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EDITORIAL STATEMENT

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In the past two years I have released academic papers under various institutional names. There was a simple reason. I was doing a survey of socio-theological and missional realities in the African section of South African Adventism. That is over. **The name under which my independent texts will appear is the one above.**

All my work is now being archived by two close friends in the University of the Witwatersrand in Johannesburg. One is Mrs Bongi Mputhi, the senior librarian in the architecture department. The other is Miss Fikile Masikane a PhD student. Both are Adventists in the West Rand region of the Trans-Orange Conference. Their origins are in KwaZulu-Natal.

1. Introduction

The introduction of missionary Christianity by half-informed Eurowesterners in South Africa has led to varying levels of psychosocial brokenness and delusions in the African community. Missionaries came to the continent under different missionary/denominational names. Variants in interpretations, differences in churchmanship and other realities caused the births of independent African churches and even rejection of Christianity as a valid communal spirituality by some Africans.

In response, other Africans decided to contextualise the faith so that they could live it within their African socio-epistemic realities, considerations, or models. Seventh-day Adventists were not spared its share of associated conflicts and defections. They also

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had their share of defections. In Lamontville township in Ethekwini, for instance, there is an independent group of African Adventists who value Ellen G. White's text, *The Great Controversy*. This reality exists in several western-originated denominations. The birth and rise of **African Initiated Churches (AICs)** can be attributed, largely, to the failure of westerners to speak into the theo-existential realities of African after 1652. *Europeans viewed us as barbarians and pagans and failed to see beyond their superstitions assumptions. To this day some still view as upgraded animals.*

In Adventism this phenomenon has remained largely underground because of the church's theology of remnancy and the assumption that Adventism is a valid biblical faith that carries the remnant of end-time biblical prophecy. **Its implied false reality is that it has answers for all human challenges.** Some, in the process, however, even pastors, resort to traditional solutions for their challenges. I have evidence of this realities in all regions of South Africa.

One known evidence of the above-noted African spritistic reality is that some African Adventist pastors and members visit traditional African medicine men/women before business sessions to be "doctored" for session fortunes. My evidence on this reality goes deep in local history and will shock the reader. This reality can be found in all Adventist constituency organisations in this land. **ABANYE ABEFUNDISI ABANSUNDU BAMASABATHA BAYAZIHAMBA IZINYANGA ZESINTU!**

Here is the Causal Crisis

African Adventists have been plunged by their narrow colonialist westernised theology of remnancy into pretentious religiosity in order to hide their psychosocial fractureness and deep hunger for wholeness rooted in their colonisation and oppression by westerners even in the church. **Sadly, some in the white community of Adventists even worked as soldiers and state military intelligence be 1994 to discomfiture liberation movements in Southern Africa. I worked with some of these persons in Bethel College, in the Eastern Cape.**

Frankly, Adventist conversion is essentially not different from conversion in other Christian denominations. Many Africans, pastors included, in local Adventism suffer from

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deep lack of psychospiritual and material wholeness in their lives. Some sermons preached in the black church manifest this deep psychic hunger.

The problem with pastors is that they deflect this reality to laity when the sordid reality is also their own. They also naively assume that the reality is not a problem in Adventism. There is an infantile notion that Adventism – with all its intrinsic Eurowesterners– is a panacea for all human challenges when it is in reality an intrinsic part of the problem. **Psychosocially, there is no distinction between an Adventist and an African of another faith.** This is one of the reasons why some Adventists marry nonAdventists.

Europeans in this church must be told that they have partly contributed to this deepening problematic syncretic reality. Until the church deals with its acute Eurowesternism in its theology and mission methodology in Africa, this Afro-syncretic reality will persist. Until the church deals with inherent realities of precolonial and post-colonial South Africa, this reality will endure into the future.

A short story:

- Somewhere in Central Africa young was tending after cattle. He then noticed a pastor baptising people in a nearby river. He walked to the group and then spoke to the pastor after the service. He asked, ***“If I take thus batch of yours, will it protect me from the people in my village who have not taken it?”***

This narrative is in some small text in my library. The question of the young man was typically African. **In Africa baptism must go beyond being symbolic. It must be administered as a rite that empowers believers for combat and victory in the struggles of life.**

African thought goes beyond mere spiritual symbolism. It deals with real issues in real life. Remember that when we left the biblical text in North Africa ritualism moved in to close parts of the textual vacuum. It is for this reason also that the experience of slavery in North Africa produces the Negro Spirituality. In essence these songs were/are a deep longing for liberation from unjustified pain inflicted by whites.

- Until Adventism addresses the deep-rooted psychosocial thirst of African people it will remain a whimper in the larger scheme of Christian mission in this land. Farther, it will continue to produce pastors and members with syncretic lifestyles.

A short illustrative narrative

In my early years of teaching, I taught in Swaziland/ Eswatini. After a study of the narrative of David's victory over Goliath, one Dlamini young man made the comment that David's stone must have been doctored. When I inquired into his assertion he said. ***"Thishela, Akekho umuntu ongenayo inyanga. Nawe-nje unayo inyanga yakho. Ngeke usitshela."*** The young man came from a well-known Adventist family.

2. What then shall we do?

2.1 There is an urgent need for African Adventists to relook deeply at the nature of their theology and mission to African people. The ordinary African is not struggling with issues of right and wrong. He lives in the realm of socio-existential realities. The question, *Where is God when I go hungry for days? Why is my neighbour marked by success while failure is my perennial lot?*

2.2 Listen: The crime that is rampant in the African community in recent years is not solely a social problem. Since 1562 Africans have been struggling with serious existential questions of land theft by whites, dispossession, marginalisation, and oppression. Crime will not be stopped by arrests and the judicial system. The South African state must wake up and smelt the colonial coffee and its devastation of historical African existence. Crime will not be stopped by court cases and imprisonments. What we require is a radically transformed state. The central problem in South Africa consists of the following:

2.2.1 African material and historico-political dispossession

2.2.2 Global Eurowestern colonial religiosity

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2.2.3 The alienation of spiritual life from socio-material life

2.2.4 *The notion that joy will come when Jesus returns whereas whites have taken away all material goods given to Africans in this continent in present history. The Adventist Church in this land must depart from this heresy. Listen: I am hungry now! Stop telling me about food in heaven!*

TO BE CONTINUED

- The Challenge of Western Colonial Spirituality in the African community
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