrest without warrant – and yet they were taxed up to the lips, like the other free inhabitants. Since their Emancipation, their conduct has been most exemplary....Many of them are men of the most estimable character, inoffensive in their demeanour and humane and generous in their dispositions."¹ Evidently, a reservoir of humanitarian and liberal tolerance had been tapped that coincided with the conviction that all taxpayers should be treated equally. The fact that these solid citizens were votaries of "Mohammedanism" was beside the point for the editorialist.

This relaxed attitude towards the presence of Muslims in the midst of the Cape society had been building for some time. At the beginning of the century, an apparently well-to-do Indian Muslim traveller published his recollections of a stay at the Cape before continuing his journey to England.² Carrying sufficient funds and saleable assets such as muslin and a "Negro slave", he was able to afford to abandon a poorly captained ship, and pay for lodgings and board at the Cape for a considerable time until a higher-quality means of transport became available. Lady Anne Barnard was among his acquaintances, a name he did not neglect to drop in his report. A keen cultural observer, Khan noted the rudeness and avarice of Dutch, Scottish and English landlords in Simonstown and Cape Town, the susceptibility of local Dutch ladies to the charms and presents of the English newcomers, and the brutality of Dutch masters towards their slaves. More importantly for our purposes, he noted the high incidence and visibility of Muslims in the urban area, and reported on the economic situation of the strongly Muslim lower orders. Slaves were being hired out for one to four Rixdollars per day, and a slave tailor was able to accumulate enough money to purchase his and his wife's freedom. Khan mentioned approvingly that the Muslim landlord he eventually rented from turned out to be a most pleasant change from his

¹ SACA, 27 Dec. 1828.

² Mirza Abu Taleb Khan (trans. Charles Stewart), *The Travels of Mirza Abu Taleb Khan in Asia, Africa and Europe 1799-1803*, Vol. I (London: Longman, 1810).

former non-Muslim ones. Apparently, Muslims were to be found also among the better-off members of society: Khan notes the presence of wealthy Muslim merchants and landlords, and of recent immigrants such as a Sheikh Abdulla who had arrived from Mecca, married a local "Malay" woman and settled in Cape Town. Khan moved comfortably in these circles, and eventually was able to sell his slave and other valuables to purchase his onward passage. The presence of Muslims, both rich and poor, was perceived as an unexceptional fact already at the turn of the century.

Pragmatic attitudes towards the Cape Town Muslims were not limited to economic and civil rights issues. Newspaper debate dealt with the fact that court proceedings required the administering of oaths to Muslim witnesses. As Muslims frequently appeared in Cape courts, the standard Christian oath was not available to bind witnesses to the truth, and a Muslim version had to be used. Imams ("Malay Priests" in the diction of the day) were needed as the witnesses would not swear an oath without the imam's guidance. The problem arose that imams had to spend inordinately long times attending court cases, not an easy thing to do for a part-time religious leader who had a regular commercial occupation. Helpful letters to the editor suggested to institute a reimbursement system to compensate the imams for the productive time lost.³

The legal pragmatism extended to other groups that were not Christian. An editorial in 1830 noted that the court practice of routinely dismissing cases brought by plaintiffs who could not answer theological questions coherently was discriminatory. Strong criticism was directed at the hypocrisy of the courts that deprived cases of the testimony by "unbelievers" while tolerating that the 30,000 slaves and 34,000 Khoi in the colony were not receiving the legally mandated religious instruction. Poorly educated plaintiffs who were abused by owners and masters thus were unable to make their case in court. In general, it was noted that many witnesses of good character and with honourable service were excluded on the grounds of the ignorance of religious matters, and not being able to take the oath. A fair application of justice to all was seen as still in the distant future.⁴

To remedy the widespread lack of religious education for the underclass, public opinion did not limit itself to the promotion of the Christian faith. A letter to

³ SACA, 15 Aug. 1829

⁴ SACA, 17 July 1830

the editor noted that the "Malay" Muslim community of Cape Town was an important contributor to society, but suffered from under-education. The solution proposed was to subsidise the printing and wide distribution of the Qur'an ("their prayer book") in Arabic, English and Dutch to facilitate the educational uplift of Muslims. Given that the letter writers and readers of the newspaper were overwhelmingly Christian, this was an astonishingly tolerant and realistic position.⁵

However, the pragmatism was tempered by a felt need to protect the proselytising efforts of the Christian missions. The urban missions were struggling in 1829, and were constantly short of funds. The Wesleyan mission was forced to close its "Day School for the Heathen" because of low attendance. It is noteworthy that the Wesleyans did not seem to have the same problem in rural areas, where new mission found ready recruits. The SAMS, on the occasion of the 30th anniversary of its project for "instruction of the coloured population in town", reported that it was in debt to the tune of 1,000 Rixdollars, and was short of donations. Letters to the editor noted with concern that the law that required the indentured children of "prize negroes" to receive schooling and religious instruction was being routinely flouted by white masters, thus opening the door to conversions to Islam. An indignant white citizen wrote in pursuit of this matter on behalf of a "prize negro" woman. The same complaints surfaced with respect to the religious instruction of slaves: the rules called for children of Christian slaves to be baptized, and for all Christian owners to ensure that slave children in their care were to be schooled up to age 10. The rules were ignored, and the vacuum was filled by Muslim education. Editorial opinion castigated slave owners for their hypocritical descriptions of slaves as heathens, and placed the blame for slaves' lack of education and moral instruction on the owners. It noted that slaves had an excellent record of law obedience, 99% of slave convictions being for "petty insubordination", and that education and moral uplift would help to eliminate these petty offenses. Owners who neglected religious instruction and secular education were "destroying the basis of skill building and morality", were inhibiting the "civilisatory process", and deserved to be severely punished for their neglect.⁶

Not only the slaves whose education had been neglected by owners were caught in the Muslim safety net. Indentured British labourers and craftsmen had been

⁵ SACA, 22 Sept. 1830

⁶ SACA, 1 July, 12 Aug., 9 Sept., 23 Dec. 1829.

imported privately in the 1820s by Cape entrepreneurs who hoped to hire them out in the colony. As this business could not take off because of lack of demand, the importers were ruined, labourers drifted into the underclass, and many turned to alcohol. Their children were reported to have been rejected by Christian society but accepted by the "Malay community" of Cape Town, and to be growing up as Muslims.⁷ Where one faith failed to capture drifting souls, the other one stepped in promptly.

The question of having formal title to land was a recurring concern of the commentators of the time, reflecting the premise of classical political economy that secure private property was a key ingredient in a thriving economy. Ordinance 50 was seen to be the opening to establish this principle as valid for the Khoi and Free Blacks. In the same vein as the above promotion of land title for tax-paying Muslims, an 1829 account of a Khoi squatter in the Cederberg area made the same point. The Khoi farmer had informally occupied an unused area of over 50 acres and had improved the land to allow the cultivation of cash crops such as wheat, tobacco and fruit, and livestock. Newly arrived Irish settlers then claimed the land for themselves, but were prevented by the authorities from evicting the Khoi farmer on the basis of rights acquired under Ordinance 50. Similar cases were reported elsewhere. Editorial opinion supported the colonial authorities against the land grab by the settlers on the basis of the argument that individual merit, initiative and industry should be rewarded with formal property rights. Land title was to be the key to motivate people to become sedentary and productive. At the same time, the editorialist emphasised the liberal view that the Khoi "differ only in the colour of their skin" from Europeans, and are just as prone to respond to economic incentives to settle and farm as anybody else. The editorial takes the opportunity to debunk the conventional wisdom that saw the Khoi as having a "racial instinct" and "necessary habit" to be nomadic, and notes that this is a result of an arid climate and the lack of markets, which changes when land is irrigated and markets are within reach. The support of the property rights of the Khoi and Free Blacks, and the encouragement of their accumulation of further property was seen to be an important cause to push in the wake of Ordinance 50, to prevent a backlash from the white community.⁸

⁷ SACA, Dec.19, 1829.

⁸ SACA, 27 June, 22 Aug., 10 Oct. 1829.

Cooperation and Competition

While Cape Town Christian missionaries were struggling, their upcountry counterparts enjoyed a privileged position. Without local competitors, the mission stations established themselves and thrived. Wesleyan outposts such as the one at Camiesberg had no trouble collecting funds for the establishment of an auxiliary society (a local branch), including from many local "native speakers". In the LMS station at Zuurbraak, an authoritarian missionary, Mr. Seidenfaden, who had abused his position for six years, could only be removed after mass petitions by the captive inhabitants. Only mass action could effect change in the local monopoly. On a more positive note, a visit of Philip and Fairbairn to the Bethelsdorp LMS station resulted in a glowing report on the advances since the beginning of the century: the Khoi inhabitants were industrious and clean, had developed artisan skills, attended church in large numbers, and largely abstained from consuming alcohol. The reporters noted with satisfaction that moral elevation was working well there among the natives who were still oppressed in the surrounding area. They took the opportunity to stress that liberation from oppression and the inculcation of a "moral culture" are civilizing processes that create free citizens. At the 1830 annual meeting of the LMS, the missionaries reported good cooperation between denominations in the field, noting that "success for one mission is success for all", although they wondered why some denominations were absent from the meeting. Even in the field, cooperation was not universal. The annual meeting confirmed that education was the primary target of the LMS, but that there was no question of giving land title to individuals, even indirectly. The mission stations were to retain their corporate land use title, justifying it by the still widespread image of the "natural roving nature of the Hottentot". Despite the best efforts of the liberals, old racial concepts lingered. On the whole, however, the missionaries were persuading the urban elite that their work was worthwhile: a Cape Town merchant, writing to the editor, conceded that he had changed his mind about the usefulness of mission work, now considering the evident change in the lifestyle of the underclass to the better as being "good for business".⁹

⁹ SACA, 2 Jan., 9 Jan., 6 March, 11 and 18 Dec. 1830

Cooperation between denominations as observed in the rural areas was far from evident in Cape Town proper. Bickering and competitive church building were commonplace. A letter to the editor noted the "jealousies between religious sects" disapprovingly. In 1829, a fundraising drive started to build an Anglican church, felt to be necessary as the established church of the colonial power had less formal worship space than dissenting denominations. A society was formed to seek subscriptions and shareholders, and to secure pew rentals, under the name of "St. George's Church". Shortly thereafter, the foundation stone for the Wesleyan Chapel in Burg Street was laid. The progress on St. George's, however, was more halting. In early 1830, a newspaper reader submitted a poem:

For shame! For shame! Episcopalians!
 Outdone by other pious battalions!
 Chapels, Conventicles, and Public Places
 Round Cape Town raise their shining faces,
 Whilst your poor, dear old Mother Church
 Is left completely in the lurch –
 What is the reason that she stands so still?
 The reason's plain – Committee want the will.

Further blame was placed on the church building committee by letter writers reporting that it had been arguing endlessly, not coming to any decisions or agreements. In the meantime, more Reformed churches, including the Presbyterian one, were being erected. By April 1830, the foundation stone for St. George's was finally laid, after 5,000 pounds sterling had been collected in subscriptions. Other subscribers and donors, however, were pouring money into competing churches. Mr. Hoets provided a new organ for the Dutch Reformed church, Messrs Melck and Matfield, among other subscribers, financed the repairs to the 50-year-old Lutheran church in town, and the SAMS, Roman Catholics, and Presbyterians benefited from subscriptions to build their chapels. Much private money was available at this time for religious and educational purposes: a listing of public-spirited donations for the years up to 1830 included the above contributions to churches, buildings for religious instruction, an orphan house, the new South African College, and contributions to philanthropic societies for the education of the poor and for the purchase of the

freedom of slave children.¹⁰ The public spirit did not extend to investments in infrastructure facilities that would serve the community as a whole. We will return to this below.

The availability of subscriptions was no guarantee of success for a venture, however. Fractious committees delayed or thwarted the purpose, to the annoyance of the citizens of the town. Newspaper reports traced the sad story of the Church Missionary Society in Cape Town, established in March 1837 with the support of the full urban elite, including the Anglican and Reformed churches, the Governor, lawyers and merchants. Subscriptions were collected to enable the new society to redouble the missionary effort in the city. Two years later, the committee of dignitaries had not reported or achieved anything, and there was no accounting of the subscribed funds. An editorial opined that all that had been achieved was to "elicit the scorn and sneer of the infidel", and that obviously it had been a mistake to place prominent citizens with many other priorities on the committee rather than entrust it to devoted missionaries. The Muslim community had weathered another competitive challenge.¹¹

Muslims at the Cape, however, survived because of their competitors' discord, not because of their own unity. On the contrary, the small community was tearing itself apart in leadership rivalries after the death of Tuan Guru. Rather than do this behind closed doors, however, the dispute was conducted in the forum of public opinion, just as the Christian denominations practiced it. In 1836, the infighting broke into the open in a series of open letters printed in the *Commercial Advertiser*. The parties of imam Achmat and imam Asnoun (Jan van Bougies) each were adamant that their champions deserved to lead the Cape Muslim community after the death of Tuan Guru ("Prince Imam Abdoela"). Achmat and his supporters claimed verbal instructions provided by the late undisputed leader that, during a series of short-lived imamates by elderly followers of Tuan Guru, Achmat was to be groomed for the position. Disputing this vigorously, Jan van Bougies and his supporters claimed seniority in the community, and denied that a decision on designating a chief imam could be made without consultation with the elders of the community. Representing themselves, for the benefit of the reading public, as "priests" of "Mohammedan

¹⁰ SACA, 26 Aug., 31 Oct., 1829. 13 Feb, 24 Feb., 24 March, 28 April, 24 July 1830.

¹¹ SACA, 13 March 1839

churches", both sides invoked legitimacy from tradition, or from designated succession. At this time, several mosques and *madaris* were operating in Cape Town, with an active congregation population of over 6,000 instructed by ten imams. By 1840, about half of the population of worshippers and students were under the leadership of imam Achmat, who had won the argument, supported by the son of Prince Abdoela, Prince Abdol Roove (Abdul Rauf).¹²

This was by no means the end of the matter. Constant friction about legitimate succession to the imamate was to be a hallmark of nineteenth-century Cape Islam. By the 1860s, the 12-14,000 Muslims of Cape Town were still embroiled in argument. In 1867, a dispute over who should be the imam of the Long Street mosque erupted in disturbances and riots, which had to be settled by outside mediation. Luckily, the Cape Muslim community had a patron in a member of the Legislative Council during the 1850s and 60s, Mr. de Roubaix, who supported Muslim causes, engaged in charitable efforts for the Muslim community, facilitated the integration of new Muslim arrivals from the Indian Ocean littoral, and acted as the consul general of the Sublime Porte in Cape Town. De Roubaix successfully mediated the disputes that flared up with some regularity.¹³

Roman Catholics at the Cape, benefiting from the Catholic Relief Bill in Britain in 1829, also enjoyed somewhat increased room for manoeuvre. In 1830, Ordinance 68 for the "Relief of H.M. Roman Catholic Subjects in this Colony" enabled Catholics to immigrate to the colony and practice their religion, provided that they swear an oath of allegiance to the King, and that they register with the authorities at their place of residence. Editorial comment, however, pointed out that the restrictions imposed on Catholics were needlessly repressive and that they reflected an attempt to govern by fear rather than by incentive. "Oppression is the strongest bond of union", warned the editorial writer, and added for good measure that "poverty, ignorance and vice....compose the gunpowder of sedition". Catholics were not to be angered unduly by arbitrary restrictions, just as the poor were to be kept from causing trouble by education and religious instruction, not by repression.¹⁴

¹² SACA, 13 Feb., 27 Feb. 1836. See also the discussion in Davids, *The Mosques of Bo-Kaap*, Annexure A, and the article "Madrasahs and Moravians" in *New Contree*, No. 50 (Nov. 2005).

¹³ Kollisch, *The Mussulman Population*, passim.

¹⁴ SACA, 20 and 23 Jan., 1830.

In general, public secular neutrality between religions was promoting a reasonably level playing field, and prevented individual faiths from achieving too much at the expense of others. An 1830 ordinance to regulate Sunday business and the treatment of slaves in the colony triggered lively debate. It banned Sunday markets except for perishable goods, prohibited slave work on Sundays except for domestic work, and provided numerous safeguards for the treatment of slaves. Editorial opinion took umbrage at the strong restrictions on Sunday work, claiming that these were not of much relevance in the generally relaxed work environment at the Cape, and that this was an obvious case where the Cape was suffering needless restrictions as result of abuses in the Caribbean. Citing the example of India, a colony of many faiths where Christians were a small minority, the editor made the point that there was no sense in imposing additional rest days on Hindus and Muslims just because the colonial power had a Christian heritage. The explicit recommendation was to refrain from using religiously motivated rules to interfere in multicultural societies.¹⁵ The most pronounced public debate on this matter occurred in the context of the new South African College.

The South African College Debate

On October 1, 1829, formal inauguration ceremonies were held for the newly established South African College in Cape Town. This was a momentous occasion for the town, as it marked the culmination of the efforts of the urban elite to finance and staff an institution of secondary learning that would meet European standards, a novelty for a town that was poorly equipped with higher-level educational facilities. The hope was that the sons of the local bourgeoisie could be prepared for British universities locally rather than being sent away. This was to be a beacon of enlightened learning, a vehicle to spread scientific and humanist knowledge in the spirit of the times. The inaugural sermon made it clear that the spread of scientific knowledge would not detract in any way from faith. On the contrary, it was stressed that icons of secular knowledge such as Bacon, Hoyle, Locke, Descartes and Leibniz had successfully reconciled faith and science. The "sober-minded exercise of

¹⁵ SACA, 14 and 19 Aug. 1830.

intellectual faculty and its range of inquiry and speculation are perfectly compatible with a sincere and humble piety", the homily intoned. In fact, Christian charity demanded that the knowledge of science, literature and philosophy was spread to others.¹⁶ Sophisticated secular education had been introduced with the blessing of religious leaders.

Alas, the goodwill did not last long. Barely six months later, a meeting of the College's shareholders was asked to consider a motion to mandate that "weekly catechetical lectures [are] to be given to the pupils of the several denominations of the Christians...by the professors or ministers of the respective colonial churches". This potential time bomb triggered a remarkable and highly confrontational debate in which the shareholders, all solidly Christian gentlemen, tore into each other by invoking principles of moral philosophy and faith.¹⁷ The proceedings were covered prominently and almost verbatim by the newspaper of record, indicating the importance of the issue. The party that introduced the motion, including top legal dignitaries such as Sir John Truter, Justice Burton, and advocate Cloete argued that the elite school of a Christian society ought to provide religious instruction in addition to the subjects of science and the classics, in order to strengthen the moral fibre of youth. The opposition, also led by legal minds such as advocates de Wet and Brand, maintained that this school had been designed as a secular place of learning in the Enlightenment tradition, and that the founding shareholders had specifically excluded religious instruction by including only science and literature in the original charter of the school. The proponents remained adamant.

A main point of discussion revolved around the fact that there was a diversity of denominations to consider. In response to the argument of the proponents that secondary schools in Holland invariably offer religious instruction, the opposition replied that there was only one dominant denomination in Holland and that this rendered a comparison irrelevant. A speaker for the opposition posed the provocative question why the Roman Catholic faith was excluded from the mention of "colonial churches", and added for good measure that there was no mention of the Muslim faith either although there was a significant population of votaries of that religion. He opined that the College probably would not admit a Muslim any more than it would

¹⁶ SACA, 3 Oct. 1829

¹⁷ SACA, 27 March, 7, 15, 17 April, 5 Sept. 1830

admit a Roman Catholic, and recommended that it is better not to have any religious instruction than have an arbitrary selection of religions providing it. A second diversity point raised by the opposition was that there was too much suspicion between faiths and denominations to allow a smooth implementation of such a program. A situation where ministers of all denominations would teach their catechisms simultaneously at the College was considered a nightmare scenario, triggering internal religious strife and the utter confusion of students. A speaker reminded the meeting of the cautionary tale of the prudent fox, who observes the tracks of other animals leading only into the den of the allegedly ill lion, but not out again, and decides to stay outside. Once religious strife would be ensconced in this den, prudent people would not even enter.

Moderates in the meeting mediated between the opposing sides, arguing that a liberal College of this kind would naturally admit "every Christian pupil", and that classes opened with a generic prayer and Bible reading anyway, not to speak of the fact that many professors at the College were ministers. As the Lutheran and Reformed churches already had established sessions in religious and catechetical instruction on their church premises, this was a good basis to build on. An ingenious compromise was proposed that defined the College not as a building but as a body of students, who can be encouraged to receive religious instruction anywhere. This would not exclude religion from the curriculum, but only prohibit specific denominational catechism instruction on the premises. The College would "...offer religious instruction, but not within the walls of the South African College, [and would] make arrangements for having lectures in different churches". The compromise was carried, but at the cost of the resignation of key shareholders such as Justice Burton, who withdrew his subscription.

This vigorous debate anticipated a similar one in Britain in 1839, which was reported extensively at the Cape. The argument revolved around the same issues that were aired in the South African debate: how could the teaching of "generic Christianity" in schools be reconciled with catechism in the parishes, without confusing the students? Should only the catechism of the Established Church be taught? Moderates promoted exactly the same solution as that reached at the Cape: imitating the Dutch example, school hours would be set aside during which each

student would go to his church or synagogue to receive religious education, without direct involvement of the school.¹⁸

The Commercial Advertiser editorialised in 1830 that the compromise resolution was a good one, as there was no need to introduce more than science and the classics as core curriculum in a secondary school. Not being a university, it did not provide for education in medicine and law either. Once it would reach that stage in the future, subscribers would be free to endow a chair of theology.¹⁹ As new churches of all denominations were sprouting in Cape Town, there was no shortage of appropriate premises for the teaching of a variety of catechisms. Letters to the editor suggested that a principle of voluntarism would be desirable, as students could choose between religious education at their family church or at the College. Five months later, an editorial reviewed the results of the implementation of the compromise. It noted approvingly that the exclusion of "catechisms" from the curriculum had worked well, the Bible was read in class, and students were receiving catechetical instruction at their churches. The twin goals of having the College operating on a generic "Christian" basis, and of leaving denominational quarrels outside, had been achieved, and the College did not have to deal with "catechisms containing the peculiar doctrines of certain churches, often at open war, long at open enmity, and still in avowed opposition to each other". A tongue-in-cheek letter to the editor²⁰ suggested that all catechism teachers advertise commercially like other providers of services, enabling the consuming public to choose between "Anglicans, Scottish, Dutch Reformed, Lutherans, Roman Catholics, Ranters, Newlights, Swedenborgians, Muslims etc". Intended as satire, the letter nevertheless revealed how closely connected commercial and religious issues were in the mind of the writer, and how easily the Capetonian mind slipped back and forth between the two, applying the same market paradigm.

¹⁸ SACA, 21 Sept. 1839.

¹⁹ Ironically, this suggestion would be taken up in the twentieth century by the promoters of a department of theology at one of the South African College's successor institutions, the University of Cape Town, with a similar heated debate ensuing, and resulting in the establishment of a more faith-neutral "department of religious studies" rather than a department of theology. The culture war between secularists and sectarians had been dormant, but revived easily.

²⁰ SACA, 22 Sept. 1830.

The principle established in the South African College debate carried through to the education reform introduced by Governor Sir George Napier in the late 1830s. The primary education provided by the state schools was to include "one hour of Holy Scripture reading per day", but any catechetical education specific to individual denominations was to be left to the clergy.²¹ As so often in the history of the Cape, competing principles had been aired vigorously, and a pragmatic and somewhat fuzzy, but quite stable compromise had emerged to clear the market. The ability to find a workable compromise would stand the Cape citizens in good stead when dealing with the social transition triggered by the abolition of slavery.

Competing for Emancipated Slave Souls

In the build-up towards slave emancipation throughout the British Empire, the humanitarian and economic arguments employed globally also were mirrored faithfully at the Cape. Contributions in the *Commercial Advertiser*²² repeatedly went over the ground of why slavery had to be ended for liberal humanitarian and ethical reasons, invoking biblical principles of equality before God, but how this could not be done by simply expropriating the slave owners, as that would constitute an illiberal grab for assets that were still legal property under current law. This was the core of the "liberal dilemma" we examined above. The costs of rectifying past injustices inflicted on enslaved populations would have to be borne by the Empire as a whole, particularly as the Cape elite did not feel that they had as much to answer for as the slave owners in the abusive Caribbean plantation system. Owners would have to be compensated in tradable debentures in order to accomplish this de-facto expropriation of their human assets within an orderly market context. The editorials made it clear that slave owners should not be too concerned about losing out in the deal, as slave labour in the colony was estimated to be a costlier system for the masters than one of free wage labour, costing them almost a quarter million pound sterling more per year.²³ A clearer conscience and ethical rectitude could be obtained together with cost

²¹ SACA, 25 May 1839.

²² SACA 1830, *passim*.

²³ SACA, 16 Feb. 1830. Estimating the total number of slaves in the colony as about 35,000 in 1831, the SACA published a hypothetical calculation for an economy with a constant number of 40,000

savings by freeing the slaves and employing them as wage earners – a win-win situation in both spiritual and commercial terms.

Implementing the transition, however, would require a massive educational effort to bring the untutored slaves into a state of moral responsibility. Religious instruction was considered to be a *sine qua non* for creating an industrious and virtuous wage labour force. Comparisons were drawn from the West Indies, where 90,000 had been freed and, in Jamaica alone, 30 churches and 16 Sunday schools with 36,000 adherents and 10,000 pupils were operating immediately after abolition, resulting in an "exemplary conduct of the emancipated people", despite constant carping by the ex-owners that their wage offers were not accepted and that work discipline was lacking.²⁴ Where missionaries were active in the West Indies, the transition was reported to have been smooth, resulting in reasonable wage settlements. Similarly, it was noted that the Society for Propagating the Gospel in London had stressed that the newly emancipated slaves had to be "brought under the control of religion" in order to avoid unrest and indiscipline. The post-emancipation state of the ex-slaves in Cape Town was described as still wretched and poverty-ridden, but was attributed to the slowness of the climb to a self-sufficient life. The incentive to better oneself and become upwardly mobile was to be provided by the moral uplift of religious instruction.²⁵

This proved to be easier said than done, in an environment of continuing strength of the Muslim brand among the Cape Town underclass. It did not help that competing Christian denominations were trying to cover the rest of the market. Letters to the editor complained that the Anglicans were lagging far behind others in their mission work, although the new St. George's church had the means to become more active. Even the Dutch Reformed church, not known for its missionary zeal, was said to do better, and the British Reformed churches were going from strength to strength in comparison. Fingers were pointed at the shareholders and church wardens

slaves, compared to one with 40,000 free wage labourers. The costs calculated were those incurred by the investors, not those incurred by the whole economy, so that this exercise constituted a financial analysis as would have been done by an investor at the time.

²⁴ SACA, 9 March 1839.

²⁵ SACA, April 6, 24, 1839.

of St. George's who were accused of not promoting and funding mission work vigorously enough in church. They were even accused of actively discouraging the participation of the poor: a letter to the editor expressed outrage at the fact that St. George's had moved the evening service to an earlier time, thus preventing the late-working poor from attending and restricting the service to the pew-renting wealthy. He noted that when the service was still held late by candlelight, the free gallery for the poor had been filled to capacity.²⁶

Contributors to the debate ridiculed the idea that the Cape needed an Anglican bishop to promote Christianity, and were adamant that Britain would have to finance such a position, not the colony. They pointed out that Reformed churches in the colony were much more active and numerous, and seemed to get on well with the business of mission without needing a church hierarchy. However, the Dissenters were not that much more successful in Cape Town, despite the envy of the Anglicans. The Wesleyan Branch Missionary Society reported that mission was going well in the rural areas, but that the urban effort was reduced to seeking out indigenous migrants to the town: a group of about 30 individuals in a "Fingo village below Table Mountain", functioning as herdsmen and coolies, and living in traditional African structures, was intensely courted as one of the few groups not yet captured by Islam.²⁷

Schooling continued to be of central importance for the missions after the emancipation of the slaves, but was hampered by the drying up of contributions. The Cape Town Branch of the LMS reported in 1839 that, of the total annual cost of operating five schools in town, amounting to £ 362, income from donations only covered £ 168.²⁸ By 1840, the Dorp Street school of the LMS, led by a dynamic

²⁶ SACA, 22 Feb. 1840.

²⁷ SACA, 3 July, 10 July, 17 July 1839, 8 Jan. 1840.

²⁸ The main LMS schools in 1839 (all for coloured students) were the ones in Dorp Street (Mr. Vogelgezang), teaching the British curriculum in Dutch, with a lower school of 90 children, a weekday higher school for 70, and a Sunday school and congregation for 200; the Barrack Street school (Miss Buzzacott), teaching in English, with an infant school of 70, a school for 70 older children, and an evening school for adults; and the Papendorp school (Mr. Dyke) in a low-income neighbourhood with only 40 students, struggling to increase attendance. The Dorp Street school was in direct competition and proximity with the Dorp Street mosque and madrasah: By 1840, the student numbers in the children's school had risen to about 250, of whom one third to one half were children from Muslim families, indicating the Muslim strategy to take advantage of secular education in Christian schools..

missionary, had held its own, increased enrolment from the Muslim community, but could boast only few converts. As in the case of the Wesleyans, the LMS turned its attention to the small Fingo (Mfengu) community to bypass Muslim resistance. Also in parallel with the Wesleyans, they complained of the much lower levels of support they were receiving in Cape Town as compared to their rural stations. The missions and newspaper editorials lamented that the urban religious infant schools were running out of funding because Cape Town donors had turned their backs on Christian charity and were withholding funds, while the rural mission stations had no comparable financial issues. The board of the South African Infant School Society, filled with the great and good of Cape Town, noted with regret that the numbers of subscribers were declining, and only 20% of previous annual donation levels was being received. The number of their schools would have to be reduced from three to one (a school in Plein Street that had shrunk from 260 to 100 students), and the basis of religious instruction was in danger of being lost. The explanation put forward for the shrinkage of funding was the fact that the new trend to establish secular state schools was convincing donors that their contributions were no longer essential. In addition, ex-slave owners had benefited from the compensation for having their slaves freed, and felt no longer obliged to contribute anything to the education of the children of the emancipated population. As the emancipated slaves themselves had been set free without funds, and lacked any financial means of their own, they were in no position to ensure education of their children, and both secular and religious training was falling between the cracks. Editorials floated the idea that some kind of restitution was called for: as slave owners had been compensated, why not extend compensation to newly freed parents of children? Or oblige the recipients of compensation to provide some for their ex-slaves? As government school funding was promising to match privately donated funds, an increase in private contributions would leverage up the total financing of education.²⁹

In general, published opinion came down critically on those who were complaining about the religious fervour of the mission and school societies, and were holding back donations, but were not above benefiting from the increased education of the underclass that these efforts brought about. An editorial pointed out the double

²⁹ SACA, 10 and 21 Aug., 1839

standards of those who called the LMS a bunch of "canting hypocrites", but happily took advantage of their school facilities. A similar treatment was being meted out to the London Tract Society and the Ladies' Tract and Book Society who were importing and distributing religious and educational tracts from Britain, and translating them into Dutch. Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*, Abbot's *Mother at Home*, or Baxter's *Call to the Unconverted* had been translated and disseminated already, but further work was threatened by the dearth of donations. Local donors preferred to support secular education and literature, and did not want to be seen to be associated with the "tract society" of missionaries and well-meaning ladies. Did these people really want the poor to be limited to secular trash literature, the editorials asked rhetorically, did they want them to "continue under delusions of Mahomedanism or Heathenism"? It was an uphill struggle to secure funding for remaining competitive in the Cape Town market.³⁰ The Commercial Advertiser contributed to moral uplift by serialising educational literature such as Benjamin Franklin's *Poor Richard*, promoting thrift and hard work in building wealth, but could not reverse the decline in private donations.

Much of the fluctuation in the levels of donations was attributed to the transient nature of Cape Town society. Merchants spent some time in the colony, then left to other parts of the empire, and the newcomers had to be introduced to the needs of the Cape. Similarly, the many "Indians", colonial military and administrative men on long leave at the Cape, had money to spend but were unfamiliar with the structure of the local charitable societies. Even long-established local gentlemen were criticised that they were generally willing to give when approached, but lacked the initiative and motivation to become active without being urged by fundraisers. The needs were big for the small society at the Cape: missionary societies spent about £ 16,000 per year on schools, chapels, and mission outreach, while the government support for churches in the colony (primarily for the Anglicans and the Dutch Reformed) amounted to more than £ 8,000.³¹ Without vigorous charitable giving, the growth of Christianity would stall.

³⁰ SACA, 24 Aug. 1839.

³¹ SACA, 4, 25 Dec. 1839. The public expenditure on churches at the Cape was small in international comparison, and only slightly higher than the expenditure on Ceylon. The government's budget for the churches in the British Caribbean amounted to about £ 67,000, and almost £ 14,000 for Australia.

Christian Culture, Secular Law

While Christian culture was promoted vigorously, public discourse was also careful to include the principles of equality before a secular body of law. Christianity was considered to be the moral underpinning of society as a beneficial, civilizing force, but religious criteria were not to be used to discriminate against non-Christians, or adherents of non-established denominations.³² Reports noted approvingly that the beneficial effect of increased church attendance after emancipation was being felt in Cape Town. Attendance was considered to bring out the better instincts of all classes and colours, a reference to the fact that the urban underclass was not only coloured but had a European component.³³ Christianity "encouraged labourers and mechanics to be clean and sedate, not slovenly and sensual", and served to "relieve selfish anxiety and worries", thus contributing to a peaceful, productive society. Nevertheless, writers warned that restrictive legal practices based on religion were obstructing the development of such a society, as the moral improvement was better achieved through individual faith.

Public criticism was directed at a new marriage law for ex-slaves introduced in 1839, which stipulated that a religious or civil marriage ceremony was only available to persons with a "Christian name and surname", effectively limiting the service to baptized persons. Editorial comment deplored that this meant that newly freed non-Christians could only enter into "de facto marriages", that their children could not inherit, and that the existing free black population was falling through the cracks. Much of the coloured population of Cape Town would be forced into concubinage and out of the inheritance process. Marriage being a legal contract, there was no reason to discriminate by religious status.

Surprisingly, a Dutch Reformed minister's contribution to the public debate agreed with the secularists. He argued, from a Reformed point of view, that baptism is a much more rigorous marker of Christianity than marriage, and that this is what the church and the authorities should focus on. Marriage itself, and the marriage banns, were essentially a civil matter, to be conducted in a secular spirit and in a civil forum.

³² SACA, 4, 7, 11 Sept. 1839

³³ In this context, it was recommended that the new English villages of settlers on the Eastern Frontier be supplied with churches and clergy, to improve attitudes and behaviour there.

The church, being a "public assembly", could thus legalise marriages between a Christian and a non-Christian without any qualms. The public interest of maximizing the number of legal marriages was paramount for society, and trumped any religious urge for purity. In fact, he asked, how could ministers admit Christians to communion who were not legally married because their partner was not a Christian? He quoted a decision of the 1834 synod of the Dutch Reformed church which ruled that even two non-Christian parties could be legally married in a Christian church if they showed evidence of a civil marriage license. Missionaries had been conducting such marriages as a matter of routine in the field. As a promotion of responsibility and commitment, every effort should be made to legalise as many marriages as possible, regardless of the religious status of the parties. It was not until 1860 that Muslim marriages were made official by law, qualifying them by the woman's right to object, a change that was accepted by the Cape Muslim community. A choice between a secular and an equally valid Muslim marriage was now possible.³⁴

The epidemics of infectious diseases regularly sweeping through Cape Town were a cause for religious introspection, and calls for atonement to avoid a worse fate. The epidemics were interpreted as God's punishment for the poor moral standards of the citizenry, an understandable sentiment in the rowdy "tavern of the seas". During one of the epidemics, a letter to the editor in 1840 noted that the "Malays" of Cape Town had set aside a day for fasting and prayer for the abatement of the disease, and inquired why the Christian churches were not following this worthy example of the Muslim community. A year earlier, the churches had indeed observed a "day of fasting and humility", to atone for assorted miseries that had befallen the colony, such as epidemics, drought, and crop diseases. In that case, however, the Cape Town presbytery of the Dutch Reformed church had decided not to participate in such a voluntary inter-denominational effort without having the government declare an official day of prayer.³⁵ The differences between Christian denominations with respect to the relations with secular authority were showing.

The respect for Muslims had its limits. While seen as respectable craftsmen and lower-middle class citizens, Muslim lifestyles and beliefs were poorly understood, or ridiculed. Apart from shock about seemingly incomprehensible exotic

³⁴ Kollisch, *The Mussulman Population*, 24.

³⁵ SACA, 22 May 1839, 6 June 1840.

rituals such as the *khalifa*, the concept of "Malay superstition" was widespread. A typical anecdote printed in the paper told the fictitious story of two Malays who, while repairing a Reformed church in town, are startled to hear lamentations about lost parents coming from the deserted cemetery. After a headlong flight, one of them returns with trepidation, only to discover a lonely parrot talking away on a gravestone.³⁶ Official statements, however, scrupulously were designed not to be offensive, and not to favour one religion. The Attorney General at the time, William Porter, took great pains to promote this stance. In a speech delivered while on circuit in Grahamstown, he noted approvingly that the prophet Muhammad did not feel above settling disputes among sparrows, showing that nothing is too small in the pursuit of justice. On another occasion, he opined that he found much in the Qur'an worthwhile, and would not object to having it taught to young minds. In general, he made the point that "bad men have made religion the slave of their passions, yet for one pang that religion has inflicted, she has assuaged ten thousand."³⁷ In 1860, Porter used the death of a respected Cape imam, Mammat, at the age of 102 to argue in the House of Assembly debate on ecclesiastical grants that this imam's "...character rose far superior to many of an opposite creed, and who profess more advanced and enlightened views."³⁸

Christians were not only keeping an eye on what the Muslims were doing. Letters referred to the small Cape Town Jewish community and its difficulties in achieving equal status. The case in point was the allocation of "prize negroes", who had been taken off foreign slavers captured by the British navy and landed at the Cape, to local masters for a lengthy apprenticeship. At a time of perceived labour shortage in the colony after emancipation, these additional hands were much sought after, and the Collector of Customs who allocated them to worthy masters was besieged by requests. As a matter of routine, Jewish applicants were excluded from the consideration by the Collector. Letters to the editor noted with outrage that this kind of illiberal discrimination was unacceptable, and showed a degree of hypocrisy that could not be inflicted on a small community who did not even have a full-time rabbi. The Collector's defence that he "wanted the prize negroes to be brought up in

³⁶ SACA 20 July 1839.

³⁷ SACA, 2 May, 31 Oct. 1840.

³⁸ Kollisch, *The Mussulman Population*, 38.

Christianity" was considered a poor excuse, as it was well known that most masters were neglecting the required religious education of their apprentices with impunity. Furthermore, the writers asked, if proper Christianity was the issue, why were Unitarians not excluded as masters, but Jews were?³⁹

Opinions such as these demonstrated an astounding pragmatism vis-a-vis other faiths or non-religious people, even by men of the cloth, when matters of public order and justice were at stake. However, believers were not above a good fight if they felt that their own faith was losing territory against another.

Intra-Christian Friction

In the post-emancipation environment, the competition with Islam was not the only worry of churchmen. Catholics after their emancipation were to be reckoned with, and internal bickering within denominations was as common as within the Muslim community. The lengthiest public debate was kicked off by complaints that the Anglican minister of St. George's was slipping towards Catholic doctrine. That this doctrinal dispute led to a heated exchange of letters and opinions in the main newspaper is worth a pause by itself. Religious feeling was high enough to motivate educated lay citizens to put pen to paper and join the public debate, in turn leading to a discussion whether this was an appropriate subject for a secular newspaper.

The debate⁴⁰ kicked off with an indignant letter to the editor from a St. George's member, complaining that the minister was preaching increasingly quasi-Catholic sermons, and that it was time to put an end to imitating the competition, and to return to good Protestant principles. The editor responded with a balanced view, exploring the question of the place of such a discussion in the paper. While it was recommended that members of the Anglican church should resolve doctrinal issues among themselves, it was recognised that church matters in Cape Town were matters of public interest and thus deserved to be aired in the public sphere. Letters by other members of the public were pointing out that the minister was merely reminding his flock of the principles contained in the Book of Common Prayer, which constituted Anglican orthodoxy, not Catholic incursions.

³⁹ SACA, 22 Aug. 1840.

⁴⁰ SACA, 1, 8, 11, 18 April; 2, 6 May 1840.

Having opened this Pandora's box, opinions of adherents of various strands within Anglicanism, as well as of Catholics poured in, discussing everything from the infallibility of the Pope, through the role of good works in salvation, the appropriateness of saints as intermediaries, to the definition of image worship. Anglicans took differing positions on fine points of theology, Catholics wrote in to clarify their doctrine and point out differences. A dialogue of a kind ensued, but questions were asked why one side should have the right to define and interpret the position of the other. Minute discussions by anonymous contributors on the issues of transubstantiation, infant baptism, and intervention by saints led to a despairing contribution noting that "experience teaches that controversies on religious subjects have, as yet, only ended in each party being more firmly convinced of the correctness of his own views."

Eventually, as the Cape debate simmered on, similar controversies were evident throughout the Empire. Anglican bishops issued a call for forming an alliance with other Protestant denominations to conduct a coordinated campaign against Roman Catholicism in all British possessions. In particular, the Presbyterian churches of Scotland and Ireland were to be approached to form a united front in the colonies. At the Cape, public opinion was sceptical: it was remembered that Irish Catholics were loyal colonial subjects in the Cape Colony, and it was asked with some justification why one should confront the Catholics rather than include them in a cooperative effort of all Christian clergy.⁴¹ The Cape was torn between competition and cooperation.

Competition usually gained the upper hand. In 1841, the Anglican Colonial Chaplain John Heavyside exchanged irate letters with John Locke, Dissenting minister. The issue was who could be buried in the cemetery of St. George's. Locke claimed that it was a public burial ground, and that therefore he was entitled to bury the deceased of his Dissenting flock there. Heavyside countered that the cemetery was not public but private, owned by the subscribers and pew tenants of the Anglican church, and only an Anglican minister could officiate. Contributors suggested a compromise that would provide for an increase of the cemetery area to accommodate other denominations.⁴²

⁴¹ SACA, 5 Aug. 1840.

⁴² SACA, 15 March 1841.

The denominations were not immune to internal strife, often focused on the appropriate uses of funds, and on the structure of the church. A loud public dispute erupted in the Cape Town Dutch Reformed church on the issue of expanding to a second urban congregation. The 1837 synod had recommended that the town should have two churches and three ministers, as the over 5,000 existing members and 5,000 members-in-waiting were too much for the capacity of the venerable Groote Kerk. Naturally, a faction within the church emerged and objected to this project, and asked for further reports that would justify this additional expenditure. The Cape Town vestry of the NGK was dragging its feet about implementing the decision of the synod, and letters to the editor were asking why these delays were tolerated. It was pointed out that the SAMS chapel in town had helped out the Lutherans and Presbyterians before in providing temporary premises for additional congregations, and that offers to the NGK had already been made. The Cape Town consistory had already raised funds towards the construction of the second church, but there had been no accounting of how these funds were spent. Church members turned to the Colonial Secretary, John Bell, with requests to intervene and force the church administration to move on the project. The response from the government was an affirmation of the separation of church and state: there would be no intervention by the Governor in internal church matters, and members should go through the courts to force an open accounting of the funds. If problematic handling of funds would come to light, the church synod was free to censure or otherwise penalise the Cape Town vestry. It took about two years from the beginning of the dispute until it was clear that a second Dutch Reformed church would be established in Cape Town.⁴³

The Cape Against the World

Notwithstanding the vigorous competition of views at the Cape, and the acerbic criticism of perceived faults of fellow citizens, local public opinion coalesced when outside criticism was levelled at the Cape. Publications and statements in Britain, Australia, India and elsewhere in the empire were scrutinised with a fine-tooth comb for evidence of unfair denigration of the Cape colony, and a sturdy

⁴³ SACA 21, 28 March 1839, 2 May 1840, 27 Jan. 1841.

defence was mounted. One of these instances occurred when the import of poor juveniles from Britain as indentured apprentices to Cape masters became an issue in Britain. We will deal with the perception of a "labour shortage" after slave emancipation, and the vigorous debate about it, in detail below. What is of interest for the religious discourse is the question of whether these juveniles were receiving appropriate religious and secular education, a similar issue that had cropped up in the case of prize negroes, slaves, and indigenous Khoi. A British charity, the Children's Friend Society, had operated a program since 1833 that took juveniles from asylums and workhouses in Britain in order to apprentice them at the Cape and elsewhere in the empire. The Society was severely criticised in London and Australia as an "abominable society under the cloak of charity", a "kidnapping society" that abducted kids for forced labour in the colonies, and was a miserable failure. The Cape was singled out for particular criticism, alleging abuse of the juvenile immigrants there, and the withholding of religious instruction. The editor of the Commercial Advertiser, John Fairbairn, who was also the honorary secretary of the Cape Town committee of the Society, refuted the criticism strongly: he claimed that the Cape committee had been extremely diligent in selecting good masters for the apprentices, and that abuses were the exception, not the rule. He conceded that providing education for the juveniles in their scattered locations was difficult, but that good families as hosts were compensating to some extent. Contributors noted that the 140 clergy and missionaries at the Cape should be enough to provide decent religious instruction, but that the geographical spread of the juvenile apprentices was too big for the religious instructors who were concentrated in population centres: it was recommended that English clergymen should be imported and dedicated to teaching the juveniles on a circuit. Letters to the editor opined that all the fuss in London and Australia was triggered by the fact that the Cape society was such a fractious one, the ethnic and religious mix leading to slander and exaggeration that reflected on the image of the Cape abroad. "There is a strong party spirit at the Cape", wrote one, adding that "Dutch colonists and farmers are painted unfavourably". By 1840, there were calls that no more "juvenile delinquents" be shipped to the Cape to be apprenticed, because they were strengthening the undesirable element in society, and worsened the image of the Cape. If there were to be imports, a work farm for

destitute children was mooted as an alternative, where they would receive work training collectively under supervision.⁴⁴

Another instance of a quick defensive reaction to criticism from overseas was a negative report of the Colonial Church Society in London in 1840. It alleged that the Cape colony was poorly served in religious matters, only three or four clergymen serving 60,000 people. As the colony was so "destitute in religious instruction", the Society proposed to send ministers and schoolmasters to rectify the situation. The reaction from the Cape was swift. Comments in the *Commercial Advertiser* pointed out that the report had underestimated the Cape population by some 100,000, and overestimated the scattering of the population over the huge territory. People were concentrated reasonably well in towns. Furthermore, rather than having only a handful of clergymen, the Cape boasted 88 ministers from 12 denominations and missions, all "working clergy", plus a number of instructors and lay preachers.⁴⁵ If the paper would have thought of including the Muslim imams, the numbers would have been even more impressive. But the point had been made that outside criticism was ill-informed, and that the Cape was better than its reputation.

2. Socio-Economic Discourse

The Competitive Instinct

As in the case of religious discourse, the public debate on social and economic issues was imbued by a Smithian purism of combating monopolies, fostering open competition, and opening up opportunities for diversification and innovation, all within a well-regulated context and the rule of law. The practice, as we have seen above, often was a more complex matter, a pragmatic mix of collusion and competition depending on the circumstances. But most contributors to the public forum felt it incumbent on themselves to demonstrate their preference for free trade and an open-access economy. The regulatory role of the government was most often

⁴⁴ SACA, 3, 7, 28 Aug. 1839, 25 Jan., 18 Nov. 1840

⁴⁵ SACA, 25 March 1840. The paper listed 8 Anglican, 23 Dutch Reformed, 1 Presbyterian, 2 Lutheran, and 3 Roman Catholic clergymen, and 17 Moravian, 1 Berlin Missionary Society, 6 Rhenish Missionary Society, 1 French Missionary Society, 15 LMS, 1 SAMS, and 10 Wesleyan missionaries.

invoked with reference to social issues, law and order, but also in cases of unlicensed economic activity that disadvantaged others. A classical liberal in the tradition of the Scottish Enlightenment would have felt quite at home in this discourse.

A frequent topic of editorials and readers' comments was the need to get government out of everyday business. The discussion dwelt on the drawbacks and inefficiencies of the "public enterprises" such as those engaged in the retail trade in wine and pharmaceuticals, and insisted that business of this kind was not a suitable pursuit for government. Profit not being a reliable public resource, the state should stay out of this kind of business. This, however, did not mean that commerce should be unregulated: on the contrary, it was felt to be of paramount importance that the state should enforce licensing laws to preserve good business standards. It was noted approvingly that an unlicensed private seller of wine and brandy (a popular sideline in drink-happy Cape Town) had been apprehended in a sting operation by an independent agent who pretended to be a prospective customer.⁴⁶

Public authorities were not only encouraged to open up markets, but also scrutinized for the intransparent letting of public works contracts. With some relish, the press reported that the small town of Swellendam had awarded a contract for the painting of the *drostdy* without tender, at an allegedly inflated price of £ 500. This compared to bigger jobs in Cape Town being accomplished for the price of £ 50, an indication of the greater competition and market transparency in the bigger city.⁴⁷

The felt need for sound regulation sometimes tipped into a desire to limit competition in the interest of a more harmonious society. "Self! Self! Self! is the ruling principle here", complained a letter to the editor in 1830, "but narrow-mindedness ever defeats its own object." It went on to contrast the "unfair" fierce competition among shopkeepers and traders in Cape Town with the orderly cooperation within craft guilds and associations in Britain, arguing that "cooperation produces wealth". The writer suggested that the *ancien regime* under the VOC was to blame for preventing cooperation among merchants, and that permitting merchants to associate and collude would eliminate a lot of friction. Established traders who constantly objected to the entry into the market of "peddling importers" and "lady peddlers" would be protected from such impositions. Apparently, it was common for

⁴⁶ SACA, 21 and 31 Jan., 1829.

⁴⁷ SACA, 12 Sept. 1829.

wholesale importers and single women to occasionally offer goods at the retail level, and perhaps undercut traders who had built up expensive stocks. Similarly, the licensed publicans of Cape Town clamoured for protection from "unlicensed shops, hotels and restaurants" which were disturbing their business. Entry into the retail market, whether legal or illegal, seems to have been accomplished relatively easily.⁴⁸

Taking advantage of unsuspecting outsiders was a common strategy. As in the case of the wealthy Muslim visitor, Mirza Khan, at the beginning of the century, the long-term visitors from the Indian civil and military services who were drawing full allowances at the Cape were regularly overcharged. "Indian" letter writers to the editor complained about poor service and extortionate prices. Good servants were hard to find or overpaid, and landlords were extracting premium rents from these gullible visitors.⁴⁹

Cape Town's daily market for perishables came in for criticism concerning inefficiency and lack of competition. As only limited space and time in a public square was made available for this purpose, letter writers argued that relatively few traders could clog the space with their wagons, thus preventing more traders to participate. Easier entry of more market participants and therefore more competition could be ensured by relocating to a larger space, and by extending the trading times. Writers also urged the prevention of the establishment of a proposed "corn and wheat depot" by farmers' collectives, as this would be a move to restrict competition as had been done by the wine farmers earlier in the case of the "wine depot".⁵⁰

The cartel of bakers was the source of constant annoyance, but opinions as to the right solution differed widely. It was noted that the price of bread in Cape Town was significantly higher than that in Britain, despite the similarity of the wheat price in both locations. The question was asked in 1829 whether the Cape bakers were extracting higher profits because of the lack of free entry into the business. In response, one baker wrote to the editor, offering to guarantee loaves of correct weight at a fixed price if subscribers could be found to guarantee him a market for a subscription of 170 rixdollars per year. Not much was done about the matter, however. In 1839, an editorial still had to report that Cape Town bakers were making

⁴⁸ SACA, 17 March, 1830, 4 Dec. 1830.

⁴⁹ SACA, 13 Oct., 1830.

⁵⁰ SACA, 3 April 1830.

apparently excessive profits, adding about 200% for baking costs to the cost of grain. Within ten years, bakers were said to have accumulated cartel profits of about £ 15-20,000. In the spirit of the times, a reader suggested to form a joint stock company to produce greater volumes, pass on the savings to consumers, and thus supply even the poor. As the Cape was suffering not only from the cartel but also from bakers' fraud, new regulations for bakers and butchers were finally instituted in 1839, mandating accurate weight and prohibiting adulteration and false advertising.⁵¹

After much further debate, a private cooperative association was formed in Cape Town in 1840 with the aim to hire a baker, provide him with flour purchased in bulk, and sell bread to the subscribers at a fixed agreed price. An editorial in the Advertiser objected on grounds of economic principle. Why do this in Cape Town at this time, it asked, when new regulations were already increasing competition and weakening cartels? Smith's division of labour was already starting to work in the urban area and was creating competition among bakers. The recent tripling of the wheat price, not collusion, explained the high price of bread. A cooperative that fixed prices would do nothing for increasing competition.⁵² Pragmatic cooperation was facing unyielding market principles.

Monopolists and Their Adversaries

The concern about continuously improving the competitiveness of the economy was expressed not only in the complaints about details, but also in terms of principle, echoing the prevalent streams of political economy in the liberalising empire. An editorial in the Advertiser proposed the thesis that "people generally rely too little on themselves, and expect too much from the government." It went on to postulate that government has the tendency to be fickle, self-aggrandising, and interfering (not a bad description of the colonial administration of the time), and that private initiative is driven by more rational considerations. The invisible hand of the free market would provide the proper incentives to make the economy more efficient and less distorted by direct government intervention. Government could usefully devote its energies to opening up the market and liberalise, however. As an example,

⁵¹ SACA, 16 June, 24 July, 13 and 20 Oct. 1830, 13 Jan. 1839, 10 April 1839.

⁵² SACA, 5 Feb., 1840.

the editor pointed out that the establishment of more fairs and markets would provide more outlets for farmers to offer their goods and motivate them to increase production. On the whole, published opinion wondered why the economy at the Cape was so sluggish. The perceived paradox was how little of the potential was realised, how little was cultivated for marketing, and how negligible the manufacturing development was. Conveniently, much of the blame could be placed on the Dutch *ancien regime*, a period during which the Cape was subject to a "mercantile horde of monopolists", a "company of money-changers and traffickers" who would not allow individual economic initiative and stifled development. The beginning of proper colonial administration was not to be placed in 1652 with van Riebeeck's landing in Table Bay, but in 1795 with the first British occupation of the Cape. Given that there had been only a little over 30 years of increasingly enlightened government, the recent achievements of the colony were considered remarkable: a modest export trade in some products had been created, and the Cape had been integrated into a liberal trading order. Much was still to be done: one of the obstacles to a Smithian division of labour to generate a manufacturing economy was seen to be the policy of scattering new settlers loosely around the vast territory of the colony, instead of concentrating them around urban centres that could then develop diversified and specialized economies in place of pockets of subsistence agriculture.⁵³

A dominant theme was the unrelenting battle against existing and emerging monopolies. This was by no means restricted to economic matters alone: an editorial piece in 1829 combined economic, religious and civil freedoms in a general assault on the restraints on liberty. It argued that the principle was the same, whether supporting the emancipation of Catholics, promoting the opening of trade through a repeal of the "restrictions on trade and commerce", removing the privileges and monopolies of the East India Company, or fighting for the freedom of the press (illustrated by the case of the expulsion from India of the editor of the Calcutta Independent Press by the East India Company). Letters to the editor added that the Cape not only suffered from the disqualifications on the basis of religion, and from the restrictive burden of taxes and ordinances, but also from the frictions inherent in a diverse urban society: the litany of problems included the jealousies between religious sects, inefficient distinctions made

⁵³ SACA, 1 July, 1829, 13 Feb., 1830.

on the basis of colour, the prevalence of "ethnic prejudice", and the innumerable personal feuds that were conducted in all spheres of life. In 1830, the press opined that the obsolete and indefensible hierarchy based on the Cape's diversity must be overcome. The old order was described as an inefficient mix of untouchable public servants, burghers in a social and legal limbo, chattel slaves, indentured prize negro apprentices, indigenous Khoi who were treated as game to be domesticated, and the second-class citizenry of Malays and free blacks. Sweeping away the old hierarchy would lead to equality before the law, the only desirable outcome that could guarantee a competitive economy in a free society.⁵⁴

The retail monopolies for wine, beer and spirits evoked the indignation of commentators. A letter to the editor in 1839 referred to Adam Smith's point about the benefits of competition for ale-houses: they can not sell more than is demanded, and therefore competition is the best vehicle to prevent price-gouging. In addition, it was argued that the discretionary granting of these licensing monopolies was an incentive for corruption, and that it brought with it not only bribery of public officials, but also the bypassing of licensing laws by selling illegal Cape brandy ("smoke").⁵⁵

The perennial *bête noire* of the public discourse was the East India Company. During the late 1820s and early 1830s, much editorial space was devoted to listing the drawbacks of the Company's monopoly of the Eastern trade. The 1829 debate in the House of Commons on lifting the Company's monopoly was covered in great detail, always stressing the beneficial effects of free trade. The strongest opprobrium was directed at the prices of commodities enjoyed by the Company when trading with the Cape. Editorials and letters hammered away at the fact that the Company could sell tea at the Cape at excessively high monopoly prices, while buying the colony's export commodities at normal market prices. The Advertiser calculated that an estimated 100,000 rixdollars per year were taken out of the colony as excess monopoly profits. Reports on the gradual opening of the China trade led to renewed demands for the removal of Company monopolies at the Cape, and for an opening of the opium trade. The island of St. Helena, "owned and misruled" by the Company, was held up as an example of the pernicious effects of giving one entity a monopoly, as the Company was alleged to force the inhabitants to farm, but at the same time was undercutting

⁵⁴ SACA, 8 July 1829, 13 Feb. 1830, 3 March 1830.

⁵⁵ SACA, 24 Aug., 1839.

their efforts by its own imports. The argument that the Company could only service its debt by maintaining monopoly profits was dismissed as erroneous and self-serving. A meeting of the leading Cape Town merchants, including Pillans, Ebden, Neethling, Sutherland, de Wet, Vos, Ross, and Collison, was reported to have agreed on a forceful demand to eliminate the Company's monopoly on tea, on the grounds that tea of poor quality was being sold at inflated prices, and that private competitive trade would result in better quality and lower prices.⁵⁶

City and Countryside

The public debate illuminated the gradual opening up of a gulf in economic behaviour between the city of Cape Town and its hinterland.⁵⁷ Reports stressed that city business tended to be quick, flexible and adaptable in reacting to market changes while farmers in the rural areas were slow in adapting to change. On the positive side, the lack of innovative momentum in the countryside contributed to a reasonably stable food supply. On the negative side, however, this would not be sustainable if farmers would not inform themselves about innovation and take initiatives to improve the efficiency of agricultural production. Letters to the editor supported this wholeheartedly, promoting the spirit of knowledge sharing and of publishing relevant improvement ideas. This, however, was felt to be a matter of individuals informing themselves, not of government imposing solutions or picking winners. A second key ingredient was to be the development of a more highly skilled and motivated labour force. This was to be achieved by abolition of slavery, and by the ending of the enslavement of the Khoi, followed by an educational campaign to motivate the newly freed labour to take an interest in the business they were working for. Finally, it was recognised that farmers were not about to risk capital for expansion if they were restricted to the small Cape market. Opening up of an export market for agricultural commodities would require a removal of British import restrictions, and an improvement of transport infrastructure to get the harvest to the ports without exorbitant transport costs.

⁵⁶ SACA, 18, 22 and 25 July 1829, 16 Sept. 1829, 2 Jan. 1830, 12 June 1830, 5 Sept. 1830.

⁵⁷ SACA, 16, 19 and 23 Sept. 1829, 24 Oct. 1829, 17 Dec. 1829, 2 Jan. 1830, 1 May 1830.

The analysis in the press concluded, however, that an increase of agricultural production would not be marketable internationally in the long run. As an alternative, the commentators urged surplus farmers and their labourers to consider a move into manufacturing for export, but lamented that this suggestion was falling on deaf ears. No move to new cash crops, agroprocessing, or into manufacturing was evident. Those who could no longer make a living from the land in the colony should not wait for the future arrival of more skilled agricultural labour, but should engage actively in retraining their labourers and investing in the manufacture of consumer goods, close to urban centres and export facilities. As in Australia, imports of consumer goods were high, and were not matched by adequate exports. Investors with available capital were urged to find a new niche, as it would be uneconomic to employ immigrant skilled labour in agriculture. It was generally deplored that the rural areas did not show initiative, and farmers merely increased the numbers of slaves and labourers without focusing on increasing their productivity. Overall, commentators noted that there was a fixation on land as a key asset and store of value, a mindset that prevented redirecting the focus of economic activity towards manufacturing.⁵⁸

By 1840, wool exports were rising fast, having grown from £ 3,000 to over 26,000 in a space of six years. This occasioned the opinion that the wool industry was a good example of a new opportunity for British investment in the Cape economy, a precedent that could lead to others. The wine, grain, and cattle industries had not been able to break out of the local supply and limited export mode, and it was time for new entrepreneurial initiatives. Letters to the editor pointed out that there were many useful potential investment opportunities at the Cape, but were not taken up by risk-averse investors. Flax growing and processing into exportable oil was cited as a success in India, and a possibility for the Cape. The large urban area of Cape Town was criticised for having no significant productive activity, much energy and capital being poured into real estate. As a remedy, it was suggested to tax new building construction in Cape Town heavily, unless it was erected for a productive purpose. As high urban wages were here to stay, it would make greatest sense to invest in high-value products, shifting labour from agriculture to manufacturing. A way to add value to existing materials would be to grind bone and horn into inputs for fertilizer

⁵⁸ SACA, 6 July, 1839.

and colours, carve it into craft items, and extract oil for leather processing. Sea salt production would supply and help expand the curing industry, which had to use expensive imported British salt for curing. Commentators lamented that none of these opportunities were seized by the Cape investors. Not even small technology improvements were seized quickly: on the occasion of the opening of a Regatta Club in Cape Town that would improve boat design, a letter to the editor inquired why it had taken so long for anyone to realise that it would cut the transshipment time between ships and the harbour jetty by two thirds if the paddle boats would be replaced by sculling craft.⁵⁹

Above all, it was considered essential to increase skills at home and to retrain: the unskilled and unmotivated were destined to go under, the skilled and entrepreneurial were to thrive. Critical comment was reserved for those farmers who neglected to innovate in this way. In 1829, the Advertiser considered that there was plenty of labour in the colony: European labourers, farmers and their families, and large numbers of slaves and free blacks were all available for skills improvement, if only there were the will to make an effort. On the whole, the colony was thought to be able to support many more people, as subsistence was relatively easy, moderate exertion yielded enough to live on, and underemployment was evident. In order to engage in more profitable intensive agriculture close to urban centres, farmers would have to stop expanding into outlying territories which only support a marginal existence, and would have to invest heavily in skill building of the labour force.

On the occasion of reporting the results of the Commission of Inquiry on Trade in 1830, editorial comment concluded that inefficient farming practices (obsolete plough technology and poor yields) and poor infrastructure made agriculture anywhere but close to Cape Town unprofitable. In addition, government intervention in the grain markets was shown to be inefficient. A misguided policy of self-sufficiency banned grain exports if a minimum price level was reached, and only allowed imports of grain if the price was well above what inefficient Cape farmers were incurring in costs, to protect local farmers' profits. A "grain fund" was operated by the government, fed by a tax on bakers, to smooth out the price swings. The recommendation of commentators was to abolish the protection of farmers, open the

⁵⁹ SACA, 12 Feb. 1840, 19 May 1841.

trade in grain without special duties, and foster competition that would increase farming efficiency. An adequate return would still be available to farmers who diligently improved productivity, while inefficient ones would deservedly fall by the wayside. If the prevalent system of quit-rent (long-term leasing of farmland owned by the government) would be replaced by freehold ownership, farmers' motivation to innovate and invest would be increased, and would reduce the incentive for government to keep food prices high.

Barrow's travel reports through Southern Africa met with a prickly response by Cape public opinion. His assertion about the Boers' "indolence and sloth" in the interior was met with the sharp rejoinder that this was not a natural state of affairs, but was a result of restrictive government regulations that destroyed farmers' incentives to be entrepreneurial. A more open and less tax-burdened economy would motivate more farmers to take advantage of free trade and open markets. As in other areas of public life, published opinion was optimistic about the entrepreneurial potential of human nature if only external restrictions and distortions were lifted.

The "Labour Shortage"

Following the emancipation of the Khoi in 1828, and the abolition of slavery 1834-38, a constant refrain of public discourse at the Cape, both rural and urban, was the perceived emerging shortage of labour. The perception, vigorously disputed by the free-market camp, was that emancipation had removed the motivation to work for the established masters, and the system of wage labour alone was not going to result in a sufficient supply of labour. In response to complaints by white settlers that their previously bonded Khoi labour force was disappearing to claim their own land for cultivation, editorial opinion maintained that the grants of land to small farmers were a beneficial policy to improve the lot of the indigenous population in the same way as that of white settlers. It was pointed out that, of the 34,000 Khoi in the colony, only a few thousand were moving from mission stations and farms to new land, and that there was no case for government intervention in the free movement of labour to more promising locations. On the contrary, "oppressed groups must first learn from mistakes after liberation", and free migration was useful to "improve the benighted race" and "bring [them] to civilization and independence". Accumulation of property

by the Khoi was to be encouraged in order to move to a more equitable society, the settlers' complaints about insolence and absconding notwithstanding.⁶⁰

While it was recognised that Mauritius had done well by importing Chinese labourers, and starting rice and sugar cane cultivation, the solution to the "labour shortage" was seen to be home-grown. Waiting for the government to subsidise the immigration of labourers was considered to be a waste of time, and likely to still be too costly to make new ventures profitable. Contributors pointed out that it took more than high wages to attract skilled labour to the Cape: an own house, and subsidised passage from Britain to the Cape were a *sine qua non*. A public investment of at least £ 20,000 would be necessary to lure enough immigrant labour to the colony to increase productivity and lower wheat and meat prices by a margin sufficient to justify the investment. In addition, a letter to the editor stated that Englishmen arriving in South Africa lose their sound industrious spirit, as they "imbibe the habits of indolence among a motley population". The real culprits, as pointed out in letters to the editor, were the farmers' habits to keep a surplus of inefficient bonded labour, and their reluctance to invest in increasing the skills of labourers to improve productivity. It was noted that the total 1830 population of the colony of 134,000 included 34,000 slaves and 40,000 free blacks, a labour pool that had great potential: slaves who were hired out often were at least as productive as free white or coloured labour, an indicator of the possibilities inherent in skill building and emancipation. Slave populations in the peri-urban area often included skilled craftsmen in addition to unskilled farm labour: the auction sale of the Bergvliet estate in the rural suburbs of Cape Town included 36 slaves, six of whom were skilled artisans, ten house boys and house maids, six children, and only 14 unskilled labourers.⁶¹

Complaints by farmers about the "desertion" of newly freed farm labourers were met with disdain by public opinion. Editorial comment noted that brick manufacturers around Cape Town could maintain a stable labour force, because they paid a reasonable wage, the workers had the freedom to use their leisure time and had Sundays off, lived with their family in their own dwelling, and had schools and churches nearby. Furthermore, the editor observed that the directors of the South African College had reported that labour for the construction of school buildings had

⁶⁰ SACA, 27 June, 18 July 1829.

⁶¹ SACA, 16 Sept., 17 and 23 Dec. 1829, 23 Jan. 1830, 19 Jan. 1831, March 6 1839.

been easily obtainable. Were these not the same people, the editor asked, who were complaining loudly about an agricultural labour shortage? Owners of large farming operations in Constantia and Wynberg/Rondebosch, such as the Cloete or van Renen families, were petitioning that the emancipated labourers were unwilling to work for a "reasonable wage" – small wonder, said the commentators, as farmers had brutal reputations and the wages offered did not compensate for the risk. Farmers' lobbying for a "vagrancy law" to force workers to stay on a farm was barking up the wrong tree, editorial comment observed. Such laws should be only used to control crime, not to interfere in the free movement of labour. The liberty of workers to enter into contracts of their choice had to be preserved.⁶²

A move by free labour from a more restricted, low-wage employment to city manufacture was entirely normal, and farmers would have to pay market wages and provide amenities if they did not want to lose workers. The Advertiser demonstrated with a hypothetical calculation that a typical large wheat farm investment in the Cape Town hinterland could generate about 15% profit even if decent wages were paid to a productive workforce of labourers and herdsman. Collusion by farmers resulted in an offered wage for an agricultural labourer of only 1s6d, while a brick worker could get at least 2s plus amenities. The agricultural wage offered had not risen during the period that had seen an increase of the wheat price from £ 7 to £ 20, a fact that the workers pointed to when asking for a wage increase to 3s. The press warned that the farmers would lose their crop if they would not negotiate in good faith. A reader's letter from the small town of Malmesbury reported that no labour shortage was experienced there as soon as good wages were offered.⁶³

The colonial secretary, Colonel Bell, was quoted in 1839 to have refuted the notion that thousands of ex-slaves had abandoned the farms as unfounded. He argued that more free labour was available now because the previous overstaffing had become obvious after emancipation. Farmers would have to pay wages that were competitive with city wages in order to retain labour. Furthermore, female domestics had left their place of work to live in their own house, supported by their husbands. In short, he argued, there was no such thing as a "labour shortage", the working of the market was merely becoming visible. Reports about the friction between planters and

⁶² SACA, 29 Jan., 5 Feb. 1840

⁶³ SACA, 8 Feb. 1840

newly freed slaves in Jamaica about wage levels were taken as opportunity to draw a lesson for the Cape: principles of a liberal economic policy demanded that the liberty of exchange in a free market was to be guaranteed, allowing labourers the freedom to negotiate a market wage.⁶⁴

Not all the discussion went in the workers' favour when the rule of law necessary for a market society was invoked. After 1838, commentators stressed that the transition from slave to free labour had to be based on clear contracts that were to be honoured. If workers were not adhering to this principle, they were to be punished for violating a contract, to "inculcate the custom". Withdrawing labour by going on strike was considered such a violation. In 1839, five masons were charged for quitting work on a construction site because they had been reprimanded for the quality of their work. They were sentenced to pay 5s each, and to forfeit the wages for the time they missed by going on strike.⁶⁵

On the whole, complaints about the shortage of labour were met by the argument that the labour market would clear if everybody would react to market signals, adhere to the law, and act entrepreneurially. Reports about a shortage of cooks in the colony? This was not a problem, answered the commentators, but an opportunity to start catering businesses and cooking schools, taking advantage of niches opening up in the market. Difficulties in finding domestic staff in Cape Town? Just establish a "servant employment exchange" to bring together those seeking jobs and those seeking servants. Trying to find seasonal labour for harvests? Labour agents could compete to mobilise urban workers for temporary farm work, a much more market-efficient solution than retaining underpaid farm labour by coercion.⁶⁶ Following the emerging principles of political economy closely, "shortages" were no longer treated as physical limitations, but as a lack of transparency in the market. Markets would come into equilibrium if prices were allowed to adjust to reflect supply and demand. As the labour market would sort out the wage levels, the resulting division of labour would accelerate the economic development of the colony – a straightforward Smithian argument. To achieve this division of labour, new settlers would have to be located near urban centres, not spread out thinly across the

⁶⁴ SACA, 20 Feb., 23 March, 13 April, 10 July 1839, 27 Nov. 1839.

⁶⁵ SACA, 11 and 25 Sept., 1839

⁶⁶ SACA, Jan. 9, 17 April 1839, 17 Oct. 1840.

vast territory where they would fall into a mode of subsistence agriculture. Unfortunately, commentators noted, there was an illusion that frontier land was better for settlers, and this misguided policy prevented more sophisticated development of the colony.⁶⁷

At the same time, pragmatic partial solutions were mooted to bridge temporary malfunctions in the market. Training the emancipated slaves who already had artisanal skills was one of them. Another was the suggestion to lobby for the landing of more prize negroes at the Cape, to increase the labour supply: while not many more slaving ships were being intercepted in the Mozambique channel by 1840 (the exception being a cargo of 700 captives taken from an apprehended Portuguese slaver), there still were significant captures by the British navy off West Africa. Instead of dropping them in Ghana, commentary in Cape Town suggested that they could be much more productively apprenticed and employed at the Cape. Yet another option was the continuation of the import of juveniles from British orphanages by a London charity, despite the objections of humanitarians in Britain that this was a despicable kidnapping racket. Experiments to try to induce European immigrants to come by subsidising their passage were recommended regularly.⁶⁸ Participants in the discourse were slipping easily between standing on high liberal principle and grabbing for quick advantage. The same persons, whether merchants or other citizens, promoted an open economy one day and lobbied for protection the other.

Banking, Money and Usury

One of the direct interfaces between religion and commerce happened in the drawn-out public debate about the morality of credit, and the level of interest. We have seen above that the period under review saw a transition from a system of private individual creditors to a system of commercial banking at the Cape. This discussion was intertwined with the debate on the pros and cons of issuing paper money instead of relying on specie, and on the wisdom of financing government by public borrowing.⁶⁹

⁶⁷ SACA, 1 July 1829, 22 Jan. 1840.

⁶⁸ SACA, 4 Jan., 22 Jan., 1840, 19 Dec. 1840.

⁶⁹ SACA, Jan.21, 1829.

It soon became obvious that the informal way of providing and obtaining credit between individuals did not serve the colony's economic needs well, and was an invitation to fraud. A letter to the editor in 1830 expressed the writer's outrage at the high incidence of fraud committed by generally well-to-do citizens. While squandering their assets, they were said to be running up huge debts with merchants, giving fictitious income as collateral for the credit lines. Among less well-off debtors, a similar lack of discipline prevailed: petty debts were found to be enforceable only with difficulty, as no property or income could be readily identified to be attached. As both plaintiffs and defendants in petty debt collection cases were in similar economic circumstances, they often switched roles as debtors and creditors, confusing matters even more. In addition, transient fraudsters made their mark at the Cape. One example was the arrival of an adventurer from Australia who stayed for 18 months at the Cape, talked his way into becoming Collector of Accounts, promptly embezzled significant funds, and absconded on a ship to England. To end the high incidence of forgery of paper money, all currency issued between 1804 and 1828 had to be recalled in 1830, and new notes were issued. Meanwhile, the existing government-owned Discount Bank was operating very conservatively, limiting its discounting to bills and promissory notes rather than including bonds. Incurring very few losses because of its cautious approach, it was in good financial shape – the financial needs of the colony were not met.⁷⁰

To make a start on formalizing the credit sector, prominent merchants and advocates of Cape Town⁷¹ initiated the discussion on the establishment of a savings bank. The aim was to have an institution that could attract deposits from the lower-income part of the population, and put these funds to productive use by lending them out against sound collateral. Credit would be put on a more formal footing, and the lower orders would be uplifted by saving for education and old age. Good bills and bonds (mortgages) would be discounted at the prevalent rate of 6%, but land was not considered to be very useful collateral in Cape Town: short-term credits were the norm, and collateral had to be easily monetized. As land prices were falling, the interest rate on loans with land collateral would have to be double that for normal

⁷⁰ SACA, March 10, April 3 and 17, Sept. 25, 1830; Feb. 2, 1831.

⁷¹ Including the ubiquitous names of Ebden, Collison, Pillans, Ross, Tredgold, Liesching, Borchards and de Vos on the merchant side, and Cloete, Truter, Joubert, Menzies, and Brand on the legal side.

credit. Commentators supported the creation of the bank as highly overdue, and stressed that investments should be made in high-quality bonds only. Several months later, however, a letter to the editor inquired about any progress with the establishment of the bank, and worried that "it has suffered the fate of death of all Cape projects in infancy". Other correspondents observed that inefficiency was widespread at the Cape, and that a lot of talk, speeches and plans were not followed by action. The "Club" and the "Exchange", gatherings of merchants, were mere talking shops.⁷² Pessimism about actually implementing worthy plans was permeating the discussion. The sceptical public did not expect much action to follow words.

Following the successful establishment of commercial banks, citizens still had cause to complain. In 1839, the three Cape Town banks stopped discounting bills, citing a money shortage in the colony. The newspaper explained that circulating money was insufficient to accommodate the doubling of many prices in recent years, and that the large trade deficit of the colony had removed specie overseas. In addition, the Boer farmers who had trekked out of the colony into the interior in the 1830s were blamed for having taken large amounts of cash with them, thus depleting the stock of specie circulating at the Cape. The Cape government had been issuing too much paper money in the form of "promissory notes", thus devaluing the currency (now the pound sterling after the replacement of the devalued rixdollar), in turn fuelling the rise in prices. The inflation through promissory notes had been significant: an estimated 1.4 million rixdollars in paper money had been added to the stock of 2.1 million circulating in 1806, and had to be redeemed at the time of replacement of the rixdollar by sterling. The trade deficit was financed temporarily by the use of slave emancipation compensation payments, partly by direct import of specie, partly by arranging payments for imports directly in London. Additional sources of specie were the payments by ships restocking at the Cape, and expenditure by the "Indians" spending their rest and recreation sabbaticals there.⁷³

A liquidity and solvency crisis at the Cape of Good Hope Bank in 1839 threatened the £ 60,000 subscribed as capital by prominent members of the Commercial Exchange. It was reported that, in time-honoured fashion, the Bank's

⁷² SACA, 24 Nov., 1 Dec. 1830, 19 Jan. 1831, 3 Aug. 1839.

⁷³ SACA, March 30, May 25, June 8 and 19, 1839.

shareholders first asked for a bailout by the government bank to the tune of £ 100,000, then complained that the government bank was competing against them.⁷⁴

The glut of paper money, much of it in promissory notes as part of compensation to slave owners, had depressed interest rates to 4%, and had eventually caused the excess liquidity to flow elsewhere. Now that the glut was over, the fears of a money shortage and the upwards pressure on interest rates caused an intense soul-searching at the Cape in late 1839:⁷⁵ how far could interest rates rise before they were considered usurious? And who was defining what usury actually was? The trigger was the proposed bill to abolish the laws on usury, so interest rates could rise beyond the statutory ceiling. The bankers were lobbying for the passing of this law, in order to return the commercial banks, including the crisis-ridden Cape of Good Hope Bank, to solvency. The public was sceptical. How would competition between banks be assured, and collusion avoided, given that the Cape was so far from the commercial centres of the world? It was suggested that the lifting of the interest rate ceiling should last only three years, to give all parties time to unwind their positions, then be forced again to live within the ceiling. Otherwise, it was feared, the historically low interest rates on mortgages would rise rapidly, as capital from abroad would not flow into the financially isolated Cape fast enough, and a local banking oligopoly was likely. Countering this view, editorials maintained that all laws limiting interest rates are ineffectual, as parties will find a way to circumvent such ceilings. Countries without rate ceilings were observed to be able to maintain equilibrium interest rate levels at about 5% in an open credit market, while countries with ceilings were showing *de facto* rates of 10-12% on the informal credit market. Free competition was always to be preferred to achieve efficient results.

The economic arguments were soon superseded by a vigorous debate about the Biblical interdiction of usury, and whether it was applicable to the case at hand (had the Cape Muslims been asked what they thought of it, they would doubtlessly have weighed in with opinions about the Qur'anic prohibition of interest). Opponents of the lifting of the interest ceiling argued both the economic and the religious angle: usury, i.e. charging excessively high interest, was scripturally unsound, and in addition would disrupt an economy with a "money shortage" that could not possibly

⁷⁴ SACA, June 15, 1839.

⁷⁵ SACA, Oct. and Nov. 1839, *passim*.

service the large volume of outstanding bills. Free-market supporters of the removal of limits first made the point that the Biblical definition of usury allowed the charging of interest between consenting equal parties, and only prohibited taking unfair advantage of the poor and helpless. They went on to argue that limiting interest in legitimate private transactions was tantamount to stealing, because investors could borrow from the bank at the legal limit of 6% and thus finance a business that could yield up to 15% profit. In effect, the limit allowed borrowers to appropriate the lender's property, and by implication the property of low-income depositors in the bank who could have gotten a better return on their savings. The Biblical commandment forbidding stealing assuredly would trump the prohibition of usury.

The argument ended in farce. A review of existing laws yielded the surprising result that no law capping the interest rate at 6% was on the books. The Dutch usury law applicable at the Cape at the time of the British takeover had not been carried over into the post-takeover period. The bill to lift the ceiling was withdrawn, as no legal limit existed. Nevertheless, the government continued to impose the ceiling administratively, and the debate of the free traders versus the protectors of money market stability continued.

Argument erupted again a few months later, when the South African Bank and the Good Hope Bank clashed over the issue of the rate ceiling, and over the question of whether paper money could be issued by private issuers. The SA Bank supported the status quo, i.e. maintaining the ceiling and restricting the issue of paper money to the government. The newly emboldened Good Hope Bank responded that the other bank was just afraid of competition, that interest rate caps could be removed without adverse effects, and that it would be beneficial if banks could issue paper money. As government paper money was not always easily convertible, it would be an improvement of the colony's money markets if easily redeemable private notes were issued. Money supply in a situation of tight liquidity would increase, and lubricate commerce. The argument was not only about substance. The two competing banks, roughly similar in paid-in capital, had quite different sets of shareholders. The Good Hope Bank was the vehicle of Cape Town's merchant elite, including Ebden, Ross, Chiappini, Pillans and Cloete. The SA Bank's capital was subscribed by the city's smaller merchants. The greater international clout of the leading merchants allowed

them to challenge the prevailing system with greater ease than would have been possible for their competitors.

The Advertiser commented on the situation by supporting the lifting of any interest rate caps on the basis of economic principle and the tight liquidity, but lamented that banking at the Cape was the province of speculators, not level-headed financial businessmen. It compared the Cape unfavourably to Scotland, where banks were designed to serve business development as necessary intermediaries, and to enable the poor to accumulate savings. In contrast, Cape bankers were short-term speculators without regard for long-term development.⁷⁶ The small capital base of the banks, designed to meet the needs of the shareholders, not the economy, was considered to be too low to allow enough bills to be discounted, the editor commented. The result was that private individual lenders again filled the gap, as they had done before the emergence of commercial banking. Private lenders commonly asked for interest at one percent a month, much more than the ceiling rate of 6% per year for commercial banks. It made no sense, the editor concluded, to maintain the fiction of preventing usury, interest rates should be freed to rise to the market rate, reasonable interest could be paid on deposits, and more money would circulate.⁷⁷

Public Purse and Public Spirit

As practically the whole budget of the colony's government was spent on recurrent expenditures, primarily civil service salaries, public investment needs had to be discussed in the same way as charitable contributions: donations and subscriptions had to be sought from the public, shares in proposed projects had to be funded by individual investors. However, the funding drives that benefited individuals were generally more successful than those that would provide public goods and amenities. Churches, educational institutions, and philanthropic causes (such as buying slaves' freedom or supporting the poor) managed to attract funds. Similarly, fundraising for projects that would benefit the subscribers directly, such as the provision of

⁷⁶ SACA, 5 Feb., Nov. 1840, 29 Jan. 1841.

⁷⁷ SACA, 8 Feb., 1840.

reasonably priced bread, met with a positive response. Projects involving roads, water supply, or lighting met more resistance.⁷⁸

Better roads to connect Cape Town to the interior were a constant subject of debate, but of little action. In 1830, it was noted that private investors had contributed funds to road improvements in the Hex Valley and the Bokkeveld, at some distance from Cape Town, and that it would be only logical if the same would happen in the proposed construction of a hard road across the sandy Cape Flats, or a safe road over the Hottentot Hollands mountains just beyond the Flats. The Advertiser even engaged in some early economic cost/benefit analysis, and demonstrated that time savings in transporting goods had a clear monetary value to the economy. Other contributors to this discussion mooted the idea of toll subscriptions, to be paid by frequent commercial and agricultural road users, and providing a better revenue base than ad hoc tolls. In any case, the merchants met to petition the government to also make an investment contribution by reducing taxes proportionately to the private subscriptions that would be needed for the road improvement.⁷⁹

Ten years later, the road over the mountain pass had been improved successfully, but debate about an all-weather road across the Flats still raged on. A joint-stock company was being formed to make things happen, as the 1830s had been a good decade for the formation of new companies. Most successful joint stock companies, however, were in the service sector: banking, steam navigation, fire and marine assurance, and wharf operations were among those that survived. Editorials and letters lamented that the colony was not getting any new infrastructure to connect Cape Town to the interior, preventing the market economy and civilisation from spreading. Infrastructure and public spaces were perceived to be decaying, as committees proliferated and pontificated, but no action was taken. The decision-makers were seen to focus on international matters and to neglect local needs. Appeals were made to counteract the promoters of Australia who seized on Cape inefficiencies to claim that "the Cape Colony is a perfect failure", that "the typical Cape person smokes most of the day", and that the "Caffres are irreclaimable".

⁷⁸ SACA, 9 Jan., 24 July 1830.

⁷⁹ SACA, 8 Dec., 1830, 8 and 26 Jan., 1831.

Correspondents deplored the "strong party spirit at the Cape" which prevented productive cooperation.⁸⁰

The hard road across the Flats was deemed to be easily financeable, but correspondents were at a loss to understand why the Legislative Assembly was not approving it. Arguments about the difficulty of building on the shifting, sandy soil were dismissed by contributors who suggested that the soil could be improved easily, and that much more difficult soil circumstances had been overcome in Australia. Was the Cape too lazy, they asked? Fingers were pointed at Darwin, who, during his brief stay at the Cape, had reported that the sandy Flats were useless, and that no water or hard material was available between Cape Town and the agricultural settlements of Paarl and Stellenbosch. It was noted that a regular postal service could be run on an improved road, to replace the erratic private services available on seasonal roads and tracks. Private post wagons were operating to Stellenbosch and Paarl only occasionally, when the volume was sufficient to cover the cost, and often refused to go. Furthermore, it was argued that Stellenbosch, now isolated from Cape Town, could become an efficient supplier to the urban area, and even produce for export, with all-weather transport. Without such facilities, the 26-mile transport costs of one leaguer of wine, sold in Cape Town at 60 rixdollars, were 20 rixdollars. One shipment of six leaguers, valued at 360 rixdollars, incurred a loss of 150 rixdollars by losing two oxen to exhaustion.⁸¹

Urban streets were in no better shape than the roads to the interior. Holes and rocks in the roadway caused frequent damage to vehicles, and obstructed all traffic. Letters quoted the American practice approvingly, whereby citizens of a neighbourhood got together and fixed a common problem without much argument. Why was this not happening in Cape Town? It was estimated that the inhabitants of Strand Street would manage to clean up all the loose stones in their street in 45 minutes, if they all sent their servants to collect them in baskets. As an added bonus, the editor suggested, they could then "pelt the municipality with them". Instead, suggestions to sue the municipality were raised.⁸²

⁸⁰ SACA, 2 Jan., 2 Feb., 11 May, 3 and 28 Aug. 1839.

⁸¹ SACA, Dec. 25 and 28, 1839, 4 March 1840.

⁸² SACA, Nov. 18 and 21, 1840.

Water supply matters similarly suffered from misguided self-interest. Comments in 1830 noted that the water sources in suburban Wynberg were tapped excessively upstream by the rich citizens, not leaving anything for the poor downstream. It was pointed out that this was a self-defeating strategy, as the poor were going to move away to another water source, thus depriving the upstream estates of easily accessible labour. A socio-economic issue was couched in pragmatic argument to make a persuasive point. In the urban area proper, a "superintendent of water works" was in charge of installing water connections, and of checking on households' water consumption to avoid waste. Indignant correspondents asked why there had to be a monopoly on connections, and what business it was of this official to check on people who were paying by volume used, rather than a fixed amount. Property rights were paramount, and as long as they were willing to pay for it, they should be allowed to use water wastefully. Individualism trumped public benefits.⁸³

The debate about securing the Cape Town harbour against the devastating winter storms that caused regular shipwrecks in Table Bay was conducted in like manner. Everybody agreed that something had to be done: opinions differed widely about what that was, and who should do it. The Cape of Good Hope Trade Society in London, normally a staunch ally of the Cape merchants, was lobbying strenuously for the construction of a stone pier that would provide a more secure place to load goods and passengers than the old wooden jetty that had done service for ages as the landing place for small boats transshipping from ships anchored in the bay. The Cape merchants reviewed the costs and declined to be involved. The consensus of the Commercial Exchange was that the costs of the stone pier, about £ 20,000, would vastly exceed the stream of wharfage income and would be impossible to finance. Members of the Exchange felt that the London Society was mistaken, refused to serve on a commission to review the matter, and proposed that the construction of smaller jetties would serve the same purpose at lower cost. The Society concluded that Cape merchants were ignorant, and did not recognise what was in their own interest. But other motivations may have played a role behind the scenes: commentators wondered why there were so many fine-weather wrecks in Table Bay, and concluded that captains were tempted to cash in on insurance claims by deliberately wrecking their

⁸³ SACA, 11 Dec., 1830, 18 Nov. 1840.

vessels. The commission that was to investigate this matter mysteriously contained only local merchants and no seamen, leading to suspicions that this was going to result in a whitewash to preserve the Cape's reputation, and protect any merchants and captains who may have been involved in the insurance racket.⁸⁴

The Advertiser summarised that such debates illustrated that there were two major unresolved issues for public expenditure at the Cape: infrastructure and immigration support. Both were essential for the development of the colony, but neither was being tackled seriously. Two birds could be killed with one stone, if public/private partnerships would subsidise the passage of immigrants to the Cape, provide them with instant employment on infrastructure projects, and let private employers pick them up after the completion of these works. How could the government claim that there were no funds available, if other British colonies could find ways to finance such key tasks? The public funds, matching private ones, could be raised by a small surcharge on customs duties (one of the main revenue sources) and by the sale of Crown land in the colony. The road across the Flats, for instance, could be constructed in three years for a total of about £ 15,000, a sum that could easily be raised. The editor concluded, once again, that there was too much discussion and idle talk about public projects, yielding no results. Both government and private investors should act more decisively. The government responded to the barrage of criticism that the financing of infrastructure or immigration subsidies through land sales was out of the question, as any land sale income was needed to retire the huge public debt. In any case, land was only selling for very low prices: 3,500 acres of Crown land in Swellendam district had been sold for £ 3, and the London Times had confirmed that colonial land was generally not very easily monetised. In desperation, Hamilton Ross commented that "public assets seem to have been all mortgaged for paper currency; Capetonians might as well be asked to remove Table Mountain as to pay off debt". If this attitude persisted, editorial comment argued, no public works would ever be constructed, and the colony would sink into stagnation. If government could not bring itself to raise revenues or borrow for investment, then private funds must be raised to finance infrastructure and provide

⁸⁴ SACA, 6 May 1840, 28 Oct. 1840, 8 May 1841.

credit to productive British immigrants. Private initiative would show more efficiency than incompetent government.⁸⁵

Whatever infrastructure was actually constructed in the 1830s and 1840s was relatively small-scale, and dependent on private investors. Shareholder committees raised the funds and implemented projects such as jetty construction or road improvement. Small municipal infrastructure improvements, such as the covering of open ditches and canals, were completed with public funds. Overall, the tenor of local opinion was that the poor image of the Cape colony abroad was undeserved, but that the bickering and indecision created an exaggerated impression of backwardness. Defensive commentary maintained that the dangers of Cape Town's harbour were minor, that the shortage of skilled labour was an illusion, that the Dutch population had an undeserved reputation for sloth, and that servants were treated better than reported. As in the case of the religious discourse, the Cape closed ranks against foreign critics.⁸⁶

Meanwhile, the educational and religious charities were trying to tap the same funding sources, but often were struggling as well. The South African College was financed by private contributions in 1829, and a committee formed to start infant schools for the poor called for donations in 1830. The Ladies' Benevolent Society successfully collected for their charitable work since the 1820s, and its members were held up as a good example of the charitable spirit, filling the gap where the lack of government provision for the poor was felt. While commentators lauded the ladies' dedication, empathy, and good judgement in weeding out fraudulent claims, they noted that only £ 120 was collected in 1838, much below the needs. The Philanthropic Society, designed to collect funds for the purchase of the emancipation of female slave children, had prominent sponsors, ranging from the governor to merchants such as Ebden, Watermeyer and Liesching, to the wealthy "Indians" sojourning at the Cape. But charitable funding was erratic. Editorials urged the government and private donors to support the state infant schools which were failing for lack of funding. Who would educate the poor, to become "industrious domestics, labourers and artisans", if nobody stepped forward? Why was there no local spirit of

⁸⁵ SACA, June 27, July 1-22, Aug. 5, 1840, 15 and 29 May 1841.

⁸⁶ SACA, 24 March 1841.

charity to support these schools, if other schools financed by overseas missions were thriving? Capetonians preferred to be bailed out by foreign money, not their own.⁸⁷

The Illuminating Case of Street Lighting

The long discussion about what to do about the poor lighting of Cape Town's streets provides an insight into the tortuous way to arrive at results in providing public services. In 1830, letter writers complained that everybody in town seemed to be commenting on the unsafe darkness of the streets at night, but nobody was about to take an initiative in the matter. Why was nobody raising private subscriptions for a trial lighting of one area of the town, to test the suitability of such an approach? In response, another contributor, identifying himself as "a mulatto", noted in a letter to the editor the circulation of a proposal that all non-whites should carry lanterns at night, or be arrested. This was an exceedingly silly suggestion, he thought: who would be able to determine the colour of a person in the Cape Town night? As a better suggestion, he proposed that everyone, regardless of colour or status, should be obliged to carry a candle or lantern at night. This extremely individualistic proposal would ensure that busy streets would be lit up well by the many carriers of lights, less frequented streets would only be lit up as needed when individuals were passing through. No lighting would be wasted on empty streets. The editor opined that the discussion demonstrated the lack of public spirit in Cape Town. Only individual solutions were sought, nobody was starting initiatives for the public good. "What is everybody's business is nobody's", he concluded.⁸⁸

The lighting debate illustrates how municipal infrastructure and public order were intertwined in the public's mind. As in many other colonial port cities, the concern about crime and citizens' safety was high on the priority list. The existence of an unstructured urban underclass, and the presence of many transients, gave rise to numerous comments about the quality of policing, and to suggestions on how to improve the rule of law. As public dissatisfaction with the underpaid and low-skilled informal security services mounted, a more formal and organised urban police force emerged slowly. At the same time, constant complaints about the deterioration of

⁸⁷ SACA, 27 Jan., 12 June, 28 July, 1830, 11 Sept. 1839, 7 April 1841.

⁸⁸ SACA, 23 June, 7 and 10 July, 1830.

personal safety on the Grand Parade, an area of perambulation and recreation, brought about more attention of the authorities. Eventually, a kind of "zero tolerance" approach was advocated, urging the authorities to clamp down even on small offences to encourage lawful behaviour. When poor youths were prevented from collecting acorns in the government-owned Company Gardens because these were destined to be fed to the governor's herd of pigs, letter writers waxed indignant about such heartlessness. In response, the Advertiser editorialised solemnly that these acorns were undoubtedly government property, and that "government acorns belong to government pigs". Judging by the continuing complaints, zero tolerance was not implemented, the anarchic creole city went its own way.

Chapter Four: Religion/Economy Linkages in the Nineteenth-Century Cape Discourse

Let them say that the Cape is a dreary place,
Let them prate of the land of Ham,
It will rival the countries of Japhet's race,
Or the homes of the sons of Shem.

C.L.¹

Early nineteenth-century Cape Town, a heady mix of ethnicities, religions, and social groups, much maligned but stoutly defended by its creolised inhabitants, was a small version of other urban mixing bowls of culture that had emerged in the wake of early modern globalisation. Let us draw together the evidence of the predominant mindset at the Cape by summarising the themes in the public discourse, seen against the backdrop of the religious, social, and economic realities. The religious and socio-economic discourses in Cape Town were remarkably similar and intertwined, and of a different quality than the attitudes prevailing in the interior of the colony.

Transition and Transformation.

Capetonians of all shades were actively conscious of the fact that they were living in a period of rapid change. During the political upheavals of the turn of the century, changes could still be perceived as temporary and as driven by faraway conflicts. After the new British order had been made permanent, it had become clear that a transition from the static, hierarchical system to a new, dynamic paradigm was in progress. The urban elite became increasingly infused by British imperial thought and anglicised, and attempted to change the social, cultural and economic environment actively in that image. The middle classes became aware of new opportunities, and of the option of upward social mobility. The underclass saw the real possibility of emancipation from bondage opening up within their lifetime, and

¹ From "Song of the Cape", *The Cape Monthly Magazine*, July 1861.

witnessed the Khoi emancipation in 1828 and the abolition of slavery in 1834-38. All were swept along by the explosion of religious conversion that had become possible from the beginning of the century, observing in real time how the Christian denominations multiplied and grew, and how Islam gained adherents visibly. International trade volumes and the number of trading partners increased rapidly.

The public discourse in religion, economics and social matters reflected this perception of change. The concept of "development", a steady and continuous progression through personal, moral, social, and economic improvement, had taken hold in the wake of the influx of British political economy and Christian humanitarianism. For both Christians and Muslims, expansion was the guiding principle: the question was how to accelerate the process, and how to manage the frictions inherent in it. Underlying this was the felt need to push the mindset of the yet unconverted towards a more spiritually sound, but also more industrious and "civilised" stage. Similarly, the tenor of the economic debate was the need to expand and innovate, how to develop a supply of skilled labour for more efficient business, and how to change entrenched inefficient mindsets. Desperation crept into the discourse when attention turned to the lack of entrepreneurship and innovation in the colony, particularly in the rural areas. Dynamic attitudes were deemed to be essential for coping with the rapidly changing trade and business environment. Economic growth and transformation to manufacturing were the guiding principles, but inertia interfered. The debates about the religious concept of usury, and about an efficient credit market, both called for long-overdue change and updating.

The social transformation was momentous, at least *de jure* if not always *de facto*, and occasioned vigorous debate about how to deal with the transition to free labour. An expansion of education at all levels was promoted as the best way to do this, from infant schools for the poor to the South African College for the elite. The intensive spreading of education, knowledge and information was the tool of choice for missionaries, imams, merchants, charitable ladies, and opinion leaders, to cope with the difficulties of transformation. The default solution to any issue, religious or socio-economic, was to push education and the building of new skills. Both religious and economic attitudes were attuned to the necessity to move forward and develop: liberty, education and conversion were considered to be an effective combination to achieve this. "Moral elevation", "civilisation", equality before the law, and economic

change were to proceed hand in hand. Einstein's quip about life as a bicycle ride, that to maintain balance you have to move forward, would have been subscribed to wholeheartedly by the Cape opinion leaders.

An indicator of the quickly changing orientation of the urban population was the pattern of reporting by the press.² The editorial choice on what to focus on underwent a significant change within a mere ten years, presumably reflecting the shifting interests of the reading public. Reporting by the South African Commercial Advertiser in 1829-31 was still heavily dominated by parochial matters, looking at the need to resolve local problems while applying enlightened thinking. By 1839-41, much of the news space was taken up by international reports, ranging throughout the empire and beyond: news from the United States, Latin America, France, Germany and Russia were filling the Advertiser's pages in addition to news from the far-flung empire, reducing the local issues to the margin. The link to the world at large had become much more important, and even local problems were seen through the lens of comparison to other parts of the world. While the debate about the impact and consequences of Khoi emancipation in 1828 was conducted mostly on the basis of theoretical principle and local anecdotal evidence, the aftermath of slave emancipation after 1838 was carefully compared to what happened elsewhere, and benchmarked against global socio-economic developments.

Diversity, Tolerance and Identity

Public discourse recognised, albeit with regret, that the kaleidoscopic mix of ethnicities, religions and cultures in the port city of the Cape was an obstacle to orderly, well-planned progress and development. Neither a dominant morality and religious dispensation, nor a linear path to economic development could be imposed without furious resistance by promoters of alternative solutions. The government was resigned to just maintain the peace, and preserve a modicum of law and order. Nevertheless, the awareness of problematic diversity did not discourage the participants in the public debate from offering pragmatic recommendations on how to work with it. Both religious and economic issues were discussed in a business-like

² SACA, 1829-31, 1839-41, passim.

manner, without too much concern about purist ideological positions. Principles of theology and political economy were invoked frequently, but were quickly abandoned when a workable compromise was possible, or when a personal or group advantage could be secured.

It is remarkable that, although diversity was often deplored as an irritant, no calls to extinguish it were heard in the mainstream of urban public debate. On the contrary, the "ethnic cleansing" of Khoi and San communities conducted by groups of farmers in the interior of the colony, and the atrocities committed against indigenous groups outside the colony by the Boer farmers who had trekked to the northwest, were aired with indignation in Cape Town. Column space was given to mixed-race Griqua letter writers who complained that their community beyond the Orange River border of the colony was being invaded and abused regularly by Boer groups. As the Dutch farmers were also claiming to be Christians, asked a mixed-race letter writer, why were they not better people? Similarly, much editorial space was devoted to expose the mistreatment of non-white labour, whether slave or free. In the same spirit, the religious groups did not call for the banning of other Christian or Muslim faith communities, but were content to compete peacefully and within the framework of the law. Catholic emancipation, and the social benefits of the Muslim faith were highlighted as desirable features of Cape society.

The government kept out of disputes arising from diversity. Despite the efforts of religious groups to obtain a ruling from the authorities when intra- or inter-religious argument flared up, the usual response was a firm refusal to get off the secular fence, and a suggestion to resolve the issue within the religious sphere. Even the complaints of Christian citizens about the alien nature of the physically challenging and noisy *khalifa* rituals of the Muslims were not acted upon authoritatively, but it was left to the Muslim leaders to find a face-saving solution. A *modus vivendi* developed at the Cape, recognising the differences but acknowledging that no religion or culture could establish clear dominance. Suggestions proliferated on how to make everyday relations work more smoothly in a spirit of tolerance and pragmatism, while recognising the real differences that existed. Public discourse indicated that strict Christian-based rules to prohibit Sunday work were considered unnecessary and inflammatory in a multi-religious society which needed to aim for maximum flexibility, not rigidity.

The urban economy was geared to deal with diversity. Wholesale and retail trade, the mainstays of the economy, were open to all comers, niches being available from very small informal operations to large formal firms and joint stock companies with an international focus. Ethnic and religious groups slotted into the available opportunities, such as Muslims ("Malays") becoming dominant in artisanal trade and fishing, or Khoi gaining a reputation as highly skilled coach and wagon drivers.

The diversity of cultural and ethnic groups did not translate into a collection of well-defined, side-by-side group identities. The emancipation and immigration/importation processes, coupled with the expanding universe of religious affiliations, produced a fluid pool of possible identity elements that could be combined into a personal identity architecture. Children of immigrant white labourers who had fallen on hard times or had succumbed to drink, were integrated into Muslim families and their heritage. Mixed-race products of masters and slaves, if suitably lighter-skinned and adherents of a religion acceptable in higher social circles, could enter the Cape elite. The Griqua descendants of whites, Khoi and slaves considered themselves to be steeped in Dutch cultural and religious heritage. The increasingly hybrid "coloured" urban lower classes could choose to be that plus "Malay", or a flavour of Christian, or add an occupational identity element. Ethnicity and race, generally considered identities not subject to much choice, transformed themselves at the multi-hued Cape into something you could try to redefine. After all, as the street light correspondent had pointed out, who would be able to identify the colour of your skin correctly in the Cape Town night?

Individualism and Self-Interest

Through the public discourse, the Cape society shows itself to have been a highly individualised, fractious community in which it was essential to preserve a personal advantage against the incursions of others. While being born into a religious, social or cultural heritage played some role, particularly at the upper echelons of society, choice among many options was both observed and promoted. Spiritual drifters were urged to choose the "right" religion and pursue moral uplift. If they did not, choosing the second-best religion was still better than nothing. Choosing education and industriousness over ignorance and sloth was promoted,

albeit not always successfully. Similarly, having a choice in the market was always considered to be better than being subject to monopolies, although the chance of securing a monopoly for oneself quickly dissipated this high principle.

Altruism was, of course, not unknown. Protestants approved of the emancipation of Catholics, Christians urged the adoption of rules that would make life easier for Muslims, and whites waxed indignant about the treatment of Khoi and slaves, or about the wretched state of the poor. Philanthropic societies and charities of many kinds thrived, although they struggled to raise enough funds. Yet, the altruism was one of individuals, who voluntarily made an effort to help the less fortunate. In the same way, it was directed at individuals, not at improvements of the public sphere. There was a will to fund schools for the poor, mission activity, the provision of church premises, the buying of slaves' freedom, or the relief of individual misery, but the promoters of private financing of infrastructure, or of better policing found the going difficult. Raising more government revenue for public works and services met even more resistance from a fiercely individualistic citizenry. The opinion that private charities had sufficient impact to provide a safety net for the poor, and that there were ample opportunities for self-improvement and upward mobility, was not seriously disputed. Lifting oneself out of dire circumstances through hard work, skill building, personal discipline, and a moral lifestyle was the commonly prescribed recipe.

The temptation to gain a personal advantage, fairly or unfairly, was always present, made easier by a local government that was weak in enforcing laws. It was relatively easy to commit fraud or exploit legal loopholes, and get away with it. The wealthy had no trouble evading a large part of their tax payments, builders were skimping on quality materials. No uniform moral code bound the urban population together, the only bond between all individuals being the fact that they were making a living in a port city with a strong focus on local and international trade. Individuals entered this trading economy easily, in the same way that they were encouraged to enter religious communities. This was in stark contrast to the rural hinterland, where public opinion constantly discerned a strong spirit of group solidarity, and of homogeneous pockets of cultural identity. The rural mission stations were extolled for their success in instilling religious and social uniformity and a moral life, while it was lamented that the urban society was atomistic, immoral and entirely driven by

individual self-interest. Commentators would have liked to see a Smithian balance of enlightened self-interest and a moral consciousness of the public good: unfortunately, all they could observe was untrammelled self-interest, and a propensity to secure an advantage.

Nevertheless, the rule of law played a prominent role in the public discourse. Contributors agreed that it was highly desirable to maintain sound public order, have an honest and effective police force, strongly discourage crime and petty larceny, and protect private property rights. Alas, it was often admitted that this was wishful thinking, and that the reach of government was too weak to enforce it. The courts, however, made an effort to uphold individual property rights, and to adjudicate between rival claimants according to British law.

Personality clashes were prime drivers of disputes that seemingly concerned matters of substance. Both Presbyterian and Muslim leaders left their congregations in high dudgeon when it became clear that rivals beat them to key functions, and started their own operations with parts of the old flock and new recruits. Strong missionary personalities soon tired of the frustrations of Cape Town and sought opportunities in the less contested interior. Key merchants' personalities and interests collided in the discussions on the South African College or on the pros and cons of flexible interest rates and paper money. The individualisation à la Simmel, brought about by an increasingly open commercial urban economy, may have resulted in a benign neglect of ideological differences, but propelled personal ambition to the fore instead. The tolerance of other worldviews was bought at the price of big egos.

This was not necessarily just a negative feature. The window of opportunity for individual achievement was used to innovate and to take selected risks. Investors were quick to spot openings in real estate, trade, or financial services where there could be quick payback and capital did not have to be tied up too long. While innovation in public transport, harbour operations or postal services was slow in coming, the chance of making a quick rixdollar by renting out rooms and providing services to gullible travellers and Indian civil servants at extortionate prices was taken quickly. Temporary bottlenecks in labour supply were removed by making use of imported juvenile apprentices or "prize negroes", while looking for innovative ways to lure immigrants to the Cape or to develop local skills. Imams set aside religious purity of instruction, and encouraged Muslim parents to take advantage of Christian

and secular schooling for young children, then to return to Muslim schools that were adding secular subjects to religious instruction. The risk of losing families to the Christian community by doing this was deemed acceptable in view of the potential benefits of acquiring secular skills. New business models were established in commerce and religion, even if they carried risk, as long as they promised quick returns.

Competition and Collusion

A rich vein of concern with the pros and cons of competition runs through the public discourse at the Cape. The individualisation fostered by the diversity of the port city was confronted with the growing integration into a global economic system, and with the lifting of the lid on religious proselytising. During the decades of growing awareness that an increase in personal freedom was possible, this confluence of trends sharpened the sense of having a choice in many areas of life. In social terms, at least an attempt could be made to redefine one's social station. The choice of religious affiliation opened up, and was exercised vigorously. The tenor of public discussion constantly pushed in the direction of opening up markets and removing monopolies and restrictions.

The economic discussion hammered away at the obstacles to trade caused by protectionist British laws and regulations, and at the highly visible monopoly in the China trade enjoyed by the East India Company. At the local level, the opening up of produce markets, the relaxation of licensing and retailing rules, and the removal of the perceived bakers' oligopoly and alcohol monopolies were pursued tenaciously. The lifting of ceilings on interest rates was promoted as a way to increase competition and avoid inefficient informal lending. Using the same arguments of enlarging the freedom of choice, the discussion promoted a framework for the coexistence of different religions and denominations in order to expand the opportunities for moral and spiritual uplift. Despite vigorous debate about the relative superiority of individual faiths and confessions, a consensus emerged that it would be best to live with competing religions, as long as their rivalry was kept within the confines of an open society based on the rule of secular law. Participants in the spiritual market realised that opportunities for other religions would benefit all: Christian

commentators endorsed the legitimising of Muslim marriages in order to enlarge the basis for public and private morality. Religion in general was lauded as a contributor to good social behaviour, and as deserving of more competitive space. In both religion and business, conventional wisdom prescribed that well-regulated competition would benefit all individuals in the community.

In the argumentative society of the Cape, dissenters who challenged this paradigm were not scarce: nostalgia for a well-ordered corporatist and hierarchical society was voiced, and many contributions to the debate deplored the lack of civic spirit and the prevalence of selfishness. Nevertheless, the dissenters were a minority, complaining about a course of events that was not going their way. Other critics endorsed competition, but complained that enforcement of fair rules in the market was lax, and that competition deteriorated into lawlessness and fraud.

Suppliers of both religious and economic services were keenly aware of this window of opportunity, and engaged in robust competition. As was to be expected, the fervour for competition evaporated when there was a chance to collude with other suppliers or to secure a privileged position through a ruling of the authorities. To its credit, the government maintained a hands-off policy, and mostly let competition take its course. Merchants complained loudly when the privileges granted to Cape wine imports into Britain were withdrawn, but had to live with it. Anglicans were claiming a rightful place as the Empire's established dominant religion, also in vain. Despite many alarmist calls to stop the spread of Islam in the urban underclass, and to counteract the educational edge of Islam, no radical action was taken. On the contrary, the authorities tried to extend support to Muslim schools to put them on the same footing as Christian ones, an attempt thwarted only at the last minute by senior Christian clergy. Official attempts to exclude Jews from the competitive allocation of "prize negro" apprentices were met with public criticism.

Cooperation rather than competition was evident in the rural areas, where Christian missionaries, despite their confessional differences, collaborated readily and provided mutual support. Areas of the vast interior were demarcated for individual denominations by the sheer fact of distance and difficulty of travel, and contacts between the pockets of mission were cordial. Annual meetings of mission societies stressed the good relations with other missions, and celebrated the pace of conversions in the rural areas. While friction between mission stations and local

farmers was common, this was expressed in terms of argument about who had the right to local unskilled labour, and often was settled by negotiated arrangements to provide labourers. In general, agricultural operations were castigated as outdated and not competitive, relying on ever larger numbers of forced or cheap labour, and in need of an opening up to a competitive labour market with equilibrium wages. The urban scene presented a much more competitive picture in all respects.

Trust and Suspicion

Trust in strangers was a commodity in short supply at the urban Cape. The transient social nature of the city, as opposed to the more settled social relations in the hinterland, kept individuals from relying too much on others who were not known to be as reliable as kin or close associates. The diversity of religions and cultures added to the perception that members of other groups had different value systems, and were not necessarily to be trusted in the long term. Suspicion of others was a precaution against being taken advantage of.

Prominent citizens felt the need to take to the public forum to dispute the claims of others in the community who may have impugned their integrity. Members of religious congregations took pen in hand to voice their suspicions of others in the same group who may have been deviating from the straight path. Muslim imams suspected each other publicly of deliberately twisting the last wishes and dispensation of the revered Tuan Guru for personal advantage. Fair-weather wrecks in Table Bay gave rise to conspiracy theories about insurance fraud. Those who criticised the mission schools and did not contribute to the funding were suspected of being free riders in an improvement effort financed by others. Citizens were reluctant to contribute to initiatives benefiting the public at large, suspecting that others would not join. Others voiced suspicions that members of the underpaid police force were deliberately waiting to apprehend culprits until a sufficient reward was offered. Above all, a constant suspicion about the motives of British and Australian critics of the Cape Colony permeated the debate. In this spirit, Cape merchants suspected their sometime allies in the London merchant community of condescension when they criticised the Cape attitudes towards harbour improvements. Similar knee-jerk reactions took place when British critics saw negative features in the shipment of poor

juveniles to the Cape for indentured apprenticeship, or when Australian commentators were thought to be furthering their own interests as immigrant destination by blackening the image of the Cape Colony.

In general, suspicion about the motives of others came easily to Capetonians at this time of transition. While there was a general consensus that tolerance of the wide variety of views and lifestyles was best for the maintenance of peace, this did not mean that differing views were embraced as equally valid as one's own. As there were many combinations of identities, it presumably appeared to be the safest course to keep the circle of trust as small as possible, and to rely only on those fellow citizens whose cultural and business thinking was known to be compatible with one's own worldview. Most joint stock companies that emerged in this era were designed for services such as insurance or operating companies, and did not require long-term commitment to investing capital. The investors in the first Cape banks were tightly-knit groups of like-minded merchants, often linked by family ties, who were looking for speculative gains.

The Cape's Place on the Cultural Values Map

Where would we place a society like early nineteenth-century Cape Town on a map of cultural values that would give us an indication about the path of development characteristic of such a society? The features of the society appear fairly clearly as follows:

- Rapid cultural and economic transformation, felt by all.
- Creolisation and ethnic mixing of the entire community, not only parts of it.
- Secular government, limited to administration and maintaining law and peace.
- Rich religious, cultural, ethnic and social diversity.
- Vigorous religious competitiveness under a secular authority.
- Growing religious affiliation based on personal choice, and a strong role of religion in personal identities.
- Tolerance of other worldviews in the interest of maintaining one's own options.
- Active construction of personal identities by individuals from the choices available.

- High degree of individualism and pursuit of self-interest for the short term.
- Poor public spirit, and lack of cooperation for long-term goals.
- High degree of competitive spirit with a tendency to slip into occasional collusion.
- Low levels of interpersonal trust, focus on temporary interpersonal alliances.
- Focus on protection of personal property rights.

These features resonate with the clusters of values used in the World Values Surveys conducted from the 1990s to the early 2000s by Ronald Inglehart and his collaborators³. The results of these surveys have been consolidated in a map that plots the different positions of surveyed countries on two coordinates: one ranging between a traditional values set oriented on religion and a secular-rational one that indicates a dynamic, science-based model; the other ranging between values that stress community survival and those that indicate reliance on the expression of individual preferences. The graph below illustrates that this method clusters groups of countries by cultural-religious heritage: Protestant Europe occupies the extreme end of the intersection of high secular-rational and high self-expression values; African countries are clustered at the opposite extreme where highly traditional and strongly community-survival values intersect. Other cultural clusters show different combinations of these value sets: countries with Confucian or Communist heritage show high secular-rational readings, but less focus on individual self-expression; the English-speaking world shows high individualism, but less secularity than Protestant Northern Europe. The general development path over time that has been derived from this cross-sectional data base suggests that a common feature of many cultural areas is to first get on a collective track of secularisation and economic growth, then using the acquired material security to break out of the collective survival mode into a more individualist paradigm. Economic success increases from the south-western to the north-eastern corner of the graph.

The map shows clearly, however, that there is no linearity or determinism in this pattern. Cultural zones set their own pace in combining and changing the value sets. Based on this insight, one can easily insert the urban Cape society into the map,

³ Inglehart and Welzel, *Modernization*, 48-76; www.worldvaluessurvey.org.

although it belongs to a different era. The facts of a small circle of trust, a high reliance on religious values, and the lack of long-term rational vision puts it at the traditional/religious end of the vertical axis. On the other hand, the high individualisation, the tolerance of other worldviews, and the competitive instincts of the population places the Cape at the self-expression end of the horizontal axis. The overall result is one of individuality and self-expression racing far ahead of any secularising and rationally planning trends. The urban Cape presents an outlier among the major homogeneous cultural zones, by virtue of being an urban, highly diverse society.

The Inglehart Values Map 2009: Adding 19th-Century Cape Town



Human Development and Values

This position of the urban Cape in an unusual combination of values explains the fact that all efforts to organise the community for efficient long-term visions and investments met with strong resistance. Rather than move first from a static, traditional and hierarchical society in the direction of a dynamic, modernising and cooperating society to achieve collective material gains, the Cape moved straight into a quasi-postmodern paradigm of a highly individualised competition of personal preferences, without leaving the traditional values behind. This contrasts with the general pattern evident from today's surveys, that societies that also remain close to the traditional end of the spectrum generally have not developed a similarly high degree of individualism, Latin America perhaps having gone farthest in this direction. One must, of course, consider that we are placing a multi-ethnic and hybrid port city in a data set of countries where both rural and urban values are averaged. Undoubtedly, similarly cosmopolitan cities in the cultural zones listed here also showed quite unique patterns of development, a matter we investigate below. Nevertheless, the discrepancy illustrates the gap between urban and rural values vividly: judging by the public discourse, the rural Cape would have been located much closer to the south-western corner of the graph than Cape Town was. Rural communities placed a premium on the solidarity of groups that forged a common identity, in order to ensure survival.⁴ In Cape Town, survival of the community was secondary to personal achievement, as a common identity of the community was lacking.

The result was a development pattern that relied heavily on individual skills of navigating a competitive environment, finding unique niches and combinations of activities that ensured an advantage. This made the economy behave in a peculiar way: creative and innovative energies, used for long-term investment and risk-taking elsewhere, were channelled into short-term commercial activities. The usual pattern of development in this modernising and industrialising period of change would have been to harness the individual initiative and spirit of innovation for the expansion of both social and physical capital, in a deliberate effort to increase material security in

⁴ See for instance Robert Ross, *The Social and Political Theology of Western Cape Missions 1800-1860* (Leiden, undated).

the long run – the basis of the development of productive capitalism and economic growth. What was missing at the Cape was the move from traditional/religious values towards secular/rational ones. This would have happened in a society less resistant to the "regimented organisation of human activities" and to the development of a collaborative "civic ethos", the hallmarks of modernisation and secularisation. The feature blocking this move at the Cape was the strong diversity and intense competitive spirit in the community, much of it represented and reinforced by the highly visible religious competition. An atomised community did not have the collective strength to forge coherent material development. Trust in strangers and the law, a precondition for long-term risk-taking, was low. In comparison, the sense of individual autonomy was high, and was channelled into commercial, social and spiritual personal strategies.⁵

We thus are observing a community in which "development" was defined as a low-growth, low-confidence process of manipulating ad-hoc opportunities creatively. At a time when other areas of the world experienced rapid economic growth on the coat-tails of the British Empire's globalisation, the simultaneous incidence of (1) vigorous religious and economic competitiveness, (2) an opening of opportunities to build personal identities, and (3) diversity-driven individualisation directed development onto another, more anarchic path at the Cape. In a more homogeneous, less culturally competitive society, competitive instincts of individuals may have been channelled into increasing productivity. This kind of growth-oriented economic activity with long-term investment, however, only manifested itself after the middle of the century, when the diamond and gold finds in the northwest drained economic attention away from the Cape and resulted in the "minerals boom" of the late nineteenth century with its centre of gravity in the newly dynamic areas. Peaceful religious competition at the Cape, meanwhile, avoided sectarian conflict and enabled individuals to thrive, but became an obstacle to collective progress.

⁵ This analysis draws heavily on the methodology outlined in Inglehart and Welzel, *Modernization*, 15-47.

Chapter Five: Comparative Perspectives

1. Colonial Comparators

These conclusions for the early nineteenth-century Cape can be profitably compared to the pattern identified by earlier work on other creole locations⁶, in order to assess whether Cape Town represents a unique case or shows similarities to trends elsewhere.

The post-emancipation experience of the Caribbean and of other African colonies offers interesting insights into the way in which diverse and creole societies coped with the achievement of formal freedom from chattel slavery in a global imperial context that had economic, social, and political liberalism as its *Leitmotiv*. Asian colonies displayed ethnic and cultural mixes that matched those at the Cape. To focus more narrowly, it is not the emancipated or multicultural society as a whole that needs to be examined, but only the cosmopolitan port cities that show a trajectory similar to that of Cape Town.

Exploring the available literature on colonial cities,⁷ a number of commonalities appear, without yielding convincingly matching parallels. However,

⁶ Much interesting work on post-emancipation societies has been done on the Americas and the Indian Ocean littoral, including William A. Green, *British Slave Emancipation: The Sugar Colonies and the Great Experiment 1830-65* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1976); Robert Conrad, *The Destruction of Brazilian Slavery 1850-88* (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1972); David Cohen and Jack P. Greene (eds), *Neither Slave Nor Free: the Freedmen of African Descent in the Slave Societies of the New World* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Univ. Press, 1972); Akintola Wyse, *The Krio of Sierra Leone* (Madison, WI: Univ. of Wisconsin Press, 1989); Frederick Cooper, Thomas C. Holt and Rebecca J. Scott, *Beyond Slavery* (Chapel Hill: Univ. of North Carolina Press, 2000); Gwyn Campbell (ed), *Abolition and its Aftermath in Indian Ocean Africa and Asia* (London & NY: Routledge, 2005); Rebecca J. Scott et al, *The Abolition of Slavery and the Aftermath of Emancipation in Brazil* (Durham: Duke Univ. Press, 1988).

⁷ Among numerous others, this includes: Bridget Brereton and Kelvin A. Yelvington, *The Colonial Caribbean in Transition* (Gainesville: Univ. Press of Florida, 1999); Thomas E. Skidmore, *Black Into White* (NY: Oxford Univ. Press, 1974); Philip D. Curtin, *Two Jamaicas* (Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1955); Douglas Hall, *Free Jamaica 1830-65* (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1959); David J. Hess and Roberto A. da Matta (eds), *The Brazilian Puzzle* (NY: Columbia Univ. Press, 1995); Philip D. Morgan and Sean Hawkins (eds), *Black Experience in the Empire* (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press,

nuggets of common experience can be used, focusing on the following features typical for nineteenth century Cape Town:

- **British Empire Linkage:** Caribbean, Southeast Asian, Indian, and West African cities (Kingston, Singapore and the Straits Settlements, Freetown, Bombay, Madras etc) were similarly embedded in the nineteenth century Empire and its globalising influence.
- **Port and Entrepot City:** Kingston, Bahia, Rio, Melaka, Penang, Freetown, Bombay, or New Orleans can serve as comparators to Cape Town in their function as major points of transshipment or port activity.
- **Ethnic Mix:** Brazilian and Asian cities (Melaka, Penang) exhibited a similar diversity in ethnic and cultural terms.
- **Religious Mix Including Islam:** Straits Settlements, Freetown, and Bombay have the religious diversity that compares well to the Cape case.
- **Creole Environment:** Jamaican, Brazilian, and West African port cities, as well as New Orleans developed a creole culture similar to that at the Cape.
- **Slave Society:** the Caribbean and Brazil are cases of a colonial transition from an established slave society to a more fluid and complex one, seeking identities. The West African experience is more that of a source of slaves than one of local slavery.

On the whole, then, all comparisons must be partial. Some locations were slave societies based on sugar plantations and exports (the Caribbean, or Brazil), giving them a different flavour from the Cape. Others had the religious diversity and

2004); Thomas C. Holt, *The Problem of Freedom* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Univ. Press, 1992); David W. Cohen and Jack P. Greene (eds), *Neither Slave Nor Free* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Univ. Press, 1972); Simon McGrath, Charles Jedrej, Kenneth King, and Jack Thompson (eds), *Rethinking African History* (Edinburgh: Univ. of Edinburgh, 1997).

the crucial presence of Islam as a competitor, but did not emerge from slave societies. As this work is focusing primarily on the role of religious diversity in cities of a liberalizing colonial empire and not on the heritage of slavery, locations such as the Straits Settlements (Penang, Melaka, Singapore) yield the best comparative results. The city of New Orleans, a creole intersection of cultures, also helps in establishing a pattern.

The Straits Settlements

Asian colonial port cities present a particularly good match for Cape Town, as several of them were involved in a similar transition from Dutch to British rule in the Indian Ocean littoral, and displayed a religious mix that included Islam and Christianity. Melaka (Malacca) is the prime example here, having been a trading port well before the arrival of the Portuguese and their successors, the Dutch, and sharing with the Cape the fate of an initially temporary, then permanent handover to the British at the beginning of the nineteenth century. Newer, British-founded ports such as Penang and Singapore showed belated, but similar hybridity. Batavia, the eastern headquarters of the VOC, had of course maintained a close affinity with the Cape throughout the Dutch period. So did ports in the eastern Indonesian archipelago such as Makassar.

Most Asian port cities had either a potentially productive hinterland (as did Cape Town), a nearby network of other regional ports, or both.⁸ Bombay, Madras, and Calcutta benefited from possibilities of textile production, and the processing of hides and other agricultural products. Rangoon, Bangkok and Saigon had rice-surplus hinterlands, Batavia and Surabaya were located in areas focused on agroprocessing and spices. Colombo had tea and rubber, while Melaka, Penang and Singapore benefited from tin and rubber in the hinterland, and a network of Indonesian archipelago ports. Not all of these port cities, however, became important processing and exporting centres, although most of them were the type of cosmopolitan and hybrid cities we would expect to lead the way in development.

⁸ Broeze (ed), *Brides of the Sea*, 235.

Let us look at the religious relations in some of them, and consider the implications. Rangoon, Bangkok, and Saigon were cities with a dominant official religion, Buddhism, and small expatriate-type enclaves of other religions. Bombay and Calcutta had a pre-1800 British colonial mix of Hinduism, Islam and a thin layer of administrators' Christianities, but the bulk of the urban population, having an established pre-colonial local religious heritage, treated religion as inherited by birth, and not subject to contestation. British rule encouraged communal corporate identities, leading to settled religious communities living side by side and negotiating as corporate bodies.⁹ Batavia, although multi-ethnic and multi-religious, was superimposed on a traditionally strong Javanese Hindu-Islamic cultural base, and had only a brief interlude of British rule in 1811-16 that was not enough to bring in any missionary fervour: the non-competitive attitude of the Dutch Reformed tradition of the colonial elite was not interrupted.¹⁰ All these port cities managed to channel their innovative energies into long-term material development.

Colombo and Melaka, however, originally mainly Buddhist and Muslim respectively, went through a Portuguese period with strong Catholic conversion activity, followed by a Dutch period with an addition of a Dutch reformed element, and concluded by the British period beginning in the early nineteenth century that saw the explosion of missionary activity and an influx of Hindu migrants. Both port cities had accumulated a number of rival religious communities over the colonial years, and migrants from distant areas constituted a large part of the population. Religious and cultural competition may have gone beyond the tipping point at which consensus-based collective development became difficult. Colombo maintained some economic momentum based on its tea and rubber plantation hinterland. Melaka did not and declined, eclipsed by the new British ports of Penang (1786) and Singapore (1819).

Melaka's case is intriguing when looking for a confirmation of the fate of Cape Town. In addition to the accumulation of Chinese, Arab, Indian, Malay, and European ethnicities and religions, the city had undergone a clear creolisation. The "Portuguese-Eurasians", a mixed-race Christian population group derived from successive intermarriages and sexual liaisons between Europeans and Asians had

⁹ Basu (ed), *The Rise and Growth*, 49-52

¹⁰ Jean Gelman Taylor, *The Social World of Batavia* (Madison: Univ. of Wisconsin Press, 1983), 96-130.

emerged, matching the "coloured" population of Cape Town. Chinese-Malay, Indian-Malay and Chinese-Eurasian descendants enhanced the mix. Indeed, the whole community had become essentially creole, as many of those formally accepted as Europeans were of mixed descent, the mere fact of acknowledgement by a "European" father making the difference. As in the other Straits Settlements, Melaka was experiencing what has been termed "ethnic oscillation", the occurrence of shifting ethnic and religious affiliations of individuals. A laissez-faire lifestyle had evolved, avoiding official interference in the construction of personal identities. On the eve of slave emancipation in the British Empire, about 10% of Melaka's population were urban slaves from a wide variety of Indian Ocean origins – further targets of religious competition as abolition loomed. As in the case of the Cape, the combination of high religious diversity and a thorough hybridisation of the community as a whole had resulted in competitive individualism, and a turning away from corporate identities. Individuals of different ethnic and religious backgrounds easily established business and family relationships without being too concerned about their respective cultural identity structures. Melaka remained peaceful and free of sectarian conflict, but stagnated in its traditional role as trading port and entrepot without forging a more active, modernising urban identity.¹¹

The Americas

Port cities of the colonial Americas, whether with a British, French, Spanish, or Portuguese heritage, usually served as export outlets for large-scale plantation agriculture. Sugar in the Caribbean and Brazil, and cotton in the southern United States had created large populations of agricultural slave labourers on estates by the early nineteenth century, many of whom were recent imports from West Africa. Only a small number of Europeans and mixed-race people, primarily planters and their supporting population, were in evidence. At mid-nineteenth century, three quarters of Jamaica's population were classified as "Negro", primarily agricultural labourers of West African origin, the remainder being mostly "Coloured" (mixed-race). About 5%

¹¹Hussin, *Trade and Society in the Straits of Melaka*, 177-184, 271-290. See also Ibrahim et al (eds), *Readings on Islam in Southeast Asia*, passim.

were listed as "European".¹² A recognisable slave culture had developed on the plantations and in the ports, characterised by African spiritual practices and beliefs meshed with indigenous adaptations of superficially introduced Christianity.

In Jamaica, African spirituality and slave Christianity were perceived by the British colonial elite as potentially disruptive: in large concentrated slave populations, preaching by their peers could result in insubordination, tipping into organised rebellion. The example of the successful Haiti slave uprising against the French before 1800 was concentrating colonial minds. Independent slave-based quasi-Christian groups such as the Native Baptists were suppressed in the early 1800s, and replaced by officially sanctioned Anglican, Wesleyan, Baptist, Presbyterian and Moravian missionaries, who were expected not to engage in the promotion of systemic change. Anglicans and Presbyterians primarily served the white population, Wesleyan Methodists relied on the support of the urban mixed-race group, and the Baptist and Moravian missionaries were primarily interested in conversions among the plantation slaves. Rather than competing, the denominations were delineating spheres of influence. Any differences between the denominations, however, were swamped by the antagonism between white planters and missionary humanitarians in the run-up to emancipation. All missionary work was seen as supporting the British humanitarian and abolitionist movement, and was resisted accordingly. In turn, much of the active resistance against slavery arose out of the mission stations and their offshoots on the plantations. All promotion of organised religion, whether African or Western, among the slave population was politically suspect: the common predicament engendered cooperation, not competition.

Kingston and other urban centres had developed a creole nature, being dominated by a mixed-race population composed of "free blacks" and urban domestic slaves, a de facto "coloured" agglomeration of the results of inter-racial sexual contact. Joining the Anglicans and Dissenters in town, Jews and French Catholics added to the religious diversity. Of all denominations, however, it was the Wesleyans who established the closest identification with the coloured population (the urban majority), leaving the Anglicans, Presbyterians, Catholics and Jews to share the

¹² Hall, *Free Jamaica*, 265.

adherence of the white minority. Thus, competition was not a key feature of religious life in Kingston, to the extent that it was at the Cape at the same time.¹³

After emancipation, an element of competition crept into the Jamaican religious life, as education of the ex-slaves became a government priority, in order to assist them to become upwardly mobile. Dissenting clergy feared a domination by the established Anglican church in receiving funds for education, and opposed any government funding. Further competition appeared after the big initial post-abolition success of the Baptists in converting the ex-slaves: voices were raised among other missionaries (such as the LMS) that the Baptists had only succeeded so spectacularly by adopting traditional Africanist elements into their faith, moving away from mainstream Christianity. This, however, was a rural phenomenon, not an urban one. The Wesleyan Methodists retained their lock on the urban coloured population, and friction erupted mostly within the denomination, driven by the church's reluctance to acknowledge the equality of white and coloured congregants. As in Cape Town, the complaints about the Anglican church were that it was too staid and slow-moving to make any headway in conversions. There were attempts to suppress the African-inspired popular Christian rituals at Christmas and Easter, to little avail.¹⁴ Creole Kingston experienced its share of religious competition, and saw little modernisation and development beyond servicing the gradually declining sugar export industry.¹⁵

As in the urban Caribbean, Brazilian port cities boasted a high proportion of creolised mixed-race inhabitants, both free and enslaved until emancipation, whose more individualistic and egalitarian life contrasted with the hierarchical and regimented existence of the labourers of mostly African heritage on plantations and rural mission stations. Members of these "coloured" groups were artisans, small traders, fishermen, skilled labourers and professionals who often achieved significant wealth, owned slaves, and acted as creditors and business partners for plantation

¹³ Brereton and Yelvington, *The Colonial Caribbean in Transition*, 26-42; Curtin, *Two Jamaicas*, 23-55.

¹⁴ Curtin, *Two Jamaicas*, 158-172.

¹⁵ Around 1830, sugar exports from Jamaica still amounted to about 1.5 million cwts per year, while by the 1860s, they had declined to about 500,000 cwts. (Hall, *Free Jamaica*, 270)

managers and the white colonial elite. Social mobility was not easy, but possible.¹⁶ Unlike the British Caribbean, however, the religious life of colonial and post-colonial Brazilian cities was dominated by Catholicism. Competition in the religious sphere came almost entirely from semi-clandestine traditional African spirituality and ritual, manifested in the focus on spirits and supernatural phenomena. Creolisation had taken place, but spirituality was kept firmly under the Catholic umbrella, even if tinged with Africanist practice.

An intriguing parallel to Cape Town exists in the case of New Orleans.¹⁷ Both port cities had a pre-anglophone colonial history, and were taken over by British and American authorities, respectively, in the early 1800s. Both had a potentially productive hinterland, New Orleans being more easily connected to it by the navigable Mississippi river, while Cape Town had no comparable transport infrastructure to overcome the ring of mountains and sand flats surrounding it. Neither city achieved significant industrialisation and modernisation in the early nineteenth century, but remained wedded to the port and trading functions. As in Cape Town, creolisation had taken place, the urban population showing evidence of a large segment of mixed-race and mixed-culture people in contrast to the two-tier hierarchy of the rural hinterland. Urban slaves had more personal leeway than their rural counterparts, being able to be contracted out for work, engaging in artisanal and domestic work rather than farm labour, and having more opportunities to achieve freedom through manumission or purchase. A significant population of "free blacks" was a characteristic of both cities, the number in New Orleans being boosted by the influx of freed slaves from the British Caribbean after 1838. Both were considered as non-typical for their region. The creole population of both cities, free and slave, clustered in employment around the port and waterfront.

The handover from French to American rule after 1815 put New Orleans on a somewhat different trajectory from that of Cape Town. The predominantly Catholic society, with some Africanist elements, was not immediately confronted by an aggressive British missionary effort as the Dutch Reformed/Muslim society was at the

¹⁶ Cohen and Greene (eds), *Neither Slave Nor Free*, passim. See also Conrad, *The Destruction of Brazilian Slavery 1850-88*.

¹⁷ Christopher Saunders, "Two Port Cities: Some Cape Town and New Orleans Comparisons", in *Quarterly Bulletin of the National Library of South Africa*, Vol. 53, No. 4 (June 1999), 137-145

Cape. Furthermore, New Orleans became part of an expanding continental economy and turned more towards servicing its hinterland, while Cape Town integrated outward into the British imperial network. Finally, the slave and free black population in New Orleans, in line with most colonial slave locations of the Americas, was of a more homogeneous West African heritage than the atomistic slave and indigenous serf population at the Cape, making the urban creole culture more uniform. On the whole, then, New Orleans experienced a creolisation of a more community-friendly kind, slavery lingered until the 1860s so that the subsequent identity-renewal phase occurred later, and the city was not subject to vigorous religious competition at the time of regime transition in the early 1800s. The link to the American hinterland kept the economic momentum going despite the absence of urban innovative development.

Colonial Parallels

Although every case of a colonial port city has its own peculiarities, there are a few insights that can complement the list of community characteristics outlined for the case of British colonial Cape Town.

- Creolisation alone, although common in colonial port cities, creates a new urban culture that can still be conducive to collective effort and civic spirit, and does not necessarily hamper economic development in conjunction with a productive hinterland.¹⁸ The added presence of vigorous competition between faiths can create a tipping point at which individualisation and atomisation of the society preclude a secular-rational modernisation process, although there is a good chance that the peaceful religious competition encourages tolerance.

¹⁸ Colombo, Batavia/Jakarta, New Orleans, or Kingston showed elements of this. Another case of creolisation without significant religious competition was observable in West Africa, where a community of freed slaves from the New World and Africa was settled in the area of today's Freetown, Sierra Leone, and achieved a coherent urban creole culture. See for instance Akintola Wyse, "The Krio of Sierra Leone: Perspectives and West African Historiography", and Andrew Walls, "Meditations Among the Tombs: Changing Patterns of Identity in Freetown, Sierra Leone", both in McGrath, Jedrej, King, and Thompson (eds), *Rethinking African History*, 201-226 and 489-504.

- Religious diversity alone, unaccompanied by significant creolisation, can result in a community of independent religious islands that achieve internal homogeneity and relate to each other as corporate groups competing for resources and status, rather than as suppliers of spiritual goods to freely choosing individuals. The strong group identities serve as drivers for a modernising local economy, but can tip into conflict and communal violence.¹⁹

The locations that combined creolisation of the whole community, religious diversity and religious competition for individual adherents were the ones that produced commercially successful individuals, but stagnated in terms of modernisation and long-term economic development. Cape Town and Melaka were reasonably close examples of this combination.

It is important to recognise at this point two definitional issues of religious competition: the nature of competition as collective or individual effort, and the importance of the number of religious groups contesting the terrain. First, the collective versus individual angle. Religious competition can have two quite different aspects: the competition between religious *groups* for influence in the community, and the competition of religious groups for *individuals*, in the sense understood by Rational Choice theory. The former can easily lead to communal conflict and disrupt economic development, but is likely to form identities that are conducive to a collective striving for progress. The latter may direct religious fervour into more peaceful and market-oriented paths, but robs the community of a sense of common purpose.

The second feature of religious competition is what has been described as the "polarisation" aspect. In contrast to the mere fact of diversity or fragmentation, i.e. the existence of a number of religious groupings in a community, polarisation

¹⁹ The large port cities of India, dominated by one ethnic group and constituting arenas for rival religious groups, are a case in point. Inter-religious conflict rather than peaceful competition is a clear risk, particularly in the absence of firm secular authority. See Harriss-White, *India's Religious Pluralism*, 9-13 and 34-38. Contemporary examples of this conflict-prone template in a non-creole setting could be urban communities in central Nigeria, southern Thailand, Bosnia, or Northern Ireland.

describes the intensity of the threat perceived by a religious group as coming from another one of similar strength. Econometric work on religious diversity has suggested that fragmentation alone has little effect on long-term economic development. Polarisation, on the other hand, seems to have a significant negative effect on economic development when a small number of religious groups of similar strength are competing. The detrimental effect is biggest when there are only two major competing religions of similar size, and decreases with the increasing number of groups claiming smaller shares of the population.²⁰

For the colonial locations examined above, both aspects are relevant. Cape Town exhibited the feature of two major competing religious blocs, similar in size: Christianity and Islam. Polarisation theory, therefore, would indicate poor prospects for long-term development because of mistrust and the high potential for conflict. Moreover, religious competition at the Cape was primarily of the kind that contested the allegiance of individuals, and only in a minor way a group contest for dominance. Again, the spirit of collective purpose would have suffered, impairing development, although the risk of violent conflict was diminished. A double strike against the Cape, then, in economic terms, although creolisation and individualisation avoided communal conflict.

The early British Cape, then, had selected features in common with creole port cities of the nineteenth century around the world. The best comparison, however, may be available when looking at the same city of Cape Town today, about 180 years later.

2. Back to the Future: Cape Town Today

Having emerged from the straitjacket of the apartheid decades in the early 1990s, the creole community at the Cape discovered that it is again in danger of being marginalized. The new Africanist democratic majority government of the country, although pluralist and democratic, is setting political priorities that aim to reverse past injustice against the most oppressed, but is at the same time relegating the concerns of past marginal groups (white liberals, the Coloured) to the sidelines. The creolised

²⁰ Montalvo and Reynal-Querol, *Religious Polarization and Economic Development*.

Western Cape, dominated by these marginal groups and consisting to 60% of persons of significantly mixed heritage, has felt this keenly, and has presented the nation with the paradox that two thirds of those defining themselves as Coloured voted in the 1994 elections for the New National Party, the heirs of the architects of apartheid.²¹ A decade later, creole Cape Town struck again, and elected an "anti-Africanist" municipal administration, largely composed of liberal white, coloured, and religiously based small parties, to form the only significant polity in South Africa not under the direct control of the African National Congress.

Are these signals from a creole community to be taken seriously? Perhaps, but they are also a manifestation of the fact that cultural allegiance is something that transcends racial and political markers. The identities driven by language, religion, history, geography, values, and shared location are asserting themselves again now that the apartheid lid has been lifted. The official fiction of a homogeneous "nation of coloured people" as a separate racial category is gone. Again, competing group identities are contesting the mind of the individual, the traditional cultural markers being joined by a sense of continuing threat by skewed resource allocation, affirmative action, crime, or educational bias against the mixed bag of people including those previously described as Coloured.²² Is a large subgroup of this population, forming the heart of hybrid Cape Town, correct in thinking of themselves as "brown Afrikaners", linked to the lighter-skinned Afrikaners by a shared Dutch Reformed tradition, the Afrikaans language, and values formed by close historical proximity, not to speak of the shared blood in each other's veins?²³ Rejection in the presence of such close kinship is painful, particularly when representatives of the white ruling class have consistently, albeit patronisingly, paid lip service to the relationship: from Hertzog in 1925, to white apologists in the 1960s, the statements describe the nature of Coloured people as essentially "European", Western, or as the

²¹ Prinsloo, *Identity and Community*, 1

²² Prinsloo, *Identity and Community*, 7

²³ R. H. du Pre, "One Nation, Many Afrikaners", *Journal of Contemporary History*, Vol. 22, No. 1 (1997), 86. Cape politicians of mixed heritage have been known to hold this position. Genetic research has shown that the average "white" Afrikaner possesses a significant percentage of non-European genes, just somewhat less than the average "coloured" person. Recent random DNA analysis (*Cape Times*, March 20, 2008, p. 9) confirms that "white" Afrikaners carry significant amounts of ancestral Khoi and slave genes.

“Afrikaner working class”. Van Wyk Louw states: “The Coloured people are our people”²⁴. Alternatively, is the identity to be reduced to one of exotic diversity symbols, entertaining tourists and locals alike in the reincarnation of the Cape Coon Carnival? Or does one revert to an essentialist Khoi or Malay/Muslim cultural ancestry? Or is the creole community to either join the black or the white mainstream?²⁵

By the early 20th century, Cape vernacular Afrikaans had become a political and social statement for the mixed-heritage population that was losing political clout. The *Straatpraatjes* satirical column that appeared in the English/Afrikaans bilingual APO newspaper between 1909 and 1922 lampooned everything that was pompous and self-important, and illustrated the uncertainty and ambiguity of the Coloured population with bitter self-irony. Significantly, this was done in a well-chosen *Kaapse Afrikaans* street vernacular that highlighted the creole nature of the city’s underclass, and its aspirations to become socially accepted by anglicising its speech and names.²⁶ The column faded away with the APO and “Coloured politics”, but the vernacular remained. Today, close to 6 million people in South Africa profess to speak Afrikaans at home, equally split between the previous “White” and “Coloured” groups. In the Western Cape, home of the vast majority of mixed-race South Africans, Afrikaans is the home language of more than 60% of the population, white and non-white.²⁷ This group of “Afrikaners” of various shades of skin colour, from lily-white to ebony, shares a powerful creolising language that conveys common identity. About 15% of Western Cape “Coloured” people speak English as first language, but 90% of all English and Afrikaans speakers in this group are bilingual.²⁸ A polyglot urban culture enlarges the horizon, but also is a source of cultural uncertainty: a sample survey in the Mitchell’s Plain suburb of Cape Town yielded a significant percentage of respondents stating both a single language (primarily Afrikaans) and bilinguality as prime feature of household speech. Interestingly, two thirds of respondents in this suburb stated a strong preference for their children to be

²⁴ Ibid. 91.

²⁵ Erasmus, *Coloured by History*, 20.

²⁶ Adhikari (ed), *Straatpraatjes*, passim.

²⁷ van Rensburg, *Afrikaans in Afrika*, 79/80.

²⁸ du Pre, *One Nation*, 84.

bilingual in future, a recognition that English will be an important skill in a cosmopolitan city.²⁹ Language shapes identity strongly at the Cape, indeed.

The New Religious Scene

Religion continues to exert a significant influence. The strong Cape Muslim identity endures, but may only be sustainable in the long run because of a feeling of being part of a worldwide Islamic “hinterland”, reflecting the historical Muslim concept of “one religion with many nations”. The members of the Dutch Reformed or more generally, the Protestant denominations may not see themselves as similarly spiritually sustained by, say, the international Dutch Reformed confession or the World Council of Churches, or even the fractious Anglican communion: they exhibit the post-modern Christian acceptance of “one nation with many religions”, which makes the Christian identity more easily replaceable by social, ethnic, language, or creole ones.³⁰ Islam may be a stronger transformer of culture than mainstream Protestant Christianity can be in the Cape environment of competing cultural identities.

As with language, the “Coloured” population at the Cape shares Christian religious heritage with the white and African ethnic groups. The Muslim community does not have this affinity with white groups, but shares the faith with a wider national and international *ummah*. Identifying oneself as a Christian or a Muslim removes one temporarily from the ethnic, creole, or language identity and joins one to the wider circle of believers. Again, the Western Cape sample survey provides insights: two thirds of respondents in the previously “Coloured” areas of Mitchell’s Plain indicate that they see themselves as belonging to one specific cultural community. When prompted to name which one that is, about one third of them point, unsurprisingly, to the familiar “Coloured” identity. However, more than 20 % choose to identify themselves primarily as Christian or Muslim, far more than those who identify mostly with “South African”. Nationwide samples analysed by racial categories confirm that 20% of the “Coloured” population primarily identify with a

²⁹ Prinsloo, *Identity and Community*, 9; Birgit Pickel, “Coloured Ethnicity and Identity”, *Demokratie und Entwicklung*, Vol. 28 (Hamburg: LIT, 1997), 66.

³⁰ Bernard Lewis, *The Crisis of Islam* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 2003).

religious identity, compared to about 30% each who see themselves as “Coloured” or “South African”.³¹ More than three quarters find religion highly important in their lives, the vast majority attend religious services regularly.

What are we to make of a driver of cultural identity that rivals the ethnic/creole marker in importance? It is partly linked to language: nationwide, the largest share of the “Coloured” population belongs to the family of Dutch Reformed Churches, closely associated with Afrikaans.³² The Muslim minority has its own Afrikaans tradition. Membership in traditional mission churches (Anglican, Catholic, Methodist, each less important than the Dutch Reformed tradition) has a more anglophone connotation. At the Cape, the Dutch Reformed/Afrikaans element looms even larger in the total, as does the Muslim community which continues to be heavily concentrated in Cape Town. Perhaps half a million Dutch Reformed adherents share the “Coloured” label with a similar number of Muslims in the greater Cape Town area. However, these Dutch Reformed members share the faith and liturgy with over a million “white” Afrikaners, and their Cape Muslim counterparts are part of a bigger South African community including South Asian and other more recently arrived Muslims.³³ On the whole, today's Cape Town shows the same "polarised" structure of religious adherence as it did in the mid-1800s, about equally-sized self-declared communities of Christians and Muslims, with a large undeclared element.³⁴

This compares to a similar “ethnic overlap” of the Cape Town Coloured population with a “Coloured” identity of more than 3 million nationwide, or with the affinity of this group with the wider Cape Town area creole culture of several million people of all colours, increasingly supplemented by rapid immigration of indigenous Xhosa from the dysfunctional Eastern Cape province and migrants from other African countries. Identity, however, does not only need kindred spirits but also needs outsiders from whom one can distance oneself. These are now in good supply, as new immigrants into the urban area do not share the ethnic and cultural makeup of the

³¹ Pickel, "Coloured Ethnicity", 64/65; James L. Gibson and Amanda Gouws, *Overcoming Intolerance in South Africa* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 2000), 78.

³² Pickel, *Coloured Ethnicity*, 77.

³³ www.urcsa.org, www.bethel.edu. See also Al J. Venter, *Coloured*, 381.

³⁴ Y. da Costa, "Religious Divide in the Cape Peninsula", in *South African Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 25, No. 2 (1994), 55-60.

established population. About half of survey respondents in “Coloured” areas of the greater Cape Town area state unequivocally that “Africans” are the population group whose religious beliefs differ most from the respondents’ own. “Whites” are seen as more compatible.³⁵ The antipathy against the “African” identity reflects the long-held fear of being aggregated with underprivileged groups, as well as the current anxiety about being marginalized again by Africanist policies of affirmative action.

If the question is whether there is a set of identities, based on culturally mixed heritage, one of which an individual in a creolised society may choose as the primary one in certain circumstances, relegating other identities temporarily to the back burner, then the answer may be yes. At times when a threat is perceived that is expressed in racial or ethnic terms, individuals will seek security in a group identity that responds to this ethnic focus – e.g. the identity of being “Coloured”, or “non-African”, or “Black”³⁶. If the threat is to the home language, the group identity will encompass those who speak and value this language – e.g. all Afrikaans-speakers, regardless of race, will feel at one to oppose the deterioration of the status of their language in education and public life. This oscillation between multiple personal identities is coming to the fore again at the Cape, after the lifting of the lid of the primarily race-based single-identity system of the twentieth century. Cape Town is already practicing what is being promoted for the new South Africa as a whole: a “cosmopolitan multiculturalism” in the words of Kader Asmal, an attitude that recognises that citizens have “multiple loyalties based on factors that may differ from each other, and may even be contradictory”.³⁷

The religious identity brings a somewhat different aspect to the table. Ethnicity or language in the Cape context imply mixing, ambiguity, creolisation. The traditional mainstream religious affiliations discussed here, on the other hand, seem to be escaping much of the creolisation and syncretism. While many African-Initiated Churches celebrate the integration of mainstream Christianity and African traditional

³⁵ Pickel, *Coloured Ethnicity*, 78.

³⁶ Graduated oppression of the non-whites during the apartheid era created a groundswell of identification with a general “Black Consciousness” among Coloured groups, but also a seeking of relative advantage by “Coloured identity”; post-apartheid affirmative action triggers an outraged “Non-African identity” backlash, or an opportunistic “African identity” strategy to get benefits.

³⁷ Asmal, “We Need to Create a Sense of Global Belonging”.

thought, and the fast-growing Pentecostal movement stresses exuberant demonstrations of the power of the spirit, the Dutch Reformed tradition, mainstream English-speaking Christian churches, and Cape Islam have settled into a fairly conventional mould, eschewing syncretism, fundamentalism or charisma. The mainstream Christian and Muslim traditions are promoting an identity that provides a quiet spiritual counterpoint to the noisy mixed identities of the creole city.

The depth of traditional religious feeling at the Cape is likely to match the South African national levels yielded by the 2001 World Values Survey. In contrast to more secularised Europe, 90% of South Africans surveyed stated that they are religious and believe in God. Unusually, this seems to go in parallel with a widespread feeling that the individual has significant choice in and control of life (85% feel this to be higher than average), and with high levels of tolerance for different lifestyles (only 20-30% are concerned about neighbours with different faith, different national origin, and different sexual preference).³⁸ Traditional values go hand in hand with those expressing and tolerating individuality.

The rainbow of this transforming nation exists not merely in multi-cultural political philosophy, but in the mind of each individual at the Cape, mixing and refracting a range of vivid colours into an ever-changing kaleidoscope. The rainbow's end is always elusive, but faith provides the confidence that the riot of colours has a firm anchor somewhere.

Competition Revisited

This anchor, quietly stable and submerged under racial identities for many decades, is now becoming contested again in an echo of the turbulent times of transition during the early decades of the nineteenth century. Moreover, it is becoming contested not in the sense of religious groups vying for group advantage collectively, but again in the sense of seeking individual converts among the indifferent and the disillusioned. It is no longer the competition between Islam and mainstream Christian denominations that sets the pace now: it is the vigorous

³⁸ www.worldvaluessurvey.org, 2001 data.

proselytising of the Pentecostal and charismatic Christian churches among the urban population in search of a meaningful spiritual home.

Neither one of the two large faiths at the Cape, Christianity and Islam, have stood still in orthodoxy. The spectrum of Cape Islam has been expanded by the addition of new Sufi *tariqas* with different outlooks from the old established ones, and by a Shia community.³⁹ A Turkish-inspired component of Islam has again entered the Cape picture, promoting interfaith dialogue and cultural understanding in the spirit of the Turkish sage Fethullah Gülen.⁴⁰ The competing number of Muslim voices has increased, overwhelming the capacity of the Muslim Judicial Council of Cape Town to maintain homogeneity and uniform doctrine. The reformist push by the Claremont mosque in Cape Town, introducing sermons by women and other innovations, has been challenged by the orthodox establishment, but with little success.⁴¹ Nevertheless, the pragmatic proven strategy of the Cape Muslim community to seek accommodation with any current regime appears to be unchanged, reflecting the fact that Muslims are a small national minority despite being well-represented at the Cape. Contemporary commentators lament the accommodationist stance of local Muslims, and exhort them to engage with social and political issues as a collective, to little avail.⁴²

Mainstream Christianity is experiencing a similar expansion of the Christian spectrum. The most dynamic force in South African Christianity since the last decades of the twentieth century has been the explosive growth of the Charismatic and Pentecostalist churches, particularly the new wave of Pentecostalism that is superseding the original spread of "classical Pentecostalism" arriving from the United States during the early 1900s.⁴³ In contrast to the personal-salvation-oriented

³⁹ Aslam Fataar, *After the Honeymoon*, presentation at Islamic Peace University of South Africa (IPSA) seminar, Athlone, 21 Sept. 2008.

⁴⁰ www.interfaithsa.co.za.

⁴¹ Tayob, *Islam in South Africa*, passim.

⁴² See for instance the plea by Fataar in *After the Honeymoon*.

⁴³ The following discussion draws primarily on Lawrence Schlemmer, *Dormant Capital: Pentecostalism in South Africa and its Potential Social and Economic Role* (Johannesburg: Centre for Development and Enterprise, March 2008), and on CDE, *Under the Radar: Pentecostalism in South Africa* (Johannesburg, 2008). See also Elphick and Davenport, *Christianity in South Africa*, and Peter Berger, "Development Should Take Account of Religion", *The Mercury*, 6 March 2008. Further

traditional Pentecostalism, and the communitarian, syncretist African Independent Churches (AICs), the "new Pentecostalism" engages the aspiring lower and lower middle classes and encourages personal initiative and material uplift. This new wave often is an urban and suburban phenomenon, while the AIC message with its traditional Africanist emphasis on community solidarity and ancestors often appeals to the rural poor who can eventually re-establish a quasi-traditional community when migrating to urban areas. In both cases, the rootlessness associated with urbanisation is addressed by the offer of a congenial, sympathetic community that assists in navigating the modernising process, and provides a new anchor. Despite the cooperative spirit within each congregation, the Pentecostalist movement as a whole is highly atomistic and resistant to efforts to organise it in local, national, or international bodies.

Small wonder, then, that the Pentecostal recruiting drive has found fertile ground at the Cape. The individualist, hybrid-identity predisposition of the urban population, coupled with a sense of rapid, uncontrollable transition after the rigidities of apartheid, is providing spectacular growth of adherents, mostly at the expense of traditional mainstream Christian denominations, but also drawing from the newly urbanised AIC members and from those in search of a clear, affirmative message. The market-oriented recruitment technique of the Pentecostal churches is drawing other denominations into a similar mode, replaying the situation in which individuals choose an affiliation rationally. In line with the current interpretation that the neo-Pentecostalism is a revival of the "Protestant ethic" originally associated by Weber with the early Calvinist churches, the Pentecostal congregations stress the principles of personal discipline, clean living, self-help rather than dependence, hard work, saving for the future, individualism and initiative. This is proving to be an attractive offer for low-income individuals who are searching for rational paths to social mobility. Theoretically, this process should be moving a community towards a modernising path of long-term development, as small entrepreneurship grows into

background material on the South African situation is contained in Ann Bernstein, "Culture and Development", in Lawrence E. Harrison and Peter L. Berger (eds), *Developing Cultures* (NY: Routledge, 2006), 23-41; and Ann Bernstein, "Globalization, Culture, and Development", in Peter L. Berger and Samuel P. Huntington (eds), *Many Globalizations* (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 2002), 185-249.

larger-scale investment. At the Cape, this seems to be thwarted again by the combination of religious competition with a creole environment.

As in the early nineteenth century, trust is in short supply. Again, this can be expected to at least match national survey results which indicate that almost 90% of respondents do not trust other people much, and that 70% are convinced that they are being taken advantage of if they are not vigilant.⁴⁴ Religious polarisation plays its part in reducing the possible circles of trust for individuals, adding the variable of religious difference to those of race, ethnicity, social status, or income level. Despite valiant efforts at outreach and interfaith dialogue, both the Muslim and Christian population groups are wary of those who do not belong to the own faith. In the last decade of the twentieth century, the Muslim population of the Cape Town metropolitan area has been found to be most comfortable in association with co-religionists, and to limit contacts with non-Muslims to the levels necessary for daily life in the city. Surveyed Muslims in the "coloured" population of the Cape, living in close neighbourly relationships with "coloured" Christians, nevertheless consider adherence to Islam an added asset in interpersonal relations. Despite centuries of acculturation at the multicultural Cape, and despite decades of the imposition of synthetic racial identities, the faith identity is a source of comfort for Cape Muslims, and serves as a vehicle to limit trust in others who share other identity features. In a similar way, the fastest-growing urban Christian groups, surveyed in a study of charismatic churches a decade later, tend to encapsulate themselves socially in their congregations, also using faith to override other identity drivers such as race, community spirit, or poverty. The affinity most keenly felt is that to the family, leaving the loyalties to the greater community and the national purpose far behind. Under these circumstances, productive long-term cooperation is an uphill struggle.⁴⁵

A Service Economy of Individuals

As noted initially, Cape Town has been struggling to join the ranks of "world cities" that are connected by a web of economic and cultural networks, despite the apparently suitable cultural assets and cosmopolitan outlook it possesses. Recent

⁴⁴ www.worldvaluessurvey.org, 2001 data.

⁴⁵ Da Costa, "Religious Divide", passim; Schlemmer, *Dormant Capital*, 53-57.

efforts to push the city further into this network from the margins include the construction of a major convention centre, the attempts to establish a skills and facilities infrastructure for attracting more of the international film industry, and the public investment in major sports venues and transport infrastructure to serve the 2010 World Soccer Championships.⁴⁶ In a fractious and argumentative city, these efforts are an uphill struggle, as well-meaning municipal, provincial and national authorities try to fit them into a planning framework that is by definition a top-down one. The city of Cape Town has a rolling "Integrated Development Plan" (IDP), the province of the Western Cape, surrounding Cape Town, boasts of a "Strategic Infrastructure Plan" (SIP) and is designing an ambitious "Micro-Economic Development Strategy" (MEDS). Both try to coordinate with national strategies for housing, transport, energy, water and other key issues in a still skewed and unequal economy.⁴⁷ The alphabet soup of plans is confronted by a fast-growing sprawling city of over three million people, more than one million of whom are estimated to live in temporary, makeshift "informal housing" in settlements poorly served by infrastructure. In this environment, the maintenance of law and order is difficult enough, even without attempting to impose an orderly pace of development.⁴⁸

Let us glance at the MEDS planning process as a representative recent example of the potential mismatch between public intentions and the urban reality in Cape Town.⁴⁹ This planning exercise, conducted over several years by teams of consultants, aims at identifying suitable economic growth sectors in the Western Cape and at suggesting public sector interventions, or public-private partnerships, to bring about such growth. Based on occupational data from the 2001 census, skill profiles, and extensive interviews and research, the study attempts to "pick winners" that would generate jobs and growth with some public prodding and support. Unsurprisingly, the prime candidates for the Western Cape's accelerated development

⁴⁶ David McDonald, "Drive to Make Cape Town a World-Class City Has Made It One of the Most Unequal", *Cape Times*, 21 Oct. 2008. See also the discussion in McDonald, *World City Syndrome* (NY: Routledge, 2008).

⁴⁷ Francis Wilson, "Drive to Break Political Logjam", *Cape Times*, 15 March 2007.

⁴⁸ Gerry Adlard, "The Future Is Going Informal", *Cape Times* 21 Oct. 2008.

⁴⁹ Dept. Of Economic Development and Tourism, Western Cape, *Micro-Economic Development Strategy* (MEDS), Research Rounds 1 to 4, 2004-07, CD set.

(largely driven by Cape Town) turn out to be wholesale and retail trading, cultural industries and creative arts, the film sector, small and micro enterprises, tourism, financial services, construction, and the large and poorly recorded informal sector. The overlap of informal business, micro enterprises, and trading in consumer goods and services is the core of the potential, channelled into commerce, art and crafts, music, film, and tourist services. Fishing, marine services, and port functions support this base.

This combination is what the cultural template of the city would suggest, and echoes the situation of the nineteenth century. The difficulty arises in taking the step to promoting the growth of these sectors, or to use the pattern to incubate new types of ventures, such as biotechnology, or sophisticated financial services beyond insurance and traditional banking. As the MEDS rightly recognises, the very informality and small-scale nature of business activities militates against organised intervention. Formal and informal business overlaps, skill needs change and do not favour long-term human resource development, and economies of scale are difficult to attain. The diagnosis of an anarchic and atomistic business community seems spot-on, but the prescription for targeted funding and organised collaboration may be wishful thinking. The infrastructure needs of economic growth also are not addressed easily. The MEDS suggests an ambitious streamlining of public transport in the urban metropolitan area, based on suppression of crime, cooperation between taxi and rail/bus services, and massive public investment. In the current urban context, investment may have to wait until confidence in crime control grows, and until the continuously flaring conflicts between public and private transport operators cease. Creole and chaotic Cape Town is defeating the planners easily, long-term cooperation is still a distant target.

Contemporary commentators and editorials constantly dwell on the puzzling inability of Cape Town to make use of its cultural and environmental assets and pull itself together to achieve steady and efficient development without endless bickering and rivalries, while other South African cities appear to be able to do this better. Earnest admonitions on how better cooperation and efficient planning would vastly improve Cape Town's striving for "world-class" status are proliferating.⁵⁰ Other

⁵⁰ See for instance February, "Muddling Along In Eccentricity", and Wilson, "Drive to Break", *Cape Times*, 15 March 2007.

equally strident voices argue that the "world-class" aspirations are an illusion and an unnecessary luxury as long as large sections of the urban population are without basic services, and that urban planning should refocus on the poor.⁵¹ Both lines of argument seem to disregard the city's nature as a cauldron of competing individualists, rendering any kind of planning extremely difficult. This fact has encouraged a more grassroots-focused set of advocates who recognise that informality and bottom-up development may be the best way forward for the city.⁵² In the densely packed informal settlements, where Hobbesian survival is an everyday reality, and Pentecostal and charismatic churches thrive as a much-needed anchor and life support system, such stirrings are visible. Very low formal employment and high dependence on social grants in these settlements have made it necessary for the inhabitants to become enterprising in informal ways, both legal and illegal. Small trading and service businesses are a common feature, and a plethora of semi-legal premises serving alcohol are reminiscent of the nineteenth-century Cape. Projections imagine that "these communities will have realised that if they want development they will have to drive it themselves, networking with organisations elsewhere". Furthermore, these voices argue, "the term 'informal settlement' will stick, but it will lose its stigma and gain some distinction, because although 'formal' connotes convention, legality and order, it is not always appropriate, creative or inspiring".⁵³

This may indeed be one way forward that appeals to Capetonians, as the creole city battles against attempts to impose orderly planning and long-term strategy. Religious competition and general hybridisation is pushing all layers of the community towards seeking individual or small-scale paths to personal and social advancement. The Pentecostalist churches encourage their members to be self-supporting and to learn how to organise small-scale, short-term projects in ad hoc alliances of individuals. While top-down development efforts often meet violent resistance, are ignored or sabotaged, or generate a "cargo cult" of passive expectations, the small efforts by private entrepreneurs, NGOs, religious groups, and local activists bear fruit quietly "under the radar".

⁵¹ McDonald, *World City Syndrome*.

⁵² Seton Bailey, "Born of Strife, Raised on Hardship", *Cape Times*, 21 Oct. 2008; Adlard, "The Future".

⁵³ Adlard, "The Future".

The Religion/Economy Linkage Revisited

As the nineteenth century opened with a time of transition, creolisation, individualisation, emancipation, and religious competition, so does the twenty-first century. The same forces are at work, again pushing the Cape into a direction of creative anarchy.

- Religious competition is reinvigorated, but may be fragmenting into more groupings, thus avoiding the bane of two-player polarisation.
- Competition takes place for the adherence of individuals, not for group dominance, operating in a broadly secular and pluralist community.
- Religion plays a key role in the values of individuals, and brings with it traditional values. On the other hand, tolerance of different worldviews and lifestyles is high.
- Faith communities, such as long-aculturated Muslims and self-help "Protestant Ethic" Pentecostals, accommodate the secular authority of the day and foster market-oriented behaviour.
- Trust between faiths and individuals is low, obstructing long-term cooperation.
- Individual competitiveness, small scale, and informality drive the local economy.

Chapter Six: Conclusions for Development Strategy

Does the review of the attitudes in nineteenth-century Cape, the progress of similar colonial port cities, and realities in today's metropolitan Cape Town yield any insights that could help in the judgment of how culturally diverse cities develop? One clear conclusion is that cultural and religious diversity does not have to be just the heavy weight that is holding back economic development as indicated in the statistical studies, nor is it only the creative panacea that is promoted by advocates of hybridity. If one unpacks the elements of development, one finds that competitive diversity encourages some of them, and discourages others. Development is not stalled or accelerated as a whole, but proceeds *differently* in diversity-driven communities, as opposed to more homogeneous ones. There is a "diversity bonus", as well as a "diversity discount" in the development process of such communities. The assets of diversity and hybridity are innovation, creativity, and tolerance of many other identities. The drawbacks are atomisation, and a lack of public spirit and long-term life strategies.

A second insight is the difference that religious competition makes. If superimposed on a creolised, hybrid society, the individualisation process combines with a sense of personal choice and initiative in all areas of life, sharpens the individual competitiveness, and diminishes levels of interpersonal trust. In an ethnically and culturally more homogeneous society, the competition element can easily tip into group conflict, something that is likely to be rare in a community averse to strong group identities.

Finally, the best chance for improvement and development in diverse and personally competitive societies seems to lie in the harnessing of the type of social capital that is predominant, not in the vain attempt to impose models that need different types of social capital that are lacking. We are dealing with communities that have an abundance of personal initiative, uniquely constructed personal identities, a taste for innovation and creative solutions, a tolerance of unusual and unorthodox worldviews, and a population of intensely competitive individuals. We also note the absence of a strong community spirit (despite strong efforts to foster one), and the lack of a willingness to sit down around a table and plan cooperative ventures for the

long term. Development does happen in such a society, but it is of a kind that focuses on shorter-term achievable goals, arrived at through temporary alliances of interested individuals.

It would seem, therefore, that a promising strategy for a city like Cape Town should avoid projects that require a large measure of civic consensus, but should utilise the principle of market-oriented competition and individual entrepreneurship inculcated by the religious communities. This may well be in direct contradiction to the aims of national and regional development policy, which often relies on top-down planning approaches unsuitable for a creole environment. Drawing on the behavioural foundations laid in the nineteenth-century Cape and revitalised today, a realistic urban strategy would draw on the following elements:

- High priority on the establishment and maintenance of the rule of law, to provide a secure platform for the free exercise of innovation and entrepreneurship. Small-scale and informal enterprise is channelled into legal and more formal activity if there is a perception that the risk is only economic, not a threat to life and property.
- Relaxation and liberalisation of licensing and labour regulations, to reduce the fear of entanglement in red tape and to enable small initiatives to expand with flexible and reversible employment strategies.
- Dismantling of public or licensed monopolies, where there is a chance of small entrepreneurs entering the market profitably. Vigorous enforcement of fair competition and regulatory standards is a necessary corollary, to avoid collusion, intimidation, and fraud.
- Guarding the open market in religious promotion and new religious ventures, both between faiths and within them, in order to maintain the competitive ferment and to avoid a congealing of faiths into rival identity monopolists. Efforts by Muslim and Christian establishments to impose limits on innovation and diversity and enforce internal homogeneity through recourse to secular authority should be opposed.

- Embracing the entrepreneurial and skill-building potential of the religious groups that are actively encouraging personal initiative and material improvement. The role of the rapidly expanding missionary churches and Islam of the early nineteenth century is now played by the growing urban charismatic and Pentecostalist churches, and education-oriented Muslim foundations. Competitive growth encourages entrepreneurial behaviour. If not invited into a dialogue on the improvement of the community, the new religious congregations and associations may isolate and "encapsulate" themselves.
- Making room for informal initiatives driven by religious and other non-profit groups. Such initiatives tend to be stifled by integration into a formal, bureaucratic environment.
- Facilitation of unorthodox art, lifestyles and religious expression, to utilise the creative potential of the community's tolerance of diversity.

In the early nineteenth century, religious competition for souls in the heterogeneous Cape acculturated the individuals in search of identities to the new competitive environment brought about by the globalising British Empire. Missionaries and imams, irrespective of their underlying motives, established the mindset that self-improvement and an active personal search for identity construction were assets for the survival in a transforming colonial world. In the same way, the new "evangelical fervour" in post-apartheid Cape Town is educating a diverse population searching for stability how to survive in a globalised competitive world, in which economic cycles are felt by everyone. It is not just the fact that elements of Max Weber's "Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism" are observable in the Pentecostal revival. This is happening all over South Africa and in other regions of the world. More importantly for cities such as Cape Town, this competition and market orientation in the religious market is superimposed on a community of hybrid individuals who have no truck with long-term planning and inner-worldly asceticism, features that would be key elements of orderly, productive secular-rational

development. The driver of development in such cases is more likely to deserve the title of "Diversity Ethic and the Spirit of Individualism".

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List of Abbreviations in the Text

AIC	African Independent Church
APO	African Political Organisation (later African People's Organisation)
CMS	Church Missionary Society
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
IDP	Integrated Development Plan
LMS	London Missionary Society
MEDS	Micro-Economic Development Strategy
NGK	Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk (Dutch Reformed Church)
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
RMS	Rheinische Missionsgesellschaft (Rhenish Mission Society)
SACA	South African Commercial Advertiser
SAMS	South African Missionary Society
SIP	Strategic Infrastructure Plan
SPG	Society for the Propagation of the Gospel
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
VOC	Vereenigde Oostindische Compagnie (Dutch East India Company)