

'Rise, Africa, seek the saviour.' The Nazareth Baptist Church in the post-apartheid public sphere.

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The Nazareth Baptist Church, a one hundred years old African Initiated Church from South Africa, can be characterized by propagating a detachment from the polluting influences of the secular world and providing a safe haven within its sacred realm during the social disruptions of colonial and apartheid times, while at the same time dealing with all kinds of problems of everyday life by incorporating relations to ancestor spirits and by taking over the functions of traditional healers and diviners. With its insistence on a bounded religious sphere, which nevertheless permeates all aspects of the life of its members, the Nazareth Baptist Church provides its very own critique of the religious/secular divide.

In this paper I will analyse the church's position in the public sphere by looking at how its religious practices challenge hegemonic conceptions of public space. I argue that in the reconfigured public sphere of the new, post-apartheid South Africa, the church provides one of the most radical answers to former president Thabo Mbeki's call for an 'African renaissance'.

