

Paper One – February – March 2024

LAUNCHING A LIBERATED BIBLICAL SOUTH AFRICAN BLACK ADVENTISM

Text Number One of Five

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130 Years - 1895-2025

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The year 2025 will mark 130 years of the presence of Africans in the Seventh-day Adventist Church in South Africa. The congregation in Zola in Soweto celebrated the 100th anniversary of African presence in this country. Some nincompoops in the West Rand asked the most imbecilic question: **Who gave the Zola Church the right to stage celebration?**

- **Mr/Mrs/Miss Adventist Imbecile:** Who gives you the right to celebrate your birthday?

The same will occur in 2025. In this article I shall feature an outline of South African Adventist history in the African church. A larger text will be published later in 2024.

FAREWELL EUROPEAN JESUS!

**Pastors, Youth Leaders, and Parents,
Wake Up! There is a New Socio-epistemic
Revolution on the Rise in the Black Church**

You are “sleeping through a revolution” (Dr Martin Luther King Jr) There is a rise of a new socio-epistemic .revolution in the church in all parts of South Africa. But it is centred largely in urban areas. If you are not aware of it, you are miserably blind. This revolution is steadily changing the conceptual parameters of present medieval colonial Eurowestern Adventism in South Africa. You took your children to public schools and failed to create Adventist schools. You are about to witness a socio-epistemic earthquake that will usher in a new brand of Adventism in South Africa, one rooted in and guided by a new epistemic model.

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Adventist youth have stopped asking questions. They have stopped questioning “things” and institutional practices that are antithetical with the Christian Scriptures and valid rational spirituality. They are evolving their own perspectives of Adventism and generating steadily a silent epistemic understanding of Adventism that will be concretised in their offspring.

Strands of this revolution have been around for some decades. I personally inherited this strong predilection from my late father, Pastor Absalom Soqothile Nkosi. It is for this reason the Adventist pastor of the Ntuzuma North Church (Ethekewini) instructed the local elders not to serve my father holy communion in the last months of his life. He viewed him as a nuisance. My father lay ill and was incapable of walking and servicing his churches. This is the nature of parts of South African Adventism in our time – obnoxious and hateful.

- **Tell me: How many pastors children have followed their fathers in this country?**

Seventh-day Adventists, from their birth and rise in North America, have been conscious of and vocal on matters apostate and Satanic practices. This is the reason why Adventists engaged in the anti-slavery moment in North America until 1916. Their sociotheology was fundamentally antithetical to Catholic Romanism and apostate Protestantism. In that year, the United States government called on the Adventist church to stop opposition to slavery. This is one of the major reasons why the Adventist Church, globally, has been silent on social injustice, especially slavery and apartheid injustice in South Africa. This church is socioethically damaged by its half-cooked biblical epistemology. This is the reason why its literature depicts Jesus and angels while Lucifer, the leader of angels is black!!! How does this reality constitute common sense and morally just epistemology in the field of social justice? *Phendulani MaSabatha!!*

- *This is one of the major reasons why I stopped buying and reading the Sabbath School quarterly some eighteen years ago. It is a tool the GC to hoodwink and brainwash Africans!* In my primary home in Ethekewini we have these lessons dating back to the late 1920s. I cannot consistently return to my childhood, sociologically and epistemically. It makes no sense! This is the reason why I shut my mouth when the Sabbath School Lesson is studied unless there is a critical salient or theologically devious point under consideration.

Listen: Present-day South Africa whose dominant political parties opposed colonial apartheid, is gradually being overtaken by sinister moral movements that sell ideologies and practices that are antibiblical. Evolutionism taught in schools, atheistic communism and moral liberalism are now major challenges to and enemies of the Bible. These thought models have no recognition of a Creator God. The West is secularistic, and the East is communistic. Both ideologies are antibiblical and Satanic. Personally, I am not surprised that South Africa has become a state with high levels of criminality and senseless murders. We are reaping what we sowed by voting a secularistic-semi-atheistic government. Our political logic was faulty. We were oppressed by

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Christians. Therefore, the post-apartheid future must delete commitment to biblical epistemology and governance. It is harvest time. I am not surprised Afrikaners have their own university in Tshwane north.

The liberation struggle in South Africa has been overtaken by structures and ideologies that took advantage of the poverty – ideological and material - of the African populace and its leaders. The ideo-structural wrangling that currently exists in our national politics is not an accident. It is part of a large scheme of Satan to move global history away from Creator to the enemy of all souls.

- **The problem I personally have is the ideological and structural unreadiness of Adventism for the ominous future. South African Adventism has been ideologically misled and inferiorised by western coloniality posing as valid Christianity and racism masquerading as valid identity of the human species. *The Adventist Church in this land will not grow until it openly jettisons the colonising apartheid ideology and its associated evil practices in its sociotheology.***

The merger of racially profiled Adventist Unions in 1994 was a colossal socio-political deception engineered from the General Conference in cahoots with apartheid advocates in South Africa. Compliant African pastoral leaders and naïve laity who did not critique the foundational motives of white Adventists must now tell us why the Northern Conference and the Trans-Orange Conference remain unmerged. In particular, why are the General Conference and the Union leadership silent on the matter.

Here lies one of the reasons:

- **White Adventist pastors, laypersons and youth in this country were an essential element of the anti-liberation military and intelligence against Africans that the whites were oppression. They engaged liberation forces inside this country and in the SADC Region militarily. I had relative's and acquaintances in the military both in KwaZulu-Natal and in Gauteng. Some African pastors even spoke of their own fellowmen across the borders as "communists." The South African Adventist past has a lot of unspeakable skeletons. One of the results is that collective worship in this church is hard to come by. South African Adventism is an alloy of true and falsehood. *Sengishilo!***

I was a member of the TOC Team on the merger discussions between the Trans-Orange Conference and the Transvaal Conference (now the Northern Conference). In the meeting held in the ADRA Boardroom in Bloemfontein there was an apartheid army General from the Transvaal Conference. Some two young white men across me read a document under the table. The one directly opposite me later tired and placed the document on the table. The line I was able to read from the document made me close my file and pull a book from my bag. I was done in my soul with the talks. The statement made it clear that if the Union forced the Transvaal Conference to merge with the Trans-Orange Conference, the Afrikaans-speaking

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members would recall the **SEVENDE-DAG ADVENTIST KONFERENSIE** of previous decades. I fully knew the implications of that statement because I knew the historical ,motivation for the departure of the Afrikaner group from the Transvaal Conference after their strategy for an earlier business session failed. I know also why Robert Pierson, a former President of the Trans-Africa Division, then headquartered in Harare, Zimbabwe, visited South Africa in 1973. I was in a Wednesday night meeting he addressed in the Central Methodist Church in Johannesburg. He did not touch the matters of the Conference across the fence.

- I have read parts of an MA thesis by Francois the brother of Danie Swanepoel who worked in the Bloemfontein office. In the course of his research, he found letters written by Ellen White to the General Conference, remonstrating with the brethren over sending first-grade missionaries to Europe and third-grade missionaries to Africa!
- The letters leaked to the Afrikaners in the Transvaal Conference. Hell broke loose. They then mobilised to place a significant number of their people in the Executive Committee in the 1963 Business Session. Sadly, the plot failed. In 1967 they seceded from the Transvaal Conference and created the Transvaal Afrikaanse Sewende-dag Adventiste Konferensie. Pierson was here to untangle that problem reality. Thus, a merger between the TOC and the Northern Conference will occur in heaven or in hell!

The Adventist Church in South Africa will remain racially patterned until the first season of the persecutions noted in the books of Matthew and Revelation!![]

THE NECESSITY OF THE CREATION OF A NEW AND AUTHENTIC LIBERATIVE LITERATURE IN THE AFRICAN ADVENTIST CHURCH

There is an urgent imperative for the creation and institutionalisation of new and realistic biblical ethnology and art in Adventist literature in the African church. Our children and youth deserve to be exposed to valid realities – literary and artistic - that marked the ethnology of biblical history and its authors. Truth and Salvation walk side-by-side in salvific history. Our children and their children deserve none of the false literary and textual imaginations of white people that were fed to our parents and our generation.

For too long we have been fed on a Eurowestern racist epistemic diet that has not led us to authentic salvation and valid mission to our people. Hundreds of Africans in South African Adventism have never had the exciting experience of leading fellow Africans to Jesus. They have grown to become warm static “furniture” on church pews. We come to church each Sabbath, week and month, literally to occupy seats.

African Adventism in South Africa needs urgent, robust, and focussed foundational rebirth in its biblical epistemology, history, sociology and salvation methodology. We must stop feeding our people Euro-propagandist biblical art and a theology that speaks nothing of the narratives of participation of our ancestors in the histories of obedience and rebellion in Scripture.

Listen

The Christian Bible is the product of the literary sweat -under divine inspiration – of our biological ancestors. Not a single Caucasian wrote a word, come or fulstop in the authorship of the Bible. The Christian Bible is the product of African ingenuity under divine inspiration, supervision, and direction. Not a single Caucasian in world history ever wrote a word in the Bible.[]

THE CHRISTIAN BIBLE

A Book Authored Solely by Africans

(Lecture One of Five)

Thula Mlondolosi 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.

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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 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.”¹

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

¹Mokgethi Mothlabi, (Editor), *Essays on Black Theology* (A Publication of the South African Students Organisation (SASO), Durban, 1972

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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

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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.

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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 wherewithal 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.

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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.²

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

²*Pre-Theology, Lessons 1-24, Theological Education by Extension College, 1989, p. 86*

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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!*

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

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

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

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

Oral, historical, archaeological, and linguistic evidence all point to the fact that we have been here for a long time. Maylam presents evidence that in KwaZulu-Natal, for

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instance, human presence has been known as far back 207 AD. South African history did not begin in 1652. Theirs did so, not ours. They came; we did not come. They found us here.³ In 1488 a group of Greek soldiers who were exploring the world docked in the Eastern Cape and spoke to Xhosa-speaking people. In their diary they state that the people called their leaders, *inkosis (izinkosi)*

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

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

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

Our knowledge system

African religion is fundamentally theistic and creationist. There are no evolutionary tales in our histories of human origins. Narratives may vary from one community to another, and from one place to another, but the central organising fact is creationism. This is the reason why there is – historically – no discourse on atheism in

³See *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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Africa. Atheism is a heresy from other parts of the world. African theologian, Mbiti, has immortalised the statement that “Africans are 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.

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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 5:15-27.⁴

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.

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.

⁴Molefi Asante, Cain Hope Felder, et al, *The Original African Heritage Study Bible* (Nashville, Tennessee: The James C Winston Publishing Company, 1993)

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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*.⁵ 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.⁶

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 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 marriages with Africans. The result is: Today we find Jews of various skin colours.*⁷

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

⁵Charles 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

⁶Leviticus 24:10-46, 1 Chronicles 2:34

⁷Bruce Britten, *I hate your white religion*, (Mbabane) Self-published, 1997, pp. 61, 62

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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.*⁸ (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?

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.”⁹

⁸*The Star*, Johannesburg, October 17, 2003. A more thorough text on the Lemba will appear in edition three of this paper.

⁹*The Original African Heritage Study Bible*, p 1814

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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.¹⁰ 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.
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

¹⁰Joseph E Harris, *Africans and their History*, (New York: Penguin Putnam Inc., 1998) p 34

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Africans. Our languages have many similarities with languages spoken in parts of West and Central Africa.¹¹

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).

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.

¹¹The 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).

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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.

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

Expect Lecture Two in the April-May Text

A BRIEF HISTORY OF BLACK ADVENTISTS AND REVOLUTIONARY MOVEMENTS IN SOUTH AFRICA

Thula Mlondolozzi Nkosi

Some historical and Growth realities

From its origins in late 19th-century North America, the Seventh-day Adventist Church has rooted its existence and mission in the study of the Scriptures and associated supportive academic disciplines. This tradition has consolidated the church's vast mission across the world. Today Adventists run the largest number of educational institutions globally second to that of the Catholic Church which is more than 1500 years old. The largest number of these institutions is in Africa south of the equator. South Africa, however, has not done well in this ministry, especially among Africans.

In South Africa Adventist education has declined dramatically in the African community. Several schools that were established by missionaries have disappeared, and they have been replaced by schools created and owned by members. The past three decades have seen the birth and rise of Adventist-related schools owned by South African and non-South lay persons. Blue Hills College in Midrand, where I spent a year as a teacher, has been the flagship of privately owned institutions. After Blue Hills I was called to become an acting director of Funda Community College in Diepkloof, Soweto. This was after the Board resigned *en mass* because of some serious financial misconduct on part of the principal. Funda had been established by Professor Eskia Mphahlele and some academic luminaries in the West Rand. I later left for educational work in the Murray & Roberts Construction company headquartered in Bedfordview, east of Johannesburg. This is how I had the privilege of getting a Diploma in Literacy Education from Hampton College in Ethekwini, in KwaZulu Natal Province. This is how I got an opportunity to run workshops in all provinces of South Africa.

Adventist Youth

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The large majority Adventist children and youth receive education from the world that we should evangelise. This is a strange and tragic self-contradiction. This is the reason why my wife and I did not send our children to Model C schools to be taught by Europeans. We sent them to schools owned by Africans.

The Trans-Orange Conference alone has shut down seventeen schools since the mid-1950s. One school was surrendered to Methodists 117 kilometres south of Kimberley. The very extremely logical question is:

- **What is the function and use of the Education Department in African Conferences or African-led Conferences? Are we paying pastors to do nothing?**

Many black Adventist schools in South Africa were closed by pastors and not the government. Sitebhisi SDA School in Edendale in Pietermaritzburg, for instance, was shut down by a respected pastor in the church. My mother was my teacher in Grade One and Grade Two before my father was transferred to Sibongile Township in Dundee. My father pastored churches there.

In fact, the black section of the church in South Africa depends solely on state education for the development of its children and youth. In the years since 1994, the public system has grown acutely secularistic, evolutionistic, and hedonistic in its academic design and practice. It is heavily supported by Adventists who claim to be the remnant of Bible prophecy. Thus, the destiny design of Adventist offspring occurs outside of the salvific parameters of Adventist Christianity. The obvious result is that Adventist youth in the African church have grown deeply secularistic and hedonistic in thought and behaviour. The ultimate consequence is a church that simply has no salvific and redemptive message to deliver to the secular world. All this must stop if we hope to leave this planet when Jesus returns. []

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

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

Thula Mlondolozzi Nkosi

In the January 6-12, 2017, edition of “*Mail & Guardian*,” 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 20th 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.

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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 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 in 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 more than three thousand books are published.

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- *A Pastor in Johannesburg stood behind the pulpit in the old Kelvin Church 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.¹²

- *In the 2010 TOC business session in Bloemfontein, people had to desert a pastor who had strong odour of strange herbs coming from his clothes. He had been doctored for a presidential post. He was not elected.*

¹²Some African Adventist pastors visit African traditional diviners,

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- *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 his/her 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. This phenomenon is common in Gauteng.

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 or elsewhere in the SAU. **Frankly, some should not even be in the ministry!**

Challenge 3

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

In the postcolonial period we should be shaping a new gospel story of re-education and development. We evangelise and run church as if we are in the colonial period. Virtually nothing has changed within black Adventism, institutionally and missionally. We are pushing the same useless agendas that wasted our energy during the British-Afrikaner dispensations. We waste energy on determining who occupies this office and who leaves.

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Therefore, even young pastors can meet in a church in the East Rand and deliberate on office-bearing. The agenda is satanic and grossly undevelopmental.

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

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

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

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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. 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

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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 was TMI?**”

- Why do seventeen million people 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?

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

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heard if we won't be the voice; if we won't be the church that will pick up 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 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 at 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]**

A BRIEF ADVENTIST HISTORY AMONG AFRICANS IN SOUTHERN AFRICA

Thula Mlondolosi Nkosi

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

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

Introduction

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

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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 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 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 Senkopane, in pioneering work in other parts of Lesotho. David

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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 south east 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 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 movement.¹⁸ The 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

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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

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

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 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

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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.

In the West Rand churches had been born in Sophiatown, Alexandra, Orlando and Jacksonsdraif, 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

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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.

Swaziland/Eswatini

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 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 Wesselton 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.

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. Soweto boasts a dilapidated Tabernacle in Jabavu location.

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 Caprivian community wish to be independent from Namibia. Some

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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

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 nineteen 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

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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

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 50 years for the black church to accumulate a membership of 5 000, 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

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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. The discontent in the world met a resonant note within the 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 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.

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 to the local 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 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.

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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.

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From Structure to Ideology

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*

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into Tiro's death. I have learnt this fact from some leaders in the Azanian People's Organization. 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.

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

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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 reason was that 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 Third World communities.

A New Postcolonial Ideological Movement

In the present period a new epistemic movement is on the rise in parts of Soweto. This movement is centered on a concern over the historico-epistemic irrelevance of Euro-

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colonial Adventism in South Africa. Some concerned Sowetans are about to launch a new genre of sociotheological thought that will speak to the realities of Africans. We shall announce a convocation for this emerging agenda.

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14. Seventh-day Adventist Encyclopedia, Vol. 10 (Washington DC: Review & Herald Publishing Association, 1976)
15. Swanepoel, p 42
16. Spicer, p 227
17. Interview conducted by writer on Eric Tarr, son of Bethel College founder (D. Tarr), April 1985, Bethel College
18. Hinchliff, p 94
19. Maylam, p 141
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22. The Land Act of 1933 displaced thousands of Africans from lands, which they had occupied for generations, even centuries where they could not have land tenure.
23. The Group Areas Act designated certain parts of the country as special reserves for white people while blacks were relegated to spots far from towns and places of work, many of the existing black townships were created in the wake of this Act.
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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 paper?

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

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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 now

1. an intentional and decisive recalibration of Adventist mission to Africans.
 - Currently Adventist theology is silent and partially irrelevant to Africanity and its realities
2. new literature from Africans themselves must arise that speaks to African realities and aspirations.
3. a convention designed to address the realities must be held soon.

Listen: I am an African. I shall not be saved on the terms prescribed by Eurowesterners. Jesus is ethnically, my anthropological black brother. []