

# ADVENTIST MINDSET: A PANACEA FOR PEACEFUL NEIGHBORLINESS IN THE ECONOMICALLY CHALLENGING WORLD OF THE 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY

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## Abstract

*The 21<sup>st</sup> Century in which we live is presenting series of economic challenges in the lives of individuals, families, organizations and nations. These situations are results of natural and artificial disasters befalling the world, which day by day create fear as well as restlessness in the minds of people and nations. In spite of these challenges, the Adventist mindset, which is rooted in belief in the Second Coming of Jesus Christ, avails those who imbibe it a sense of satisfaction with an inner peace that promotes good and peaceful neighborliness in the society. This is an outcome of the understanding that unemployment, economic hardship, crime and moral lapses have their way only here and now, while the desired blissful life of complete satisfaction for the human being would only become possible when Jesus Christ comes and takes his true believers to heaven. Therefore, it is the position of this paper that the peace which Adventism possesses and bequeaths to the world is founded on hope and faith in the promises of Jesus Christ enshrined in the Bible. This type of peace is not enforced upon mankind rather it is imputed and imparted providentially to those who desire it sincerely.*

**Keywords:** Adventist, Mindset, Artificial, Neighbour, Bequeath, Second Coming, Imputed, Imparted.

## Introduction

The situation of things in the world today reveals tremendous hardship due to economic difficulties being faced by nations, organizations and individuals. Population growth without commensurate employment opportunities is leading to production of fewer commodities than is adequate for market forces to compete favorably. Prices of goods and services are rising while the income level of many people remains deplorable. In the quest for survival, individuals, organizations, and nations sometimes engage in unwholesome practices which rather than solve societal ills, create suspicions, ill-feelings, hatred and dissensions. Moskala affirms these states of affairs by averring that the world in which we live is evil dominated and that evil is insensitive to human predicament (108). Socio-cultural practices bequeathed to

certain sections of our world by preceding generations aggravate such evil treatments as the caste system which also hampers cordial and peaceful relationships. This, according to Okwueze thrives in Nigeria, especially among the Igbo where even Christians segregate on the guise of “free borns” against “slaves and outcasts” in matters of marriage, employment and association, due to what their ancestors had approved or disapproved (27).

This same world in which we live, was created by God as a very good place (Genesis 1:31), and man was given the responsibility of managing its affairs. The fall of man which resulted from his disobedience to God’s command, is the catastrophic event that has over the years brought degeneration and decay both spiritually and physically to the world and its inhabitants (Gen. 3). White says:

As they witnessed in drooping flower and falling leaf the first signs of decay, Adam and his companion mourned more deeply than men now mourn over their dead. The death of the frail, delicate flowers was indeed a cause of sorrow, but when the goodly trees cast off their leaves, the scene brought vividly to mind the stern fact that death is the portion of every living thing (Patriarchs and Prophets, 62)

The decay in the world in this 21<sup>st</sup> century has reached a point where people care so less about their environment and fellow human beings and more about self and wealth that they kill and use human parts for rituals of wealth, worldly protection and power. Others, who genuinely get riches as gifts from God, hold to it as if eternity solely depends on materialism. Thus they disdain the word of God which says “Bear ye one another’s burdens” (Galatians 6:2 KJV). This deplorable state of affairs in the world which stems from moral decay and reels through socio-cultural biases to economic selfishness is in dire need of a remedy.

This lasting remedy could be found in the “Adventist Mindset”. In this mindset there is no discrimination of caste or nationality or race or color. Every child of God is seen as of one blood in Christ, since the elect of God are of a universal relationship (Seventh-day Adventist Church Manual, 2016, P.20). Thus the Adventist mindset creates a religious, social, cultural and economic view of life which is Christ centered and breeds peaceful co-existence and good neighborliness.

### **Mindset**

Mindset is seen by Harper as a fixed pattern of thinking that makes somebody to be ready at any time, to meet situations of life as they come (Online Etymology Dictionary). On a similar note, Collins relates mindset to thought patterns which people rely on to face demands of life though carefully replacing the idea of fixity with the notion of “being difficult to alter”(British Dictionary). Thus, to Collins, mindset is not totally fixed, rather, it is, under

careful considerations, changeable. Lending its voice to the idea of fixed attitudes in describing mindset, Oxford American Dictionary, as cited by Amazon's Editorial Reviews, drafts in the word "established" to explain why a particular mindset could be as it is ([www.amazon.com.../0345472322](http://www.amazon.com.../0345472322)). In this light, it follows that experiential knowledge, though not necessarily of the immediate actor, contributes substantially in making predetermined ideas and attitudes possible, as regards situations of life.

Further on the explanation of mindset and its role in guiding one to responding to life situations, Dweck brings in considerable dynamism of thought. He posits that each individual possesses "either a fixed mindset or a growth mindset" ([www.amazon.com.../0345472322](http://www.amazon.com.../0345472322)). Dweck portrays a fixed mindset as that which believes that one's talents and abilities in life are unalterable. A person with such a mindset, he argues, lives a life of avoidance in the face of challenges and possible failure. Contrarily, he showcases a growth mindset as a liquid and a process full of dynamics. People with such mindset make use of varying opportunities of life to grow in their dealings with the situations of human life. Given the limitations of knowledge associated with human beings in this life, a guided dynamic mindset, paying allegiance to the One who is all-knowing, the God of heaven, apparently serves best.

### **The Adventist Mindset**

The term "Adventist" in this work is used to designate the Seventh-day Adventist Church which is "A conservative Christian body, worldwide in extent, evangelical in beliefs, and professing no creed but the Bible. It places strong emphasis on the Second Advent, which it believes is near, and observes the Sabbath of the Bible, the seventh day of the week" (SDA Encyclopedia Vol. 11, P. 574). Faithful members of this body are believed to have a mindset that though culturally sensitive, is intrinsically submissive to biblical standards of behavior. Such a mindset is deemed balanced because it recognizes the place of culture which is man-made as well as the Bible which is God-sent. Chalmers corroborates this view by asserting that whereas Adventists' learning process is both culturally and divinely determined, God so monitors His children's learning that their errors are eventually corrected by His Spirit as His followers obey their conscience's demand that they do the will of God (74). It follows therefore that the "Adventist Mindset" is that mindset which obeys its conscience as guided by the Holy Spirit. In other words, since it is the Holy Spirit that inspired the writings of the Bible (2 Tim.3:16; 2 Pet. 1: 20, 21), the "Adventist mindset" is that whose conscience is guided by the Bible.

### **Some Economic Challenges of the World in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century**

Although we are in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, the economic condition of the world is not independent of the past century. By the second quarter of the 20<sup>th</sup> century the world witnessed the great economic depression as well as the Second World War. The after-effects of those experiences have continued to affect world affairs till this day. It led to the “cold war” between the U.S.A and U.S.S.R and the economic fisticuff between capitalism and socialism. These battles are still latently going on and they are affecting the world economy. Huge financial resources are being committed to defense, which if channeled to economic production and distribution of goods and services, could improve the lot the world’s population.

In a United Nations General Assembly Debate on Economic and Financial Imbalances, Hongbo laments that whereas properly organized globalization of ideas and resources could stabilize and prosper the world, what is being practiced is “isolationism and protectionism” and this is threatening developmental co-operation among nations (GA/EF/3448 October 3, 2016). Contributing on the matter, Moyo, names some factors that are complicating issues in economic development such as technology, which she says was creating a “jobless underclass” of people, population explosion, which is almost 8 billion and targeting 11 billion by 2100, and uneven income distribution, which has worsened within countries. She further intimates that whereas many African, Asian and South American Countries are accepting democratic practices and capitalistic economics as means to economic growth, the developed nations are retreating on trade, cross-border capital flows to emerging markets and free movement of people. By these acts, she further states, the leading nations are telling the world that the monetary and fiscal policies they used before to create their growth cannot work anymore (GA/EF/3448 October 3, 2016).

These attitudes of the World’s leading economies have driven some developing countries like Nigeria into economic recession. The reduction in demand of oil which led to the fall in its price meant reduction in income. This led to less expenditure on the part of government and oil companies, thereby reducing demand for other domestic products and services. With this scenario, the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) falls, triggering economic recession with its attendant negative effects. Pettinger avers that economic recession is typically characterized by high unemployment, fall in average income, increased inequality in income distribution, rise in poverty level in the society and fall in educational standard, less tax revenue and high government borrowing (September 2016). Corroborating the views above, Nwosu asserts that several instances of sick people being rushed late to hospitals and eventually dying, is as a result of poverty among the masses. He further intimates that these

poor people when rushed to the hospitals and clinics, only arrive to be scared with exorbitant financial charges (2000, p.79).

### **Negative Effects of Economic Challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century World.**

#### **1. Conflict.**

A submission by Brookings Global Experts has it that:

Contrary to the conventional wisdom that civil conflict stems from ancient ethnic hatreds or political rivalries, compelling evidence now suggests that the most powerful predictors of civil conflict are in fact weak economic growth and volatile low incomes . . . . In 2002, more than two-thirds of the poorest countries of the world were in conflict.

The submission above, it must be understood, does not begin, *ab initio*, at the corporate or regional level. It begins from homes where family relationships are negatively impacted by job loss, unemployment and depression due to poverty. Underscoring this view, Olarinde, adds loss of status, self-worth, health and well-being as negative effects of loss of jobs arising from economic difficulties of nations (December 2016). It follows therefore that from families the negative attitude of individuals to the society begins and spreads to the larger community. Still further, communities begin to extend their hands to what belongs to their neighbors. Thus this attitude spirals into wider conflicts that at times escalate and lead to inter-tribal and international conflicts.

#### **2. High Cost of Living.**

When there is economic recession in a society, prices escalate, as every business concern tries to survive, by selling what it produces or supplies at a cost that will sustain it. These acts send the impact down to the final consumer of goods and services. Famakinwa cites Ibiwumi as lamenting the Nigerian situation where nylon bags formerly sold for ₦10 now cost ₦20, a bag of rice which was bought ₦9,000 is now being sold ₦22,000.00 and a plastic bowl of garri formerly of ₦150 is now sold for between ₦250 and ₦300 (The Hope 2016). The list is endless as every commodity is affected. Transportation costs are not left out in this menace of price hikes. In fact the price of fuel which dictates transportation cost, directly leads to soaring prices of commodities, from food stuff to groceries, and from dresses to house rents.

#### **3. Criminal Activities among Youth.**

It is widely acknowledge that economic difficulties lead to several criminal behaviors among the youth. Psychol encapsulates these acts as “behavior problems, less social competence, lower cognitive ability and elevated physiological markers of stress” (PMC 4742411). Expatriating on these acts, Yusuf intimates that major and well planned crimes as

well as spontaneous thefts are increasingly reported. They range from missing soup pots and tubers of yam to the draining of human blood and severing of human parts for sale (the nation online). Associating these acts further to economic symptoms, Ames reiterates that violent acts committed by laid off workers have been so highly noticed that there is a popular belief that violence and criminality are imminent outcomes of job loss which itself is an irresistible fall-out of economic recession.

#### **4. Fall in Standard of Education.**

The intimations in the sections above lay credence to the effects economic challenges have on the educational standards of people, especially in the developing countries. As was pointed out by Psychol, economic difficulties affect the cognitive domain of learning of the youth. This means that their level of logical reasoning is down-graded. The problem of family instability which is associated with job loss in most cases leaves emotional scars which have to do with the affective domain of learning of the students. This emotional imbalance affects the student's educational performance. In the same vein, the student's psychomotor domain of learning, which leverages from the relationship between the muscles and the mind, suffers due to inadequate food or insufficient nutritional needs of the body's system. Furthermore, lack of funds on the part of Parents leave many students without adequate textbooks, thus limiting their access to needed information as learners. To some of these students, school attendance becomes epileptic due to non-payment of fees which lead to their being sent out of class from time to time.

#### **5. Government Debts Increase.**

The sum total of troubles a nation experiences during stringent economic recession is increase in its national debt. The government does this to sustain its agencies, ministries and departments, so as to enable it remain functional and relevant to its citizens. But there is a popular aversion that he who goes borrowing, goes sorrowing. This is because loans are bound to be paid with interests and in most cases they stifle rather than expand the economic operations of the borrower. Some of the conditions that are given before loans are released to nations by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank include retrenchment of workers, whose ills we have enumerated above.

#### **The Need for Peaceful-Neighborliness in Our Human Society in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.**

A neighbor is one who either lives or associates closely with another person. It could apply to an individual, a family, community, a state or nation. Neighborliness is a relationship that exists between people, communities, organizations, and nations who are close to each other

either by nearness in geographical location or by interactions. On its part peaceful which is an adjective connotes absence of violence, quietness and calmness (Cambridge dictionary online). Owing to the expositions above, peaceful-neighborliness is a friendly relationship, devoid of misunderstandings, violence and quarrels, that exist between persons, organizations and countries that are close to one another either by geographical proximity or by interactional association of different sorts. Such relationships are needed because of but not limited to:

### **1. Social Harmony**

For any society to have a harmonious atmosphere of existence, its citizens have to be peaceful and need to live peaceably with others. This type of lifestyle is not easily come by. It requires a mindset that is founded on Christ. Intimating on the need to associate with others in a community in appropriate terms, White states:

The example of Christ in linking Himself with the interests of humanity should be followed by all who preach His word and by all who have received the gospel of His grace. We are not to renounce social communion. We should not seclude ourselves from others. In order to reach all classes, we must meet them where they are. They will seldom seek us of their own accord. Not alone from the pulpit are the hearts of men touched by divine truth. There is another field of labor, humbler, it may be, but fully as promising. It is found in the home of the lowly and in the mansion of the great; at the hospitable board and in gatherings for innocent social enjoyment (Desire of Ages, 152).

White further submits that in all of life's interactions there is the need for self-control, endurance and sympathy. This she states is due to the fact that people are different in thinking, education, habits and perceptions. This leads to varied sense of judgment and understanding of the truth (Mind, Character and Personality, 615). This is the reason why a worldly mindset finds it difficult associating freely with people. Without the mindset hinged on Christ, people are tended toward forcefully enjoining others to follow their inclinations. An Adventist mindset on the other hand recognizes that every individual has the power of choice within socially acceptable limits. When majority of the people in a society appreciate and imbibe this mindset, there will be a harmonious social order in that society's

### **2. Neighborhood security.**

Another important benefit of peaceful-neighborliness is collective security of the environment. This is a task that requires the cooperation of everyone in order that there will be relative public safety from any possible danger that may rear up its head anywhere. Danger could arise due to natural causes or through economic engagements. At times military operations also raise dangerous circumstances. In all these situations, neighborhood cooperation will help to cushion effects of scarcity of resources and protect against acts that

degrade the environment as well as any biological threat that could cause trouble (The Millennium Project). It is through a mindset that allows for such cooperation that the three challenges identified by Stern, as the 21<sup>st</sup> century problems which include poverty, climate change and economic downturn, could be successfully overcome. The mindset that realizes that God is the Creator and owner of the world would be mindful of the fact that He is going to judge the world and its inhabitants and will “destroy those who destroy the earth” (Rev.11:18 NKJV). Such a mindset would be a panacea amidst prevailing economic challenges in this 21<sup>st</sup> century because it realizes that “the trials of life are God’s workmen, to remove the impurities and roughness from our character” (White, Welfare Ministry, 20). Thus people who adopt such a mindset will endure hardship and certainly overcome through divine Providence.

### **3. Economic Strength.**

Economic activities thrive better where there is peace and cooperation. A society which experiences peaceful-neighborliness, bequeaths to its people the necessary ingredients for optimum labor output. Such a society attracts investors and as such is developed economically. Products of such an environment are sound and satisfactory as nothing is done haphazardly or in haste. People enjoy living and working in such a place, thus boosting its commercial activities. However, in every human society there always exist different classes of people. The rich and the poor, the strong and the weak, the great and the small. In view of this, there is the need for a mindset imbued with generosity.

The rich are to help the poor. The strong are to protect the weak. The great are to accommodate the small. It is noted that all fingers are not equal, yet the bigger fingers need the cooperation of the smaller ones to function effectively and efficiently. In this wise, White intones:

When men who have been abundantly blessed of Heaven with large wealth fail to carry out God’s design, and do not relieve the poor and the oppressed, the Lord is displeased and will surely visit them. They have no excuse for withholding from their neighbors the help that God has put it into their power to provide (Welfare Ministry,16).

The Bible lays credence to the submission above when it states “bear ye one another’s burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ” (Galatians 6:2 KJV). The Adventist mindset which stands on the Word of God and savors the counsels of the Spirit of Prophecy will if imbibed by members of any given society, generate and imbue such a society with economic strength that is divinely sanctioned.

### **4. Educational Insight.**



Here education is regarded as the process and art of imparting and acquiring knowledge. Insight connotes directional guidance. Peaceful-neighborliness will avail people the soundness of mind to forecast what will be beneficial to their society in terms of knowledge impartation and acquisition. The Bible laments that God's people perish due to lack of knowledge (Hosea 4:6). When people are properly and holistically educated, they are able to face all kinds of challenges in life. This is because holistic education does not only center on the head. Rather it trains the head, heart, hand and mind. In other words, holistic education trains one mentally, spiritually, physically and socially. This is what Christian education offers, as Knight submits when he avers that, Christian education is meant to equip students with the ability of reflective thinking within themselves rather than merely sticking to the thoughts of authority human figures (214). With this type of education, people will be able to think and fashion a positive way out of any difficult situation of life. This positive thinking will weigh physical, spiritual, mental and social consequences of any line of action, before engaging in it.

### **5. Promotion of Spiritual Growth.**

Man in his relationship with God and his fellow human beings, needs spiritual growth. This cannot be if the neighborhood is chaotic. It is a peaceful atmosphere of both the environment and the human relationships therein that would avail one the proper disposition to pray to God, study His word and sing praises to Him. These three phases of man's relationship to God are biblically authorized. Jesus Christ taught His followers to pray, while Paul the apostle enjoins Christians to pray always (Mt 6:9-13; 1 Thess. 5:17). Christ encouraged His hearers to search the Scriptures while James urges Christians to both receive God's word and put it to practice (John 5:39, Jas 1:21-25). Jesus together with His apostles sang hymns, Peter, an apostle of His, intimates that God has called us out of darkness to show forth His praises and Paul admonishes us to sing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs (Mark 14:26; 1 Pet 2:9; Col 3:16). To encourage spiritual growth among those who aspire to go with Christ to heaven, white insightfully intimates:

It was the marvel of all the universe that Christ should humble Himself to save fallen man.....And as Christ in His expiring agony upon the cross cried out, 'it is finished'(John 19:30), a shout of triumph rang through every world and through heaven itself.... His death had answered the question whether the father and the son had sufficient love for man to exercise self-denial and a spirit of sacrifice. Satan had revealed his true character as a liar and a murderer. It was seen that the very same spirit with which he had ruled the children of men who were under his power, he would have manifested if permitted to control the

intelligences of heaven. With one voice the loyal universe united in extolling the divine administration (Patriarchs and Prophets, 69, 70).

It is only by steadfastly aligning with God through faith in Christ's ministry in man's behalf that life's challenges can be effectively endured and overcome. Poverty, climate change and economic vagaries of life, are instigations of Satan and his demons to test humanity's faith in God. The mindset that spurs people to trust in and walk with God through thick and thin is greatly to be desired. This is the Adventist mindset.

### Conclusion

The more the world ages, the greater the complexities of existence in it. Economic capitalism and its human tendency toward selfishness will continue to breed complicated challenges for mankind. These economic challenges should be seen as diseases of societal interactions. Just as diseases have panaceas, a compound word from the Greek *pan* "all" and *akos*, "remedy" thus indicating "a remedy for all difficulties" (oxford dictionaries.com), so do economic challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

The panacea, that is, the remedy for all the economic challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century in the world, as has been enumerated in this paper, is the development and exhibition of the Adventist Mindset. This mindset which is founded upon God's word, the Bible, will if adopted by people in any given relationship, environmental, occupational, or biological, bequeath social harmony, neighborhood security, economic strength, educational insight and promote spiritual growth. If this mindset is allowed to thrive by all and sundry, the world will be better off.

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