



# What God Hath Wrought

## High Lights of Eighty Years of Growth Among Black Seventh-day Adventists

JUST eight decades ago there were approximately fifty black Seventh-day Adventists in the United States. Then the work began to develop under strong evangelism by men such as L. C. Sheafe, John Manns, Sidney Scott, J. K. Humphrey, J. H. Lawrence, G. E. Peters, P. G. Rodgers, M. C. Strachan, T. B. Buckner, J. M. Campbell, M. G. Nunez, B. W. Abney, H. D. Green, J. G. Dasent, and John Allison. We had 900 members by 1909, when a General Conference session voted to establish the North American Negro Department, with A. J. Haysmer chosen to be the first secretary.

President A. G. Daniells of the General Conference wrote in the *Review and Herald* (June 19, 1909): "I believe under this direct effort, we shall see the work in behalf of the colored people of this country go forward with greater success than we have ever seen before. Now how will this be managed? The department will have a secretary, an executive committee, or a departmental committee . . . [with] a fair representation of the field . . . [to] plan its work . . . [and] carry forward the evangelical work among colored people. They will take up the question of mission schools, church schools, and higher schools such as Huntsville, and will look after them. They will look after the publishing of such literature as will be best adapted to the people."

The membership among America's greatest minority reached 3,000 by

1918, when a General Conference session elected W. H. Green, a former lawyer who had argued cases even in the Supreme Court, to be the first black secretary of what is now the Regional Department. Through the years with their attendant changes in organization the membership kept on growing. Provision was first made in the late 1920's in union conferences in the South for colored departments at the union level, with representative leadership to nurture evangelism among black people and to promote the work along all lines. This type of leadership was formalized when the Autumn Council voted to recommend that secretaries of Negro departments of three unions were to attend the general councils of the church. At the same meeting a General Conference Negro Department Advisory Committee was authorized.

Elder W. H. Green served from 1918 until his death in 1928; then G. E. Peters became secretary of the department at the General Conference with his office in the headquarters building, a development not earlier thought feasible because of prevailing conditions.

To meet a crisis that emerged when J. K. Humphrey left the mainstream of Adventism, G. E. Peters moved into leadership in New York, and F. L. Peterson became secretary of the department in 1930. Elder Peters later returned to the department and re-

ported, at the Autumn Council in 1941, 14,537 members by the close of 1940, a five-year tithe of \$1,112,000, plus mission offerings of \$703,000. He went on to say, "It is obvious that the colored work made decided advancement when greater and larger duties were placed on their own leaders."

In words that today sound almost prophetic, Elder Peters, after calling for fuller implementation of earlier voted plans, and after recommending biennial meetings of the Negro Advisory Committee, said: "I believe the present organization known as the Negro Department can be made a more ideal system of organization for the Negro work in North America if fully carried out and broadened. . . . Give us a fair chance, a greater responsibility with our own people, and I assure you there will be yet greater results in the building up of the work of God as related to the great Advent Movement where all races should stand together, united and true for the completing of the task committed to us by our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ."

One of the truly historic meetings of our movement occurred in Chicago in 1944, when Regional conferences were recommended to care for and to advance the growing work. The first of eight Regional conferences, the Lake Region Conference began operating in January, 1945, and the thirty-year history of Regional conferences in terms of membership growth, employment,

buildings, incentive to youth, public evangelism, institutions, development of leaders, and financial strength is a remarkable story in itself. The record of progress well justifies the move made thirty years ago.

In barest detail the following figures speak for themselves:

	1944	1973
Pastors	116	325
Bible Instructors	28	50
Church School		
Teachers	120	269
Churches	235	487
Members	17,891	90,000
Baptisms	1,515	7,458
Tithe	\$828,869	\$13,611,459
Mission Offerings	\$321,196	\$ 2,634,000

Our INFORMANT readers will be interested also in a report rendered at a recent meeting of the Regional Department Advisory Committee:

#### Membership Growth and Tithe Increase From 1960 to 1972

Year	Membership	% Growth	Tithe	% Increase
1960	43,700	—	\$ 3,696,030.17	—
1961	45,991	5.2	3,692,656.20	(.09)
1962	47,456	3.1	3,972,621.17	7.58
1963	50,810	7.0	4,308,098.32	8.44
1964	53,847	5.9	4,728,214.56	9.75
1965	57,202	6.2	5,127,939.61	8.45
1966	60,052	4.9	6,030,849.69	17.61
1967	62,732	4.4	6,697,850.45	11.06
1968	66,399	5.8	7,617,150.21	13.73
1969	70,003	5.4	8,587,804.26	12.74
1970	73,759	5.3	9,516,428.68	10.81
1971	77,517	5.1	10,587,703.23	11.26
1972	82,432	6.3	12,192,587.21	15.16

#### SUMMARY:

12-yr. membership growth	38,732
% growth 1972 over 1960	88.6
12-yr. tithe increase	\$8,496,556.04
% increase 1972 over 1960	229.9

It is interesting to note that from the North American Regional membership, including both that in Regional conferences and in those unions where there are no such organizations, the tithe exceeds that received from eight of the world divisions. For the year 1973 it was as follows:

Division	1973 Tithe
Euro-Africa	\$11,877,000
Australasian	11,410,000
Inter-America	9,770,000
South America	7,122,000
Northern Europe-	
West Africa	6,286,000
Trans-Africa	3,096,000

Afro-Mideast	898,000
Southern Asia	291,000
Regional Churches	13,611,000

Under the Lord's blessing, black membership has grown from 17,000 in 1944 to some 90,000 at present. The challenge of evangelizing the 25 million black Americans is before us.

Still we must not rest. We must labor on until "the Lord shows us a better way." With gratitude for past blessings we must press forward the work of the future with faith and steady persistence.

W. W. FORDHAM  
Associate Secretary  
Regional Department

### Holding Our New Members

WHEN a survey was taken among persons who had accepted the teachings of the church at one time but had later left the faith, it was found that very few left because of doctrines. They still believed we teach the truth, but the majority (so they say) had left because they had not felt fully accepted by the Adventists they found already in the church. This is a terrible indictment.

Is it true that when newly baptized persons have come in, often they have not been integrated into the church fellowship so that they have felt accepted, welcomed, and wanted? Did they feel they were under critical observation? Remember, they have made the greatest decision of their lives and may be unsure as to whether or not it was a wise one. This is a human trait. When important decisions are made we are prone to wonder whether the best thing was done, and are anxious for reassurance from others that it was.

Now it is a fact that when one is baptized into the Seventh-day Adventist Church, the word immediately goes abroad and members from the former church, relatives and friends, become alarmed and begin to upbraid the newly baptized one. This is a difficult experience, and many get shaky. If ever they needed reassurance from their new brothers and sisters, it is now. They need to be made to feel welcome, needed, and a part of the congregation. The older believers must also not expect maturity in the faith from them, in that they are just babes. You can transplant a tree to a new hole in one day, but it takes many days for it to be rooted so it can grow. Too often we

manifest great zeal in bringing a person to a decision, but afterwards leave him to find food and pasture as best he can. But grievous wolves are always watching for the weak sheep, ever ready to ensnare and to devour.

It has been said that "guarding the back door of the church is as essential as making attractive the front door." One of the best ways to establish new members is to put them to work for others at once so that their first love will not die but rather increase with fervor. We must integrate them into the mainstream of the church activities as soon as possible.

It has been found that for every five persons accepted into our churches by baptism, we are disfellowshipping two persons. This is a poor record and I am sure heaven is disappointed. If the angels rejoice over every soul that repents, surely they must weep over every one that loses his way.

So the question for each Seventh-day Adventist to ask himself is, "Am I accepting my responsibility as my brother's keeper?" At the judgment seat, what will the one who left the faith have to say about your relationship to him?

H. D. SINGLETON  
Secretary  
Regional Department



### Workers in Transition

THE following changes in positions of workers during recent months are:

George Rainey from the Detroit Center, Lake Region Conference, is the new pastor of University church in Los Angeles.

Oswald Gordon from Brooklyn, New York, Northeastern Conference, now serves Tamarind Avenue church in Compton, California.

Pastor Richard Hodnet, new intern graduate of La Sierra Campus, Loma Linda University, now pastoring Barstow company, Barstow, California.

Pastor Linton G. Manier, graduate student from Andrews University, now serves Santa Ana, Shelton Street church.

Pastor James Kyle is serving as in-