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# The Post-Covidian

*A Kelvin-on-Athol Journal for South African Liberative Adventism*

Founding Publisher/Editor: Thula M. kaSoqothile Nkosi

Guest Writer: Miss Fikile Masikane

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## Founding Editorial

In Bethel College, Eastern Cape, I was a Student Editor of the *Bethel Beams* under Pastor Burton L. Wright from North America. I later took a journalism course from a respected Johannesburg college when I lived in KwaThema, Springs.

When my family lived in Eswatini I went to Manzini Central School, a stone's throw away from the Adventist Conference office, for my secondary education. All my teachers were political refugees from apartheid South Africa, except the principal who was also one of my two English teachers. This was Christian P. D. Ntsikeni who shared the subject with Miss Thandiwe Mabuza, the author, who later became South Africa's ambassador in several European countries during the time of Nelson Mandela. I lost tears recently when I viewed her funeral programme in Regina Mundi cathedral in Rockville, Soweto. Mabuza has posthumously been awarded a doctorate by a local university. Regina Mundi means "Queen of the Earth," a name that is ominous in Adventist and global Christian eschatology. All my teachers in "Central" were refugees from apartheid South Africa. It was also in that school that I lost my faith in God and embraced atheistic secularism and evolutionism.

I developed an ambition to be a medical doctor when I was in "Central". I received a scholarship to do medicine in Glasgow, Scotland. But God had other plans. I only received positive correspondence from Scotland six months into Bethel College in the Eastern Cape. I hated the school with a passion for its biblical creationist perspective for five months until visit of late Dr Edwin Essery, a health missionary from Britain, stopped at Bethel on his way to Helderberg College. His bold chapel presentation on arguments from reason alone that there was a Creator-God in the universe shook me to my very foundations. That night I sat behind all students in the chapel. I did not know that the speaker was sent to and for me. At the end of Essery's presentation I walked out of the chapel, passed the boys' dormitory and walked to a large stone near the farm, and wept heavily for my simplistic atheistic folly. I realised that my

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teachers in high school had perfectly deceived us. I later met one of them, Mr Present Tshaka, who was a crack in mathematics. In his BSc he scored the highest marks in mathematics in Fort Hare University. White lecturers assumed that he had copied. He was made to rewrite with white students in Rhodes. He bit them. Fort Hare gave up.

The presentation on atheism and pro-God arguments in my first of three books, *The Memory of a Legacy: A Tribute to Bethel College*, (2008), deserves exposure to present-day youth in the church who are bombarded by nefarious evolutionism and secularism in secondary and tertiary schools in this land. I am toying with an idea of isolating the specific chapter for singular publication as a paper with more convincing arguments that I have studied in the past thirty/forty years.

It is for the epistemic reality I note in the previous paragraph that I fail to understand African pastors who deliver tithe to public secondary and tertiary institutions where their children are taught by paganistic secularists and atheists. African pastors, unlike missionaries, build no schools for the church.

Talk to black pastors about a school. You will draw black looks and even departures. I have experiences I can quote on this matter. Some five years ago I pulled out of a TOC task committee assigned with the work to establish a school. I cannot sit with persons who have not been to Adventist schools to create a programme to establish one. Where is that school now?

- **My wife and I did not send our children to nonAdventist private schools for their pre-university education to be taught, in part, by racist whites. What cultural values does a European teacher deliver to a young pre-tertiary African child?**

Frankly, mine is an unpopular position. I am opposed to whites in South Africa teaching primary and secondary school African children. Teaching is both an objective but also deeply subjective profession. It is ideologically laded with primary premises related to culture and epistemology. This is why whites cannot send their children to township schools.

- Is it true that the Adventist school in Orlando West (Soweto) uses a Catholic name to get a subsidy from the state? If it is true, I know the reason. If indeed this is true, we are engaged in a serious duplicitous crime of fraud!

### **“I write what I like”**

This is the title of a text devoted to the work and memory of Steve Biko. The journalistic streak in me is back in full swing. It is for personal and developmental reasons that I establish and launch this paper. The core purpose is to give expression to certain concerns and realities associated with Adventism in South Africa. The other purpose is to help our children and youth

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understand the colonial nature of the church they have inherited from an adult generation semi-demented by English colonialism and Afrikaner Kyperian Calvinism of seventeenth-century Holland.

Listen: You may argue and rant all your feelings out – this church in South Africa is a deeply colonial and Euro-imperialistic institution. The merger of the Black and white Unions some thirty-odd years ago was a clever political plot to hoodwink the African Adventist church into a spurious marriage with intractable racists. *Sengishilo*.

I shall protect you from shock on the intelligence and military contributions of white pastoral Adventists to the apartheid system. This is one of the major reasons why the Union in Bloemfontein is a fake organisation that deserves one of two things:

- (1) dissolution or
- (2) departure of the African membership.

If any of these two “things” do not happen in the next twelve months, the emerging existing youth church in Soweto will not be attached to the TOC and will, as planned, follow its own epistemology and missional methodologies. One of the major realities in black Adventism is the intellectual and missional somnambulism of the pastoral ministry. This is not an insult but a description of a reality that has been with us for some time.

- **On the eighteenth day of March 2022, I dispatched an opinion paper to the SAU officers. I have received not even a note of acknowledgement of receipt. I no longer need any such response. It will not help.**

## **This Paper**

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

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

## The Agenda

In this paper we shall articulate realities, facts and opinions without favour. In Adventism I fear only the Creator. I am always ready to assault anything that pretends to be a demi-god, whether it is a person, idea or practice. My father used to tell us, in family devotions, that this church is not the property of anything earthly, and thus we should fear nobody, especially when they are on the wrong side of rightness or sensibility.

In recent days I recall a comment made by one Adventist friend of mine, Desmond Goba, in eThekweni (KwaZulu-Natal). We drove home from eGoli to home one day. On the way he made a comment I have failed to forget. “*Mfana, uzakwazi ingwazi*. If your father came back to life today, I would boldly kneel on the pavement in the city. I really need that prayer.” My father became known for meeting Adventists – young and old – in Durban City and asked them to kneel on the pavement and pray with them while people passed by and insulted them, asking why they do not go a church building to pray. Many Adventists, as a result, would meet others in town and ask, “*Awukamboni ubab’Nkosi?*” They feared the embarrassing experience of being made to kneel on pavements in town.

One elderly woman was told “*Uzohlangana nobab’uNkosi kuleyondlela*.” She turned and crossed a road with red robots with a load of grocery on head while “angry” cars were hooting against her; all to escape the reality of being made to kneel on the pavement.

Every midnight hour my father would rise and go to the kitchen to pray. In my childhood I could not understand why he had to torture himself so much about God. As I grew older, I knew that all of us do need to kneel on our own pavements, sometimes even at midnight! Our Saviour did this always especially when he was about to face the cross. Sadly, we now belong to a church that gossips more than pray! Our really worst human enemies are fellow Adventists. We prey on one another in many ways. Pastors also earn trophies on this nefarious exercise

By the way the word “fellow” has its origins in pre-industrial agrarian England. It referred to “the farmer next door.” In that epoch farmers would combine their cattle and tend to them together. The act was called “feellowship.” That is the mother of the sociological and theological term, “fellowship.” The term means that our cattle are together. Thus, if we understood the origins of this term, we would, as Adventists facing contemporary and future crises, keep our interests and destiny together. Today the church qualifies for being described as “*kwamhlamb’uzelusile!*” This sad existential condition is very hurting to many of our youth and adults.

I presently think of Pastor Matyumza in the Eastern Cape, who had come from another church. Each time he was behind the pulpit at Bethel College, I have been told, many in the audience

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would laugh. After total disgust, he left the church as he said, “I would be more at home with my original Presbyterians in hell, than to be with Adventists in heaven.” I have found it very hard to remove this tragic comment from my memory. Bethel College, by the way, beside many of its merits, was also, and equally, a site of hellish behaviour from some in the staff.

I have met people in Soweto and elsewhere in this land whose memory of Bethel is not sacred at all. The institution was a hive of some white racists from Helderberg and North America. I have narratives that will draw tears from your eyes from as far as the 1950s. Several relatives of mine went to that institution.

I know one deceased senior librarian in Soweto, Mr Gilbert Pewa, a well-known story writer who said to me in reference to Bethel, “That school destroyed my son.” The young man died as a regular visitor to jail. The cause was the racist Afrikaans teacher, Mr Ackerman, a graduate of Helderberg College. Gilbert was expelled on Sabbath for a non-crime! I do not think he still breathes, to use an African idiom. Apart from its virtues, the Bethel story is also a narrative of mixed fortunes in this church.

## **My Primary Concerns**

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This paper is the outflow of a long process of thought and planning. I first thought of it some fifteen years ago. I could not proceed because of another equally important social development task I had to do. Before the end of 2022 this paper will have a more professional and technical design. In the interim, we shall make do with a tabloid character.

I will be publishing in the next four months a text on the harm caused by colonisation on African males in South Africa from the discovery of diamonds and gold in Kimberly and Johannesburg, respectively. Sadly, Adventism has added its own curses through racism.

### **The Agenda**

Initially, this publication will have three core or central concerns. These will be Christian Education, Faith and Urban Mission. Other disciplines will, when necessity demands, find space for attention. My goal is to deliver a literary product of academic excellence that will speak sensibly and redemptively on issues impacting on the practice of Christianity within the spectrum of South African Adventism and general Christianity in South Africa.

Apart from evangelistic sermons, the South African broader community has not heard Adventists, especially in the African community, engage in serious discourse and/or debate on matters of epistemology, history and salvation. South African Adventism, especially in the

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African community, is concerned with navel-gazing and, sadly, quasi-political self-worship and conflictuality. This tradition has sapped the church of valuable intellectual and moral energy for restorative and redemptive academic and salvific missional practice.

**It is a tragedy that African Adventism in this land has primary literature in the Bible and the writings of a modern prophet, that address the whole gamut of human realities, but fails to utilise these foundational resources to articulate God's saving message to troubled and sin-sick humanity. *The consequence, inter alia, is that Adventism in the African community is a slave of white thought and cultural practice. Adventism in the black community is a coward imprisoned in colonial Eurocentricity and social irrelevance.* This faith has no valid message for African people ravaged by evils of deepening colonisation and oppression. It is time that this reality is removed from our religious life and the church's programmes of ministry and mission. To this worthy end this publication will commit its articulations and energy.**

**Note this**

- This paper is not for moral or intellectual sissies, but for brave, independent thinkers and readers. It is not for blind church patriots. It is for persons who are ready to hear and hearken to God in the context of our rugged realities as Africans. Frankly, some statements you will read here will cut across known colonial and/or unbiblical concepts and practices. We are not a Settler's Monument but a Voortrekker Movement. We are on the move.
- Finally, we shall accept responses, critiques, and questions to the publication, and even publish guest articles/papers. We shall not, however, pay for these until a year from now. One of the "things" we shall do is to send the publication to relatives and friends across the seas. []

## SOCIO-CONCEPTUAL BACKGROUND

### Part 1

The necessity of a faith that both redeems from moral sin and liberates its practitioner from socio-moral and structural evils is a valid biblical model for the salvation of humanity. In this paper we argue that

1. South African Adventism cannot save African people from either moral sin and/or sociological evil while it is itself a moral and epistemic captive of Eurowesternness;
2. that until African pastoral leadership and laity in the church embrace the totality of the biblical redemptive programme and its embrace of the broad inter and multidisciplinary complex and the total fallenness of humanity, it will fail to deal with the sins of colonisation and capture of African people by pagan ideas from European unbiblical ideational and institutional systems.

Apartheid Adventism that Magezi and this writer published 1991, exists and is far from liquidation. In a parliamentary debate in the late 1940s, Jan Hofmeyr, in the opposition, told an Afrikaner minister, *“You can fool some people for some time, but you cannot fool all the people all the time.”* I am one of the “fools” who are determined never to be fooled or coddled into racist falsehood.

Today, thirty years after the merger of the white-dominated South African Union Conference, and the black Southern Union Mission, nobody can fool me into believing that the merger was a marriage of equals! It was not and will never be. **No culture that I know in this world permits the marriage of a mother and her child!**

**The SAUC was an autonomous organisation, and the SUM was an ecclesial Bantu Homeland with no legal rights to ownership both of land and of itself!**

- This is the reason why a chief in Mfazana in KwaZulu-Natal retrieved his land donation to the KZN Conference (then a Field) when he heard that whites would be part of the ownership.

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## A Short Narrative

In 1972 Sis' Peggy Oldjohn from Dobsonville, Soweto, worked in the Southern Union office in Orange Grove, Johannesburg. One day she walked to a rubbish can in the office to dump some old papers. She was attracted to a particular document that was foiled. She picked it and opened it. She ran with it to Pastor Hendrik Malatjie. They ironed it neatly and discovered that these were Minutes of a secret Executive Committee meeting of Caucasian staff in the black Union. The committee was unknown to Pastor Paul M. Mabena, the President. Read me clearly. The document landed in the hands of the leadership of the Memorandum Movement in Soweto, of which this writer was the secretary.

Not long thereafter, we attached these minutes to 1972 Memorandum to the General Conference, authored by Wellman Ntwana who went to his death a few years ago, Onkgopotse Tiro, the former student leader of the University of Limpopo, who was murdered by South African apartheid agents in Botswana assisted by Tiro's own blood relatives! [If I am killed after this, my relatives will tell you who killed me]. Many people do not know that Tiro was an Adventist of unusual heroic commitment. We later discovered that some Adventist white pastors and youths were spies and soldiers in the apartheid army against South African liberation armies of SWAPO in Namibia and our MK, APLA and AZANLA. *[Don't call me. Call yourself.]* You can then understand why unity in the South African church is, as Winston Churchill described communist Russia, a "a mystery hidden in an enigma." I cannot forget those words. Churchill was a master of rhetoric. Britain survived World War II partly because of his elocution and clever use of language in inspiring his people into defensive battle.

## AN URGENT THEOLOGICAL IMPERATIVE

It is high time African Adventists realised that land is the greatest asset and resource in the hand of any thoughtful citizen and honest Christian. The landless are not free! You may use all your systematic theology and sociohermetic gymnastics; the truth remains – the landless are not free. Real freedom, cosmically and biblically, is associated with land ownership. This is the fundamental reason why friction between Africans and Europeans in South Africa will never end. Many of our socio-cultural and economic challenges in this country are rooted in the reality that we are landless. We have been turned into "vagabonds" in our land. *Izwe lethu leli!* White people took land by legal and political trickery, even if this involved financial transactions. We were not in the parliament in 1913 and 1936 when the so-called Land Acts

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were enacted. Europeans own large plots of land because their government handed land to them through its legislation. This is the reason why Sol Plaatjes's text, "*Native Land in South Africa*", and other associated texts are a must for every sincere student of South African history.<sup>1</sup>

If Adventists subscribe sincerely to the theistic creationist model of creation, logic mandates ownership of land for all. There is no way Adventist in this country can honestly claim to be theistic creationists when some of his/her fellow Adventists are legally and circumstantially landless. Listen: **God did not create land for white people. Land was created for all humankind.** One historical reality I know is this: Europeans moved across the world in the past four hundred years taking land from natives! No groups in the African continent took land elsewhere outside of the continent. Give me the evidence. Land grabs and imperial ownerships have generally been on a one-way track in modern history.

Read chapters fifty and fifty-one of *Patriarchs and Prophets* by Ellen G. White. Invite me to discussion thereafter. The whole economy of old Israel (by the way these people were dark-skinned) was rooted in agriculture. Such was the economy of African before colonial theft and trickery. Adventism in this land is in dire need of cleansing from the dregs of colonialism. *Lelibandla linesichitho*. It is in urgent need of serious and urgent ritual cleansing, especially its African section. There is neither glory nor greatness in landlessness. Sengishilo.

**An Imperative:** There is an imperative for a convention on landlessness in the missional agenda of South African Adventism. If the centre does not call for it, some of us will do so from the margins. There is no middle choice. If such a movement does not occur from the centre within the next eight months, you can be certain that by this time in 2023 some of us will have convened a conference on *Land(lessness) and Adventist Mission in South Africa*.

**Finally: The landless have never been free in any history and land since Adam.** This why talk about health education (especially vegetarianism) in the Adventist Church is a partial anomaly in the absence of a discourse on land. This is one the reasons why I celebrate the future persecutions. We shall be forced to leave the cities and all other thickly populated areas. Nature will be our companion.

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<sup>1</sup>An Adventist friend who is the media told me some eight or so ago that in an old box of Sol Plaatjes' (First Secretary General of the ANC) that had not been opened until recently, some Ellen White's books were found.

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## THE IMPERATIVE OF LIBERATIVE AFRICAN ADVENTISM IN SOUTH AFRICA

Thula M. kaSoqothile Nkosi

In the past twenty-two years I have battled with the question:

- *Why has Adventism failed to be a liberative theory and movement in South Africa?*
- *Why is this movement divided between those who are part of a colonising community and others who are victims of colonialism?*
- *How come masters and slave are in the same room and party celebrating salvation when one is propertied, and the other is poor?*

I know that my classification and descriptions here are random and not totally objective. But they are true in the broad sense and understanding of South Africa socio-politics and colonial realities.

Based on the above paragraph and earlier statements, it is therefore irregular to reason that South African Adventism is socio-ideologically unified and coherent. We read the same Bible and the same Ellen White's literature; but we are divided and strained against each other on matters of materialist reality. **Broadly, whites have two heavens, this earth and heaven; while Africans, in general have one heaven, the one beyond the clouds.** Thus, we are, as a church, embedded in socio-material cleavage and deepening underdevelopment. The Corona reality has shown clearly where each national community comes from historically – even in the church!

### Urgent Missional Tasks

There are tasks this church must fulfil in its mission in this land in order to redeem its theology of mission from ignominy. I list and discuss each of these below:

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**1. Restudy of the Bible:**

The church, especially in the African segment, in this land must relook at Scripture through its own eyes and the those of God, and stop thinking that the eyes of the General Conference are the only ordained eyes in the church. Our eyes are African and God-given, and so are other eyes. In so far as eyes are concerned, we all stand on equal ground. The distinction lies in how these ayes are used. In general, western eyes have thought and documented, while African eyes have read and mimicked. **It is time we read the Bible and Ellen White with our own eyes, and not those of the GC or other white people.** We can no longer look at God and salvation history through the eyes and interpretations of others.

**2. Rewrite our Story:**

Our presence in salvation history and in the church must be written by others. We can no longer survive on borrowed textual meals. We have a divine right to eat our own meals, cooked from our stoves and pots. This is not rebellion but autonomy! Every Adventist must cook and eat from his/her own kitchen and stop peering over the pots and meals of others.

**3. A Moral-cultural Duty**

We have children and youth who deserve to know why we are parenting then within Adventism. They have a divine right to hear our voice and read our texts as we move into the future. The oral cost of a denominational heritage lacking internal African documented expression is “too ghastly to contemplate.” (John Balthazar Vorster). The African parent generation has an unavoidable task to create a heritage literary production for its children that will point them to the Master and finally land them on heaven’s shore.

**4. Institutionalisation:**

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A major flaw and failure of African Adventism is absence of institutionalisation of mission and ministry. The TOC, for instance, has shut down sixteen schools since 1955. Strangely, it expects its children and youth to be genuine Adventists. Not we are parasiting on schools created by white Adventists. This is a shame in a land we claim to be ours.

**End of Part One**

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**"I CAN'T BREATHE!"**

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

**Thula M. kaSoqothile Nkosi**

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

The perennial struggles of African people in the context of European presence go back to the day Pontius Pilate decided to have the black-hued Jesus crucified. The myth of a white Jesus has been the curse of global Christianity from the Dark Ages. Sadly, despite all the benevolence blacks have received from white people in recent times, many persons of European descent remain racists to the core. This has even been consolidated by false religious view about the

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ethnology of Jesus. The truth is – Jesus was a dark-hued person. This also explains the reason why his cross was carried by a black brother from Cyrene, a region encompassing present-day Libya in North Africa.

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

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

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

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

1. I can't breathe because white people crucified my dark-hued Saviour. Now we are being fed a white Jesus through white Christian art.
2. I can't breathe because more than 30 million of our forebears were shipped by force to North and South America into slavery.
3. I can't breathe because whites came here and presented to our forebears a Eurocentric message that denigrated the historical truths of scripture.

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4. I can't breathe because while the Bible was written by my forebears, white people have made the worlds believe that they wrote the Bible.
5. I can't breathe because white people came to Africa and fiddled with our ethnic identities and cultural systems and gave us pagan Europeans names and pagan gods, claiming they were Christianising us.
6. I can't breathe because Europeans who came to South Africa brought colonial evils and apartheid misery that rests on the necks of our people to this day.
7. I can't breathe because our minerals – God's gifts to us, have become state and Europeans property.
8. I can't breathe because our lives are stymied by social injustices and material imbalances that prevent us from experiencing life as God's gift to us.
9. I can't breathe because in spite of the cryptic truth by Professor Adam Small (University of the Western Cape) that "We do not live by the mercy of white people," whites globally, have stymied black lives and made us believe that they are benefactors from God.
10. I can't breathe because white avarice and self-righteousness do not recognize the authenticity of black lives. We must ever live at the behest of white benevolence.
11. I can't breathe because I carry a strange name that has no relation whatever with my ancestry and anthropology.
12. I can't breathe because even African rulers are colonised and run the continent at the behest of European powers and interests.
11. I can't breathe because my life is measured by a yardstick that is foreign both to God and my ancestors.
12. I can't breathe because I was educated to serve white economic interests and not those of my ancestral communities. My solace comes from the Son of David who bled that I might not bleed.

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### **The Crisis of a Eurocentric Christianity**

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

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

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

**A Paper Presented in the Decolonisation Seminar in the  
12th Annual Camp of the New Destiny Institute. SA,  
Adams College, Amanzimtoti, Kwa-Zulu-Natal**

**Miss Fikile Masikane<sup>2</sup>**

Sabbath, 30 December 2017

I seek to explore the effect of the growing protest movements in and around South African Universities and South Africa at large. The past movements with its various calls such as: **#rhodesmustfall** **#feesmustfall** **#bringbacktheland** have all challenged the political, religious

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<sup>2</sup>Fikile is a young woman who is completing her doctorate with the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. Her membership is in the Adventist Church in Senaoane, Soweto. Her topic is on **"Ibandla lamaNazaretha"** of Isaiah Shembe in **Kwa-Zulu-Natal**. Her origins are in the same province. She taught research skills in the NDI Camp in Amanzimtoti College in 2017.

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and academic communities to urgently envision a [new] world, where the so called oppressed black people are freed from the bounds of white ideologies. Following this I have themed this presentation “indigenous religious values: understanding work and rest”, taken from my Masters dissertation (2017).

I will be looking at the concept of the Sabbath by Adventists and the practice of Rest by the Shembe Church. This has, I suggest, not only a conceptual understanding of what black liberation is, but also provides a practical understanding of ‘what should rise’ or what should be done, in light of the broader South African black emancipation project. Having analysed the concept of rest which will be discussed shortly, this concept or practice of the Sabbath rest proposes, for me that black people should not approach liberation or black freedom through the lenses of oppression, because oppression was created by a system (oppression is manmade system) in order to fulfil a certain purpose and in the same breathe the very system then dictates and defines what freedom for black people should be thereafter. In fact the greatest liberation that was given to man was firstly, at the Cross which brought about the forgiveness of sins and secondly, the gift of the Sabbath rest which brings to us freedom. And on that basis I argue that perhaps African/traditional religious practices of the Sabbath observance and true rest- using the Shembe church as a case study, should be looked at in depth as a way to begin to think of a ‘decolonised’ religion/Adventism.

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

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and their culture. He then as a young man spent his life rejecting this practice. He later moved to iNanda –Ohlange where he became a well-known healer.

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

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

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

### **Work: the first law of God**

In South Africa, post-1994 waged labour or the idea of having dignified jobs for black workers became a huge part of the emancipatory project, according to Barchiesi. On the one hand, dignified jobs in this era, Barchiesi argues, were a solution to extreme poverty, and inequality with their related, persistent risks of social explosion” (Barchiesi, 2011:2). Moreover, “work promised to infuse democratic citizenship in the new South Africa with unprecedented social and ethical inequalities” (Barchiesi, 2011: 4) framed hard work as a solution and way out of poverty. However, Barchiesi (2011: 7) sees both ‘work’ and ‘production’ as contrasting imageries where in the post-apartheid state, labour ideologies and ordinary citizenship are only but mere social claims.

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

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the government's discourse (Barchiesi, 2011: 14). The precariousness of black workers needs to be analysed as a social and existential reality filled with uncertainties and harmful unpredictability (Barchiesi, 2011: 15). This is why Shembe spoke about work!

It is important to understand work and industry as a whole. Because work and industry whatever its stage may be has a very edifying influence on the character of the people. It elevates their intellectual and moral standards and eliminates among them such objectionable qualities as indolence sloth, and narrowmindedness, and pervades them with a spirit of common brotherhood and co-operation, which teaches them the useful lesson that no nation has ever risen to a respectable position but by making industry its first consideration. In fact, the best kind of national education lies at the seat of industry. Industry was the first law of God to man, and our progenitors in the Garden of Eden were the first workers, ever since industry has been the chief source of our daily bread and butter and when all things shall fail; industry will still remain the mainstay of the world (Tsekiso, Friday, 29, 1926: 7). With this, it is important for work to be an act that is fulfilling, it should allow for individuals to exercise their full powers by this I mean that work should develop an individual holistically.'

Following this,

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

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

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

*For Shembe, no man is meant to work for another, worse off doing his work to better his own needs. Shembe believes that God showed them how to work by creating something out of nothing; this not only highlighted the importance of creativity in one's work, but also promoted an idea working in order to enhance oneself. When this free flow and creativity is exercised, the day of rest then makes sense. Because how does one work when they have not rested?*

### **Rest as freedom**

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

Often when we speak of the idea of decolonisation, some minds run to monkey living in open fields, with no technology and what white people deemed as backwardness, while others

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imagine decolonisation as an ‘exercise of replacement’ where black bodies replace white bodies in white spaces however, driving the same white ideology. In fact it is this very thinking that highlights how deep colonisation has gone. It is important to note that the ‘decolonial’ moment focuses on the effects of ‘coloniality of power’. ‘Coloniality of power’, simply expresses the lingering effects of colonialism in the now ‘independent’ countries. According to Mignolo, ‘coloniality of power’ is possible through “the global reach of imperial capitalism”, which functions as “exploitation of labour” and controls “knowledge” production among other things (Mignolo, 2007: 158-159). Therefore, decolonial thinking or ‘decoloniality needs to be appreciated as a liberatory thought that gestures towards the possibility of another world and knowledge’ (outside the imperial bondages) (Gatsheni, 2013: 12). Gatsheni (2013: 10) believes that ‘what Africans should be vigilant against is the trap of ending up normalizing and universalizing coloniality as a natural state of the world. This must be unmasked, resisted and destroyed because it produces a world order that can only be sustained through a combination of violence, deceit, hypocrisy and lies’. #

## **LIFE AS CINEMA: IMPLICATIONS FOR ADVENTIST MISSION AND MINISTRY TO AFRICANS IN 21<sup>st</sup> CENTURY SOUTH AFRICA**

**Thula M. kaSoqothile Nkosi**

In the January 6-12, 2017, edition of “*Mail & Guardian*,” former University of the Witwatersrand research professor, Achille Mbembe, writes 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 notes, “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.

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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.

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 for Adventist mission**

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

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**Challenge 1:** Digital technology has created societies that no longer have time for long “things” and events. We compete with the social and public media. need to rethink the length of our sermons. Length is not and never been a substitute for quality. People want to know what you want to tell them. As they listen and evaluate you as you deliver your subject. Decisions for or against you are made as you speak. You sell your “product” (yourself) as you stand and deliver a presentation or sermon. Audiences have become a market. If you do not deliver as expected, audiences seek for others who have a better product.

- 1.1 We must read prodigiously and consistently. Many in our audiences know “things” we do not know. Many are more educated than we are. Pastors and seminar speakers, especially, need to reconcile with the reality that we are assessed daily on what we say and how we say it. If your information is not relevant and new, you may soon be relegated to the stone age. Until the late 1970s human knowledge doubled each decade. From the beginning of this century knowledge expansion has grown exponentially. Each day three thousand books are published. A Pastor-friend in Johannesburg stood behind the pulpit in Kelvin and preached a Googled sermon. A congregant went into Google and discovered the same topic and same content. He distributed the sermon friends around the country and the pastor became the centre of hilarious but shameful fun.
- 1.2 All elocutionary practice is a form of self-advertising. In your first appearance people make decisions on whether they deserve your presence again. If a second invitation never comes, you should engage in serious and honest rethink. Of course, the absence of a second invitation may not necessary 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!

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

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

In the late 1980s the Human Sciences Research Council tasked late Prof Gabriel Setiloane (a Methodist pastor) 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



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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 therefor never surprised when some of them give us the satanic impression that we owe them jobs as Directors and Officers in Orange Grove and elsewhere in the SAU. Frankly, some should not be in the ministry!

**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 pour energy during the British-Afrikaner dispensations. We waste energy on determining who occupies this office and who leaves. 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 of 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?

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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?**

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

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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 a shock and new perspectives on what it means to be poor and discarded by society. Nobody asked

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questions after that. I immediately recalled my book by Alvin Toffler, “Future Shock” published in 1970. Since that day I have been asking myself the question, “For whom is TMI?”

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

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

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

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

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

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*us its cross, God will find another one. And if we try to muffle in any way the distinctiveness of the trumpet sound, Christ has told us that the cross will crush us.*

Let the Adventist Seer speak:

*God never meant 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]**

**REFERENCES WILL APPEAR  
IN THE LAST SECTION OF THE PAPER.**