

July-August 2023

Adventist Studies

Lectures on Education, Faith, History and Mission

Batch Number One of Seven



Thula Mlondolozzi Nkosi

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Kelvin -on-Atholl Seventh-day Adventist Church Johannesburg,
Gauteng Province.

In this publication there is a paper by
Miss Fikile Mabaso delivered in the 2017 camp of the
New Destiny InstituteSA held in Amanzimtoti High School
South of eThekweni, KwaZulu-Natal Province.

Think!

“The challenge does not just come because we are approaching a particular date. Nor does it arise only because changes in the world seem to occur at an increasingly bewildering speed. The church presents its own challenge to itself. There is a growing feeling, encountered all over the world, that the present dominating ways of seeing the world and structures which no longer release its power to be God’s agent of a new life and new hope, Christian faith will no longer do. The faith has either become entangled up with a culture, language and structures which no longer realise its power to be God’s agent of a new life or else at crucial points it has been trimmed down to fit the benefits of a world conditioned to reject all claims to final truth.

There is a malaise in the Church, a disenchantment with presents ways of engaging the world with the gospel. Christians are looking for an authentic restatement of their faith which both adequately expresses the reality of the life they lead and does justice to all that God has shown of himself in Jesus Christ.”

(A New World Coming: A Fresh Look at the Gospel for Today)

Andrew Kirk, pages 12 and 13)

Quoted in the Preamble of the 32-page text,

“GOD OR APARTHEID: A CHALLENGE TO SOUTH

AFRICAN ADVENTISM” (1991)

Authors - Pule Magethi and Thula Nkosi

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52 **THE SOUTH AFRICAN ADVENTIST**
53 **HISTORY BELL IS RINGING**
54 *“Liberation o’clock!”*

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56 **Eurowestern Socio-institutional Coloniality**
57 **and Race-coded Underdevelopment**
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60 **Thula Mlondolazi Nkosi**
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64 office, well and good. That office was created to monitor Africans from epistemic and social
65 revolt from Euro-American theological and missional colonisation after 1994. Secondly it was
66 established to cover local Adventist whites in the church from criticism as racists. The whites
67 in the Northern Conference want no Africans in their churches. I have sufficient narratives on
68 this matter.

69 **The hour of African Adventist total emancipation from Eurowestern epistemic**
70 **theology and race-inspired organisational mission has struck!**

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72 **Think**

73 From the time Adventism landed on our shores it perpetuated the slavery of our brothers
74 and sisters suffered in North America. Adventism in South Africa has been for the
75 sociotheological co-option of Africans into a deeply unsalvific and captive spirituality and
76 mission. The cosmic irony is that until 1916 Adventists were deeply engaged in the anti-slavery
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During the three years I spent as a teacher at Bethel the institution was closely guarded by the Transkeian police intelligence service. On some nights the school was visited by strange cars. One even parked at the edge of the veranda of my house one night. The lights in the house were off. I was getting ready to sleep. The car left after some ten minutes. My suspicion was that they had come to eavesdrop on conversations that sometimes occurred in my house because after the banning of COSAS (Congress of South African Students) caused as strain to some students from Gauteng. Many students went to institutions in the homelands.

There were two students camps on the Bethel campus that did not see eye-to-eye on matters of liberation from apartheid. One group was Cosas-based, the other was Pan-Africanist/Black Consciousness driven. I never discussed this with any member of staff. *Some persons in the black staff were politically naive, thinking that the social theory of colonial Adventism was biblically genuine and righteous.*

In my time as a member of staff Bethel also had white teachers who were servants of the apartheid intelligence. I shall not disclose names here and how I discovered this reality. They worked with police in Butterworth. In one of the walls in the Butterworth police station I physically saw a list of Bethel College male students who were under intelligence surveillance. One day they tried to recruit a woman student who later became a pastor's wife. I got the story from her during registration. She was a in the college programme as a teacher-trainee.

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I still clearly remember the Friday Mphuthumi (Pucto) Mafani telling me of the arrest of a home boy, Zuko Camagu, who was in the secondary section without the knowledge of any staff member. Pastor Joseph Mdakane the principal, had gone to Zimbabwe for a special meeting. The Division office was located there until this country was falsely “liberated” from apartheid racism. After lunch I drove to the police station to inquire about this arrest. On a wall in the foyer, I saw a paper pinned with close to ten names of Bethel male students. I read it very fast and then consulted the receptionist about Zuko. In a moment a young policeman came to me. I then told him that I wanted to know whether or not the police would release the young man. I needed to inform his parents on this matter. The policeman complained over the fact that the “this boy“ was refusing to speak about his origins. He asked me if I knew he had been in Robben Island. I told him that I did not know that, but that this fact was totally irrelevant to me as an educator, and that if they motivated us to expel him, we would resist and refuse to expel him. Admission to the institution had nothing to do with politics.

He then said that if there was trouble in the institution, we should not call them. I told him that our institution would be peaceful, and that their help was unnecessary. After the vesper service Zuko and I met and discussed his past., We then made an agreement that we would keep him until he matriculated. Zuko was promoted twice in a single year. He was an exceptionally capable student. He was a thorn on Mrs Nciya who taught history. Zuko would occasionally raise a hand in class and correct her. After we gave him two class promotions Zuko gave us the school an exemption pass in matric. Today he is a retired post-apartheid army officer.

In its history Bethel lost growth opportunities for keeping staff some of whom were socio-politically naïve and who blindly subscribed to the unscriptural colonialist Adventist politics of white missionaries and other politically lost Africans in the staff. This is also the reason why the Bethel-Oakwood University coalition did not succeed.

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THINK AGAIN

First, they came for the socialists and
I did not speak out because I was not a socialist.

Then they came for the trade unionists,
And I did not speak because I was
Not a trade unionist.

Then they came for the Jews,
and I did not speak out
Because I was not a Jew

Then they came for me,
And there was no one left to speak
For me.

Pastor Martin Niemoller

This Paper

This paper is not the official voice of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. While it is born and situated within an Adventist Church it is my creation and thus will articulate issues and concerns that sit deep in my soul, and hopefully, in the souls of other equally or similarly concerned African Adventists in the profession in this troubled church and land.

I am the first child of four of an Adventist pastoral couple. I come from the Nkosi-Ndlangamandla-(Mphazima)-Siwela-Mabaso/Khumalo-Mntungwa people of the AmaZulu nation on my father's lineage. I am the child of the Ngwenya-Mntimande people on my mother's side. I am biologically related to nine Adventist pastoral families in this country. I shall not mention them in case they are your targets of animosity and *vice versa*. You are old enough to know that our church is a shady melee of convoluted friendships and animosities. But the voice of the Master remains, "*Love thy neighbour as you love yourself.*"

Adventist Education and State Legislation

Until 1960 Adventist schools among Africans dotted each major region of South Africa. After the implementation of the Verwoerdian Bantu Education system in 1953, and the state's promise of subsidies for surrendered Christian schools, church schools began to dwindle. Only Adventists and Roman Catholics refused the grants, fearing that this was a ploy to gradually make them lose their institutions. The tragedy, however, was that African Adventists had not been taught how the institutions should be funded. Some of the teachers were not adequately trained. African pastors also did not know how the schools should be managed. In time each province began to lose its schools.

The North Bantu Mission Field, later known as the Trans-Oranje Field and finally the Trans-Orange Conference, lost seventeen schools through the lack of pastoral knowledge on how institutions should be funded. Secondly, African pastors also suspected that the schools would eat into their salary budgets. In later years Mrs Beauty Wakaba, then Treasurer of the TOC, told Pule Magethi and this writer in a meeting of the TOC Executive Committee held in the Zondi church in Soweto, that schools would invade pastoral budgets and lead to the

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198 bankruptcy of the Conference. Of course, she was lying! Nobody in the committee raised a
199 finger to stop the nonsensical statement.

200 Later when Abner Seleseng was Education Director claimed that just over one hundred
201 positive interests, we had raised for a school in the TOC, was not enough to convince the
202 Conference.

203 Some years, during the tenure of Dr Paulos Shongwe a committee was set up to plan
204 for a school. I attended only two meetings. In the second meeting I concluded that there would
205 never be a school and I stopped attending meetings. Not long thereafter that committee
206 dissolved. Personally, I never trust pastors when they speak about Adventist education. They
207 know nothing about education. They know something about being taught.

208 It is because of this ignorance the Youth Ministries Director, Peter Maligudu and some
209 grossly ignorant and misled Pastors assumed that the New Destiny InstituteSA, the Education
210 Project I created with some senior youth in the TOC, was a competitor against the Youth
211 Department. I refused to be coerced to kill my brainchild in a meeting held in his office in the
212 TOC. One of these pastors even visited Blue Hills College management to as then not to give
213 us accommodation for our first NDI camp. Elders in the whole TOC were told about me and
214 the wrong camp. I told members of our Committee to close their ears and walk forward.

215 We ran camp for 12 years without any hiccups. We are now about to launch an Online
216 NDI Channel after winter. A one-day Congress of all NDI seniors will be held in Cedarwood
217 Conference Centre within the first month of summer this year. **This time the project will be**
218 **passed to run by senior youth who have acquired tertiary qualifications!** We shall move
219 into advisory and associated roles.

220 Tertiary Institution

221 We have also acquired, as a gift from a university official, who was my college when I
222 taught English and geography in Dr WF Nkomo Senior Secondary School in Pretoria/Tshwane.
223 The programme is for business studies at a diploma level. This man will run two of our
224 graduations and leave us when we introduce degrees. We have lands donated to me in Gauteng,

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Mpumalanga and KZN for an institution. We are also in touch with professional friends in North America.

The motto of the NDI was “*Preparing Leaders for the Kingdom.*” All other interested senior youth may attend the NDI Convention. All TOC provinces had representation in the NDI camps. We were already having members in Kwa-Zulu-Natal and a facilitator from there.

In a seminar held in Bloemfontein a General Conference Associate Education Director told me that there was no such other camp in the whole church!!

This Batch of Studies

The first two editions of this journal were sent to a select group of twelve persons. We were searching for opinion and whether the idea of a communication platform among Adventist teachers and other professionals in this land would fly.

There is very little professionalism in the Adventist spiritual culture in this land. This is evidenced, among other realities, by lack of academic and professional instruments for individual growth and communal development. All we do is to listen to sermons, some of whom are third-grade archaic stuff, that I heard when I was a child. The difference is that the current sermons come from pastors who have academic gowns. But for some of us it is the same menu dressed in new condiments.

My teaching experience has led me to disdain inferior homiletic reality. I cannot avoid assessing thought, presentation, and purpose when I listen to sermons. Some sermons preached in our churches are the same except that they differ in topic, language and thought. Virtually nothing revolutionary takes place after sermons. They are simply elocutionary time fillers. Nothing follows some of these worn-out presentations.

The core reason for the above reality is that the African Adventist church critically lacks a development plan for its existence and mission. It has no eye on the future except an eschatological leap to the second coming of Jesus. The present is cluttered with uninventive talk, foreign language hymnody and routinised low-grade spirituality. In some churches in this land, I sit on a chair and wonder why I am there. I hear the old Great Trek Adventism of dead generations.

There are many educators in this church, but they add nothing to intellectual and institutional development. They are treated as members. They are not seen as professionals. Thus, many of them live a churchmanship of low-grade spirituality and unprofessional mission. They seem to have slid into inferior uncreative spirituality.

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The purpose of this publication is to call persons in the teaching profession to become a voice of transformational and progressive development in the church. It bothers me deeply when I hear teachers in the church articulating the same low-grade ideas that ooze from mouths far less educated than they. This reality is national and ubiquitous. This is the reason why there is a so-called Students Association in this church and no teacher/professional organisations. This is a reality that calls for new creative thought and Adventist spirituality. This is the reason why some of them ask the same questions in Sabbath School and other church programmes that they should be answering.

1. SDANA

In the nineteen seventies nurses formed an organisation called Seventh-day Adventist Nurses Association. In its infancy it was riddled by ideological and programme variances until it died. Some power-packed nurses sought to turn into a movement that would even face social realities in this land. One from Tshwane who later left for exile in Europe, found a platform for the articulation of realities affecting African nurses in South Africa. Unfortunately, she was confronted by a socially and politically lame community of nurses who had been in the Adventist Church for decades. The latter group avoided was not ready to challenge the professional, socio-political realities in the church and in the world. Ultimately, she left for exile in Europe.

- My own assessment of the failure and demise of SDANA is that its founders were largely Adventists by birth/socialisation and were not intellectually and morally ready for confrontational Adventism. They wanted to maintain the colonial and slave Adventism inherited from white pastors and their black counterparts. Finally, SDANA died without a funeral.

2. SDATA

When I was the Director for Education in the Trans-Orange Conference I launched, thought eh sanction of the administration of an teachers' organisation. Some SDASA nincompoops assumed that this was an organisation to oppose or contest SDASA space. They were wrong. In this land SADTU is not COSAS. All this was neurotic lunacy. It did not bother

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me even though some person I trusted decided to withdraw from the project. Some naïve pastors also undermined the new body. I relinquished it, not because the idea was wrong, but because I did not want to engage in a battle that was professionally infradig.

The one organisation that I resolutely refused to kill was the educational project, New Destiny InstituteSA. Some uninformed and misled pastors fought and gossiped about the project as though it was a counter-Adventist Youth Movement. I refused to kill the NDI in the midst of gossip and opposition. One fool even called on Blue Hills College to deny us space for the camp. They did not know that I had taught in the school in its infancy. This is one of the reasons why our sons schooled there. One pastor visited us in a subsequent camp and delivered to us the whole vomit of prejudice that oozed in our direction from the TOC Youth office.

- **Listen:** I am the first child in my family. I have no other point of reference but me. When I decide to do something, I give no heed or comfort to oppositional thinkers.
- **This year the NDI is returning with a totally different programme format and leadership. We will also locate the programmes on the electronic media.**

Uninformed critics will again rant, I suppose. We are, as Julius Caesar told his murderers “as constant as the northern star.” We fear no fool in Adventism – educated or not. All that I can tell is the simple message: **NDI is coming back!! We are returning with a big programmatic bang!!**

The Birth of a New Black Adventist Academic Culture

A new academic culture is being established in the African Adventist community in this land. It will land on the South African soil before

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Watch the space. We are Voortrekkers. We are not Settlers!

***“A ship that travels alone travels fast
when it knows the route.”***

Purpose and Function of Lectures

The cohort of thought papers here is meant - partly - to relook and celebrate the work of Africans in the Seventh-day Adventist Church in the area of literary production.

African authors have not been celebrated in South African Adventism. This the reason why I applaud the work done by Hlanga Mafani on Richard Moko. In the community of the AmaZulu and amaSwati, authors such as Joseph Hlubi, Elijah kaE. Khuboni, Absalom S. Nkosi, Mrs Eleanor Msimang (wife of Pastor Percy Msimang) have not been given the celebratory honour they truly deserve.

Hlubi and Khuboni¹ gave us *Ukhrestu Esihlabelelweni*. They spent their winter vacations in Spionkop Missionary College near eMnambithi (Ladysmith) and translated Franklin E.

¹The distance between the institution and their homes in Newcastle (Khuboni) and Eswatini (Hlubi) compelled them to stay on campus until the end of the academic year. They only travelled in November. They travelled in a wagon that was donkey-driven. Incidentally, two of their children married. Late uMamKhuboni in Diepkloof was the daughter of Hlubi. Hlubi is also the first native to embrace Adventism in Eswatini after the work of an American missionary from North Africa and a Coloured person from Pietermaritzburg. In addition, another person, Mzozoyana from the Cape also

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Belden's Christ in Song (1908). But note this: **Christ in Song** was never the church's official hymnbook.

- The official hymnal of the church was the 1935 Church Hymnal. When the new hymnbook was released, the General Conference asked all users of the Christ in Song to return copies to the office. People refused and stuck to the old hymnal. *This reality is significant for African Adventists. We get obsessed by tradition and find it difficult, if not disturbing, to embrace change. We often bring an ancestralist/traditionalist response to newness.* The Christ in Song was finally released from the church in the 1985 General Conference Business Session of 1985.

Absalom Nkosi, my father) translated *Our Day in the Light of Prophecy* into *Okwaprofithwao Kwezinsuku Zanamuhla*. Khuboni later released his own text, *Ibandla LikaNkulunklu Emhlabeni*. The text is written in old Zulu orthography based on the work of Clement Doke who was commissioned from England to come to Southern Africa to corrupt African languages. I learn of this fact when I was in a meeting in the University of Zimbabwe, some years ago. The noun classes (*Izigaba zamabizo*) in Nguni languages, for instance, have irregularities and inconsistencies.

introduced Adventism in Ermelo. This same man then travelled to the East Rand where he established Adventism in Payneville, Springs.

In the next edition
we shall feature an article titled,
**"THE IMPERATIVE OF FOUNDATIONAL
RETHEORISATION OF
SOUTH AFRICAN ADVENTISM IN THE
AFRICAN CHURCH"**

A Note from Google

THE WORD "ALKEBULAN"

The word "Alkebulan" has a long history in Africa. This word was widely used throughout Africa, especially by the Ethiopians, Nubians, Moors, and Numidians. Numerous authorities concur that the name is actually a combination of two Phoenician words - the Arabic terminology for maize and fruit, respectively, were "friqi" and "pharika." Experts who study the history of the African continent claim that Alkebulan was the continent's original name in antiquity. Translations of this name include "mother of mankind" and "the garden of Eden," respectively.

Alkebulan and the Bible

The meaning of Alkebulan in the bible can only be linked to what historians and theologians have described it to be since there's no record of the word Alkebulan in the bible verses. The earth and the skies were first created by God. Darkness covered the surface of the deep, and the earth was empty and without shape. Then He uttered the words "Let there be light," and light appeared. Who knew that God made Alkebulan, is the question I have now

Since the term Alkebulan is not mentioned in any biblical verses, the meaning of Alkebulan in the Bible can only be derived from what historians and theologians have declared it to be. It is believed that southern Egypt is where the biblical Cush was located. More than 100 times in the Bible, Cush is referenced, yet its location is never made clear. The inhabitants were known as Kushites.

Is The Word Alkebulan In The Bible?

Alkebulan which is a word of indigenous root refers to belonging to tribes in Africa. There have been many mentions of places with geographical locations in Africa such as Egypt, Ethiopia.

Alkebulan History

The Kemetic or Alkebulan history of Africa leads one to believe that Alkebulan was once the name of the continent. The oldest and only word with indigenous roots is “alkebu-Ian.” Alkebulan refers to either the mother of humanity or the Garden of Eden.

In the latter half of the 17th century, the word Africa was first used. At first, it was restricted to the northernmost region of the continent. The continent had been colonized at that time, and the Europeans had slave-ruled over its inhabitants. They had a hand in the shift from Alkebulan to its current name.

Africa’s original name was Alkebulan. It is mentioned in the Bible with geographical representations and landmarks such as the Nile River, such as Ethiopia, Egypt

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Is Africa Mentioned In The Bible?

Places in Africa are rather mentioned or used in the Bible. For example, the Nile River which is in Egypt is mentioned 53 times in the Bible, most notably when Moses led his people out of Egypt, where Pharaoh had oppressed them when they rebelled against him (Exodus 2:15-17).

THINK

*“Religion is not the business particularly of a preacher
but is the business of man....*

*A nation’s religion informs it, makes its ideals,
supports those ideals, fortifies the
courage of man in making these ideals
and shows the way to finer
and higher ideals.”*

Reverend C. W. Gordon, 1919

**Quoted in the
Journal of Research on Christian Education**

**Volume 3, Number 1
Editor: Dr Paul S. Brantley²**

²Dr Paul S. Brantley is known to persons who were in Bethel College during my time as a teacher and registrar. The document that brought funds from the General Conference for the present new but unfinished structures in Bethel was authored by the two of us and typed by Miss Carol Brooks. We were mandated by the staff. Brooks is no longer alive.

**THE SOUTH AFRICAN ADVENTIST
HISTORY BELL IS RINGING**

“Liberation o’clock!”

**Eurowestern Socio-institutional Coloniality
and Race-coded Underdevelopment**

Thula Mlondolozzi Nkosi

Introduction

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The hour of African Adventist total emancipation from Eurowestern epistemic theology and race-inspired organisational mission has struck!

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THE SOCIAL LIBERATION ETHIC

An Urgent Task for South Africa Adventism

Thula Mlondolozzi Nkosi

Africans in the Adventist church in this country urgently need a historic redefinition of what it means to be a Christian and an Adventist in a post-colonial state in which racism essentially still rules the roost. South Africa did not liberate its oppressed communities in 1994. It merely changed the guard. Europeans have left office but still hold the black government *ngamasende* through their financial wealth and political influence. The real rulers of this land are rich whites and some masters in the Eurowestern hemisphere. In my study of history, I have not read of a country as multi-partied as present South Africa is.

African Adventist clergy and some awoke members need an urgent theological convention to reinvent the church's social theology. New postcolonial sociotheology and organisational reform must occur from the centre, if this does not occur soon, some events I know of some developments in the east and west of the Gauteng Province that will certainly overtake this church early in 2024. Pastors in this land must never think we are silent because we are thoughtless. **Currently two theological movements are in ascendancy in the East and West Rand. These are led by lay members. It is these that will translate into institutions soon.**

Listen church: Our Creator and Redeemer is God, not the General Conference and its subsidiaries. These structures and their leaders did not bleed for us in Golgotha. Anything/Person that did not bleed cannot save us. We are ultimately accountable to the Creator God who went to Golgotha for our sins and salvation. It therefore rests with us to establish institutional mechanisms to register our names in the Book of Life in heaven's administration office. There are currently two such development institutions emerging in Gauteng in the African Adventist community. There is no prohibition in scripture and in church policy that

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prevent church-unemployed persons from establishing and running theological seminars for themselves. Watch the space. Helderberg is about to face stiff competition from Gauteng.

I was in the recent Oakwood University lectureship in the Kelvin-on-Athol Church two weeks ago. Something bothered me in that programme that I shall not disclose here. This Kelvin programme, with all its excellence, also lost a golden opportunity because of its academic one-sidedness. Our project in Soweto will certainly take care of matters I shall not disclose. Watch the space.

**“Not to know what happened before
you were born
is to remain a child forever.”
*Cicero, Roman Orator and Poet***

**“Hope sees the invisible
Feels the intangible. and achieves the impossible. “
*Author unknown***

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**A NEW ADVENTIST
PROGRAMMATIC INNOVATION
TOWARDS A NEW POST-MASTER GUIDE
STUDIES PROGRAMME**

Thula Mlondolozzi Nkosi

Preamble

This short statement proposes a study programme and qualification that is beyond the historical Master Guide that has become trite in parts of our church organisation and youth ministry programmes. The entry qualification will be a matric certificate. The naïve question I shall not answer is **Does the General Conference know?** Answer your simplistic imbecilic question yourself.

I am an African in a country ravaged by a myriad of realities some of which are rooted in our colonisation in the world and in the Eurocentric Adventist Church. My first allegiance is to my parents. The second level is my local church.

Note the following realities

Number 1: In itself the programme was good, but it severely lacked local contextualisation. The primary cause for reality is that the programme was proposed and designed by pastors who place homiletics above pedagogy. For me, an essentially pedagogic person, this was the programme's major Achilles Heel.

Number 2: We do not need more sermons in South Africa but socio-situational development programmes that will (1) decolonise African Adventism and (2) systemically purge African Adventists of deep-rooted harmful colonial Europeanism.

Note this: South African Adventism in the African community is a firmly Euro-colonial and racist missionary churchmanship and mission. This is why, among other trite realities., it

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is concerned about dressing like Europeans and wearing of neck ties as though we live near the Arctic Ocean. The neck-tie comes from the countries near the North Pole where winters are hellishly icy and cold. It was a string tied around the neck to prevent air from torturing the chest. It then grew into a string and finally a bow tie. In Adventism and other colonial faiths, the tie was then “baptised” and “ordained” as a necessary item for pulpit practitioners as if it is a biblically mandated reality.

The western tie is part of our socio-nonsensification and colonisation by white colonisers in the state and in the church. **Phansi ngothayi, phansi!!** How you feel about my slogan is your problem and not mine.

I am an African, the descendant of persons who wrote the Bible. There are no ties between Genesis One and Revelation Twenty-two. *Amen kuleyo ndawo!* Even the false European Jesus of the General Conference has no tie!!

Niyamuzwa ubab’ uNkosi, ubulala ibandla! Listen: If your Bible has a European tie as a fundamental belief – you can silently march to hell and leave me alone with my tieless neck. I am an African and I shall remain so eternally.

Questions

Did you know that Ellen White saw more Africans than Europeans in heaven?

Did you know that she says that many persons will be saved from pagan cultures **because they obeyed their parents there?**

I have personally read the Bible seventeen times from Genesis to Revelation. I shall eternally refuse to be deceived by colonised African pastors and laity. I shall also remain eternally African in my ethnology even in the world to come.

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THE COMMISSIONER

A South African Post-Master Guide
Youth Ministry Programme

A Soweto-based church is about to implement this programme.

1. Your Family History (Ten pages)
2. How Adventism has Enhanced your Life (15 pages)
3. Write a Paper of not less than a thousand words on a Mission Project of your interest in your community.
Proposed Organisation of Paper
 - 3.1 Introduction
 - 3.2 Rationale for the Project
 - 3.3 Programme Dynamics
 - 3.5 Summary and Conclusion
4. Read the books of Leviticus and Deuteronomy and write a summary of key points on what God told Israelites about the land question. Present notes from your reading. Also Read *Patriarchs and Prophets* (E. G. White), on **The Question of Land** (Chapters 13 and 14). Make notes as you read. Submit these to your Tutor.

**Submit each part of these assignments
to me on completion.**

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DID YOU KNOW?

Between 1990 and 2000 the General Conference reported that the Adventist Church lost one million (1 000 000) young people. Many reported that they had no problem with the doctrines of the church *but had problems with how these teachings relate to their lives.*

How is the Youth Ministries programme in your church?
Does it make sense to your youth?

Listen

**There is nothing as devastating to youth as
irrelevance.**

=====

“YOU ARE THAT FINGER!”

Thula Mlondolozzi Nkosi

No person in this world was born by mistake. Mazzini, the 19th century Italian statesman once said, Every existence has a mission.” I keep a poetic statement by one of my North American intellectual heroes in my Bible,

“Couldst thou in vision see,
Thyself the man God meant;
Though nevermore wouldst be
The man though art – content”

Ralph Waldo Emerson

Emerson says that if you could see yourself as the type of person that God intended you to be, you would stop being the type of person you are, *who is satisfied with mediocrity*. This statement has pushed me often when I was almost about to give up on something. I plead with you reader. You are greater than your challenges.

When God said “Yes!” to your birth, he was affirming a divine purpose for your life. The God who allowed you to come to this planet does not make junk! His ideas and actions do not come from the rubbish bins of this world. There is something great and precious that this world is waiting to see come from you. The famous preacher, Dwight Moody, stood at the back of a hall in England and wondered if he was ready to preach a sermon that night. He then prayed, “God send some finger to touch some soul tonight.” As he walked into the platform, he heard a voice say to him, “You are that voice!” Scores of people surrendered themselves to God that night.

(Article to be continued)

**THE FOUNDATIONAL PRESENCE AND
PRIMARY AUTHORSHIP OF THE BIBLE
BY AFRICAN PEOPLE**

(Lecture One of Four - Thula Mlondolozzi Nkosi)

I well remember my Standard Five (Grade 7) teacher, Mr Ndlovu (uSchibi), in Steadville Location, Ladysmith, KwaZulu-Natal. He always reserved Fridays for a special lesson in African history. He would teach the prescribed history and then use Friday for what he termed, “the real story.” He would always preface his Friday lesson by saying, “This week we studied such and such. But today I will tell you what really happened.” To this day I cannot forget the Friday history period. All of us in that class grew up with the understanding that there is false history and real history. Every African parent or teacher must do this in order to give perspective to his/her children in a world that thrives on falsehoods and distortions.

In this lecture my intention is threefold:

1. to arouse the moral conscience of concerned African Senior Youth to the urgency of a decolonial agenda about the presence of African people in the Christian scriptures.
2. to argue for an epistemic reformation in the teaching of Bible history, Christian anthropology, and sociology among African Christians.
3. to argue for an Afrocentric biblical model of mission and ministry to South African communities with specific reference to Africans.

Indigenous Africans get little or no respect from westerners because of long-held myths and prejudices held by generations of their race. Some of these myths are deepening in the post-apartheid period. They derive from the degeneration that we have suffered from colonisation and forced superintendence of whites over our lives. The notion that as “innocent

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children of nature” (Hegel) we must be nursed and tutored by whites to serve their interests is a silent driving motivation for our continued subjection to western civilisation and Eurocentric Christianity.

There are certain historico-epistemic traditions, rooted in the Christian community, progressively fuelling negative behaviours and responses to the welfare, even salvific experiences of Africans. One of these is that Africans are an inferior learner-nation from which nobody can derive any worthy and sensible knowledge and value.

Caucasian westerners have placed themselves as perpetual tutors of other national groups in the world. Very few white people hold the notion that Africans have something to teach other nations. This, to me is one of the reasons why decolonisation must be conducted and sustained without the permission of Eurowesterners or their endorsement. Decolonisation is not meant to please them or to place Africans at par with Europeans. **Decolonisation is meant to declare to the world we can be who we wish to be and become through the power of the One God who created us, and that our existence in the world cannot be seconded to or be subservient to the existence of others.**

The purpose of decolonisation is to correct and re-empower our nation to become what God had intended it to become even in the absence of Europeans. If western natural knowledge, even theology brought by them to the continent, were designed to place them above us so that we can be servile to their interests and schemes, we need to tell our children and future generations what late Professor Adam Small of the University of the Western Cape, stated in the early 1970s, that “We do not live by the mercy of whites.”³

The old historical tendency of African Christians to ignore issues in their social environment while they desire to win souls therefrom, is one of the strange anomalies of modern Christian mission. It may have been easy and convenient to shun and ignore these issues in the colonial past; but the 21st century is another century. Historical critics are now

³Mokgethi Mothlabi, (Editor), *Essays on Black Theology* (A Publication of the South African Students Organisation (SASO), Durban, 1972

interrogating all questionable traditions and institutions. There is no way African Christianity will survive the rising critique of decolonial thinking.

This text seeks to inform, to clarify and redirect our people to the truth. We are committed to speak what we know and leave the decision to the reader. We shall endeavour to expose falsehood and direct our people to the truth as we know it. We believe that there is something better than what presently clouds our vision of who we are and our future. We believe also that somebody has told us small and big lies about ourselves and our duty and destiny in this world as Africans. We do not believe that there are superior and inferior nations. We also believe that colonisation is more than a political or moral error. It is the worst form of slavery that one nation can visit on another.

The Tragedy called “colonisation”

Colonisation has to do with loss, capture, destruction, or distortion, for the purpose of control of people and resources. Today Africans are so messed up one almost does not know where to begin to redress the situation. Some are so stuck “in the mud” that they will not understand why decolonisation must take place. We may as well state here that some of the hardest resistance to decolonisation will come from our own people – believers, church leaders, community leaders and academics. It will be old case of the African American House Nigger versus the Plantation Nigger.

Colonisation has survived, locally and globally, through direct assault, educational design and collaboration of some in the subject group and mystification. Major platforms of colonisation have been **religion, culture, education, economics and politics**.

I have lived in South Africa all my life except six years that I spent in Eswatini. I have been to Botswana, Lesotho, Namibia, and Zimbabwe several times. All these countries were colonised and missionised by Europeans of English, German, and Dutch origin. There are therefore common socio-spiritual and cultural similarities and spiritual threads that run through all of them. These countries were also all extensions of European countries, and all were also involved until the nineties in struggles for liberation from European rule. In addition, all these countries have communities with common or shared ethnological and lingual ties which make them culturally uniform and epistemically connected. Thus, there is an imperative for a

rebranding of their current and ongoing development with the truth from a text that has become a salient guide of all modern self-respecting societies.

The Imperative of Decolonisation

There is a need for a thorough and ongoing discourse on decolonisation within Christian theology, worship and mission. We must be deliberate and intentional in doing this. **We need a methodology that will create a free and developmental spirituality capable of delivering the gospel of Jesus to local communities without the cultural trappings of western Christianity.** Unless such happens and happens reasonably soon, Christianity in the African community will be overrun by an emerging internal discord on decolonisation and fail to deliver salvific mission and development to our people.

As youth and scholars taking studies in tertiary institutions, it is your moral duty to leave these institutions with sound knowledge and engage our church communities with knowledge and understandings that will redeem them from centuries of white ignorance of the anthropology of the Bible and the heroic roles that our people have played in Christian salvation history. Frankly, if salvation history is foundational to Christian life and vocation, it should correspondingly be disgraceful for us to remain ignorant of our roles as Africans in that history.

Further, we have a duty to pass this knowledge to our children so that we can recalibrate the intelligence of African Christianity for more redemptive and liberative mission from the vagaries of this sinful world.

I argue on a broader scale that the decolonisation agenda should be led by religious communities for the following reasons:

1. Churches and missionary organisations are the most colonised. They have used the Bible to sanction and justify acts of injustice, giving undue longevity to oppression of Africans by Europeans in the church and in the street.
2. Churches should be best able to tell where things really went wrong since their faith stood as the vanguard of colonisation. Theological sophistry

and ethical miscreancy were used to hoodwink and exploit the benevolence of our forebears during the missionary era. Missionaries and missionary education stood as the foundation of all oppressive and discriminatory acts done to blacks by European missionaries and colonists. Paul Makhubu's text, "*Who are the Independent Churches?*" (1988), provides ample simple evidence of this condition in the history of faith in South Africa. Churches must take it upon themselves to redeem their historical and epistemic association with our plight.

3. Within the Christian community evidence is awash on this condition. There is simply no way our church can claim innocence on this matter. The fact that we have mixed structures, schools and churches, does not imply that the church has decolonised. It is very possible for people to live and worship together when they hold diverse theological and anthropological views on life and of one another. Frankly, physical togetherness has never been the platform for unity.

African Christians must stop hiding behind global administrative decretals and programmes, while ignoring the burning issues on the ground. We shall not be able to win our people to the Christian gospel if all we do is to listen and not speak, mediate, and not engage, tithe and not create the wherewithall for material development for the money the church needs and continually calls for.

African People and the Bible

I have a reason for this part of the study. We cannot decolonise a faith and associated systems of thought until we locate ourselves in the epistemic trajectory of what we must decolonise. It is necessary for us to know that the Christian faith and its central text of reference are not alien realities in African history and life. The Bible is full of African people more than those who colonised us. This fact must be emphasised many times to our children and youth so that they do not become victims of the tragedy that befell and continues to befall their parent generations.

In this subsection I deal with the presence of African people in the Scriptures dating from the beginning of human history. I do this with no prejudice against other national groups. It is pedagogically necessary for us to do this since white Christians, in the main, have made the world believe that they are first-class citizens of heaven while the rest of us belong to the servant's quarters. The truth is the opposite.

Oral and literary histories tell us that there was a time when African people owned **knowledge, land, cattle, their time, their labour, their God, culture and education.** *Africans owned themselves on behalf of God.* This too was their attitude to land and cattle. Ownership was cultural, not legal. Our ancestors were in kingdoms, chiefdoms, and clans and not in republics. This governance was consistent with the theory of rulership and power in the Christian Bible, an Afro-Asian text.

All facets of their sacred lives have been lost or distorted by other communities in the past four or five centuries. In recent decades more people have laid their burdens on Africans. We are now troubled by other communities as well. The loss did not occur by error, magic or some mysterious process that cannot be understood or explained. The loss was not caused by God, even though his name was invoked in all the losses we suffered. The loss was discussed, planned, deliberate, forced, legalised and politicised. Think of the 1884 Berlin Conference chaired by Leopold II of Belgium. The intricate process continues to this day in subtle and sophisticated ways. The name for these processes is **colonisation**, with a sinister strategy now termed **capture**. Tragically, in more ways than one the process has involved some of our own people, as perpetrators, collaborators or beneficiaries. Amilcar Cabral once stated,

The colonialist has a habit of telling us that when they arrived, they put us into history. You are well aware that it is the contrary. When they arrived, they took us out of our own history. Liberation for us is to take back our destiny and our history.⁴

⁴*Pre-Theology, Lessons 1-24, Theological Education by Extension College, 1989, p. 86*

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No truthfully informed African will deny the fact that African history in recent centuries is deeply compromised history. It is no longer our story; it is the story of how some people interfered with our past and future. It is a history in which areas of utter ignorance were declared knowledge or forms of intelligence. It is also a history in which areas of knowledge and wisdom were declared ignorance and superstition. White knowledge also interfered with our visions of the future.

Being black and African knowledge

In his book, *“What is wrong with Being Black?”* African religious leader, Matthew Ashimolowo, says that Africa is the richest continent in the world but is carrying the poorest people. We live in a stolen continent. We simply participate in the religious, social, political and technological histories of other people.

Think about alcohol. Drinking beer is not new in the continent. Since Noah all nations of this world have been drinking, some to excess. *But why have Africans in our country found joy in literally drinking their way into the future? Whose liquor are they drinking?* Today it has become easier to lift a bottle or can of alcohol than to lift a book. In South Africa 56% of alcohol used in 2016 was bought in December, and most of it went to African people. Why? *Why are Africans fuelling their journey into the future on alcohol?*

What makes us more drunk than other nationalities? Why are there more bottles and cans of liquor than books in many African homes? Why do black areas have more bottle stores than libraries? These are some of the questions we must ask if we plan to free ourselves from colonisation and capture.

Why have other nations of the world turned Africa into a market for their goods and even poisons? These questions and many others need our immediate attention. How many African-owned shops are in Pakistan and Somalia? We are not asking this question to kindle xenophobic feelings. This question is meant to say – We cannot hope to deliver ourselves from colonisation until we manufacture, sell and buy our own goods. *Africa, it is time you stopped to think!*

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941 In this country most persons who are doing terminal degree (doctorates) in South Africa
942 are women – and foreign. So, inside the African problem, there is also a South African problem.
943 Inside the South African problem there is a gender problem. Where are males in educational
944 development?

945 All nations come from the past. So do African people. Our history as Africans dates far
946 beyond the histories of many nations in the world. Even while this paper does not subscribe to
947 evolutionary thinking, evolutionists, creationists and oral traditionalists agree on one fact –
948 Africa is the cradle of humanity.

949 When Europeans came here in 1652, they found the *Khoi, San and African* people. In
950 800 AD Roman soldiers in a ship saw the Xhosa and Zulu-speaking people along the eastern
951 coast of South Africa. The notion that we came here around the same time as Europeans came,
952 is falsehood.

953 Nobody disputes the fact that Europeans came here in April 1652. The first European
954 sighting of South Africa was done by Greek soldiers in 1488. Apartheid history told us that
955 African people came here around the same time whites landed in the Cape. This is the myth
956 propagated by misguided apartheid scholars and their Department of Communication to
957 undermine the claim by blacks that South Africa belongs, *not to all who live in it but to*
958 *Africans*.

959 Oral, historical, archaeological, and linguistic evidence all point to the fact that we have
960 been here for a long time. Maylam presents evidence that in KwaZulu-Natal, for instance,
961 human presence has been known as far back 207 AD. South African history did not begin in
962 1652. Theirs did so, not ours. They came; we did not come. They found us here.⁵ In 1488 a
963 group of Greek soldiers who were exploring the world docked in the Eastern Cape and spoke
964 to Xhosa-speaking people. In their diary they state that the people called their leaders, *inkosis*
965 (*izinkosi*)

⁵See *A History of African People of South Africa: From the Early Iron Age to the 1970s*, Paul Maylam (David Philip: Cape Town and Johannesburg), 1986

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968 African historian, a former teacher-colleague of mine in Tshwane, Ntsatsi S. Kekana,
969 also affirms in his master's dissertation, the pre-European presence of Africans in this
970 subcontinent. He goes to state that Europeans even fiddled with our personal identities by given
971 us false names to recreate us into beings they could manipulate.

972 In a paper titled, "The Remaking of South African History: African languages as
973 European scripts", scholar Sinfrey Makoni even argues that when whites came to South Africa
974 they re-invented our languages, with the South Sotho language being the most Europeanised
975 because of literary work done by French missionaries in the late 18th and 19th centuries. This
976 is beside the fact that Sotho and Tswana had long been affected by the San. For instance, the
977 hanging sounds at the end of many Sotho and Tswana words is of San origin, which is also
978 linked to the language of the Chinese people. Words such as *qetelong*, *mafelong*, *tshimolong*,
979 *Mahikeng*, *Taung*, etc, typify this San influence on African languages. The absence of an
980 emphatic vowel sound is not African at all.

981 This is very clear in many of our language cognates that even the Zulu paper, "Bayede,"
982 attests to. There is even a need for the regrammartisation of African languages, among other
983 tasks of the decolonisation agenda. In our re-reading of African histories and knowledge
984 systems a lot calls for reconstruction and redress. The decolonisation agenda will have to deal,
985 in some specific ways, with language distortion that came with the academic engagement of
986 whites with our languages and knowledge systems. I learnt when I was in the University of
987 Zimbabwe four years ago that the British linguist, Clement M. Doke, who also came here was
988 mandated to reconfigure and distort African languages.

989 **Our knowledge system**

990 African religion is fundamentally theistic and creationist. There are no evolutionary
991 tales in our histories of human origins. Narratives may vary from one community to another,
992 and from one place to another, but the central organising fact is creationism. This is the reason
993 why there is – historically – no discourse on atheism in Africa. Atheism is a heresy from other
994 parts of the world. African theologian, Mbiti, has immortalised the statement that "Africans are
995 notoriously religious" in his *Introduction to African Religions and Philosophy* (1969). The

reader may benefit from Professor Gabriel Setiloane's text, *"Introduction to African Theology."*

Some Evidence from the Bible

In chapter 10 of Genesis in the Christian Bible, we read that Noah had three sons – Shem, Ham and Japheth. It has often been said that these three men are the progenitors of the major racial classifications or human types found in the world today. This claim cannot be true for very simple historical and biological reasons.

1. According to the Christian Scriptures the presence of human beings in the world predates the appearance of Noah and his family by 2000 years. Before Noah's time human beings had a definable ethnological profile. Noah and his sons could trace their social, genetic history and ethnology from the first man, Adam.
2. The traits that Noah and his sons had in their bodies had come down from their immediate and remote ancestors. **In the normal course of life, no three national groups can be born by one man and woman.** This happens only where there are recessive genes. Noah and his sons were the continuation of already existent human types. They were not the original seed of variant human types.
3. **Scripture tells us that the curse that Noah pronounced on Ham, landed on Canaan. By the time Noah had children there were already black-skinned persons in the world. Canaan was not the ancestor of Africans but of Canaanites. This nation no longer exists.**
4. Colour has not been used as an instrument of punishment in the Bible. Blackness therefore cannot be described as the cause of the curse Noah made against Ham (Canaan). **Black people have never been cursed by any heavenly being.** Yes, other human beings have insulted them. What has come

to be known as the *Hamitic curse* is a creation of prejudiced people of other human types.

5. We Africans are dark-skinned because of a substance called melanin that has protected black people from skin cancer for many centuries. Diet and climate can also change pigmentation.

In a note captioned, *Noah and His Three Sons*, the editors of *The Original African Heritage Bible*, make the following statement:

Western teaching is that Shem was the progenitor of the Asiatic peoples, Japheth was the father of the Caucasians, and Ham was supposedly black, and was the progenitor of black people. This myth has been taught with such vigour and strength that most of the world's population have heard it at one time or another. Facts show that these sons were of African origin, all born of the same parents who themselves were African/Edenic. There is no account from the historical antiquities that their physical features were Negroid, Caucasoid, and Mongoloid. It can be logically concluded that the people inhabiting the earth after the flood were of African/Edenic descent. The only time the scriptures mention a change of colour pigmentation on a permanent basis is written in 2 Kings 5:15-27.⁶

A consequence of this misconception about Noah's curse of Ham is the misrepresentation of the identity of heavenly beings. According to this tradition God (Father), God (Son) and God (Holy Spirit) – and angels, are white European type personalities. Billions of people have an impression of God as a person with European features. Missionaries/Christian scholars/artists from the Eurowest are responsible for planting false ideas about God. Millions of us have grown up believing a lie – that God (Father) is a white man and that Jesus was a European male. Christian art continues to spread this lie. Contrary to this tradition, Bible history has a strong multicultural tradition.

⁶Molefi Asante, Cain Hope Felder, et al, *The Original African Heritage Study Bible* (Nashville, Tennessee: The James C Winston Publishing Company, 1993)

The Exodus

When the Israelites left Egypt for Canaan, they were a mixture of several groups. Some of these persons were identified by their dark or honey-brown/ olive complexion. Miriam's misguided behaviour and for which she was punished by God, proves that there were African people in the Bible.

Copher, an African American Bible scholar, says that there were **African names** among the Jews, some of which included *Moses, Hophni, Merari, Miriam, Putiel and Phinehas*.⁷ In the four and half centuries of Egyptian slavery, some Hebrews married Africans. The books of Leviticus and Chronicles make mention of marital relations between Hebrews and Egyptians.⁸

Apart from experiences of captivity and enslavement, at various times in their history the Jews were scattered by war, persecution and flight from death across the world, especially in Europe. The most recent is Hitler's decimation of 6/7 million Jews. Events of this nature explain, in part, why millions of Jews today look *unlike* their original ancestors who were less Caucasian and white-skinned as present-day Jews. *The names and surnames of many Jews are not even those of their biblical ancestors.*

In discussing the question, **Was Jesus White**? Britten (a Canadian white former science educator) makes the following significant statements,

Jews are Asians and so their natural colour is somewhat brown skin with black hair and dark eyes. But when they moved to Europe and Africa, their colour began to change. It changed through intermarriage. As the years and centuries passed, the Jews in Europe became lighter because of marriages with Europeans. Similarly, the Jews in Africa became darker through

⁷Charles B Copher, "*The Black Presence in the Old Testament*," in Cain Hope Felder, ed., *Stony the Road We Trod* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1991) pp 153, 154. See also Cheik Anta Diop, *The African Origin of Civilization: Myth or Reality?* Translated by Mercer Cook (New York: Lawrence Hill & company, 1974) p. 103

⁸Leviticus 24:10-46, 1 Chronicles 2:34

marriages with Africans. The result is: Today we find Jews of various skin colours.⁹

The VhaLemba: Black Jews

Not all the Venda speaking people we see in South Africa are Bantu-speakers. There is a section of the Venda community in Limpopo Province that has its origins in South Yemen, a state at the southernmost part of Saudi Arabia. Ancestors of present-day VhaLemba moved into east Africa and travelled down across the equator until they established a strong presence in Zimbabwe. Some of them were scattered across central Africa. For many years the Lembas claimed that they were Jews much to the disbelief of the world, especially historians. Recently studies conducted on the DNA of the Lembas have confirmed a genetic affinity between these people and other Jews.

Murphy has made the note:

That changed in 1999, when geneticists from the United States, Great Britain and Israel discovered some backing for their (Lemba's) claims. The researchers found that Lemba men carried a DNA signature on their Y chromosome that is believed to be unique to the relatively small number of Jews known as the Cohanim, *who trace their ancestry to the priests of the ancient Jewish Temple and, ultimately to Aaron, brother of Moses.*¹⁰ (Emphasis supplied)

In the same report it was stated that male Lemba persons have a twenty percent higher genetic evidence that they are Jews more than white male Jews. If genetic science validates such a crucial relationship between the Lemba males and the Old Testament Levite family of Aaron, Moses and Miriam, is it far-fetched to argue that millions of people who have had a physical association with the Lembas have Jewish blood?

⁹Bruce Britten, *I hate your white religion*, (Mbabane) Self-published, 1997, pp. 61, 62

¹⁰*The Star*, Johannesburg, October 17, 2003. A more thorough text on the Lemba will appear in edition three of this paper.

Further, this finding has a significant bearing on the ethnological profile of Jesus whose descent is traced from the house of Judah, the elder brother of Levi in whose family line the Israelite priesthood was rooted.

It is a well-known fact among historians that the Greek historian, Herodotus, described the Egyptians as **black-skinned with woolly hair** in the 5th century before the birth of Jesus. In the 1st century BC the Greek historian, Siculus, “attributed the fact that the Ethiopians (a term used by Greeks for all black Africans) have the oldest civilization due to their closeness to the ripening warmth of the sun. It should be noted also that at his time the Greeks tended to think of the fairer-skinned Nordic peoples as being an inferior race of barbarians.”¹¹

Macrinus (164-218 AD), was an African who rose to the position of Roman Emperor. Black people were very common in the Middle East and in all parts of the Mediterranean region. Some of them appear in the literature of the Greeks and Romans. Shakespearean writings bear evidence of this African presence in these parts of the world.¹² In Acts 13 Luke records that the church of Antioch had prophets and teachers among whom were Barnabas, Simon called Niger (Latin for *black*) and Lucius of Cyrene (present-day Libya). Simon of Cyrene (Libya) carried the cross of the son of God.

Geography and History

1. In Genesis 2:10-14 the Bible makes mention of four rivers – Hiddekel (Tigris), Euphrates, Pishon (Pison) and Gihon. The last two are clearly associated with the African continent. Right from the beginning of creation, African territory is mentioned directly in the Scriptures. Pishon and Gihon constitute what is known as the Nile River system. This system includes the *White Nile* and the *Blue Nile*. These rivers meet in Khartoum, the capital city of Sudan.

¹¹*The Original African Heritage Study Bible*, p 1814

¹²Joseph E Harris, *Africans and their History*, (New York: Penguin Putnam Inc., 1998) p

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2. The verses in Genesis 2:11, 12 refer to Pishon (Pison) in Havilah, the land of the Kushites (Ethiopia). This river is what is known as the White Nile. The White Nile is the longest river in the world. The second river, Gihon (Genesis 2:13), is the Blue Nile.

3. During the invasion of Judah and the destruction of Jerusalem by Roman armies in 70 A.D. (Matthew 24), many Jews left their home country and journeyed to other places in search of refuge. The tribe of Judah spread south into sub-Saharan Africa. They eventually occupied parts of the west coast of Africa. Here they built the kingdoms of Ghana, Songhai (Songhay), Mali and others.

4. In this West African region, which also includes the Niger River Valley, came the ancestors of the people who live in Southern Africa today. Research done by language scholars and historians indicates that we, black Africans, have a close link with West Africans. Our languages have many similarities with languages spoken in parts of West and Central Africa.¹³

Until the beginning of the First World War in 1914, the area now known as the Middle East was referred to as East Africa. Saudi Arabia was part of this region. What is known as Palestine was referred to as North Africa. These new names were imposed by European journalists who covered the war events. The tragic consequence is that many of us now regard people who live in these areas as aliens, if not enemies. Saudi Arabia is particularly significant for us in South Africa because it is the original domicile of the people known as the Lemba (VhaLemba).

¹³The above facts have been confirmed by a teacher colleague of mine, South African historian, Dr Simon Ntsatsi Kekana, in his research for an MA dissertation in history titled, *"The History of African People in South Africa from Early Times to 1795: A Critical Analysis of 19th Century South African Historiography,"* (Universiteit te Leuven, Belgium, 1978).

Some African Names in the Bible

1. Ethiopia – Isaiah 18:1; Jeremiah 13:25; Esther 1:1
2. Memphis (a city in Egypt) – Jeremiah 2:16
3. Go to the Pentecost event in Jeru-Shalom (Acts 1). Study the list of nationalities who witnessed the Pentecost event. Among them were persons from Asia and Africa.
4. Who took the cross of the Saviour to Golgotha? An African
5. Who ordained Paul of Tarsus in Acts chapter thirteen? Simon (Nigger) and Lucia of Cyrene in North Africa.
6. The greatest Catholic theologian, St Augustine of Hippo in northern Africa, wrote the most influential book on Catholic eschatology, *The City of God*. In that book rests the millennial hopes of Catholicism. The book has been around for 1500 years. That grand German warrior known as Martin Luther, was known as an Augustinian monk.

Summary and Conclusion

The writers of the Bible would not spend so much energy and resources on black/African people if they were of little or no importance to God. The truth is: **Black people are important to God, and we feature significantly in the various histories that are found in the Bible. The noble task that faces us now is to stand tall and act in the spirit of our divine royalty.**

Robert Ingersoll in England was an atheist. Above his headboard was a little note, “**God is nowhere.**” He fell ill one day and deteriorated towards death. One of his friends visited him, and said, “Robert, please look above your head and read.”

Robert looked at the usual line and read, “God is nowhere.” The friend insisted that he look at this line more carefully. Robert again saw nothing new. The friend then said, “Robert, look at this line, **GOD IS NOW HERE!**” Robert was surprised and immediately surrendered his life to God and soon died thereafter.

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1180

1181 I want to tell you today, dear Africans, **“Black Man, you are not on your own.”** The
1182 grand all-knowing Creator of the Universe, is here, and is your God and Saviour. Walk tall and
1183 sit up straight. This is your country. God is and has always been and will ever be - the God of
1184 the Africans and other national communities.

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1205 **SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST HISTORY**
1206 **AMONG AFRICANS IN SOUTHERN**
1207 **AFRICA**

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1209 **Thula Mlondolozzi Nkosi**

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1211 **Editorial Note**
1212

1213 This lecture was prepared by me. It is a very abridged presentation of a text
1214 of over two hundred pages on the historical and missional development of
1215 Black Adventism in Southern Africa. The larger manuscript is being prepared
1216 for a launch soon as a book. The title is **SPEAKING FOR OURSELVES:**
1217 **A Socio-ethical Evaluation of Black Adventist History in South Africa.**
1218

1219 Four friends in the Kelvin-on-Athol Church gave me a retainer for two and
1220 half years. They sponsored research I did on our story. They also hired a
1221 vehicle for me to drive to a nearby country. The recent eight-part On-line
1222 discussions done on Black history from that church were but a small inkling
1223 of our work. Note that this lecture has been prepared in American Received
1224 English. The typist used this spelling culture.
1225

1226 **Introduction**

1227 The initial evangelization of Africans by Adventist missionaries from North America was
1228 inspired by an understanding of Christ's evangelistic mandate as stated in Scripture¹. Not long
1229 after the church was organized in 1860 some persons were agitated by a sense of mission which
1230 initially localized itself within the United States, but in time led to the globalization of the
1231 Adventist faith. This missionary movement began in earnest in the 1870s when the church
1232 dispatched its first overseas missionary in the name of John Andrews. A decade later, after a
1233 special letter of request from Pieter Wessels reached the General Conference in 1886, a group
1234 of missionaries was sent to South Africa². This small group of men and women landed on the

shores of this country in July 1887³, and soon divided itself into two main bands, one working within the Cape Peninsula while the other initiated work in the diamond fields in Kimberly.

Africans Pre-evangelized by other Missionary Agencies

When Adventist missionaries began their work among African people, they found communities that had already been partly evangelized by other Christian denominations and missionary societies. Some perceptive African believers were beginning to defect from missionary churches – especially the Methodist Church – for reasons ranging from cultural conflict to self-determination.⁴ This phenomenon of religious independentism bore the name **Ethiopianism**. The Ethiopian Movement swept across sub-Saharan Africa like a veld fire between the 1890s and 1940, leading to the emergence of thousands of religious formations known as *African Indigenous or Independent Churches* (AICs) with a faith culture largely marked by syncretic tendencie.⁵ At the same time there was political conflict between the English and the Dutch (Afrikaans speaking communities) over issues of sovereignty, which climaxed in the South African war, commonly called the Anglo-Boer war.⁶ Spicer and Swanepoel noted that the war had a negative effect on the progress of Adventist mission.⁷

First African Adventist Converts

One Saturday afternoon in January 1895 an African man entered a church hoping to listen to a sermon. This was Richard Moko, a teacher who had come to Kimberly from Eastern Cape. Instead, he found a group of white believers engaged in Bible Study. The speaker was Stephen Haskell who had come to South Africa to assist in consolidating the fledgling missionary activities of the church⁸. After showing interest in what he heard, Moko received a series of Bible lessons, which led to the acceptance of Moko and his wife into the fellowship of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Beaconsfield through the rite of baptism. Thus 1895 marked the formal entry of African people into the Adventist faith in South Africa.⁹

Around that time another African family joined the church. This was the family of David Kalaka who had been a member of the French Protestant Church.¹⁰ Kalaka initially traveled

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around Lesotho as a translator for A.O. Olsen, a former President of the General Conference. It was during these translation trips that he took interest in Adventist doctrines.¹¹ He became instrumental in establishing Kolo Mission, and later was joined by his sons, Murray and Sekopane, in pioneering work in other parts of Lesotho. David Kalaka passed away in 1903 after his health-weakened considerably.¹² His children and descendants have lived near Emmanuel Mission for many years after assisting in the founding of this school in 1910.¹³

By this time Moko had been ordained,¹⁴ becoming the first indigenous person to join the gospel ministry of the Adventist Church in the subcontinent. Moko received orientation into the Adventist ministry in Cape Town after which he was sent to the Eastern Cape where he worked extensively for the Xhosa speaking people.¹⁵ In conjunction with the other ministers Moko founded Maranatha Mission in 1908-9 in the vicinity of Grahamstown.¹⁶ This small institution was shut down in 1916 and relocated to Bethel Mission eight kilometers southeast of Butterworth.¹⁷

Remains of Maranatha could still be seen in the early 1980s. It should be clear that the establishment of educational centres led to the creation of the earliest nucleus of black clergy in the church as well as founding of the black church's earliest congregations. Mention must be made here that despite the fact that the first black accessions to Adventism there were recorded in the Northern Cape, greater numerical growth occurred in the Eastern Cape for simple reasons that the latter was more peopled than the former and was located near the Indian Ocean which is warmer than the Atlantic and more habitable.

Progress after World War I

Swanepoel records that 1897 marked the beginning of Adventism in the Witwatersrand. No record, however, is known of the presence of blacks in the church at this time in this part of South Africa. It can safely be postulated that since the South African War caused extensive harm across the country, blacks were not readily attracted to the Adventist faith. Besides, this war was soon followed by the Bhambatha Rebellion of 1906, which was wrongly attributed by the English colonial government to the influence of the leaders of the Ethiopian movem.¹⁸ The

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Bhambatha Rebellion affected Natal in the main but had wide implications for race relations in the country. Its immediate cause was conflict around taxation.¹⁹

It has been noted already that the war of 1899-1902 slowed down Adventist mission. This can be seen in the fact that some thirty years after the arrival of the first Seventh-day Adventist missionaries the South African Union Conference (organized in 1892) could report only 256 black and 950 white persons in the church's records.²⁰

The demise of Maranatha made room for the growth of Bethel College. Bethel began after the Union Committee commissioned Tarr, an early founder of missions, to leave the Maranatha area and trek to north of the Kei River. Moving on a four-wheel horse-drawn wagon, the Tarr family reached the town of Butterworth where they lived for a year before purchasing the plot where Bethel is located. This 300-acre piece of land was bought with money from the sale of a wheat harvest the Tarrs had grown soon after they landed in the Transkei. Bethel had been a sheep farm owned by a certain Mr. Crossley. Soon after a few schoolrooms and boarding quarters were built, Bethel admitted its first group of scholars. These were given elementary Bible training on a 50-50-work study program. The first class of completers left Bethel in 1920.²¹ These men became the foundation group of a ministerial force that has grown, evangelized and planted Adventism in many parts of our land and in a handful of neighboring countries.

KwaZulu-Natal Region

While Bethel was developing, Adventist mission was making successful inroads into the African communities in Natal and Zululand. It was particularly the presence of Spion Kop College (1928-1937) near Ladysmith that facilitated the spread of Adventism in Natal. Spion Kop had come into existence as a successor of Claremont Union College (1893-1917), which the church ran as its first educational institution in South Africa. It was also the closure of Spionkop, which consolidated Bethel's development when some staff members and resources were relocated to Bethel.

Eastern Cape Region

Between 1925 and 1926 discussions took place between the leaders of the church and those of the Salvation Army. The intent was the purchase of Cancele Mission near Mt. Frere. Adventist operation began there in 1927 and has continued to this day. Cancele, now a full secondary school, was initially meant to serve the people of the Cape. Over the decades, however, its students have come from all parts of South Africa.

Land Acts and Church Mission

It should be borne in mind that the Anglo-Afrikaner Land Act 1913²² led to more exoduses of blacks from certain places they had copied for decades, if not generations, to the emerging industrial town. Apart from depriving Africans the right to land, the 1913 Act caused new population groupings around the country, which determined the geographic pattern, which black Adventist demography would follow. From the 1920s the growth pattern of black Adventism assumed a perceptible rural-urban trend leading to a church community, which, for some two decades thereafter, displayed tendencies of colonial rural-migrant sociology.

The Gauteng Area

The 1920s also saw the birth of Adventism among blacks in the East Rand township of Payneville, which influenced other black settlements in the East Rand. The appearance of the Adventist faith on Payneville was the work of Pastor Mnanzana who had initially arrived in Springs as a colporteur from Ermelo in Mpumalanga Province between 1926 and 1928. Some family who bought literature grew interested in the Adventist faith and left its original church. Soon a group of Adventist believers was formed into a congregation. The Payneville church later opened a school, which ran in the church building for thirty-two years. Payneville and other African townships like it were destroyed in the wake of the forced removals the National Party government instituted after the implementation of the Group Areas Act of 1950.²³ The Payneville Church came to an end in the mid-1960s, along with a number of other churches in that area such as Old Brakpan, Dukathole and Charters. Payneville gave birth to the churches in Kwa-Thema and Rest in Peace, while the church in Tsakane succeeded Brakpan.

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In the West Rand churches had been born in Sophiatown, Alexandra, Orlando and Jacksonsdrift, among others. Another older church here was Pimville. These churches gave birth to twenty-some churches found in Soweto today. The oldest Church building in Soweto was built in 1936. The Orlando West church used it until recently when it was demolished for a larger structure. In the meantime, churches were springing up in many other parts on the country because of the evangelistic zeal that the early clergy infused into the congregations.

Botswana

The birth of Adventism in Botswana is attributed to the arrival of medical missionaries, in particular Dr Kretchmar. More instrumental, however, was the role of Ntebogeng Motshwareledi of the Ba- Ngwaketse tribe. This woman, born of royalty, was born in Kanye in 1882 as a child of Bathoen. She was related to the Bakwena royal family through her mother. Because of her formal education she regarded herself as a “standard bearer of modern culture, and as a leader.”²⁹ While her mother acted as a regent, Ntebogeng left the London Missionary Society and joined the Seventh-day Adventist Church, which she promoted during her political career. Adventists, however, met much hostility from local councils, which were in the main, dominated by men who were pro-London Missionary Society. Despite this opposition Ntebogeng used her links with Adventism to establish medical care centres, notably Kanye Hospital.³⁰ Adventism has been a popular faith in Botswana with many of its adherents occupying prominent positions in the community and in government. The former president of Botswana, Dr Quiet Masire, is known to have strong sympathies for the Adventist Church through an association he developed with the church’s medical work.

Eswatini/Swaziland

In Eswatini Adventism was introduced by C. Rogers an American Missionary. At that time Pastor John Hlubi, then a teacher in Ermelo (Mpumalanga) and also an organising secretary of the African National Congress. He was also a servant of the English colonial Government in his country. Hlubi’s conversion to Adventism occurred through an evangelistic effort by a Coloured person in Ermelo. His acceptance the Adventist message and began one of the most fruitful ministries in the history of our church in this subcontinent²⁸. After surviving gross

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hostility from a local chief in the southern part of the country. Hlubi later established a church in Mbukwane, which led to the opening of a school that has been in existence since 1925. It was from Eswatini that the Adventist message moved into the eastern Transvaal (now Mpumalanga) where a school was later opened in the church at Wesselston Township near Ermelo. There is thus a connection between the entry of the gospel in the Mpumalanga region and its arrival in the East Rand through Mnanzana from the Cape.

- **In Eswatini now the church runs five schools in a country whose population is far outstripped by the population of Soweto. The church even has a medical centre.**

Namibia

The appearance of Adventism in Namibia was initiated by a white government officer. He invited Adventist missionaries from the Cape to plant church work there. The church has grown slowly there. The most successful work has been in the Eastern Caprivi region. The church has a primary school in Windhoek with staff who are miserably paid. I spoke to them three and half years ago. The sad reality is that the church in Namibia is divided tribally. The Caprivan community wish to be independent from Namibia. Some Adventists are in prison now for long periods of time for participating in a military coup against the state. The SAU needs to study the nature of the church in that land.

During my week of spiritual emphasis for youth in Windhoek Central I was confronted by a strange situation. On Wednesday I spoke on the presence of African people in the Bible. The following evening, I was called to an elders' council. The reason was that some members had complained that my presentation was nothing but politics. This is the reason why I have attached the presentation here. I added nothing to what you read in this paper. I had to apologize with a lump in my neck. The university youth loved the presentation, but adults who could not be exposed to me were the problem. To this day I wonder what my real crime was. My simple conclusion is that many of our people have been colonized and brainwashed by white Adventist sociology and theology.

Limpopo Province

Tarr who was the instrumental in the establishment of Bethel was also asked to move north where he founded Shiloh Mission not far from Pietersburg.³¹ Shiloh, like Maranatha and Spionkop, did not live long. In the early fifties the South African Union Committee studied the possibility of closing the school after it became clear that the church was facing problems with the Minister of Native Affairs, Dr Hendrik F. Verwoerd, in securing permission to start a boarding school there. The decision was then made that Shiloh should be sold. Talk about the fate of this institution occupied several sittings of the SAU Committee from 1951 to 1957.

A decision of the Southern Africa Division (later Trans-Africa Division) 259-55, reads,

On request of the South African Union, and Shiloh Mission has proved through the years to be unsuitable for carrying on mission work,

VOTED: To authorize the sale of Shiloh mission on the understanding that the funds accruing from the sale will be held in trust to re-establish the work in that area at another site, following the report of a commission.

The final decision to sell Shiloh was taken on July 14, 1957, with the understanding that the proceeds will be “re-invested with the Division Council”.³² Thus Shiloh became a lost chapter in the history of Advent mission in the African community. To this day the black church waits to hear about what happened to the funds referred to above. The establishment of Shiloh was paralleled by the entry of Adventism in such places as Seema and Gilead where the church ran small schools. It took the effort of Pastor M. Mkasi and Brother Mudziwa and others to consolidate the work of the church in that area. Mudziwa met Adventism in Cape Town.

Racial Organisation

In 1953 the church held a session in Bloemfontein, Free-State Province. This session was marked by heated exchanges between white members (mainly Afrikaners) who advocated acceptance of the National Party doctrine of racial partition and anti-partitionists who desired to see the church maintain a non-racial tradition. The partitionists won and the church re-organized itself into two race- based structures- the South African Union Group One (Europeans, Asians, Coloureds) and the South Africa Group II (black African).

The first had its offices in Bloemfontein while the other was run from Johannesburg. The President of the latter was a Vice- President of the first which was the controlling body of the church in South Africa. This division of the church into racial entities became, in time, one of the miseries of the Adventist denomination in South Africa, and caused serious alienation, even hostility between primarily African and white Adventists. All church property was registered in the Bloemfontein office.

Black Responses to Racial Partition from the Bloemfontein Union Business Session

In 1953 when the partition took place the black church had a membership of 5105 (South Bantu – 1718; North Bantu –3387).³³ In other words, it took fifty years for the black church to accumulate a membership of five thousand, a figure which was far outpaced by the figures of many mainline churches.

It was in the context of this slow growth that a man like Pastor J. Bacela organized the lay preachers of the Witwatersrand into councils for the purpose of evangelistic training and activity. These preachers' councils would, however, and unknown to him and other ministers, become the spearhead of a resistance spirit in the black church.

When what had happened in Bloemfontein reached the churches of the Johannesburg region, some leading figures of the preachers' structure in Soweto decided to mobilize the churches for protest action and for the demand for black autonomy from white control.

By the time of the 1958 General Conference Session a protest movement had emerged and consolidated action, especially in Soweto. This movement coincided with the turbulent social-political climate of that time which had been created by the defiance programme of the African National Congress and its allies.

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The socio-political discontent in the world met a resonant note within the black Adventist church. Besides, it was a time when Africa was declaring war on colonization. Thus, the 1950s were a period of special social conscientization in the African Adventist church. Harassed by the storms in the world, black Adventists sought for refuge in the church and there was none to find. The black church became a social orphan in the church during the apartheid years. The only route to take was socio-political agitation.

In the Witwatersrand the protest spirit was directed by what was known as the Lay Preachers Association under the leadership of Jeffrey Lolwane, Jeffrey Madi, Elijah Mathebula, C. Bendile, Aaron Mhlanga, J. Pilane, David Khoza, D. Nkohla, Japhta Nkosi, Christian Ntsikeni, and a host of other influential men. These men dispatched a memorandum of concerns to the local and international leadership of the church which was never addressed directly and transparently. Instead, late General Conference President, Reuben R. Fighur, paid a visit to South Africa and did not talk to the black churches. His visit turned out to be inconsequential insult to the local black churches. He did not address them. He only spoke to white people. This was in 1960.

The White Response

In June, the Trans-Africa Division – *without consulting the black pastors and churches* – dissolved the large Fields and created nine small ones which were reduced to six in 1962. These nine fields were each given a capital fund of R2000,00 (Two Thousand rand) out of a sum of R18 000, bequeathed to the black church on the dissolution of the North and South Bantu Mission Fields. This development brought a period of unprecedented hardship and poverty in the history of the black clergy.

Often field offices would be closed as ministers itinerated in the fields to collect funds for the payment of workers. Otherwise, their salaries were not assured. It was during these years that black ministerial work suffered a heavy blow in its dignity. It was also during these years that the social conscience of the black church was almost fatally scarred and demobilized. The social philosophy of the black church was identical with that of the white church. The black

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church was virtually a spiritual socio-ideological shock absorber of a primarily white political Adventist theology designed to legitimate exclusion and deprivation in the church and in the world. The decade immediately following the demise of the North-South Bantu Mission Fields were the Dark Ages of Black Adventism.

Movement into the 1970s and 1980s

In 1963 the TAD hosted a special meeting in Solusi University, near Bulawayo in Zimbabwe. It was termed Conference on African Trends. The purpose was to reflect on the political situation in Africa and its implications for churchmanship. The gathering was also designed to seek ways to develop indigenous leadership for the church. In those years a number of Adventist missionaries had experienced pain and other forms of pressure by the wave of decolonisation which late Harold Macmillan described as the “winds of change” in a speech made in the South African parliament in 1960.

Not long after the Solusi Conference some black ministers from some African countries (South Africa inclusive) were taken to Solusi for a brief course on leadership. A special crash course on finance was run by an officer of the SAU Group II in Johannesburg who issued the trainees a small certificate signed in his name. Other developments that followed thereafter eventuated in the total separation of the black and white churches with the formation in November 1965 of the Southern Union Mission, a structure created with the express purpose of serving African believers. During its first ten years this Union Mission was administered by white persons. A black person only became president in November 1975. This was Pastor Paul M. Mabena who led the Union for ten years.

By this time school-going youth had formed the Seventh-day Adventist Students Association (SDASA, 1967). SDASA was formed to restore, to consolidate and inform the spirituality of the church’s school-going young people. *The problems that SDASA was meant to address had nothing to do with persons engaged in distant education. It was direct social contact with non-church education that was considered a threat to the church’s youth. Hence the incubation of the Association within the youth department.*

The version of the Association which has evolved and entrenched itself in the church is not the model of the founding conference. Nevertheless, SDASA has played a notable role as a conservatory of the church's youth in the past fifty years. The association has helped many youths to cross the conceptual chasm between education (especially higher education) and spirituality; a chasm which was regarded as sacrosanct and God-ordained by the pre-1967 generation.

From Structural to Ideological Agitation

Whereas earlier protest activity in the black constituency focused on matters of structure, policy and mission, a new movement which emerged in 1972 spent its energies on matters of social and political ideology.

Between 1972 and 1974 the defunct Trans-Orange Field and the Southern Union found themselves confronted by a Black Consciousness orientated movement within the Soweto churches and others in the environs of Johannesburg. This movement, called the Memorandum Movement (MM) by its detractors, was not as structured as the Lay Preachers Association of earlier years. However, while Black Consciousness Philosophy was not the official ideology of the Memorandum Movement, its appearance was contexted within a broader spectrum of liberation politics rooted in the BC vision of society.

Some pastors supported the sentiments of the MM while others were vehemently opposed to it, arguing that the movement had strayed into the realm of politics. The intent of the MM was to remove missionary dominance from the black church and espouse equality of believers and black self-determination. It saw the black church as devoid of self-agency and self-articulation. Indeed, the black church and its clergy were institutions cast in a colonial dependency complex which called for thorough-going psychic cleansing and liberation on the part of its membership.

The MM was an attempt to reverse colonialism in the sinews of the black church and to empower it physically for relevant witness in South Africa.

Some prominent members of the MM Executive were Abram Sekgaphane (chairman), James Radebe, Danny Mapela, Thula Nkosi (secretary), Phanzi Magoso, Edwin Mekoa (the last two came from Springs), Washington Sixolo and Onkgopotse Tiro, a prominent leader of the BC Movement in South Africa and a popular student leader. Tiro died of a letter bomb on Friday, February 01, 1974, in Botswana. His escape from South Africa and his tragic death had a signal effect on the spirit of the MM.

- The bomb that killed him had been packaged by South Africa's intelligence police. It was carried by four groups of persons, some suspected to have been his close relatives who were hired by South Africa and some persons in the Bophuthatswana government. I have been told that some top-level state officials are hindering the full investigation into Tiro's death. I have learnt this fact from some leaders in the Azanian People's Organisation. Some of Tiro's own relatives in Soweto have also confirmed this to me.*

State of the Black Church

At the beginning of the 1980s the black membership stood at 18 000. In December 1981 the church in Eastern Caprivi Strip – a region attached to Namibia – was connected to the church in South Africa. Caprivi brought a membership of 3 000 which changed the earlier figure to 21 000. In that year the black churches had been asked to respond to a serious concern for race relations which had come from a memorandum written to the General Conference by a section of the Coloured church constituency in the Cape. The memorandum decried racism in the church and all its manifestations. Apart from crucial moral factors pertinent to racial injustice, the concern of the Coloured sector which was later shared by the African church arose in the climate of the political turbulence, which began with the June 1976 student marches in Soweto. Discussions on race relations which took place at that time signaled the advent of a process of deliberations and consultations which culminated in the dissolution of the white-base South African Union Conference and the black Southern Union Mission in November 1991. This structural unification received impetus from processes set in motion in 1984 and in March 1991. But whether the unification is genuine or not remains to be proved.

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The upshot from the unification process is that the black church – at least in the past two decades – has begun to see itself as part of a broader family of believers from all race backgrounds expressing a common faith and hope in God. Thus, even as far back as 1983 Towards Christian Unity, a Catholic publication, saw the Adventist community as a growing phenomenon in South Africa. In a general population of about 40 million, this paper reported that there were some 100 000 persons across the racial line who claimed to be adherents of the Adventist faith. However, the story of black struggles in the church cannot be completed without mention made about the intensification of the liberation struggle and its ideological impact on black Adventists.

SDAYACO

(Seventh-day Adventist Youth Action Committee)

As the black church moved into the 80s it found itself surrounded by an intensified liberation struggle. The nature of events was such that some form of moral response, albeit feeble and unfocussed, had to be made by the church in an attempt to help its members define their spirituality in the context of oppression and contending anti-oppression politics. It was, however, frustrating, especially to a politically conscious young generation, when the church could not spell out its position on issues of injustice and the bloody war that was staged within and outside of the country's borders. The ideological climate and the moral indecisiveness of the church-especially its black ministerial leadership – led to the birth of SDAYACO, a small body of zealous youth (based in Soweto), which espoused in its Constitution and Manifesto principles of Black Consciousness within a Marxist perspective.

Between 1984 and 1986 the black church, especially in Gauteng, saw a group of young men within its ranks advocating an ideological position which, in the thinking of many, was diametrically opposed to the social thought that marks mainstream Adventism both here and in other parts of the world. SDAYACO subscribed to Black Theology/Liberation perspectives and challenged the ministry and the church to clearly identify themselves in the context of the whole struggle for liberation in South Africa. The black clergy, unfortunately, could not do this primarily for two reasons.

1. The first was that the black church did not have a theology of context since it was, and still is, rooted in a universalistic paradigm of faith which has senselessly globalized a Eurowestern understanding of spirituality and salvation. The black church is a mission church existing at the behest of Eurocentric thought and preferences.
2. Flowing from the above, the black church could not deal with the liberatory and highly philosophic agenda of SDAYACO because social liberation, as a concept and aspiration, does not constitute an aspect of historic Adventist theological reflection. This is caused by the fact that the church is of North American origin. Its whole theological tradition has developed without the serious input of people of the Third World. Adventist theological discourse is essentially a Eurocentric endeavor, which has been generally void of the concerns of the Third World.

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3. Ibid., p 209
4. Peter Hinchliff, The Church in South Africa (London: SPCK, 1968) See Chapter 4, "Ethiopianism: Christianity and Politics," pp 90-97
5. Paul Makhubu, Who Are the Independent Churches? (Braamfontein: Skotaville Publishers, 1988) pp. 13-15
6. Paul Maylam, A History of the African People of South Africa: from the Early Iron Age to the 1970s (Cape Town & Johannesburg: David Phillip, 1988) p. 137
7. L. Francois Swanepoel, "Origin and Early History of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in South Africa, 1886-1920." (MA thesis, University of South Africa, 1972) p 86
8. Spicer, p. 225

- 1660 9. Ibid., p 225
- 1661 10. Ibid., p.225
- 1662 11. Ibid., p225
- 1663 12. Swanepoel, p 41
- 1664 13. Interview the writer conducted on Mrs. Paulina Nkosi, August 31, 1996,
- 1665 Emmanuel Mission, Lesotho. Mrs. Nkosi was the widow of Pastor Joseph
- 1666 Nkosi who worked and died in Lesotho in the early 1930s. She died in 2005
- 1667 in Soweto. These were the parents of Gibson (now in the USA) and Japhta
- 1668 Nkosi. Their father and mine were brothers.
- 1669 14. Seventh-day Adventist Encyclopedia, Vol. 10 (Washington DC: Review &
- 1670 Herald Publishing Association, 1976)
- 1671 15. Swanepoel, p 42
- 1672 16. Spicer, p 227
- 1673 17. Interview conducted by writer on Eric Tarr, son of Bethel College founder
- 1674 (D. Tarr), April 1985, Bethel College
- 1675 18. Hinchliff, p 94
- 1676 19. Maylam, p 141
- 1677 20. Spicer, p 211
- 1678 21. Interview with Tarr
- 1679 22. The Land Act of 1933 displaced thousands of Africans from lands, which
- 1680 they had occupied for generations, even centuries where they could not have
- 1681 land tenure.
- 1682 23. The Group Areas Act designated certain parts of the country as special
- 1683 reserves for white people while blacks were relegated to spots far from
- 1684 towns and places of work, many of the existing black townships were
- 1685 created in the wake of this Act.
- 1686 24. Maylam, p 162
- 1687 25. See Minutes of South African Union Conference Executive Committee
- 1688 1915-1921. Further South Africa Division "Outlook" XXII, April 1924, p 5

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26. See Pule Magethi, Thula Nkosi, God or Apartheid: A Challenge to South African Adventism (Braamfontein: Institute for Contextual Theology, 1991)
27. See Alven Makapela, The Problem of Africanity in the Seventh-day Adventist Church, two Volumes, (Unpublished research, 1995). I also have the final print.
28. Spicer, p. 228
29. Fred Morton, Jeff Ramsay, eds., The Birth of Botswana: A History of the Bechuanaland Protectorate from 1910 to 1966 (Botswana: Longman, 1987) p. 21

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In the Near Future

I shall also present a paper on Chapter 10 of

THE RELUCTANT PULPIT

***Reflections on Why the Seventh-day Adventist Church
in South Africa is not Growing as it Should***

Author: Clifford Nhlapo

Current President

KwaZulu-Natal Free State Conference

Purpose and Function of Lectures

In future texts thought papers here will look at and celebrate the work of Africans in the Seventh-day Adventist Church in the area of literary production.

African authors have not been celebrated in South African Adventism. This the reason why I applaud the work done by Hlanga Mafani on Richard Moko. In the community of the AmaZulu and amaSwati, authors such as Joseph Hlubi, Elijah kaE. Khuboni, Absalom S. Nkosi, Mrs Eleanor Msimang (wife of Pastor Percy Msimang) have not been given the celebratory honour they truly deserve.

Hlubi and Khuboni¹⁴ gave us *Ukhrestu Esihlabelelweni*. They spent their winter vacations in Spionkop Missionary College near eMnambithi (Ladysmith) and translated Franklin E.

¹⁴The distance between the institution and their homes in Newcastle (Khuboni) and Eswatini (Hlubi) compelled them to stay on campus until the end of the academic year. They only travelled in November. They travelled in a wagon that was donkey-driven. Incidentally, two of their children married. Late uMamKhuboni in Diepkloof was the daughter of Hlubi. Hlubi is also the first native to embrace Adventism in Eswatini after the work of an American missionary from North Africa and a Coloured person from Pietermaritzburg. In addition, another person, Mzozoyana from the Cape also introduced Adventism in Ermelo. This same man then travelled to the East Rand where he established Adventism in Payneville, Springs.

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Belden's Christ in Song (1908). But note this: **Christ in Song was never the church's official hymnbook.**

- The official hymnal of the church was the 1935 Church Hymnal. When the new hymnbook was released, the General Conference asked all users of the Christ in Song to return copies to the office. People refused and stuck to the old hymnal. *This reality is significant for African Adventists. We get obsessed by tradition and find it difficult, if not disturbing, to embrace change. We often bring an ancestralist/traditionalist response to newness.* The Christ in Song was finally released from the church in the 1985 General Conference Business Session of 1985.

Absalom Nkosi, my father, translated *Our Day in the Light of Prophecy* into *Okwaprofithwao Kwezinsuku Zanamuhla*. Khuboni later released his own text, *Ibandla LikaNkulunkulu Emhlabeni*. The text is written in old Zulu orthography based on the work of Clement Doke who was commissioned from England to come to Southern Africa to corrupt African languages. I learn of this fact when I was in a meeting in the University of Zimbabwe, some years ago. The noun classes (*Izigaba zamabizo*) in Nguni languages, for instance, have irregularities and inconsistencies.

My reading of my father's **Ministry Journals** from the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists in North America led me to the love of sociology which I took from the International Correspondence Institute in Johannesburg. I had left the University of the Transkei (now Walter Sisulu) because half of my first-year course examinations were to be written on Sabbath. My dean, Mr Present Tshaka, who had been my astute mathematics teacher in Manzini Central School in Manzini Swaziland/Eswatini, told me that I was no longer in high school, and I would need to comply with university regulations whether in like or not. I chose to leave for another university.

I was not ready or willing to sit for examinations on God's sacred day. The Institute is in Midrand now. It is owned by the Church of the Nazarene. I did my first year in high school in their institution in Manzini just across the Conference office in Eswatini. In those years Natal,

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1766 Eastern Transvaal and Eswatini were one Adventist church territory. We had come from
1767 eMnambithi (Ladysmith) in KwaZulu-Natal where I finished primary and the first year of
1768 secondary education.

1769 When I studied in Vista University, now University of Johannesburg, I earned the Vice-
1770 Chancellors Campus Merit Award for scoring the highest marks in English in my first year
1771 there. Students had made me the Secretary for Religious Affairs in the Students Representative
1772 Council. I enjoyed the love of all members of staff. When our English lecturer, Professor
1773 Jenkins, was away on some official errands, he would asked me to teach his first-year students.
1774 I was taking English II at that time. It was this experience and personal inclination that made
1775 me take a journalism course from a respected college in Johannesburg when my family moved
1776 to Soweto. I desired to enhance my love for putting words on paper.

1777 I am a text development addict. I write when I am a passenger in our family car. I write when
1778 I fly to and from home in Ethekeini. I keep paper and pen in church. Sometimes sermons shoot
1779 my brain into a tangent and a text develops in my mind.

1780 Early in my teaching life I developed an interest in urban-based people and their
1781 encyclopaedic needs. This is the reason why every high school student in the section of
1782 Dobsonville Extension Two where my family lives, has a book as a gift from my library.

1783 Before the Covid reality, twice a month on Sunday afternoons, youth gathered in my home for
1784 educational discussions and the viewing of educational videos. I have a deep passion for youth
1785 development. In the Kelvin-on-Athol Church where I worship, I sometimes leave the main
1786 church to sit with youth in their room. Frankly, I am a youth development addict. I often get
1787 disturbed in my soul when youth are neglected.

1788 • **The publications come to you at no cost. All you need to do is to notify us of**
1789 **your interest after this edition. If you do not do this, this edition will be the**
1790 **first and last that we shall send to you.**

1791 Further, we are ready to acceptance articles from readers if these adequately address realities
1792 in the Africa section of the church. Let us build our church on firm ground.

1793 **Listen**

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- **We are not creating a new denomination.** We are openly announcing the launch of a new epistemic and missiological route for Adventists in the African community. Unless we do this and do it firmly, many Africans in the church will be on the opposite side of Jesus when he returns.[]

Humour

A zealous deacon left a business meeting in the church to ask children who were playing in the yard to lower their volume.

As he shut the door behind him, one of the older girls said,
“We are enjoying our childhood here. Why don’t they enjoy their adultery?”

The Imperative of Decolonisation of South African Adventism

Thula Mlondolozzi Nkosi

I am an avid advocate of decolonisation, both in Christian and political thought. The notion of a European Jesus, European angels but a dark-hued Lucifer/ "ha-Satan" (Syriac Bible), consists of utter epistemic rubbish from the Eurowest. The international office (General Conference) of the Adventist Church is utterly and stubbornly engaged in a heresy on this point to make Caucasians happy.

The Saviour of this world was a person of African origin. He was betrayed by Africans and crucified by Europeans. All humanity stands on level ground at Golgotha. *In a vision of heaven, the Adventist Seer, Ellen White, saw more Africans than Europeans among the saved.* Read this woman. She even saw persons from pagan cultures who had obeyed their parents in those cultures. Frankly, you do not need to be an Adventist in order to be saved – in order to go to heaven!

- In one vision of heaven Ellen White saw Martin Luther whose writings essentially caused the Jewish holocaust in recent decades.
- The South African apartheid Dutch-Reformed Church holocaust was rooted in the theology of 16th century John Kuyper, a theologian.

The Problem of Colonial Racism in South African Adventism

It is strange that all the African names above have not been honoured by the church. The names of the authors do not appear in this text. Only the name of Khuboni appears in his own private text. David Kalaka in Lesotho who translated Ellen White's, *Steps to Christ*, is nameless. I have a copy of the text in my library.

This church has maintained its racist ideology in the African versions of the Sabbath School Lesson quarterlies. The European authors appear! And when some of us describe South African Adventism as a racist institution some whites and brainwashed blacks think we are beside ourselves.

Listen:

Take your immoral dispositions to hell! I am one who can be deceived by your strange attitudes to open intellectual critique. I am not a House Nigger. I am a Plantation Nigger who prays for more wind to blow in

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**INDIGENOUS RELIGIOUS VALUES:
UNDERSTANDING WORK
AND REST: A LESSON FOR ADVENTISTS**

A Paper Presented in the Decolonisation Seminar in the
Twelfth Annual Camp of the New Destiny InstituteSA.
Adams College
Amanzimtoti, Kwa-Zulu-Natal

Miss Fikile Masikane¹⁵

Sabbath, 30 December 2017

I seek to explore the effect of the growing protest movements in and around South African Universities and South Africa at large. The past movements with its various calls such as: **#rhodesmustfall** **#feesmustfall** **#bringbacktheland** have all challenged the political, religious and academic communities to urgently envision a [new] world, where the so called oppressed black people are freed from the bounds of white ideologies. Following this I have themed this presentation “indigenous religious values: understanding work and rest”, taken from my master’s dissertation (2017).

I will be looking at the concept of the Sabbath by Adventists and the practice of Rest by the Shembe Church. This has, I suggest, not only a conceptual understanding of what black liberation is, but also provides a practical understanding of ‘what should rise’ or what should be done, in light of the broader South African black emancipation project. Having analysed the concept of rest which will be discussed shortly, this concept or practice of the Sabbath rest

¹⁵Fikile is a young woman who is completing her doctorate with the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. Her membership is in the Adventist Church in Senaoane, Soweto. Her topic is on “Ibandla lamaNazaretha” of Isaiah Shembe in Kwa-Zulu-Natal. Her origins are in the same province. She taught research skills in the NDI Camp in Amanzimtoti College in 2017.

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proposes, for me that black people should not approach liberation or black freedom through the lenses of oppression, because oppression was created by a system (oppression is manmade system) in order to fulfil a certain purpose and in the same breathe the very system then dictates and defines what freedom for black people should be thereafter. In fact, the greatest liberation that was given to man was firstly, at the Cross which brought about the forgiveness of sins and secondly, the gift of the Sabbath rest which brings to us freedom. And on that basis I argue that perhaps African/traditional religious practices of the Sabbath observance and true rest- using the Shembe church as a case study, should be looked at in depth as a way to begin to think of a ‘decolonised’ religion/Adventism.

Briefly, the Shembe Church ‘iBandla lamaNazaretha’ is a traditional religious church which pre-dominantly has a Zulu following from Kwa-Zulu-Natal, however, over the years it has expanded to various areas in Johannesburg and Pretoria. The church was founded in 1911 and gained a large following in the years that followed. The church was founded by prophet Isaiah Shembe who, according to John Langalibalele Dube (who was his close friend and translator) in his autobiography entitled UShembe, was a Zulu prophet and great healer born in 1867. Isaiah was amongst the many who rejected white Christianity, which brought about what he calls the ‘white Jesus’ we always see in pictures. He grew up in a farm in Harrismith where he worked as a farmer for a white family, this then exposed him to the ways of white missionaries and their culture. He then as a young man spent his life rejecting this practice. He later moved to iNanda –Ohlange where he became a well-known healer.

Even though the church is today comically known as the church where people worship under a tree in a particular park with white stones around them, or known as the church where people go to church on Saturday where the men wear ibheshu, walking barefooted with icansi on their hand, or the fact that people believe that Isaiah Shembe died Ekuphakemeni their holy mountain trying to play God, be that as it may, it is this satirical presentation of the church that does not allow people to actively engage with their ideas and contribution to the black emancipation project.

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Isaiah Shembe founded his church in the mist of colonisation in Zululand. Isaiah Shembe, seeing how white Christianity disoriented and further marginalised the Zulu tradition and culture as they knew it by introducing its own culture sees what the missionaries were doing to break the Zulu tradition which was rooted in the Sabbath observance which was not befitting of the whites ideology of the commodification of time. It seems to me that he not only wanted to provide physical and spiritual healing but also healing from the bug of colonisation in Zululand, one would then argue that this was in fact the early stages the decolonisation movement. He saw how this spread brought confusion and disorder in the land causing what Du Bois calls the problem of ‘double consciousness’ which is a problem of blackness, of course blackness is the condition of modernity according to Paul Gilroy. Du Bois further notes that from the individual realising this dilemma, he moves beyond an individual consciousness and enters what he calls “a strange experience” the “double consciousness” experience. This “double consciousness” is a dispossession or an inability to see oneself for who one is, except through the eyes of the other (Du Bois, 1903: 185). This experience reminds the individual of the alienation that he is faced with, searching for a way to escape (Du Bois, 1903). In this case, it is as though the individual has been transported into a different reality which he now has to act out to survive. Moreover, for Du Bois “we are provided with a vision of the goal, a merging of these unreconciled striving in a better and truer self, allowed to participate as a co-worker in the kingdom of culture” (Du Bois, 1903: 9).

With this realization, Shembe then rejected any form of formal education that white mission schools offered, to him this was how white missionaries drove their ideas and ways of life to the Zulu people. Further he rejected the ways in which black people worked and the silenced notion of rest, which had been as stated above a practice that the Zulu natives lived by according to Keletso Atkins.

Work: the first law of God

In South Africa, post-1994 waged labour or the idea of having dignified jobs for black workers became a huge part of the emancipatory project, according to Barchiesi. On the one hand,

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dignified jobs in this era, Barchiesi argues, were a solution to extreme poverty, and inequality with their related, persistent risks of social explosion” (Barchiesi, 2011:2). Moreover, “work promised to infuse democratic citizenship in the new South Africa with unprecedented social and ethical inequalities” (Barchiesi, 2011: 4) framed hard work as a solution and way out of poverty. However, Barchiesi (2011: 7) sees both ‘work’ and ‘production’ as contrasting imageries where in the post-apartheid state, labour ideologies and ordinary citizenship are only but mere social claims.

The reality is that waged labour for the black majority is a humiliating, and a violent act which leads to poverty and uncertainty, especially ‘cheap black labour’ (Barchiesi, 2011). The apartheid government justified the importance of having waged labour as something that was not only a foundation of exclusive white citizenship but also a way to “teach citizens and natives alike that social virtue resided in hard work not in claiming public social provisions” (Barchiesi, 2011: 3). Social citizenship was the reward for hard work and productivity and fortification against laziness, unruliness and unrest, which could be seen as an extension of apartheid. This was problematic in a sense that waged labour was not a familiar concept for the black majority in as far as ‘work’ and hard work in particular, is concerned. It is true then as Barchiesi rightfully states, that black workers could not experience waged employment as part of decent human life. The persistent centrality of work as a solution to poverty and social exclusion has accompanied the condemnation of dependency on state and social programs in the government’s discourse (Barchiesi, 2011: 14). The precariousness of black workers needs to be analysed as a social and existential reality filled with uncertainties and harmful unpredictability (Barchiesi, 2011: 15). This is why Shembe spoke about work!

It is important to understand work and industry as a whole. Because work and industry whatever its stage may be has a very edifying influence on the character of the people. It elevates their intellectual and moral standards and eliminates among them such objectionable qualities as indolence sloth, and narrowmindedness, and pervades them with a spirit of common brotherhood and co-operation, which teaches them the useful lesson that no nation has ever risen to a respectable position but by making industry its first consideration. In fact, the best

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kind of national education lies at the seat of industry. Industry was the first law of God to man, and our progenitors in the Garden of Eden were the first workers, ever since industry has been the chief source of our daily bread and butter and when all things shall fail; industry will still remain the mainstay of the world (Tsekiso, Friday, 29, 1926: 7). With this, it is important for work to be an act that is fulfilling, it should allow for individuals to exercise their full powers by this I mean that work should develop an individual holistically.’

Following this,

- *Wayevama ukukhuluma ngomsebenzi uShembe, uthi akazi ukuthi kwenziwa yini abantu bangasebenzi balingise ama-Ndiya wona athola ukuzigcina endaweni encane. Abantu abanengi ababebunganyele kuye ekuphakameni wayevama ukubasebenzisa, babuthe amatye nehlabathi, nxa kwakiwe izindlu, abanye bakhe amanzi, abanye baxove udaka, bashaynele umuzi.*

Shembe spoke about work in most instances. He says that he does not understand why people do not want to work for themselves, but rather want to mimic Indians who work in closed and confined spaces. People worked hard in the farm and the mountain, cleaning and taking care of the land. (Dube, 1936: 32). For Shembe it was nonsensical for black people to subject themselves in such confined spaces doing the kinds of work that they did. For him this suppresses one’s human ability to work independently, freely and creatively. This kind of work does not develop the person holistically. Instead you are treated as a cog in a machine.

This he then justifies by saying that the very fact that missionaries want African people to work in factories and enclosed spaces is evident that they have a different God that they follow. The idea of enclosing (the concept of worshiping in church) people metaphorically means that they cannot think beyond the four walls that bind them. This notion of space, in this instance nature and freedom work hand in hand.

- *For Shembe, no man is meant to work for another, worse off doing his work to better his own needs. Shembe believes that God showed them how to work by creating something out of nothing; this not only highlighted the importance of creativity in one’s*

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work, but also promoted an idea working in order to enhance oneself. When this free flow and creativity is exercised, the day of rest then makes sense. Because how does one work when they have not rested?

Rest as freedom

Rest is a spiritual act, which allows us to have a deeper connection with our Creator. And as it stands we are yet to experience true Sabbath rest, especially in the Adventist church. We are, in our Adventist churches today trapped in rituals and practices that move us further away from understanding rest/liberation which essentially means that we are further away from understanding who God is, which is why the church is in the state that it is in right now. The beginning point here being the notion of time that came with colonization, 12 midnight being the start of a new day, for Sabbath keepers cited Exodus does not make sense. When the sunsets that is the end of the day and a beginning of a new day. This then calls for Africans to begin with the ‘Re-conceptualization of the notion of time.’ The point here, for Adventists lies with the practice of the Sabbath church in our churches which has become a ritual with much effort put on the 11 o’clock divine service with the rest of the day left for catching up with friends and family. Ultimately, we need to consider the way in which we observe the Sabbath in the Adventist space, especially if we are trying to have a closer walk with God, and not merely mimic what was done in the past when we can clearly see that it no longer works for us (if it did work), in the present.

Often when we speak of the idea of decolonisation, some minds run to monkey living in open fields, with no technology and what white people deemed as backwardness, while others imagine decolonisation as an ‘exercise of replacement’ where black bodies replace white bodies in white spaces however, driving the same white ideology. In fact it is this very thinking that highlights how deep colonisation has gone. It is important to note that the ‘decolonial’ moment focuses on the effects of ‘coloniality of power’. ‘Coloniality of power’, simply expresses the lingering effects of colonialism in the now ‘independent’ countries. According to Mignolo, ‘coloniality of power’ is possible through “the global reach of imperial capitalism”, which functions as “exploitation of labour” and controls “knowledge” production among other

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things (Mignolo, 2007: 158-159). Therefore, decolonial thinking or ‘decoloniality needs to be appreciated as a liberatory thought that gestures towards the possibility of another world and knowledge’ (outside the imperial bondages) (Gatsheni, 2013: 12). Gatsheni (2013: 10) believes that ‘what Africans should be vigilant against is the trap of ending up normalizing and universalizing coloniality as a natural state of the world. This must be unmasked, resisted and destroyed because it produces a world order that can only be sustained through a combination of violence, deceit, hypocrisy and lies’. #

**LIFE AS CINEMA: IMPLICATIONS FOR
ADVENTIST MISSION TO AFRICANS IN
TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY
SOUTH AFRICA**

Thula Mlondolosi Nkosi

In the January 6-12, 2017, edition of “*Mail & Guardian*,” former University of the Witwatersrand research professor, Achille Mbembe, wrote an incisive and illuminating article under the caption, “The digital age erases the divide between humans and objects.” He discusses the impact on minds, self-perception, behaviour and relationships of our domination and manipulation by computational media. He noted, “People are exposed to, and are absorbing more images than they have ever have” and that this form of multi-image impact on our senses represents what he calls “a new form of worldliness” in which the cell phone is a key vector of Afropolitan social reality.

The following statement from the article sets the stage for this paper:

The interaction between humans and screens having intensified, the boundaries of perceptions have been stretched as people are projected from one temporal regime to another. Today it is possible to move from the Stone Age to the Digital Age, from magical reason to electronic reason. Time now unfolds in multiple versions while life and the world are increasingly experienced as cinema. (Italics supplied).

Life in the 21st century has become an extremely cinematographic reality. Computational technology has moved life from entity to movement, from a static scene to a shifting reality show for which dynamic interlocking competencies are required to interact and deal with it. We are all confronted by the reality and demand for multi-competency lifestyles as we manage our studios and shifting dramas.

Human beings have been objectified by media in which we are sometimes objects of observation while we are also directors of the cinema. We have become both the manipulators

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and objects in which pressing a button yields instant results and gratification. This scenario presents serious and urgent challenges for Adventist mission and ministry even within the church and to our immediate African communities.

One afternoon in the 2004 TOC Youth camp in Taung, I walked from the podium and asked some girls while they were photographing me. One of them immediately said, “*Babu’Nkosi, siyaku-downloader.*” I immediately thought of the need for us who regularly appear before audiences to exercise extreme and rigorous circumspection as we design and articulate God’s truth to a society that has gone digital and global in thought. In one moment, your name will flow into glory. The next it may go down into dark and intractable ignominy.

Challenges of digital technology for Adventist mission

In South Africa Adventist mission must speak to Africans what it does not speak to persons of Eurowestern descent.

Challenge 1

Digital technology has created societies that no longer have time for long “things” and events. We compete with the social and public media. need to rethink the length of our sermons. Length is not and never been a substitute for quality. People want to know what you want to tell them. As they listen and evaluate you as you deliver your subject. Decisions for or against you are made as you speak. You sell your “product” (yourself) as you stand and deliver a presentation or sermon. Audiences have become a market. If you do not deliver as expected, audiences seek for others who have a better product.

- 1.1 We must read prodigiously and consistently. Many in our audiences know “things” we do not know. Many are more educated than we are. Pastors and seminar speakers, especially, need to reconcile with the reality that we are assessed daily on what we say and how we say it. If your information is not relevant and new, you may soon be relegated to the stone age. Until the late 1970s human knowledge doubled each decade. From the beginning of this century knowledge expansion has grown exponentially. Each day three

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thousand books are published. A Pastor-friend in Johannesburg stood behind the pulpit in Kelvin and preached a Googled sermon. A congregant went into Google and discovered the same topic and same content. He distributed the sermon friends around the country and the pastor became the centre of hilarious but shameful fun.

1.2 All elocutionary practice is a form of self-advertising. In your first appearance people make decisions on whether they deserve your presence again. If a second invitation never comes, you should engage in serious and honest rethink. Of course, the absence of a second invitation may not necessarily imply that people did not appreciate you. There are many reasons why you may not get a second invitation. But know this. The first appearance is an advertisement, whether you like it or not. It is an act of proposing love to an audience. You stand to be married or rejected!

Challenge 2

The question of immediacy and relevance is a serious one in African existential thought and life. African people are instant people. The silent question at the back of their minds is “How will this connect with my concerns and needs.” Remember, every appearance is both an interview and assessment. We are phenomenologists by thought and lifestyle. Therefore, Africans will rather go to a “thing” than read about it.

When we hear that Pastor/Bishop J. J. Mavuso prays curses and diseases away, questions are seldom asked. We flock to his church or services. The tradition of epistemological exposition and analysis from the pulpit may be good, especially in western-educated Adventist audiences. But real Africans seek for immediacy, relevancy, and practicality. I know an Adventist sister who taught in the Orlando West Adventist School who visited an African diviner in Soweto in search of marriage. She was harassed by extended singleness. I know of an Adventist pastor who regularly visited an inyanga yakwaMiya in Tsakane Township (East Rand) each time TOC business session was around.

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- In the 2010 session in Bloemfontein, people had to deserve a pastor who had strong odour of strange herbs coming from his clothes. It is important for us to come to grips with the phenomena of immediacy and relevancy. In the psyche of Africans, the fundamental question is not, “When is Jesus returning?” The central concerns are around health/wellness and personal progress.

Africans are practical philosophers and theologians, not systematic theologians! Therefore, the long-range and monotonous repetition of the fundamental beliefs in the Sabbath School has not benefited anybody. The African wants to know, since God is a creator of the universe, when will he come into my life to create joy and fulfilment. We are practical theologians. Thus, it is possible for some of us to come to church on Saturday and go to a Sunday-keeping church for fulfilment.

- In the late 1980s the Human Sciences Research Council tasked late Prof Gabriel Setiloane to research the question: **Did Africans fully embrace Christianity?** After months of travelling around the country during which he interviewed many people, and read papers, he came to one significant conclusion, among others, that Africans did embrace the Christian religion – but stayed connected to some of their precolonial notions and practices. I read the report. Therefore, I fail to understand pastors who have a junior degree in theology, who then do master’s degrees in disciplines totally unrelated to theology/ministry. They hardly have roots in their primary discipline. But they are permitted academic deviation that will not confirm and consolidate their calling, if pastoral ministry is indeed a calling for some of them. I am therefore never surprised when some of them give us the satanic impression that we owe them jobs as Directors and Officers in Orange Grove and elsewhere in the SAU. Frankly, some should not be in the ministry!

2203

2204 **Challenge 3**

2205 We have a challenge to witness to a country whose indigenous communities have suffered and
2206 survived double western colonisation. The Bible has been central to our colonisation and
2207 oppression by the English and Afrikaner. Our hurt will last for eternity as a result.

2208

2209 In the postcolonial period we should be shaping a new gospel story of re-education and
2210 development. We evangelise and run church as if we are in the colonial period. Virtually
2211 nothing has changed within black Adventism, institutionally and missionally. We are pushing
2212 the same useless agendas that wasted pour energy during the British-Afrikaner dispensations.
2213 We waste energy on determining who occupies this office and who leaves. Therefore, even
2214 young pastors can meet in a church in the East Rand and deliberate on office-bearing. The
2215 agenda is satanic and grossly undevelopmental.

2216

2217 Some pastors often leave business sessions deeply pained and aggrieved such as Pastor X.Y.Z.
2218 Mavela because they did not see their name the election list. All this is hogwash that stunts
2219 growth in the church. We cannot even see that it is morally and professional wrong to appoint
2220 interns as directors of departments and member o-*f the Executive Committee. This is a gross
2221 violation of the terms of the country's New Labour Regulations. How does an intern determine
2222 salaries and the employment of other interns and full-time pastors when he/she has no legal
2223 guarantee of further employment?

2224

2225 In the black church mission (e.g. TMI) is always conducted without community research. This
2226 is anomalous in the 21st century whose people's lifestyles and orientations differ markedly.
2227 People do research for their degrees but none for God's mission. Is this not a moral and
2228 developmental anomaly?

2229

2230 In June 1999 seventy-six languages were spoken in the Greater Johannesburg Region. Twenty
2231 years later, how many languages are being spoke in our cities? It is possible today to walk in
2232 the streets of our cities and not understand what people are saying. A friend of mine once

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described business done without research as a young man who proposes love to woman in the dark and expect a response.

Our cities have become extremely complex in thought, ideology, lifestyle and material conditions. If our mission is directed at getting more tithers and just increase in numbers, then it is in utter vain. We must also be careful that we do not plant ideas and programmes here that work in other regions of the world without clear adaptation. It is also important to remember that the church does not live for five years. It takes time for organisations to change. There endless quinquennial programmes from the General Conference don't make long-range sense in this land. *As far back as I can go, I recall Mission 70, Mission 72, Mission 74, One Thousand Days of Reaping* which were compromised by wrong baptisms in parts of the world, *Witnessing for Christ, Mission to the Cities, Five-Initiatives* (which I discovered were old business models used by corporates. Go to Professor Google), and recently, Total Member Involvement! My sincere question is simple: **WHAT IS REALLY NEW?**

Global Youth Day was a partial disaster where I was a witness. All the food is in the sewerage pipes! No missional impact. Mission done without research, but vague and misguided assumptions from Silver Spring! Who told us children who have run away from their homes are seeking for buttered bread and few home-made vegetarian burgers?

I posed serious questions to the youth of my church in Zola after they gave bread to people in Johannesburg. I asked, especially those who were studying in universities and those who had degrees if this is what their studies entailed. They were embarrassed! One from a prestigious university came to me later and confessed failure.

Let me emphasise the importance of research by the following anecdote. Each time I go home, I visit the BP Centre Library not far from the Workshop Mall in Durban. In March this year I visited home and then took three days in the library. On the first day the chief librarian asked me to present a ten-minute talk on how to develop a writing culture. A book, "The Pavement Bookworm" authored by what we call a "street child," was to be launched the following day.

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A hall in the library was full of visitors and a host of social outcasts and “street kids.” In this group there was a white man who looked like a social derelict. His looks and attire could tell that he lived in the Fourth World.

After the book has been summarised and advertised, question/comment time came. This man raises his hand to speak. By the time he was done, he had told us news about “things” that many of us in the hall had never imagined. He told us that he came from under bridges and in tunnels below the city. This is where he and hundreds of others live and find their fulfilment. He said that a new socio-ethnological phenomenon was in the offing in South Africa; that they – the louts and dropouts, hobos, under the bridges and elsewhere, had met several times to create a new underground society in South Africa. He said that there were masters and doctorates in their condition that no longer live in what we would term “normal” or “standard” society. I turned back to look at him. His language was that of somebody who had spent at least sixteen years at school. He was incisive, academic and daring in his comment. It was very clear that he was a reader and a thinker. He told us they had critiqued us and dismissed us – the normal or standard society, and that they had no longer any need of us. We had failed them, and they were forging a new open nation with a revolutionary scholarship and economy.

I looked at the chief librarian and his assistants and saw stunned faces. He told the audience new literature is emerging from their groups that would give the rest of the world a shock and new perspectives on what it means to be poor and discarded by society. Nobody asked questions after that. I immediately recalled my book by Alvin Toffler, “**Future Shock**” published in 1970. Since that day I have been asking myself the question, “For whom is TMI?”

Why do seventeen million people (a third of the population) in South Africa queue for grants each month end? Do we really know what is really happening in this country? Who do we wish to see converted into the Adventist family? What if these people bring their children into the church? Where will they receive schooling? Why do some people react with shock and anger when some of us talk of a new Adventist Church with a new Curriculum in South Africa?

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When I worked in the course writing department of *Khanya African Associated Churches Theological College* (Johannesburg) in the late 1990s, I discovered “things” I did not know about Africans; things that remain unexposed by western methods of mission.

I am not ashamed to state the fact that I am an Adventist Decolonialist. I share no love for a faith that answers questions asked in the West. I need answers to African concerns and worries. And it is time we provided the right answers to our people – from the Bible, and not from the texts of persons who have never known what it means to go for six months on a shoe that has a hole on the sole; people who share their food with dogs and cats when somebody in the street sleeps on the pavement floor.

On page 32 of the book “*God or Apartheid: A Challenge to South African Adventism*,” by Pule Magethi and this writer, are the following words by Dr James Londis, one of my favourite Adventist thinkers and writers:

God put the church in the world, so it would not adjust. We don't want well-adjusted Adventists. We want Adventists who resist; who are not adjusting to the abnormal. The church must take up its cross and become the underground resistance movement in the world. We are not content with this kind of thing. We are not content to see people go to the end of history doomed, hungry, if we can feed them. The church somehow has to let it thunder above the rockets and bombs that are being dropped, and above all the IRA in England and the rest of it around the world; the Church must thunder out. God cares, God loves. God feels it, and we want to do what we can to help you. God will make his voice heard if we won't be the voice; if we won't be the church that will pick us its cross, God will find another one. And if we try to muffle in any way the distinctiveness of the trumpet sound, Christ has told us that the cross will crush us.

Let Ellen White, the Adventist Seer speak:

- *God never that the widespread misery in the world should exist. He never meant that one should have the abundance of the luxuries of life, while the children of others should cry for bread.*

Bert Beach uses different language for the same challenge.

- *The arena of showing Christ's love is the world...We Adventists must not live in an "ecclesiastical ghetto," but must endeavour as salt and light, to permeate and influence unchristian society in order to draw people to Christ.*

Challenge 4

This challenge is complex, multifaceted, and developmental. The challenge relates to societal transformation resulting from other mega-transformations occurring in our country as various levels because of the demise of the apartheid state, the evolution of a society with an alternative constitutional culture and social trajectory. The challenge is intensified by the impact of global and historical trends in the world as the day of Jesus' return draws nearer. In respect of South Africa, I shall refer to six challenges that shall be the subject of our second edition. [**Article to be continued**]

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A PROPOSAL FOR AN AFRICAN ADVENTIST MUSIC FESTIVAL

I herein propose the staging of a music festival in the black church in which only African compositions will be presented. National Identity and Cultural Integrity are central to the ethos of biblical socio-anthropology and its salvation history.

Read your Old Testament with African eyes and also the New Testament. Let us launch a new sociotheological and artistic revolution in South African Black Adventism. *Yimi Owakho!*

WHAT ARE YOU READING?

I am presently reading

1. **IT'S TIME: Voices from the Frontlines of Urban Mission: 127 pages.** A General Conference Publication (2015)
2. **THE MARGINAL REVOLUTIONARIES: How Austrian Economists Fought the War of Ideas,** Janek Wasserman (2019)
3. Three months ago, I finished reading through the 374-page text, *The Lost Prince of the ANC: The Life and Times of JABULANI NOBLEMAN 'Mzala" Nxumalo. 1955-1991*, by Professor Mandla J. Radebe. I came to several conclusions for my own self and the lives of other African youth in this country, especially in the Adventist Church. The book became for me, an intricate methodological pattern for growing youth who can
(1) challenge static traditions, and

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(2) engage those who venerate history and memorialise tradition into new paths of thought and practice. Nobleman was made of an explorative, dynamic, courageous, and effervescent intellectual and moral energy. He lived in the future. He derived his ethos from his faith while his faith, institutionally, has been part of the colonial burdens that have imprisoned African believers. I last saw him in 1977 at the boundary in Golela, northern Kwa-Zulu-Natal. We had attended the SDASA¹⁶ Conference in Mjingo High School in Manzini, eSwatini. He was in the company of a friend whose identity I have forgotten.

The above text has taught me several lessons, namely, that

1. we are sustained by clear visions of the future;
2. convictions about justice and freedom rank above all petty human concerns and agendas;
3. persons and structures that oppress and deny people of freedom and development are the agents of an anti-God philosophy. Such have been English colonisation and the Afrikaner apartheid philosophy and its impact on Africans;
4. there is no price for the thirst and struggle freedom and justice;
5. God created all humanity equal. Any singular act of injustice is the denial of this divine reality. []

¹⁶SDASA stands for Seventh-day Adventist Students Association.

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BEYOND NINETEEN NINETY-FOUR

A Second Look at the Adventist Merger of
Race-based Unions in Southern Africa

Thula Mlondolozzi Nkosi

When white Adventist missionaries from North America and England came to South Africa, they found Africans who had been partly systemically removed from their God-given identity and spirituality. The missionaries who came here in the period between 1652 and 1880 paganised our forebears through western ideas of humanity and salvation.

Reasoning falsely, that African were barbarians and heathens, missionaries introduced a theology of western-cultural centredness which removed our people from their historically valid spirituality. Our languages do not even have terms for heathenism or paganism. Words we use for these spiritual conditions are derived from European languages.

The concepts. “heathenism” and “heathen” do not exist in our primary precolonial epistemology or languages. Even now we have no direct terms for this moral and spiritual condition. Frankly, it is whites who are heathens and pagans. The misconceptions of whites about Africans led to the creation of terms that insulted our people.

The wars of colonisation and dispossessions that lasted until the 1990s in this land were premised on satanic theology and ethnology on the part of Europeans. South Africa belong, not those who live in its, but to the historical natives of this land. On this point the ANC’s Freedom Charter is in gross error and deceit. This country is called South Africa and not South America or England.

Why this short note?

After I wrote the article on the Trans-Orange Conference which appears in the new Encyclopaedia of Seventh-day Adventists, I studied the membership of other constituent organisations of the Southern Africa Union. I was shocked to find that our total Union membership was less than a quarter million.

In 1910 the membership of the African Initiated Churches (AICs) in South Africa was 50 000. Today these formations number between 14 million and 18 million! What is the cause of this phenomenal growth? The answer is simple.

- These church formations speak into the socio-epistemic realities of African people. They have no theology or mission methodologies yarned in the halls of western seminaries. They are very deeply contextual in their theology.

African thought and spirituality focus on immediacy. Historical Eurowestern Christian thought has missed this reality. Listen: *Do not tell me that Jesus will heal me when he returns. I am in pain now. I need an immediate Healer. I am oppressed now. I need liberation now!*

Adventism will not grow in this land until it comes down from its high western horse and speaks to the realities of African people. The failure of Adventism to speak to Africans came be seem, among other challenges, in the

1. visitations by Adventists – even by pastors – to African traditional charlatans and healers. Sometimes this occurs around business session times. I speak from shocking evidence and testimony that I know.
2. deepening use of narcotics and alcohol, especially among senior youth
3. drug pushing in the African church. People are deeply harassed by material poverty. They will do anything possible to effect material subsistence.

What we need

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1. a recalibration of Adventist mission to Africans.
 - Currently Adventist theology is silent and irrelevant to Africanity. Helderberg College must radically alter its offerings and speak to the realities of African existence,
 2. new literature from Africans themselves must arise that speaks to African realities and aspirations.
 3. a convention designed to address the realities I noted above and others that may surface in a gathering of concerned minds. If the Union leadership does not convene this gathering before December 31, 2023, some of us will call for such a gathering before Easter 2024. New radical and revolutionary literature will suffice in the African church. The rest will be history. This is no joke! We mean business. Listen: I am an African. I shall not be saved on the terms prescribed by Eurowesterners. Jesus is ethnically, my black brother.
-

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“I CAN’T BREATHE!”

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The Perennial Plight of African People in a World of White Avarice

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Thula Mlondolosi Nkosi

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The short text has arisen from three documentaries I viewed on the “I can’t breathe” events in the United States. In the month when George Floyd was killed, I viewed a moving memorial ceremony that I recorded on my phone. I sensed that it was the story of all black people in a world captured by European self-interests and avarice. I could not avoid shedding tears as members of Floyd’s family wept in bitterness through the service. I came to the inevitable conclusion that “I can’t breathe” is the universal reality of all oppressed black people in the world.

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The perennial struggles of African people in the context of European presence go back to the day Pontius Pilate decided to have the black-hued Jesus crucified. The myth of a white Jesus has been the curse of global Christianity from the Dark Ages. Sadly, despite all the benevolence blacks have received from white people in recent times, many persons of European descent remain racists to the core. This has even been consolidated by false religious view about the ethnology of Jesus. The truth is – Jesus was a dark-hued person. This also explains the reason why his cross was carried by a black brother from Cyrene, a region encompassing present-day Libya in North Africa.

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We can no longer be deceived. White people in large numbers have no regard for the value of African lives. The massive slave trade from Africa to North and South America, is a most typical example of how white people regard black lives. We have never been autonomous beings, in the minds of millions of whites. We must ever be in the context of ethnological whiteness in order to be authentic beings. This is ideological falsehood.

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The strange irony in all of this is that those who preserved the Christian Scriptures, Africans, that is, have for centuries become the victims of white arrogance, ignorance and vice. No church with origins in the Caucasian world has been free of this ungodly practice. In our case, the apartheid government claimed to be Christian while we, the original keepers of the biblical heritage, were considered evil and unworthy of the blessings of the world.

The deep final cry of George Floyd – a black man tortured and killed by a white man in the United States, is not only materially true but also symbolically valid of the black experience in the presence of white avarice globally.

Some weeks ago, a young man in my neighbourhood asked, “What did we do to whites that they hate us so much?” I could not respond because I am asking the same question. *It is time white people told us what we did against them that they despise and hate us so much.*

1. I can’t breathe because white people crucified my dark-hued Saviour. Now we are being fed a white Jesus through white Christian art.
2. I can’t breathe because more than 30 million of our forebears were shipped by force to North and South America into slavery.
3. I can’t breathe because whites came here and presented to our forebears a Eurocentric message that denigrated the historical truths of scripture.
4. I can’t breathe because while the Bible was written by my forebears, white people have made the worlds believe that they wrote the Bible.
5. I can’t breathe because white people came to Africa and fiddled with our ethnic identities and cultural systems and gave us pagan Europeans names and pagan gods, claiming they were Christianising us.
6. I can’t breathe because Europeans who came to South Africa brought colonial evils and apartheid misery that rests on the necks of our people to this day.
7. I can’t breathe because our minerals – God’s gifts to us, have become state and Europeans property.

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8. I can't breathe because our lives are stymied by social injustices and material imbalances that prevent us from experiencing life as God's gift to us.

9. I can't breathe because in spite of the cryptic truth by Professor Adam Small (University of the Western Cape) that "We do not live by the mercy of white people," whites globally, have stymied black lives and made us believe that they are benefactors from God.

10. I can't breathe because white avarice and self-righteousness do not recognize the authenticity of black lives. We must ever live at the behest of white benevolence.

11. I can't breathe because I carry a strange name that has no relation whatever with my ancestry and anthropology.

12. I can't breathe because even African rulers are colonised and run the continent at the behest of European powers and interests.

11. I can't breathe because my life is measured by a yardstick that is foreign both to God and my ancestors.

12. I can't breathe because I was educated to serve white economic interests and not those of my ancestral communities. My solace comes from the Son of David who bled that I might not bleed.

I hereby state – without any fear of contradiction – that the greatest challenge facing African people now is an institutional faith yarned in the garment of white thought and culture. The need for the present and future is to reclaim the faith as ours and tell the world the truth as it rests in the heart of the Jesus white people crucified.

Frankly, until Christianity is cleansed of all its pagan European concepts, traditions and practices, African people in North America and in the rest of the world will ever lament under the boot of white self-authentication and hateful avarice. The challenge now is not for governments to act alone, but for churches also to drive out all racists from their folds and registers.

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Future Article

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Bethel College

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**A Seventh-day Adventist Academic Institution that
Harboured Liberation Activists and Apartheid
Intelligence Agents**

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