SECTION 2: TELLING THE STORY

About Regional Conferences

“For who has despised the day of small things?”
Zechariah 4:10 (NKJV)

This period (1945-1997) marks the 50th anniversary since the beginning of Regional Conferences (1945-47). The purpose of Regional Conferences was to enhance the opportunities of the Church to spread the Gospel and nurture believers among Black people in the United States. It was a bold move on the part of the Church to try this new form of governance. Prior to Regional Conferences it was clear that the system in operation for work among Black people wasn’t working—the Church had to do something! God has blessed the Regional Conference system, and it succeeded beyond the expectations of most of the leaders who helped to initiate it. Dramatic progress has characterized the Black work since the introduction of Regional Conferences. Progress has been made in every area of ministry—evangelism, training, leadership, role modeling, and participation in church governance at all levels. The writings in this section emphasize some of the dynamics that have gone into the development and progress of Regional Conferences.

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Fifty years ago World War II ended. The United Nations was formed. And a sea of change took place in the Adventist Church in North America. That year the church voted to organize regional conferences.

This year represents, therefore, a special time of celebration for Adventists in North America, heralding as it does the fiftieth anniversary of that historic development. It is historic—and pivotal—because it established a new area of governance in the Adventist Church. As intended, regional conferences have dramatically expanded the Adventist work among black people in the United States. Membership in these conferences is open to all people, and the term regional merely describes the distinct geographic territories they cover.

During the past 50 years these conferences have positively changed the face of Adventism, making a notable contribution to every facet of the church’s ministry, and engendering a new sense of identity, participation, and spiritual ownership among constituent members. As we reflect on how God has blessed the Black work in the United States through this means, His providence confronts us on every hand.

Formed to achieve greater soul-winning results among Black Adventists in a “shorter space of time than would be achieved under the previously existing organization,” regional conferences have brought about the following results, among others, in the Black sectors of the church:

- Dramatic increases in evangelistic outreach.
- New opportunities for training and experience in ministry.
- Increased opportunities for leadership, service, and participation in church governance.
- Normal eligibility for elected offices, and ex officio representation on boards, councils, and committees.

Membership in Black conferences is now approaching a quarter million, tithe is more than $90 million, and workers trained in regional conferences have made an inestimable contribution to the world church by serving at every level of the denomination, in North America and around the world.

Innovative programs and outreach plans of regional conferences annually add vitality and strength to the world church program (see sidebar “Looking to the Future”). Regional presidents and leaders have demonstrated administrative acumen that has matched, and in many cases surpassed, that considered to be the norm in the general church. Further, through regular councils, meetings, and boards, there have been ongoing network-

The Way Things Were

The decade of the 1940s was a turbulent one for the United States. Change and conflict were constants. The country was still recovering from the Great Depression. Morale was low. And, perhaps most traumatic, the nation was struggling in the aftermath of the bombing of Pearl Harbor and the entrance of
the United States into World War II.

All this was compounded by unrelenting racial tension in the nation. The Roosevelt presidential order, issued in 1941, began to address the problem. "There shall be no discrimination," it said, "in the employ-
ment of workers in defense industries or government because of race, creed, color, or national origin."

Conditions in the Adventist Church, however, were not reflective of the government position. White Adventist congrega-
tions and administrative leadership positions were rarely accessible to Blacks prior to the 1940s. The first Black person to work at the General Conference was the director of the Negro Department. Neither he nor Black visitors to the General Con-
ference were permitted to eat in the Review and Herald cafeterias (the eating place for the General Conference workers at the time). Segregation was the norm for the first half of the 1900s. Across the United States the denomination's schools and institutions did not yet have an equitable admissions policy.4

From the late 1800s, when Charles Kinsey, the first Black minister to be ordained, was faced with segregation on the day of his ordination, the church struggled with what to do about race relations between Blacks and Whites.5 Educator and author A. W. Spalding recorded that in 1890, R. M. Kilgore, the first denomina-
tionally assigned director of the Adventist work in the South, "advocated the separa-
tion of white and colored churches" to the church leadership; and "in the end this view prevailed."6

As the situation between Whites and Blacks went from bad to worse. Ellen White was forced to confront the church about its unjust treatment of Black people in general and Black Adventists in particular.7 Following the turn of the century, though the overwhelming majority of Black Adventists remained faithful to Adventism, a number of prominent Black Adventist ministers and laypersons gave up their affiliation with the Adventist Church because of its treatment of Blacks.8 Conditions deteriorated as the confrontations between Whites and Blacks became more frequent, resulting in Black (and some White) Adventists speaking out against the discriminatory practices of the church through the printed page, through demonstrations, and through lay organizations.

An event that has come to be known as the Byard incident personified the tragic conditions in the church and the frustration and disillusioned mood of Black Adventist believers. Perhaps more than any other, this incident highlighted the need for a change in the church’s attitude toward race relations and the need for a new way of administering the Black work.

Shortly before the 1944 Spring Council, in which the decision was made to establish regional conferences, Lucy Byard, a fair-skinned Black female who was a long-time member of the Brooklyn Seventh-day Adventist Church, was visiting relatives in the Washington, D.C. area. She became seriously ill and was taken to the nearby Washington Adventist Hospital, then a segregated facility. When the staff realized that Lucy Byard was a Negro, they refused to treat her and discharged her from the hospital. Before she could receive treat-
ment at the Freedmen's Hospital across town, her condition worsened, and she died. The effect of this incident was profoundly disturbing to Black Adventists. Numerous solutions were proposed—
including total integration. But none were accepted as feasible by denominational leadership.9

Grieving but resolute. Black ministers and laypersons pressed church leadership for immediate redress. Emotions were
stirred. The mood was tense, resulting in an uneasy standoff. It was a dark and tenebrous period in the history of Adventism. Resolution was badly needed.9

A Time for Action

In the wake of the racial tensions, an apprehensive and troubled group of workers convened at the Stevens Hotel in Chicago on Saturday evening, April 8, 1944. These premeetings of the Spring Council of the General Conference were specifically called to discuss the advisability of the organization of regional conferences. The stakes were
high. The reputation and direction of the church were on the line. The

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12 [1372] H.D. Singleton, one of only two of the original Regional presidents still alive today.
Regional conferences have positively changed the face of Adventism, and made notable contributions to every facet of the church’s ministry.

Conference, delayed the discussions until he could go and talk with the president.11 Peters impressed McElhaney with the need to speak to the issue one way or another. Clearly the dilemma would not be resolved unless and until the General Conference president articulated his position. Peters insisted that if the crisis wasn’t addressed, he didn’t know how he and McElhaney could ever face the colored constituency again. The problems would not just go away.

Upon arriving at the meeting, McElhaney started the discussion by recounting the evolution of the Black conference concept. He indicated that much thought and discussion had been given to the topic not only on an administrative but also on a pastoral and lay level among Whites and Blacks. He further spoke of his keen concern for Blacks as a people and how he had developed a “deep interest in their welfare.”

Rejoicing over the progress of the Black work in the Adventist Church, McElhaney spoke of his belief that now was the time to “lay wise and adequate plans” for the development of work among Blacks. “Self-interest ought to be laid aside,” he commented, as he invited discussion. Concluding his remarks, McElhaney added: “I have known conferences to be organized with only 800 members which have proved to be successful.”11

During the ensuing discussion, White and Black leaders openly expressed their views. William A. Spicer, former missionary and editor, and a former president of the General Conference, spoke in favor of the organization of Black conferences. “In Europe,” he said, “we have German conferences, French conferences, Swedish and Polish conferences; why not Black conferences?”12 Jay J. Nethery, president of the Lake Union Conference and later a vice president of the General Conference, gave an inspirational presentation and expressed strong support for Black conferences. He highlighted his remarks with the thought that he had confidence in the Black leaders; that just as it had worked when they had formed conferences some years earlier, so it could work now. Most important, by having conferences they would “be able to save more souls in their territory.”13 This statement was particularly meaningful in that it focused on the major objectives for forming Black conferences—the saving of souls and the building up of the work of God.

Of the several Black persons who spoke, Peters sought to direct attention to the big picture of the work in the future. He reminisced that Blacks had been patient and had not forced the issue of Black conferences, even though they had raised the issue some years earlier. But he was quick to add that as invited guests of the premeetings, they were ready to support the recommendation, to move beyond the “status quo” “avoid confusion” and accept “some organization [structure] that will give us a future.”14

F. L. Peterson, another prominent Black minister, forcefully spoke in support of Black conferences. He felt it was “one of the most outstanding moves that [has] ever been made for us” and that it would “have a wholesome effect on all our people throughout North America.” He indicated further that Black conferences would inspire leadership by giving “the young people courage and something to look forward to in the denomination.” This, he added, would be a means of helping to finish the work.15

As the discussion progressed there was a coalescing of views, and a consensus began to emerge. Of the 22 speakers on record, 17 spoke in favor of Black conferences, three spoke against it, and two asked questions of clarification. The overwhelming majority of leaders present, White and Black, voiced their support of Black conferences. Those who did not favor the idea ended by saying they would support “whatever organization is selected.”16

Of all the speeches made, the most influential was that by the General Conference president on the second day of the meetings. Not only did McElhaney support the wisdom of Black conferences, but he also went on to affirm the capabilities of Black leadership, expressing confidence in them as leaders. “To say I could be a pastor of a thousand members, but couldn’t direct a thousand members if they were divided into conferences seems to me to be inconsistent in reasoning,” he said.

Sensitive to the diverse views concerning Black conferences, McElhaney expressed his intent both to help Blacks take leadership responsibilities and preserve unity. “If I thought anybody was proposing a conference organization that would drive a wedge between the races I would oppose it. I do feel anxious for us to develop every resource. . . . We must keep together and maintain the spirit of counsel and helpfulness.” He reminded the meeting that resistance to new ideas was something that had been experienced before, and that during the early days of the Adventist Church when the denomination “first organized churches [and conferences] people looked upon it as dangerous . . . [and] wrong.”17

The Enabling Action

A fter the premeetings, the discussion, and the debate, the moment came. Walter W. Fordham, retired regional conference president and former director of the General Conference Office of Regional Affairs, attended the meeting and later
summarized the event: "Finally the inevitable happened. . . . The discussion finally came to a head. Pros and cons were examined. There were heated discussions. And in the end there was a vote to establish Regional conferences." 20

After the recommendation was voted in the premeeting, the action was passed on to the Spring Council in session the next day. Though Blacks (as invited, nonvoting guests) did not participate in the vote on the pending recommendation, the records indicate that the "recommendations were submitted to the delegations at the April 1944 Spring Council and were unanimously adopted." Thus, it is recorded:

| Lake Region (1945—J. G. Dasset, president). |
| Northeastern (1945—L. H. Bland, president). |
| South Atlantic (1946—H. D. Singleton, president; in 1981 South Atlantic divided into South Atlantic Conference—R. B. Hairston, president; and Southeastern Conference—J. A. Edgecombe, president). |
| South Central (1946—H. R. Murphy, president). |
| Southwest Region (1947—W. W. Fordham, president). |

To date, the nine regional conferences, located in six of the nine unions of the NAD, cover 69 of the 50 states. 22 H. D. Singleton and W. W. Fordham, both retired, were the only two of the original presidents alive. At the time of the forming of regional conferences, the West Coast territory, which included the Pacific Union Conference and the North Pacific Union Conference, chose to administer the Black work through Regional Affairs offices. 23 Bermuda Missions, a Black-administered field, was officially organized as a conference in 1984.

The Black work has made quantum leaps since the establishment of Regional conferences. The membership increased from 17,000 in 1944 to 23,000 in 1950, to 37,000 in 1960, to 70,000 in 1970, to 193,000 in 1990, and to more than 220,000 in 1995. In 1994 Black Adventists constituted 9 percent of the membership in the U.S. By 1977 it was 20 percent; then 23 percent in 1985; and more than 25 percent in 1995. In 1944 the tithe from the Black constituency was $511,000. It grew to $18 million in 1977, $40 million in 1984, $60 million in 1990, and to more than $90 million in 1995. Currently, tithes returns from regional conferences exceed the annual tithes returns of every world division, except the North American Division. 24

As we think of the progress as well as of the remaining challenges let us remember the words of J. L. McElhaney:

"The thing for us to do is to get this work finished just as soon as we can and go to our eternal home where these racial conditions do not exist. . . . It will be a glorious thing when we can go to our eternal home. We will forget all the things that have troubled us in this world." 25

There are nine such conferences in the North American Division that have a largely African-American leadership and constituency. Most of them were organized between 1945 and 1947. The terms regional conference and Black conferences are used interchangeably in this article. Each regional conference is organized within the existing administrative structure of a union conference and covers not merely one portion of the union area, but generally all the Black churches in the whole region of the union. The Pacific and North Pacific unions currently have no regional conferences, but instead have union and conference regional departments that serve in an advisory capacity for the Black constituency in their areas.

WHEREAS, The present development of the work among the colored people in North America has resulted, under the signal blessing of God, in the establishment of some 253 churches with some 17,000 members and WHEREAS, It appears that the different plans of organization for our colored membership would bring further great advance in soul-winning endeavors; therefore

WE RECOMMEND. That in unions where the colored constituency is considered by the union conference committee to be sufficiently large, and where the financial income and territory warrant, colored conferences be organized.

Organizing Regional Conferences

Thus, regional conferences came to be. Following the enabling action of the General Conference, the unions quickly scheduled and convened constituency meetings across the country for the organization of regional conferences. In rapid succession regional conferences were formed:

- Central States (1947—T. M. Rowe, president).
- Lake Region (1945—J. G. Dasset, president).
- South Atlantic (1946—H. D. Singleton, president; in 1981 South Atlantic divided into South Atlantic Conference—R. B. Hairston, president; and Southeastern Conference—J. A. Edgecombe, president).
- South Central (1946—H. R. Murphy, president).
- Southwest Region (1947—W. W. Fordham, president).

Today there are nine such conferences in the North American Division that have a largely African-American leadership and constituency. Most of them were organized between 1945 and 1947. The terms regional conference and Black conferences are used interchangeably in this article. Each regional conference is organized within the existing administrative structure of a union conference and covers not merely one portion of the union area, but generally all the Black churches in the whole region of the union. The Pacific and North Pacific unions currently have no regional conferences, but instead have union and conference regional departments that serve in an advisory capacity for the Black constituency in their areas. In Canada there are churches that are predominantly White, churches that are predominantly Black, and churches that are fully integrated—but no separate conferences. In Romans most of the churches have a majority of Black members and the current president is Black. (See SDA Encyclopedia [1976], p. 191.)

1 See, for example, D. W. Baker, The Unknown Prophet (1987); Make Us One (1995). (The latter has a chapter by Roy Branson entitled "Professional Race-Coalition" that traces the roots of the different ethnic groups that make up the SDA Church and includes a section on Black Adventists: W. W. Fordham, Rigorous Rebel, an Autobiography (1996); Ronald Gregory, Ellen G. White, and Black Adventists (1970) and Mission to Black America (1971); Jacob Josten, Jews in the East (1951); L. B. Reynolds, We Have Tomorrow (1984); Calvin B. Rock, They Without Us Shall Not Be Made Perfect: in Go On! Vital Messages for Today's Children (1979); R. W. Stangard, Light Bearers to the Remnant (1979); Ellen G. White, The Southern Work (1966 reprint): A Sun Gives Light, Seventy-day Adventist Heritage (a teacher's resource guide); produced by the Office of Education, Southern Union Conference, 1979; see especially for a wealth of material on the Black work and the events surrounding the establishment of regional conferences.

2 Unless otherwise noted, the quotations referred to in this article are taken from the minutes of the General Conference Spring Council meeting (hereafter: meeting) [Apr. 14-16, 1944] and the Spring Council minutes of the General Conference of SDA (Apr. 10, 1944).

14 (1974) W. W. Fordham, one of the two original Regional presidents still alive.
Future

Regional conference presidents share their vision for ministry

**My vision for ministry is:**

"To integrate the wellness concept into all aspects of ministry in my conference—spiritual, social, physical, and mental. Thus we can equip our constituents to make a greater difference in their communities."

Alvin M. Kibble, Allegheny East Conference (original membership: 6,445; current: 24,396)

"To facilitate a massive conference-wide sense of urgency on the part of pastors, administrators, and laypersons as we approach the year 2000— Ukraine, together to spread the gospel and to prepare for the coming of Christ."

Wesley Lewis, Allegheny West Conference (original membership: 4,624; current: 11,206)

To educate every member as to the soul-winning benefits of developing a Christlike character. A plan to help accomplish this goal is Project 100 for 1, by which every member is personally challenged to get involved in a specific ministry of the church."

J. Andrew Johnson II, Central States Conference (original membership: 798; current: 8,700)

"To help people in the Black community—inside and outside of the church—to realize the tremendous potential of adventism to address and provoke solutions for the challenges facing them. In so doing, we help people prepare for the temporal as well as the eternal."

Norman K. Miles, Lake Region Conference (original membership: 2,500; current: 2,171)

"To use our resources as one of the largest conferences to assist other regional conferences in such projects as Ebony Evangelism, with the aim of spreading the three angels' messages to urban centers and training workers and educators to train others."

Stennett H. Brooks, Northeastern Conference (original membership: 2,208; current: 29,561)

"Besides the charge to evangelize and keep the unity of the faith, there remains the challenge to do something to minister to the Black male—not only in regard to his future destiny but also for the sake of his self-esteem and self-worth in this present life."

Ralph P. Peay, South Atlantic Conference (original membership: 3,523; current: 25,122)

"To constantly develop creative and innovative forms of ministry to infuse the work of God, and to keep the history and vitality of the Black work alive so that it will be a means of inspiration and motivation for future generations."

Joseph W. McCoy, South Central Conference (original membership: 2,600; current: 24,004)

"To focus on the mission of the church in our schools, our churches, and in everything we do. Evangelism should be the golden strand, clearly seen as our reason for existence and the purpose of our being."

Ray R. Brown, Southeastern Conference (original membership: 8,511; current: 21,420)

"To dynamically multiply members, churches, and resources by the year 2000 that we may have to divide the conference in order to adequately administer the work. We want explosive church growth to lead to explosive conference growth and expansion."

Robert L. Lister, Southwest Region Conference (original membership: 1,939; current: 15,821)
EVENTS LEADING TO THE ESTABLISHMENT OF REGIONAL CONFERENCES

The following 15 events were catalysts that directly or indirectly provided impetus for the establishment of Regional conferences. The threads running through these incidents were a deep desire for evangelistic empowerment, Christian fairness, and administrative parity:

1889—The Kinny Proposal
Charles M. Kinny, when faced with segregation on the day of his ordination at the Nashville campmeeting, first proposed the idea of Regional conferences.

1890—The Kilgore Policy
Segregation policy proposed by Robert M. Kilgore is accepted by the General Conference and facilitates segregation in majority of White SDA Churches until the 1950s.

1891—The Prophetic Challenge
Ellen White delivered a historic message at General Conference session relative to how the SDA Church should relate to Blacks and the race question.

1909—The Shaee Stand-off
Lewis C. Shaee, prominent minister, appeals to the leadership for integration and parity in the Church. He leaves the Church after repeated rejections and other unfortunate events.

1910—The Negro Department
Arthur G. Daniells, president of the General Conference, establishes the North American Negro Department. Racial sensitivities are aroused when first three leaders are White.

1918—The Black Director
William H. Green, attorney and minister, is appointed the first Black to lead the Negro Department and the first Black in the General Conference.

1920s and 1930s—The Unfortunate Schisms
Several leading Black ministers leave the Church primarily because of racial policies toward Blacks. Most notably was James K. Humphrey, John W. Mann and M. G. Nunez.

1926—The “No Authority” Policy
Church takes action to allow Black ministers to be appointed as leaders of Black union work. Blacks jolted by clause “[Black] union [leader] has no administrative authority.”

1929/30 The Formal Resolution
At General Conference council Black leaders presented a formal resolution for Black conferences to facilitate better development of churches, schools and institutions. A committee is appointed (11 Whites; five Blacks) to study advisability/make recommendation. After recommendation, request is categorically denied. Blacks told to drop issue.

1932—The Oakwood Strike
Students implemented a campus-wide strike. General Conference eventually agrees to all points. J. E. Moran, became the first Black President of Oakwood College.

1937—The Barnett Confrontation
Charles Barnett, Black SDA publisher of the Associated Negro Press publicizes discriminatory practices of the SDA churches, schools, and institutions.

1943—The Byard Incident
Lucy Byard dies as a result of being refused treatment at the Washington Adventist Hospital. There is widespread other inhumane and destructive racial practices of Church.

1943—The Layperson’s Organization
Group of Washington, D.C. laypersons form National Association for the Advancement for Worldwide Work Among Seventh-day Adventists to address racial wrongs and equity.

1944—The Freedom Appeal
Lay person and ministers draft and circulate protest document addressing the Church entitled “Shall the Four Freedoms Function Among the Seventh-day Adventists?”

1944—The Regional Decision
1 1 McPherson, General Conference president, calls Spring Council Pre-Meetings to discuss and vote on recommendation for Regional Conferences. Recommendation voted.

Delbert W. Baker, PhD. 1995
C. M. KINNEY'S STATEMENT ON THE CONCEPT OF REGIONAL CONFERENCES
October 2, 1889   SDA Campground   Nashville, TN,

Elder R. M. Kilgore: Now, Bro. Kinney, we are ready for your statement.

Elder C. M. Kinney: It is probable that my ideas may be a little different from what has been expressed by some. But they are mere suggestions, and I would be extremely glad if there were no necessity to carry them out.

In the first place, a separation of the colored people from the white people is a great sacrifice upon our part; we lose the blessing of learning the truth—I have reference especially to general meetings. The colored people as a class are in need—

* * *

Elder R. M. Kilgore: What kind of separation do you refer to?

Elder C. M. Kinney: I refer to the separation in the general meeting; that is, for them to have a different campmeeting. It would be a great sacrifice upon the part of my people to miss the information that these general meetings would give them; and another thing, it seems to me that a separation in the general meetings would have a tendency to destroy the unity of the Third Angel's message. Now, then, this question to me is one of great embarrassment and humiliation, and not only to me, but to my people also.

There are four thoughts that suggest themselves to mind that should be considered in the solution of this question: the first is that the course that shall be taken shall be pleasing to God; second, that a position will be taken that will not compromise the denomination; third, that the position that is to be taken will be to the best interest of the cause; fourth, that a position will be taken that will commend itself to the good judgment of the colored people, that they may not be driven from the truth by our position on this question. Now, these are questions that seem to me should be considered in the solution of this matter, I am glad to state first that the Third Angel's message has the power in it to eliminate or remove this race prejudice upon the part of those who get hold of the truth.

* * *

Elder R. M. Kilgore: That is clearly demonstrated, at least to a great extent, as I learned on the camp-ground here.

Elder C. M. Kinney: Second, that the Third Angel's message is to go to all nations of people; that it cannot take hold of them if there is some obstacle in the way, and that the truth of the Third Angel's message will enable us to remove that obstacle. The colored-line question is an obstacle; in other words, the very presence of the colored people in church relations and in our general meetings is an obstacle, is a barrier that hinders the progress of the Third Angel's message from reaching many of the white people.

Now, I wish to present twelve propositions, which, to my mind, would be a complete or perfect solution to the difficulty:

(1) A frank understanding between the two races on all questions affecting each. This would avoid much trouble that would otherwise occur.

(2) That colored laborers shall have no special desire to labor among white people, except an occasional invitation where to accept would cause no trouble.
That the colored brethren do not interfere with the outside interest among the white people; the minister in charge of such work to be judge of such interference.

Where the two races cannot meet together without limitation in the church, it is better to separate.

That missions be established among them, thus raising up separate churches. White laborers giving their time exclusively to this work.

I realize the difficulty of white laborers attempting to labor for both classes in the South, for if they labor for the colored people they will lose their influence among the white people, but in laboring among the colored people exclusively that difficulty is obviated.

That in view of the outside feeling on the race question, and the hindrance it makes in accomplishing the work desired among the whites, the attendance of the colored brethren at the general meetings should not be encouraged, yet not positively forbidden. If they do attend let there be a private, mutual understanding as to the position they should assume on every phase of the meeting.

I would say in this connection that in my judgment a separate meeting for the colored people to be held in connection with the general meetings, or a clear-cut distinction, by having them occupy the back seats, etc., would not meet with as much favor from my people as a total separation. I am willing, however, to abide by whatever the General Conference may recommend in the matter, and advise my people to do the same.

In those churches where there are two or more let them remain until an effort can be made to raise up a church among them; then have them to unite with it.

Until there is enough to form a conference of colored people, let the colored churches, companies or individuals pay their tithes and other contributions to the regular state officers, and be considered a part of the state conference.

That the General Conference do what it can in educating worthy colored laborers to engage in various branches of the work among them, when such can be found.

That Christian feeling between the two races be zealously inculcated everywhere, so that the cause of separation may not be because of the existence of prejudice within, but because of those on the outside whom you hope to reach.

That when colored conferences are formed they bear the same relation to the General Conference that white conferences do.

That these principles be applied only where this prejudice exists to the injury of the cause.

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SDA General Conference Archives, Silver Spring, MD
SHALL THE FOUR FREEDOMS FUNCTION AMONG SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTISTS?

Those who slight a brother because of his color are slighting Jesus. *Southern Work*, p. 9.


II. Estimate of the colored people as being

   A. Brethren. *Southern Work*, p. 4.

   B. Men capable of attaining eternal life as the white man. Ibid., p. 27.

   C. Travelers to the same heaven to sit down at the same table as the whites. Ibid., p. 10.

   D. Worshipers of the same God as the whites. Ibid., p. 6.


IV. Duty of the white Adventists

   A. To repair as far as in their power past injury done to the colored people, 7:230.

   B. To show "exact and impartial" justice to the Negro race.

   C. To increase the force of colored workers. T 9:207.

   D. To throw their influence against the customs and practices of the world. *Southern Work*, 2:24

V. Solution: the love of Jesus a "dissipater of hereditary and cultivated prejudices. Ibid., p. 14.

THE OBSERVATIONS OF THE COMMITTEE FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF WORLD-WIDE WORK AMONG COLORED SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTISTS

THESIS: The present policy of the white Adventists in responsible positions will not stand the acid test of the Judgment

I. The policy in the educational and medical work is discriminatory and un-Christ-like.

   A. Colored people are not admitted generally to our institutions as patients, students, and nurses.
1. The Washington Sanitarium refuses to admit colored people: The Byard case, Gaither case, the Clark case.

2. Colored girls are denied admittance to the Washington Sanitarium School of Nursing and some other schools open to the whites. As a result, they are forced to travel long distances to such schools as will accept them or undergo inconveniences at the risk of their souls at non-Adventist schools.

B. No academies like the Shenandoah Academy are available in the East for our colored youth.

C. Academies that might accept colored students are not easily accessible.

D. There is no standard satisfactory creditable academy for our colored youth.

E. A notorious example of injustice was the policy of Emmanuel Missionary College.

1. Colored students were assigned to the rear seat during worship at chapel.

2. Colored students were subjected to an unwarranted and humiliating form of segregation in having to wait for their meals until there might be a "quota" of colored students to fill a table.

F. The "quota" Policy of our institutions of higher learning with its limitations of equal opportunities for our colored youth to obtain a Christian education is indefensible.

G. There is inadequate supervision of our educational work by those who should be interested

H. In contrast to the policy of the Adventists, many non-Adventist institutions admit colored applicants.

1. A SDA colored girl is pursuing nursing at Bellevue in New York City with no discrimination.

2. Catholic University accepts colored students.

I. There are no Negroes so far as we know on staffs of Adventist institutions. In contrast:

1. City College of New York City employs a full-time Negro psychologist who is a director of the Evening School.

2. Hunter College of New York City employs a full-time Negro professor.

3. The University of Chicago employs at least five full-time Negro professors as well as visiting professors.

J. There is a policy of evasion and futile appeasement relative to our work.

1. It is said, for example, that it is against public policy to have Negro and white patients in the Washington Sanitarium.

2. It is said that colored patients would be objectionable to white patients, especially those from the Southern States.

3. Non-Adventist institutions in Maryland use no such subterfuges.
   a. John Hopkins Hospital in Maryland accepts Negro patients.
   b. Sandy Spring Hospital in Maryland accepts Negro patients.

II. The policy in the administrative sphere is discriminatory and un-Christlike.

A. Negroes do not have adequate representation on committees at all levels—local, union, and general conferences.

1. The Potomac Conference Legal Association (as well as the Union and General Associations) has no representation for the 16,000 colored constituents of Seventh-day Adventists.

2. Deeds of churches and other properties are held by the Conference Legal Associations; deeds to institutions occupied by colored Adventists; yet no colored Adventist is a member of these associations.

3. Appropriations made by many committees are proportionally inadequate to the needs of the colored work.

4. There is not even one General Conference office filled by a colored person.

5. Even the General Conference stationery (there may be another type) "unwittingly shows discrimination in the caption about the Colored Department and its Secretary is shunted down to the bottom of the letterhead and to the left. "Left" and "bottom" often have sinister connotations.

6. The fact that there is a colored constituency should entitle it to at least one general conference administrative officer and colored supervisory officers with proper office personnel, equipment, and power.

7. The financial contributions of the colored constituency warrants the carrying out of the statement under "6" above.
8. The present disinterestedness on the part of the General Conference Committee as a unit calls for the presence of a General Conference officer who can sympathize with the plight of 16,000 colored Adventists.

B. Funds are allocated so that monies from the colored constituency finance institutions where we derive no direct financial and economic benefits, in other words, our money is not used enough for our advancement.

1. There is an over-emphasis and dramatization of "deficits" in the colored work.

2. The reports of those continual deficits in the colored work are too vague and lacking in detailed information for unqualified acceptance on the part of the colored laity.

C. We have no representative connected with the disbursement of funds from the colored constituency.

D. The office of the Secretary of the Colored Department does not carry with it enough administrative authority, jurisdiction, and equipment. In the eyes of the laity, it seems to be in matters pertaining to the impartial progress of the colored group powerless to function adequately.

E. There is no definite, detailed report of Negro funds and their disbursement.

1. The colored people know nothing of the business organization, loss, profits, and expenses connected with the Message Magazine.

2. There are no colored editor, circulation manager, and business manager of the only Adventist periodical devoted exclusively to the interest of the 13,000,000 colored people in the United States.

F. The personnel in the administration of the colored work is not proportionate to the needs, demands, and interest of such work. For example, the colored work at large consists of evangelizing, teaching, and selling books.

III. The policy in the field of employment is unfair, partial and un-Christlike.

A. Negroes are not employed asstenographers in all divisions of work (local, union, and general), printers, linotype setters, shipping clerks, camp directors, secretaries over such departments as Missionary Volunteer Department, Army, etc., editors and members of editorial staffs.

B. Negroes are not encouraged to find employment in the "work."

IV. The policy in spiritual matters is too one-sided and narrow.

A. Conference officials (general, union, and local) neglect to lay plans for the improvement of
the colored Adventists as a group.

B. Conference officials do not initiate, encourage, and foster dignified programs for the up-life of the colored constituency.

C. Conference officials visiting colored churches on the Sabbath preach sermons fostering conference objectives, e.g., Harvest Ingathering, Sabbath School, Big Week, etc.

D. Conference officials foster only institutes which have to do with bringing in money to the general treasury.

1. Colporteurs enrich the treasury. (We admit they help to save souls).

2. Lay workers' institutes emphasize the bringing in of souls, but these souls will bring in more tithes, more Harvest Ingathering funds, etc.

E. No dignified programs are offered, suggested, encouraged, emphasized for the improvement of our only sanitarium and college, or for the building of new academies, sanitariums, or colleges.

F. There are according to our knowledge no recreational camps for our many boys and girls.

G. White and colored do not worship together, although:

1. The Bahais worship together.

2. The Friends have a common meeting place.

H Since white and colored eat without friction daily in the cafeterias of the Library of Congress, Union Station, National Art Gallery, Interior Department, and other government buildings, it is illegal to segregate the Secretary of the Colored Department for his meals.

V. These unfair practices embarrass the colored laity, form a definite obstacle to the spread of the message among colored people in the highways and byways, and also if we may paraphrase 2 Samuel 12:14 give occasion to the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme.

Recommendations:

Educational and Medical

1. That Seventh-day Adventist sanitariums, hospitals, and educational institutions discontinue the unchristian policy of discrimination towards colored people.

2. That the "quota" policy of our institutions of higher learning be discontinued.
3. That a standard satisfactory academy be opened for our colored youth.

4. That qualified colored people be given opportunity to serve on faculties of our institutions of learning.

Administrative and Supervisory

1. That colored people be given adequate representation on committees, at all levels--local, union, and general.

2. That adequate appropriations be made to meet the demands and needs of the colored people.

3. That at least one General Conference Office be filled by a colored person.

4. That funds from the colored constituency be allocated so that the colored people may derive direct financial and economic benefit.

5. That colored people be appointed to supervise various phases of the work.

6. That conference officials encourage our ministers and workers to be frank in declaring the needs of their own people. Otherwise, those who should be like Elijah, Esther, and Moses will become craven cowards.

7. That the office of the Secretary of the Colored Department be given administrative authority, jurisdiction, and equipment.

8. That the colored people be given detailed reports of the colored funds and their disbursement.

9. That there be appointed a colored editor of the Message Magazine, with associate editors of either group, and a business manager so the colored people can be informed of the profits or losses of this magazine.

Occupational

1. That the number of colored people employed by the conferences be determined by some fixed ratio in all types of positions.

2. That colored secretaries be appointed to foster the educational, social, and welfare work in all departments.

3. That colored people be appointed as editors and on editorial staffs of Adventist periodicals.
Spiritual

1. That there be no intimidations of our colored clergymen and workers supported by the conferences when they attempt to better the conditions of their brethren.

2. That the conference officials encourage our ministers and workers to be frank in declaring the needs of their own people. Otherwise, those who should be like Elijah, Esther, and Moses will be mere sycophants and craven cowards.

3. That conference officials be elected who through their knowledge of and interest in colored people can foster programs in their behalf.

4. That campaigns for colored work be given the prominence and dignity that are given to all other phases of the work.

5. That new and adequate academies and educational institutions of higher learning be erected for the Christian education of colored youth.

Copyright April, 1944

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Shall the Four Freedoms Function Among Seventh-Day Adventists?

Angels in Ebony
Justiss, Jacob
G. E. PETERS' STATEMENT ON ORGANIZATION OF NEGRO CONFERENCES

I am not in favor of maintaining a status quo form of organization. I haven't got wisdom enough to decide while on the floor the kind of organization that we should have. Any one person's ability is not sufficient to decide this matter. I have studied my people. I wrote the General Conference and mentioned that we should come with something definite in mind so that we could avoid confusion. I did this because I know my people from infancy. We ought to decide on a policy that spells progress and give it to our friends. This is a serious matter. I don't believe that this is a time for office seeking. The salvation of the 13,000,000 colored souls in the United States is at stake.

In 1930 I listened to more speeches against the progress of the colored people than we have had today. Fortunately the speakers today are sincere. We have confidence in them. In 1930 several of the men who fought against the advanced step of the colored work are not in the work today. Those same men were not bringing in souls. They were doing a very small work. They were not in touch with the Negro to a great extent. They thought if they would say something to the white folk, they would then be sure of a job for life. Everyone is present today, of those who stood for progress in 1930.

I am not a radical. I am not an agitator. Nothing is accomplished without God. Pardon my personal reference, but I have through the help of God, brought in about 3,000 souls. In one meeting I baptized 145 without stopping. At the close of the meeting 250 souls were won to Christ. God has given me the ability to lead. I suppose that I have erected more churches than any of the brethren, but yet I am standing for progress TODAY.

I maintain that it stands out very clearly, if we continue to maintain the status quo form of organization, that we need something for the colored people in the Southwestern. This is shown very definitely. It is also quite evident that something new is needed where my good friend, Clarks, is located. For example, in the Southern New England Conference there are only 349 colored Adventists, this shows that something is needed to propel the work to our colored people.

Who am I to say that we should have colored conferences? Whatever it is that takes to bring classes of Negroes into this message, that is the thing that I am after. We must have greater evangelism. It is not a matter to insure one's bread and butter as the years go by. We should have some organization that will give us a future. It is not a matter of simply pleasing public sentiment. That does not ring with God's people.

God gave Elder Blunden a vision for his publishing department. LOOK how under this plan our colored men have advanced. This shows that colored people can lead. Today is a high day for our men in the publishing department. We can also look at Oakwood and see what God has done with colored leadership. We are proud of Oakwood.

I remembered how the colored people cried when they were taken out of the white church here in Chicago. Now the colored church is the largest we have in Lake Union. It shows how God can bless under your own leadership.

We should decide whether we should have a colored conference. It ought to be very carefully considered. I don't believe that we should try it in the whole field at the same time. I believe our people have leadership. We aren't ashamed of our progress. I don't believe that we should continue under the present plan of the status quo.

Organization of Negro Conferences. Book I. Spring Council, April 8, 1944, Oakwood College, Huntsville, Alabama
REGIONAL AFFAIRS, OFFICE OF, AND REGIONAL CONFERENCES. The North American Office of Regional Affairs is a branch of the General Conference that, with its director and associate director and its advisory committee, is concerned chiefly with the development of churches and institutions among Americans of Negro ancestry (who constitute more than one tenth of the United States population).

The Office of Regional Affairs, like other General Conference departments, has an advisory function through the General Conference Executive Committee, and it also offers leadership to the field. Unlike the others, each of which fosters certain specific activities and deals with union and local conference departments pursuing the same activities, the Office of Regional Affairs fosters the work of one specific group of churches and conferences in North America. It deals (1) with the eight Regional conferences, (2) with a union Regional department in the Pacific Union Conference, and (3) with certain local congregations in the North Pacific Union Conference.

These churches and conferences are, organizationally, constituents of their respective conferences and unions, in which they are represented on the same basis as the other churches and conferences. Yet they have also the counsel and guidance from their leaders in the Office of Regional Affairs. The office issues a bimonthly paper, The North American Informant.

The following statistics cover not only the Regional conferences but also all the churches that are largely Negro in membership in the North American Division area, except in Canada and Bermuda.

Statistics. The following statistics were compiled by the Office of Regional Affairs in 1973. In the North American Division area (total population about 230 million) the black population is 21 million; churches and companies, 457; members, 67,542; church schools, 59; ordained ministers, 923; licensed ministers, 175; Bible instructors, 50; teachers, 260. The tithe income from churches in 1973 was $13,611,459.67 and they also raised $87,030.41 for Ingathering, $1,226,121.98 in other mission offerings, and $8,295,891.73 for payments on new buildings, maintenance, improvements, and other local projects.

Institutions. See Northeastern Academy; Oakwood College; Pine Forge Academy; Riverside College. There are junior academies in the following cities: Baltimore, Maryland; Cleveland, Ohio; Philadelphia, Pennsylvania; Washington, D.C.; Kansas City, Missouri; Chicago, Illinois; Detroit and Inkster, Michigan; Atlanta, Georgia; Miami and Orlando, Florida; Wilmington and Winston-Salem, North Carolina; Birmingham, Alabama; Baton Rouge, Hammond, and New Orleans, Louisiana; Dallas and Houston, Texas.

Regional Conferences. There are eight North American Regional conferences, most of them organized in 1943 or 1946, that have a leadership and constituency largely Negro. These are called Regional because of their distinctive geographical arrangement. Each Regional conference is organized within the existing administrative structure of a union conference, and covers not merely one portion of the union, but all the Negro churches in the whole region of the union, except in the Southern and Columbia unions, which contain two Regional conferences.

The eight Regional conferences in six of the nine union conferences in North America are: the Allegheny East Conference, embracing the black congregations in the territory of New Jersey, Delaware, District of Columbia, and eastern portions of Pennsylvania, Maryland, and Virginia (offices at Pine Forge, Pennsylvania); the Allegheny West Conference, embracing the black congregations in the territory of Ohio, West Virginia, West Pennsylvania, and Southwest Virginia (offices at Columbus, Ohio); the Central States Conference in the Central Union Conference and in Iowa (offices in Kansas City, Missouri), with churches in Iowa, Kansas, Nebraska, Missouri, Colorado; the Lake Union Conference in the Lake Union Conference (offices in Chicago, Illinois), with churches in Wisconsin, Illinois, Michigan, and Minnesota; the Northeastern Conference in the Atlantic Union Conference (offices in New York City), with churches in New York, Connecticut, Massachusetts; the South Atlantic Conference in the eastern half of the Southern Union (offices in Atlanta, Georgia), with churches in Georgia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Florida; the South Central Conference also in the Southern Union (offices in Nashville, Tennessee), with churches in Tennessee, Kentucky, Alabama, Mississippi, and the northwestern tip of Florida; the Southwest Region Conference in the Southwestern Union Conference (offices in Dallas, Texas), with churches in Texas, Oklahoma, Louisiana, Arkansas, and New Mexico.

The Northern, Pacific, and North Pacific unions have no Regional conferences, but the Pacific Union Conference has a Regional Department serving in an advisory capacity to all the conferences in which there is a considerable black membership (the black conferences in Iowa and Minnesota in the Northern Union are attached to the Central States and Lake Region conferences respectively). In Canada there are separate black congregations as well as churches with black constituents in their memberships; in Bermuda most of the churches have a majority of blacks. The president is a black man.
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Missionaries called from responsibilities in the Regional conferences have gone to India, South America, Africa, the Far East, and the West Indies.

The Regional conferences were formed in the hope that the new organizations might, with concentration on work within a specific ethnic group, achieve greater results in a shorter space of time than would be achieved under the previously existing organizations (in some cases under a departmental or mission arrangement). The plan has been responsible for an evangelistic penetration into the Negro community that had not been possible under the organizations that formerly administered the work among the nation’s Negro membership. The Regional conferences also have created new opportunities for leadership and other participation by gifted and trained Negro youth. In some churches, whose structure in the same or similar capacities had not worked out in the years prior to the formation of the Regional conferences, another practical result has been that colored members of the SDA Church have been more readily and more naturally represented in elected offices and on boards and committees outside the Regional conferences than appears to have been true formerly.

History. Origin of Work Among Negro Americans. Before SDA’s existed as a group, there were Negro adherents of the Adventist (*Millerite) movement. Even though most free Negroes of that time could scarcely read, some of them had a grasp of the pertinent doctrines taught by the Adventists.

SDA leaders in the beginning were identified as antislavery in sentiment. Some of them had actively aided the Negro in his struggle against the severe system of slavery: both John H. Kellogg (father of Dr. John Harvey Kellogg) and John Byington, who was later the first president of the General Conference, had operated stations of the Underground Railroad on their farms in Michigan and New York, respectively, and thus aided free Negroes to reach freedom in Canada. Brington was well acquainted with Sojourner Truth.

The first Negro SDA’s were probably in the North, where the church originated, but they are not noted separately in the early accounts, since they would naturally be members of the same churches with the white people, according to the social pattern in that region. Not until the SDA’s began to move into the South did they encounter Negroes in any number and in a social pattern of segregation. In trying to fulfill the primary objective of the church—to preach the message “to every creature”—these newcomers made converts from both white and colored and carried on work in some places especially for the latter.

For the work for Negroes in the South, begun in Tennessee as early as 1871, South Central Conference; in Texas and Georgia as early as 1876, see Southwest Region Conference and South Atlantic Conference. In North Carolina the work was begun in 1877 by a group of black people using the church facilities of the white community.

In the West, C. M. Kinney, reputed to be the first Negro ordained as an SDA minister, was won in 1878 by J. N. Loughborough. Later he preached in the South.

No Negro Churches at First. In entering the South the white evangelists encountered a social system based on the separation of the races, though at that early time (the 1870’s) the separation was less complete than later. C. O. Taylor, the first SDA minister to go into Georgia, preached in a rural Baptist church where he found Negroes attending along with the whites, though seated separately (Review and Herald, 49:8 [i.e. 7], Jan. 4, 1877). D. M. Canright, preaching in Kentucky, reported three colored Sabbathkeepers “members of the church with the others” (ibid., 47:174, June 1, 1876).

James Edson White, apostle to the Negro communities along the lower Mississippi River, remarked that for Negroes to be members of white churches had been the custom in pre-Civil War days when slave church members had belonged to their masters’ congregations (ibid., 78:285, April 23, 1901), and it was after the war that the freedmen formed their own churches and employed their own ministers (Gospel Herald, February, 1906, p. 6).

But by the time White reached the South, in the 1890’s, he noted that a separation in terms of race was on the increase and that because of opposition—both by local whites who opposed the education of Negroes and by Negroes who did not trust whites and feared exploitation—the work of the Southern Missionary Society became increasingly difficult (ibid.). In one place in 1899 his work was practically closed, and the society had to man its Mississippi schools with Negro teachers because of local opposition to whites teaching Negroes (ibid., October, 1899, p. 87; July, 1900, p. 63).

In Texas, in 1876, D. M. Canright reported that there was no objection to his working for the colored people so long as he
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worked among them only (Review and Herald, 47:166, May 25, 1876). In 1887 J. M. Rees, in Tennessee, reported that there was no trouble regarding white and Negro members in the Adventist Church, but that if a minister tried to preach to both races in his meetings for the general public, he would have no white people to speak to (General Conference Bulletin, Nov. 14, 1887, p. 2). When O. C. Godmark and his brother attempted to preach to both in Georgia, their evangelistic meetings were decried by both white and Negro listeners. On the other hand, even many years later, Negro evangelists sometimes preached successfully to white and Negro congregations. J. G. Thomas reports such meetings in Jackson, Mississippi; Gainesville, Florida; Chattanooga, Tennessee; Columbus, Georgia, where 90 Negroes and 37 whites were baptized from his meetings. F. S. Keitts, in Nashville, W. V. Fordham, in Jacksonville; and L. D. Baku, in El Paso, report similar experiences.

Increasing Opposition in the Nineties. The early attempts at interracial churches in the South were abandoned in the face of opposition from outside. J. E. White, in explaining why the Southern Missionary Society conducted work for white and colored people separately, declared that they had been forced by necessity to adopt that policy. “We preferred to live and work in such lines as we could than to force the issue and be cut off from the work” (Gospel Herald, January, 1901, supplement, p. 4). He added that SDA’s, who teach an unpopular doctrine, “cannot do work in many lines that would be tolerated in others,” and remarked that racial feeling was deepening (ibid.). It may be assumed that much of the problem encountered by White and others stemmed from the fact that they were Northerners coming South to work for Negroes, but it is also a matter of record in American history that in the 1890’s, in a period of economic and political unrest, segregation increased sharply, and many legal restrictions date from that time.

Increased opposition to the work in the South was noted by Ellen G. White, who for many years had urged the evangelism and education of the colored people. In 1891 she read a manuscript, “Our Duty to the Colored People” (released March 20, 1891), and later printed as a pamphlet by J. E. White, to the General Conference Committee at Battle Creek. In this she said that colored members should be received into the white churches (pamphlet, p. 11). Speaking of the white members, she said that “if a colored brother sits by their side, they will not be offended or despise him”; for they are journeying to the same heaven (ibid., p. 9). “If Jesus is abiding in our hearts we cannot despise the colored man who has the same Saviour abiding in his heart” (ibid.).

But by 1895 she urged caution in the South, saying that in the future the missionary work among colored people “would have to be carried on along lines different from those followed in some sections of the country in former years” (ibid., 206).

The reason given repeatedly by Mrs. White for the change of method was the strengthening opposition (ibid., 205) from outside the church. She used phrases such as “danger of closing the door” to the work (ibid., 214): “we shall find our way blocked completely” (ibid.): “do nothing that will unnecessarily arouse opposition” (ibid., 208).

Separate Churches a Concession to Necessity. On the one hand, she laid down the principle of brotherhood in Christ, who—laid the foundation for a religion by which Jew and Gentile, black and white, free and bond, are linked together in one common brotherhood, recognized as equal in the sight of God (TT 225).

The religion of the Bible recognizes no caste or color. It ignores rank, wealth, worldly honor. God estimates men as men. With Him, character decides their worth. And we are to recognize the Spirit of Christ in whosoever it is revealed. . . . He who is living in the atmosphere in which Christ lives will be taught of God and will learn to put His estimate on men (TT 225).

She looked forward to a time “when the Holy Spirit is poured out,” when—human hearts will love as Christ loved. And the color line will be regarded by many very differently from the way in which it is now regarded. To love as Christ loves, lifts the mind into a pure, heavenly, unselfish atmosphere. He who is closely connected with Christ is lifted above the prejudice of color or caste (ibid., 209).

On the other hand, in the face of an increasing racial feeling, she also warned that discretion is the better part of valor. She cautioned against contention or inviting opposition unnecessarily. For SDA workers would have enough opposition from other sources (ibid., 211).

The time has not come for us to work as if there were no prejudice. . . . If you see that by doing certain things which you have a perfect right to do, you hinder the advancement of God’s work, refrain from doing these things (ibid., 218).
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She counseled that, on account of the changed situation, the colored believers should have their own houses of worship, "not to exclude them from worshipping with white people," but "that the progress of the truth may be advanced" (ibid., 206, 207). She advised providing separate churches as "the course of wisdom," "where demanded by custom or where greater efficiency is to be gained" (ibid., 208), and "until the Lord shows us a better way" (ibid., 207).

A. W. Spalding reported that the method of dealing with the evangelism of Negroes had been debated in General Conference sessions from time to time, "most speakers maintaining that as God is no respecter of persons, Christians should not allow social questions to affect their church policy" (Origin and History of Seventh-day Adventists, vol. 1, p. 138), though no action was taken. In fact, the 1877 session voted not to take action on the subject. Spalding records that when R. M. Kilgore (an Iowan who had preached some years in Texas) was made head of the SDA work in the South, about 1890, "though brought up with the Northern conception of the problem," he "advocated the separation of white and colored churches. In the end this view prevailed" (ibid.).

Spalding wrote, around 1924, in an unpublished manuscript, Letters and Speeches in the Black Belt, p. 112, that the church had taken the position that it should "recognize and conform to existing conditions which do not involve transgression of God's law." This attitude, he explained, though apparently "shaped by policy instead of principle," was "built upon the principle of policy" that the church in its social relations should defer to public opinion, "that the gospel may not be hindered."

The policy of separation at first adopted for the sake of advancing the gospel eventually came to be so taken for granted that probably a majority of SDA members in areas where segregation was the custom believed it to be a fundamental teaching of the church. The carrying out of this "principle of policy" over a period of years was not always understood by Negro members. As a consequence, some individuals and groups (see General Conference Adjournment) gave up their affiliation with the church, although many of those who went out returned to the original body.

Because, as Mrs. White pointed out, in different places and under varying circumstances, the subject will need to be handled differently" (GT 213), the practice of separate Negro congregations has not been uniformly followed. In many parts of the country there are no separate churches, and even in areas where the Regional conferences operate, not all colored members are in the Regional churches. In some places the colored congregations were established by members who chose to withdraw from white congregations in order to have their own groups and work better for Negro evangelism; in other places, "where demanded by custom," the separation was the result of local necessity.

Development of Negro Churches. The first Negro church originated in the 1880's, and the next few in the 1890's, in the period of increased separation that resulted in the change of SDA method.

The first congregation of colored SDA believers was organized as a company in November, 1883, and as a church in 1886, at Edgewood Junction, Tennessee. Its pastor was Harry Lowe, formerly a Baptist preacher. The second church of colored believers, with ten charter members, was established in Knoxville, Tennessee, on January 16, 1890, where the work had been begun by A. Barry, who had accepted SDA teachings through reading the Review and Herald. The third was organized at Bowling Green, Kentucky, in June, 1891. These first three, and also the fifth one, which was organized at Nashville, Tennessee, in September, 1894, were in what is now the South Central Conference. The fourth, established by C. M. Kinney in New Orleans (organized June, 1882), was the first in the present Southwest Region Conference.

Southern Missionary Society. The work of the Southern Missionary Society (incorporated in 1898) began in 1893. In Mississippi it was founded by James Edson White, who went South in his steamer Morning Star with a group of dedicated colporteurs, teachers, physicians, and Bible instructors from churches in the North to bring the SDA message to colored people along the Mississippi River. They were successful in establishing small churches and schools in Mississippi and other States. For the story, see Gospel Herald: Morning Star; Southern Missionary Society. White's printing firm was a forerunner of the Southern Publishing Association, which still produces books and magazines for the general population, as well as those licensed to a Negro reading audience.

Other developments in the South included the establishing in 1893 of a school (see Oakwood College) and, for a time...
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(1906-1925), a sanitarium, at Huntsville, Alabama, and two attempts at the establishment of a sanitarium in Nashville, Tennessee, between 1901 and 1909 (see Riverside Hospital).

Meantime work was beginning in earnest in cities of the East, beginning in New York City in 1902 (see Allegheny East Conference; Northeastern Conference).

Work in the West began in Los Angeles in 1906, when Jennie Ireland, a member of the white congregation in the city, began missionary work among the Negro population, and gave Bible studies to interested people, with the result that in 1908 was formed the first colored church west of Ohio (see Southern California Conference). Jennie Ireland's work was the Temple family, whose daughter Ruth later attended medical school at Loma Linda and became noted as the original promoter of the idea of Health Week in the Los Angeles municipality's health department. Another was the Trox family, whose son, Dr. Owen A. Trox, became a pastor and evangelist in the West and Midwest, then associate secretary of the General Conference Sabbath School Department.

Departmental Organization. In 1894 there were about 50 colored SDA's in the United States. While the membership reached 900 in 1909, it was felt that to make a more noticeable impact on the growing Negro population some form of organization should be created. Hence, at the General Conference held that year the North American Negro Department was organized. J. W. Christian, A. J. Hasbmer, and C. B. Stephen- son, in that order, were the first departmental secretaries. In 1918 the secretaries reported that there were a total of 9,900 Negro members in the United States.

When the General Conference department was set up, union and local departments or missions were organized also. In the Southern Conference the Southern Missionary Society formed the nucleus for the organization of a Southern Union Mission. The Southern Mission set up a union Negro Mission Department, and for a time the Southwestern Union had a Southwestern Union Mission for colored. Most local conferences in these units had a Negro department or a committee.

The first colored minister to head the General Conference department was W. H. Groen, former a lawyer in the District of Columbia who had argued cases before the United States Supreme Court. He held the position from 1918 until his sudden death in October of 1928. To fill the vacancy the Autumn Council of 1929 appointed George E. Peters as departmental secretary. After serving briefly, Peters went to New York City to stabilize the work there because of the grave situation after the United Sabbath Day Adventist apostasy. Peters was succeeded by Frank L. Peterson, a pastor in Boston, Massachusetts. Peters was again elected to the position in 1941, and in 1951 was made a field secretary of the General Conference, the first Negro to serve thus.

The name of the department was changed at the Autumn Council of 1942 from Negro Department to Colored Department, as the nation grew more concerned over integrating its Negro minority into the main current of American life. The term "colored" somehow appeared less harsh, less divisive.

To help with the medical needs of the various schools served by the department, Geneva Bryan, R.N., was made an assistant secretary of the department in 1942 and served until 1947.

Regional Conferences Organized. In 1944 came the recommendation to organize full-fledged conferences of the colored churches, a plan that had been requested some years earlier by Negro leaders but had not then been considered feasible. The General Conference Committee in its Spring Meeting voted:

We recommend,

1. That in unions where the colored constituency is considered by the union conference committee to be sufficiently large, and where the financial income and territories warrant, colored conferences be organized.

2. That these colored conferences be administered by colored officers and committees.

3. That in the organization of these conferences the present conference boundaries within each union need not be recognized.

4. That colored conferences sustain the same relation to their respective union conferences as do the white conferences (Action of the Spring Meeting of the General Conference Committee, April 10-16, 1944, Pp. 15, 16).

The first to act was the Lake Union Conference, which called a meeting of the colored constituency in September to organize the Lake Region Conference (began Jan. 1, 1944). Others followed, until in 1946 there were five such conferences. Two missions (Central States and Southwestern) which soon became conferences also, each with a full staff of officers and departmental secretaries, started in 1947.

In 1951 the North American Colored Department was enlarged by the addition of
an associate secretary, Calvin E. Moseley, Jr., who succeeded G. E. Peters in 1953, both as secretary of the department and as a field secretary of the General Conference.

In 1954 Frank L. Peterson became secretary of the department, and also associate secretary of the General Conference. Moseley was named associate secretary. The same year the name was changed from Colored Department to Regional Department as a further attempt to soften the term that seemed primarily to designate members on the basis of color.

In 1962 Frank L. Peterson was made a general vice-president of the General Conference and Harold D. Singleton, former president of the Northeastern Conference, became the Regional Department secretary, with Frank L. Bland, former president of the South Central Conference, as associate secretary.

In 1966 when Frank L. Bland succeeded the retiring Frank L. Peterson as vice-president, Walter W. Fordham, president of the General States Conference, was elected associate secretary of the Regional Department.

Recent Events. In many places where the social pressures have lessened, previously all-white congregations have opened their membership in recent years. In the 1961 Autumn Council, the General Conference Committee voted a statement on human relations, quoting three of the extracts that appear on page 1061 above (p. 723; 723-724; 209); and in the Spring Meeting of 1963 voted recommendations as follows:

We recommend that the following principles and practices be adopted and carried out in our churches and institutions:

1. Membership in all churches and on all levels must be available to anyone who qualifies, without regard to race.

2. In educational institutions there should be no racial bias in the employment of teachers or other personnel, nor in the admission of students.

3. Hospitals and rest homes should make no racial distinction in admitting patients or in making their facilities available to physicians, interns, residents, nurses, and administrators who meet the professional standards of the institution.

It is further recommended that these recommendations be given very serious consideration and that every effort be put forth to implement them as rapidly as is consistently possible (Actions of Spring Meeting of the General Conference Committee, April 13, 14, 1965, in Review and Herald, 123:8, April 29, 1965).

Recent Events. In 1970 the General Conference Committee, at its Spring session, in response to the desire among black SDA's for a fuller involvement in leadership, passed what is generally referred to as the "16 points." Among these is an action stating:

"On the union conference level positive steps should be taken to open doors in the area of administrative and departmental leadership for those who have demonstrated their ability and qualifications to serve all segments of the church. In unions where there are Regional conferences or where there is an organized Regional department, the administrative officer level should include black leadership."

As a result the seven unions with large black memberships have elected officers and departmental secretaries from among their black constituencies.

Another of the "16 points" provided for a Regional Presidents' Council, which meets twice a year under North American leadership and deals with problems distinctive to the Regional work.

In 1973 the General Conference staff in Washington, D.C., included 17 persons elected to their positions from the black constituency of North America, including two vice-presidents and an associate secretary. There were also two persons in appointed positions.


Director of the Office of Regional Affairs: W. W. Fordham, 1973-
Seventh-day Adventist historical highlights

1831—William Miller begins to preach.
—The great Disappointment.
—Ellen G. Harmon’s first vision.
1848—First general meeting of Sabbathkeepers. Rocky Hill, Connecticut.
1850—Second Advent Review and Sabbath Herald (now called Adventist Review) published, Paris, Maine.
—The Youth’s Instructor published.
1853—First regular Sabbath school, Rochester, New York.
—First Adventist elementary school, Buck’s Bridge, New York.
1855—Publishing office moves to Battle Creek, Michigan.
1859—“Systematic benevolence” adopted.
1860—“Seventh-day Adventist!” adopted as church name.
1861—Michigan organized as first State conference.
1863—General Conference organized, Battle Creek, Michigan.
1864—Seventh-day Adventist soldiers given noncombatant status by government.
1866—Publication of Health Reformer journal.
—Health Reform Institute (Battle Creek Sanitarium) opened.
1868—First general camp meeting, Wright, Michigan.
1874—Battle Creek College established.
—Signs of the Times published, Oakland, California.
—J. N. Andrews, first foreign missionary, sails from Boston to Europe.
1875—Pacific Press Publishing Association incorporated, Oakland, California.
1879—First local Young People’s Society, Hazelton, Michigan.
1881—James White dies, age 60.
1882—First Seventh-day Adventist book (Thoughts on Daniel and the Revelation) published for sale to public.
1884—Adventist training school for nurses opened, Battle Creek, Michigan.
1885—Seventh-day Adventist work begun in Australia.
—Ellen White goes to Europe (1885-1887).
1887—First Adventist mission opened in Africa.
1888—General Conference session at Minneapolis studies doctrine of righteousness by faith.
1889—National Religious Liberty Association organized.
1890—Missionary ship Pioneers sails to South Pacific.
1891—Ellen White goes to Australia (1891-1900).
1901—General Conference reorganized with union conferences, budget financing.
—Southern Publishing Association established, Nashville, Tennessee.
1902—Review and Herald Publishing House destroyed by fire.
—Jasper Wayne begins “In gathering” public solicitation program.
1906—College of Medical Evangelists (now Loma Linda University) opened, Loma Linda, California.
1913—General Conference organized into world divisions.
1915—Ellen White dies, age 87.
1924—J. N. Loughborough, last of the pioneers, dies age 92.
1934—SDA Theological Seminary established, Washington, D.C.
1935—Loma Linda Foods established, California.
1939—First Bible correspondence school, Williamsport, Pennsylvania.
1942—Voice of Prophecy radio broadcast goes nationwide on 89 stations.
1945—Black conferences organized in the United States.
1950—Faith for Today TV program inaugurated.
—School of Dentistry opens at Loma Linda, California.
1955—Seventh-day Adventist Church world membership passes one million.
1957—Potomac University founded, Washington, D.C.
—First Seventh-day Adventist licensed college radio station begins operations, Washington, D.C.
1959—Five-Day Plan to Stop Smoking initiated.
—Student missionary program inaugurated.
1960—Potomac University moves to Berrien Springs, Michigan; becomes Andrews University.
1961—Loma Linda University formed, California.
1966—Seventh-day Adventist Encyclopedia published.
1970—World membership passes 2 million.
1971—Adventist World Radio begins operation from Portugal.
—Radio, TV, and Film Center established, California.
1975—First General Conference session outside North America, Vienna, Austria.
1978—World membership passes 3 million.
1983—World membership passes 4 million.

For further reading on Seventh-day Adventist history:

The Great Advent Movement, by Emma Howell Cooper, $3.95
Light Bearers to the Remnant, by R. W. Schwarz, $11.95
Origin and History of Seventh-day Adventists, by Arthur W. Spalding (4 vols.), $28.95
The Story of Our Health Message, by D. E. Robinson, $4.50
Seventh-day Adventist Encyclopedia, Don F. Neufeld, ed., $21.75
Tell It to the World, by Marlyn Maxwell, $4.95
The Vision Bold, by Warren Johns and Richard Ull, $19.95 (illustrated history of SDA health work)

These books may be ordered from ABC Mailing Service, P.O. Box 1119, Hagerstown, Maryland 21740 or P.O. Box 7000, Mountain View, California 94042. If you wish to use your Visa/MasterCard, call toll free 1-800-253-3000.
The First Steps in BLACK LEADERSHIP

Message given during Black History Week at Andrews University in the 1960s, condensed.

In 1894 there were approximately 50 Colored Seventh-day Adventists in the United States. With additional Colored leadership, the work began to develop under the strong evangelistic preaching of such men as L. C. Sheafe, John Marns Sidney Scott, J. E. Humphrey, J. H. Lawrence, G. E. Peters, P. C. Rogers, M. C. Strong, T. B. Buckner, J. M. Campbell, M. G. Nunez, B. W. Abney, H. D. Green, J. G. Dasent, and John Allison.

In 1909 the membership had reached 900, and it was felt that for a greater advancement of the work, a different form of organization should be effected. Consequently, at the General Conference session in 1909, the North American Negro Department was organized, and A. J. Haysmer was elected as the first secretary of the department. Elder A. G. Daniels, president of the General Conference, gave the following explanation as the basis of the reasoning for the creation of this department: I am quoting from the Review and Herald, June 9, 1909, page 13:

"I believe that 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 it before. Now, how will this be changed? The department will have a secretary, an executive committee, or a departmental committee, the same as the other departments, and on this committee there will be a fair representation of the field. The committee will then meet and plan its work, and outline its policy for the future the same as do the other departmental committees. Their work will be to carry forward the evangelical work among the Colored people. They will take up the question of mission schools, church schools, and the 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. In fact, they will take into consideration all branches of the work.

"I have felt to make this explanation here in order to answer the questions that may arise as to why this department is brought on. Some may ask: 'Aren't we creating too many departments, and getting too much machinery?' Well, I do not think so. I want to ask how much the Education Department hinders or impedes the work of the Publishing Department? We had the Publishing Department first, and we created the Education and the Medical departments since. Now, have these departments hindered the work of the Publishing Department? The voices, 'They have helped it!'""

The first meeting of the North American Negro Department of the General Conference was held at Oakwood Manual Training School in Huntsville, Alabama, 8:00 a.m., Tuesday, September 28, 1909.

In 1919 the membership among America's largest minorities had reached 3,000, and at the General Conference session the first Black ever elected to the General Conference staff was W. H. Green, who became the secretary of the Regional Department. Elder Green was a former lawyer who had argued many cases before the Supreme Court of the United States. However, even though he was elected as the first Black member of the General Conference staff, because of racial segregation in the United States as well as in the church, it was impossible for him to carry out his duties from the General Conference office.

In 1927 there was a joint conference meeting of the Southeastern, Southern, and Southwestern unions' Black leaders, which was held in Nashville, Tennessee. This was the first effort in the South to recognize Black leadership in the Seventh-day Adventist Church, and to structure an organization that would enable these leaders to utilize their talents in working among Black people, particularly in the South.

At this meeting Elder J. L. McElhany, vice president of the General Conference, recommended that the unions should separate and formulate specific actions that could be voted upon.

May I just refer to the minutes of that historic meeting, which I feel will be
of interest to you. It was voted unanimously by all rising to their feet that the name of all three unions be changed to read ‘the Colored department.’ There was also quite a discussion as to the title of the leading ministers for the Black work; the name of evangelist, secretary, and superintendent were discussed. After considering the names and responsibilities from many different points of view, it was finally voted unanimously by standing that the title for the leading minister of the Colored department of the union, and each local conference be ‘evangelist’; that he would carry the secretarial work of the Colored department.

In 1926, therefore, the General Conference of the Seventh-day Adventist denomination took this action:

“We recommend the adoption and principle of the recommendations regarding the organization of the Colored work as passed by the General Conference [session] of 1926, adapting them to fit the conditions of the three Southern unions, recognizing the need of stressing evangelism in our fields for the Colored population, and in view of the fact that our resources both in men and money are very limited, and believing that the life and growth of our work among our Colored believers depend upon emphasizing evangelism, therefore,

“Resolved, That we urge our Colored laborers to use their utmost efforts to carry the message to all Colored people.

“Then adapting the plan of our Colored departmental work in our union and local conferences as suggested by the General Conference resolution in Milwaukee, the work of the union and local department committees be to study and provide for the needs of the work for the Colored people in harmony with established policy. When new policies are suggested, they must be brought before the executive committee that the work of the said union or local conference evangelist be outlined and directed by the president and committee of the respective conferences the same as other laborers; that we recognize the work of this department to be the same as it is understood to be the work of any other department; that full counsel be had with our Colored laborers in planning their work, it being distinctly understood that the union or local evangelist has no administrative authority. We recommend that General Conference recommendation No. 80, as appears in the Review and Herald of June 14, 1926, page 5, shall be understood to apply to Colored departmental work, and to be carried out only as finances permit, and the recommendation referred to reads, ‘Where the developing and better prosecution of the work for our people requires better attention, there should be appointed such assistant secretaries and helpers of the various departments of the several union conferences in the South as are required to look after and care for the development of the Colored work.’”

These recommendations were considered separately, and quite a favorable discussion followed. Finally, it was submitted for a vote that was unanimous, several expressing themselves as certain this was the beginning of a great work in the Southland.

Now, the irony of this whole situation is the fact that many of these recommendations were never fully implemented. In 1929 at the Fall Council held at Columbus, Ohio, September 24 to October 2, the first major recommendation relative to the organization of the Black work in America was voted, and I would like to refer to the minutes of that council:

“Recommended, I. That in each union conference where there are as many as 500 Colored believers, except in the Southeastern, Southern, and Southwestern unions, a Negro secretary be elected, the secretary to be a member of the union conference committee.

“2. That the union secretary together with the secretaries of the Southeastern, Southern, and Southwestern union conferences be invited to attend such Autumn Councils as the local conference presidents may be called to attend. Thus they would receive the encouragement to be gained by contact with the leaders of our worldwide work, and would carry it back to the Colored churches in their fields, the appears on all our activities throughout the field the world around.

“3. That these secretaries, together with the union secretaries of the Southeast, Southern, and Southwestern unions, and such other persons that the General Conference may appoint, want the General Conference Negro Department Advisory Committee. The General Conference Negro Department Advisory Committee will counsel over matters pertaining to the Colored work, and at this Annual Council the primary responsibilities of these secretaries were outlined as follows:

A. Holding evangelistic efforts when advisable.
B. By assisting evangelists with the efforts when advisable.
C. By helping to train young preachers and workers.
D. By helping to foster soul-winning work in each of the churches and conferences.
E. By cooperating in all lines of departmental and church activities.
F. That where the Colored constituency in a local conference is sufficiently strong, and is represented by a Colored minister of experience, we recommend that he be made a member of the local conference committee.

Now, this applied more or less to the Black constituency in the northern sections of our country. At this annual conference consideration was given to the previous recommendations that were made by the joint committees of the Southern, Northeastern, and Southwestern unions, which met in 1927, and this is the action that was approved by the Annual Council: "That the Negro work in the Southeastern, Southern, and Southwestern union conferences be organized on the following basis:

1. That the Negro Committee of the union conference be composed as follows: the president of the union conference; the secretary-treasurer of the union; the president of each local conference; the union Negro secretary; the Negro missionary volunteer, education, and home missionary secretary, where there is such a secretary; and the Negro evangelist of each local conference, said committee to have full administrative charge of the Negro work.

2. That the Negro Committee of the local conference be composed as follows: the president of the conference, the secretary-treasurer of the conference, the Colored evangelist of the conference, and two Negro members to be elected.

3. We recommend that in conferences receiving appropriations for their Colored work the proportionate share of local conference administration expenses be on a ratio of one third to the Colored and two thirds to the White work, this calculation to be based on practically equal constituency of White and Colored membership, and where the proportion of constituency varies from that of equality, either up or down, the proportion of administrative expense be carried on the same ratio, up or down."

You will recall that I referred to the first Black man ever elected to the General Conference staff—Elder W. H. Green, who served from 1918 until his rather sudden death in 1928. In 1929 G. E. Peters, a gifted evangelist and one of the outstanding Black pioneers of this church—indeed, one of the most progressive leaders that we have ever had—was elected to the office. In 1930 under his leadership the following recommendations were made at the General Conference session, June 12, 1930, in San Francisco:

1. That the General Conference Committee select one of our representative Colored ministers to fill the office of secretary of the Negro Department, that this secretary locate in Washington, D.C., having his headquarters at the General Conference office.

2. That in giving general supervision to the Colored work throughout North America, he work under the counsel of the General Conference Committee as do all other General Conference departmental secretaries."

Then again, there were the reiterated actions that had been taken previously concerning the organization of the Colored work in the Southland, and the recommendations for the northern sections of our country. Now let us review briefly before we come to another historic period which was 1940.

For the organization of the work in the Southland, the committees referred to as "Colored committees" were more or less rubber stamp committees. For example, as a Black evangelist in the state of Florida representing the Black work, I recall that whenever we met (the Colored committee), it was on the same day as the conference executive committee, and that committee was composed only of Whites. Generally, they met in the morning and made their decisions then. Decisions that pertained to the White as well as the Black work. Then in the afternoon, when our Black committee met, we considered and accepted the recommendations of the White committee, generally accepting and approving their decisions made prior to our meeting.

In 1930 the General Conference Committee, meeting in San Francisco, recommended that one of our Black leaders be selected to fill the office of secretary of the department. A sad crisis developed within our Black ranks when J. K. Humphrey, a leader in the eastern J.S., left the mainstream of Adventism, taking a large number of members with him.

Elder G. E. Peters had been serving in this capacity; he resigned over the unpleasant episode, and Elder F. L. Peterson, who later became a vice president of the General Conference, was elected to succeed him. The General Conference had stated previously that the secretary for the Black work should have his office at the GC headquarters. Yet when Elder Green was elected in 1918, prejudice was still so strong that this decision was not carried out. In 1930 it was recommended that the Negro Department head have his office at the General Conference in Washington, D.C. Yet even then there was strong resistance to having a Black person serve at headquarters.

At the Autumn Council of 1941 Elder G. E. Peters was back again, serving
as departmental secretary for the General Conference. I quote from his historic remarks made that year:

"Brother Chairman, I believe that we are all convinced that the Negro Department has made wonderful advances and achievements through the years. We have grown from 900 believers in 1909 to 14,537 at the close of 1940. In 1912 the receipts were $16,323 from our Colored constituency; during the past five years [1936-1940] the tithe paid was $112,000. In this same period mission offerings amounted to $703,000, as compared with $3,000 in 1912. Would you not agree that the Colored Seventh-day Adventist is more an asset than a liability!

"Looking over records from foreign mission work, we find conclusively that larger dividends are realized by the body when leadership roles are entrusted to the native workers. It is obvious from these statistics that the Colored work has made greater advances in souls won and money gained since the work has been shouldered by Colored workers.

"I believe that more will be accomplished and the scope still be broadened more when confidence is placed in Colored leadership.

"Some years ago study was given to development of the Colored work. The idea of Negro conferences was introduced in 1929. The proposal intended that these conferences would operate under the guidance of the union and General conferences as all other local conferences did.

"This movement, acceptable to Colored leaders, never got off the ground. Brother Chairman, the plan I refer to has been carried on in full in certain union conferences, but carried out only in part by other union territories. In places where the plan is not utilized, I am sure failure to carry out the resolution is not due to lack of interest in the Colored work, but due sometimes to changes of leadership, when new leaders may not have appraised themselves of the opportunity to learn about previous resolutions and decisions, the background and merits of such.

"Pleading for understanding of the restrictive climate under which Black leaders worked, he continued: "Our Colored brethren have waited for years for the fulfilling of this plan in total. Both workers and laity in Colored areas ask, 'Why has this vote not been carried out?' Thirty-one years have passed since the department was first organized with the employment of a full-time general secretary. As already stated, we numbered only 900 members then, but with a vision and a sense of mission, we now number 15,000—the advancement merits a full-time secretary in each union conference who will spend his entire time in the duties outlined by the Autumn Council of 1929."

Elder Peters continued: "My plea for the perfecting and strengthening of the department for Colored work includes a Negro advisory committee to be called together in 1942 and every two years thereafter. Sufficient time should be given to discuss plans and recommendations for the development of the Colored work with its own particular problems. I believe the present organization known as the Negro Department can be made a more ideal system for Negro work of North America if it is fully carried out and broadened. The plan is in harmony with the Spirit of Prophecy, and every conference where it has been put into full operation will experience larger and greater yield for the cause of God. We are doing well, we can do better. To put this organization into operation will cost some money, but even from a business viewpoint, we must 'spend money to make money.' Can it be that the 'children of this world' are wiser than 'the children of light'?

Elder Peters closed on a positive note: "Brother Chairman, I ask for continued confidence in the consecrated ability of Negro leaders. 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 completion of the task committed to us by our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ."

Elder Peters made three very significant statements in his discourse:

1. He requested that the establishment have confidence in the ability of Negro leaders.
2. He requested the establishment to give these Black leaders a share in the responsibility of leading their own.
3. He predicted greater results in building up the work of God as related to the great Advent movement.
THEY WITHOUT US SHALL NOT BE MADE PERFECT

"And all these, while winning divine approval through their faith, did not receive the promised blessing, for God had in view something better for us, so that without us they would not be made perfect" (Heb. 11:39, 40, KJV).

The history of Adventism provides clear evidence of God's genuine concern for the place of Black Americans in His last day redemption endeavors.

An analysis of our journey from 1844 shows that in the bringing together of believers from every nation, knower, tongue, and people predicted in Revelation 14:6 as the cultural mix of Adventism, God Himself determined that "they without us should not be made perfect."

I wish to propose that we can best understand the phenomenon of our growth and participation by examining three major segments of our church's history: (1) 1844-1894, (2) 1894-1944, and (3) 1944 to present. I ask you now to join me in this study.

Since Adventism had its birth in the North some 20 years before slavery ended, we are not surprised that the Black presence was scarce among the early pioneers. In the first place, 95 percent of Blacks lived in the South in those days, and in the second place Adventism, then as now, proceeded a message best understood by those able to search the Scriptures, and most of the slaves were illiterate.

A second reason is that most of the free northern Blacks joined one or the several all Black denominations—which came to be called the Independence movements—that already flourished in the North.

In spite of these facts, however, pioneer Adventism was blessed with several African-American personalities who helped swell the midnight cry.

L. E. Foon, famous Adventist historian, writes:

"One of the unusual characters in the roster of Millerite preachers was a Colored minister. Charles Bowles (1820-1843). He was born in Boston, his father being an

Afri~n servant, and his mother the daughter of the celebrated American Colonel Morgan. . . . Though he often met with bitter opposition because of his color and the fact that he was preaching to large White congregations, he became a successful evangelist. His was the standard Millerite exposition of prophecy" (Lee Froom, "Prophetic Faith of Our Fathers, Vol. 4, p. 705).

Another early Black connected with this movement were John W. Lewis of Providence, Rhode Island, who too was a preacher, and William Foy, best remembered as the first Adventist to receive the gift of prophecy. The Seventh-day Adventist Encyclopedia describes Foy as a tall, light-skinned Colored man and eloquent speaker. Though a Millerite, when preaching he wore the robes of the Episcopal clergy. This source also states that his successor, Ellen White, regarded Foy's prophetic call as genuine.

O. O. Farnsworth, early Adventist historian, informs us further that Blacks were aboard when the first SDA church organized in Washington, New Hampshire, in 1844. History is silent about their names, as well as of others who embraced the faith immediately after the 1844 experience.

However, in the middle 1870s the trail becomes distinct again. It was at this time that a trio of Whites (D. M. Carright, C. O. Taylor, and J. N. Loughborough) conducted separate but similar efforts to add Blacks to the fledgling denomination. As a result of their evangelistic efforts, Carright, who went to Kentucky in 1876, Taylor, who worked in Georgia in 1878, and Loughborough who preached in Nevada in the same year, all wrote back to headquarters the good news of having baptized members of the Colored race.

Taylor was particularly thrilled to have baptized a Colored minister named Kil len, and Loughborough was especially proud of a similar catch—a young man named C. M. Kinney.

In fact, J. O. Corliss, another early missionary to the South, reported to the General Conference in 1883 that the South contained 267 White and 20 Colored believers—that roughly one out of 13 Southern Adventists was Black. Not a bad start!

During the 1880s the tempo accelerated, and a number of distinguished Black personalities accepted the truth. Sejourner Street was baptized November 26, 1883, by Uriah Smith. Rosetta S. Douglas, daughter of the great Frederick Douglas, was baptized about the same time in Washington, D.C., and the first all-Black congregation was formed at Edgefield Junction, Tennessee in 1883. That church service brought together the sum total of 10 cents during its first Sabbath collection. It was a small but significant beginning. In February 1889 a former slave by the name of A. Barry,
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as a result of reading the Reina and Hurd, became a Sabbathkeeper and evangelized Blacks in Louisville, Kentucky.

Shortly thereafter in June 1891 the Greensboro, North Carolina, church began. The Bowling Green, Kentucky, church started in September 1891, and the Nashville, Tennessee, church in 1894. The New Orleans, Louisiana, congregation was established in June 1892, and the Catchings, Texas, church in 1893. All of these, coupled with C.M. Kenney's ordination as the first Black pastor (October 1899), served as sure evidences of greater things to come and that even in our church's very beginnings, God had us in mind.

As his first 50-year segment of our church history ended, the organized body was itself solidifying its doctrinal positions and rapidly developing its institutional programs. The presses were rolling and the Review and Herald, Signs of the Times, and Youth Instructor were being printed. Missions opened by the scores for overseas duty, and school and hospitals sprang up around the world.

Thank God, we as Blacks were already affiliated in those foundation days—a small but faithful number. While our participation in leadership was still future, we were there, and it was clear that in spite of the paucity of our numbers, "They without us should not be made perfect."

The next major segment of Black Adventist history began in 1894, the year in which James Edson White, the son of the prophetess, built and launched the Morning Star. A year earlier James Edson had read a pamphlet entitled "Our Duty to the Colored People," written by his mother.

Inspired by Ellen White's concern for the neglected children of slavery, James Edson gathered about him a cadre of teachers and nurses, who, with the boat serving as a floating school and church, sailed down Lake Michigan onto the Mississippi River, where he docked at dozens of cities. Within the next 15 years, armed with two publications, The Gospel Herald and The Gospel Trumpet, as texts, James and his crew established 60 schools within six Southern states.

And speaking of schools, it was at the urging of Ellen White in 1895 that the church purchased 368 acres in northern Alabama for the sum of $6,730 and named the place Oakwood Industrial Training School. I am proud to report that one of the original 16 who comprised the first student body, Eta Littlejohn from Vicksburg, Mississippi, was my maternal grandmother. It was from the decks of the Morning Star that she first learned of the Sabbath.

But the most obvious significant event in the 1890s was the mushrooming of Colored congregations—especially in the South. Lexington and Memphis in 1894,

Birmingham in 1895; Corseca in 1896; Chattanooga and Charleston in 1898; and Orlando, Montgomery, and Winston Salem in 1899. And, as the twentieth century began, the phenomenon continued—Atlanta, Georgia, in 1900; Washington, D.C., and St. Louis in 1901; New York City and Kansas City, Kansas, in 1901; Kansas City, Missouri, in 1903; Mobile in 1904; Jacksonville, Florida, and Berkeley, California in 1906; and Philadelphia and Los Angeles in 1908. The tide of the three angels' messages was rising to high proportions. Whereas in 1894 only some 50 Colored members lived in the entire United States, by 1900 there were 100, 1,000 by 1909, and 3,500 by 1918.

In 1883 the offering had totaled 10 cents at Edgefield Junction. Tithe had swollen to $50 by 1893 and $5,000 by 1900. By 1909 it was approximately $25,000. The General Conference session in 1918 saw Black membership total 3,500. What had been Oakwood Industrial School in 1896 had been renamed Oakwood Manual Training School in 1911 and Oakwood Junior College in 1917. We were growing within the church. The gospel story was finding a healthy reception among our people, and our response and development then in terms of membership, money, and budding organizational patterns again made it clear that "They without us should not be made perfect."

The period between the two worlds saw a number of events important to the continued development of Black Adventism. The first was a remarkable display of loyalty by its Black constituency when several of its leading ministers defected during the 1920s and the early 1930s. Chief among them were J. K. Hunsberry of New York City and Charles and John Manns of Florida. They and a number of others left the Seventh-day Adventist Church because of disenchantment with what they saw as the group's racist posture. Their defection led to several independent Sabbathian movements, some of which still exist, but the vast majority of Black members remained faithful in spite of obvious prejudice. Their love for God and truth superseded their concern, and Black churches continued to proliferate. There were 7,000 members in 1922, 12,000 in 1937, 17,000 by 1944.

Other major developments during these decades were the establishment of Message magazine in 1935, Riverside Hospital in 1936, and the coming of age of Oakwood as a senior college in 1943.

Fast on the heels of these events came the formation of regional (Black) conferences in 1944. By that time Black tithe income had grown to $111,000, and Black membership, which had been 3,500 in 1918, had now swollen to 17,000.

And with the development of Black conferences, Black Adventism took quant-
They Without Us Shall Not Be Made Perfect

The real reason our preaching is demonstrative and our testimonies so audible.

It is said of Christ, while He was on earth that the poor heard Him gladly. The rich don't sense their need of divine assistance as easily as the poor. The advantages don't have to pray for rent, and food, and clothing as our parents did—not as we still do in many cases.

In slavery we sang and prayed for deliverance. We cried for another world—a world of peace and rest and freedom.

After slavery we prayed for protection from the Klan and from injustice. Many thousands of mothers, scrubbing floors and washing clothes, watered their rags and brushes with the warm, briny tears of broken hearts, begging God for strength to keep on toiling.

We sent this far by faith, "leaning on the Lord," and that's why our forebears, bent with unbearable suffering, sang with deep meaning: "Precious Lord, take my hand, lead me on, help me stand, I am tired, I am weak, I am worn, thru the storm, thru the night, lead me on to the light, take my hand, Precious Lord, lead me home."

However, the more affluent we become, the more educated and successful we are, the greater the danger that we shall lose that fervor, that we shall grow fat in the land of plenty and forget our God.

 Isaiah cautions us to remain focused on "the rock whence ye are hewn, and to the hole of the pit whence ye are digged" (Isa. 51:1).

We must look beyond earthly prosperity to heavenly reward.

Rather than lose our zeal, we must allow it to serve as a catalyst to the other ethnic groups in our church. Our church needs a strong dose of Black enthusiasm. We have come to the kingdom for such a time as this. "They without us shall not be, cannot be, made perfect."

The second contribution that we can make is a vivid demonstration of love and fraternity. One of Black America's most enviable traits is its magnanimity. In spite of all we've suffered, we find it hard to hate. I know of no other race as prone to forgiveness as ours. Despite oppression, we have remained, for the most part, a kind and openhearted people.

That doesn't mean we shouldn't stand up for our rights. There's a time to fight for freedom. Christians, too, are mandated to use legitimate weapons in obtaining release from social oppression. We too must work for justice in our communities, for better sanitation, better jobs, better education, recreation, housing, etc.
They Without Us Shall Not Be Made Perfect

evil. Each of us must by voice and by vote combat injustice—with and without the church.

But we must do so with a quality of love that evidences our Christlikeness, a love that binds us together here in our Jerusalem of fellowship but which at the same time establishes our place in the wider family of God—a love that allows us to fight for justice without and within the church as we remain always mindful that "they without us shall not be made perfect."

The third and perhaps most challenging contribution that I wish to propose is that of family solidarity. I realize that studies of family patterns are not usually kind to the Black community. In fact, if we are to believe them, our communities lead the way in illegitimacy, one-parent families, juvenile delinquency, joblessness, homelessness, and a lot of other characteristics of which we are not proud.

Our family reputation is not good. Oriental families, Jewish families, Indian families, Caucasian families, and others have, on the whole, a much healthier image.

But that is just the point. The very weakness associated with the broader Black American family makes the triumph of the gospel in our homes all the more impressive.

That gospel has redeemed us. The instructions of the Bible and the writings of Ellen White have delivered us from the clutches of superstition and ignorance that grip so many of our neighbors. Because of what the Bible has done for us and our children, we are living exhibits of the revolutionary power of the Word. We are proof that monogamy does work, that Christian education does pay, that endogamous marriage is right, and that those little red books—particularly Child Guidance and The Adventist Home—do make a difference. Our communities need this witness, and our church needs this testimony.

The evils of divorce and disease that inure to the larger society have brought great pain to the Adventist family system as well. We hear it at our college and academy campuses. One senses it in the alarming apostasy rate of our youth and in the escalating numbers of emotionally ill among our membership.

And that is where you and I come in. We, as no other group in America, know the value of family solidarity to group prosperity. It was destruction of valid family structures that initiated our descent into intellectual and moral poverty, and it was the restoration of family structures, reared by religious values, that has taken Black Seventh-day Adventists to new heights of social and economic strength.

Did not Malachi promise that God would turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the children to the fathers, lest He smite the earth with a curse (Mal. 4:5, 6)? Did not John see the remnant keeping the commandments of God—most of which have direct reference to the home?

By observing the Sabbath we have ascended to the high places of the earth (Isa. 58:14). By returning tithe we have had the windows of heaven opened upon us (Mal. 3:10). By caring for our bodies we do enjoy superior health and longevity (3 John 2). We are redeemed not only spiritually but socially, and for that we thank God. And we can, if we will, use this miracle of grace to inspire our children, to invigorate our church, and to guide our witness as we individually and collectively go forward as contemporary fulfillment of God's design that "they without us shall not be made perfect."
**1878**

Charles Kinney, born a slave in Richmond, Virginia, accepts Seventh-day Adventist teachings from the preaching of Ellen G. White and John Loughborough in Reno, Nevada. He attends Healdsburg College and is the first Black SDA to become an ordained minister in the SDA Church. He suggests the concept of Black conferences when confronted by efforts to segregate him and his members at camp meeting on the day of his ordination. He suggests Black conferences as a way to work more effectively among Black people and to help deal with the racial tensions in the church.

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**1945**

Jubilee

**1946**

Oakwood Industrial School begins operations. Oakwood becomes a junior college in 1957 and a senior college in 1944. It is estimated that 85 percent of the Black SDA leaders have spent some time at Oakwood College during their educational careers. C. L. Moran becomes the first Black president in 1932. Benjamin F. Reaves is the current president.

**1951**

Riverside Sanitarium, the first Black SDA medical facility, is founded in Asheville, North Carolina, under the direction of Nelle DuBrell. The sanitarium expands to a hospital in 1957. Many famous, wealthy African Americans visit for treatments. The hospital is placed under General Conference management in 1956. Further expansion includes the purchase of 46 acres adjacent to the property in 1947. A modern hospital building is constructed in 1963. Riverside Hospital is sold in 1983.

**1969**

The Negro Department of the General Conference is formed. The department is created by the General Conference in 1963, with the growing issues of the Black work. W. H. Green becomes first head of the department. His successors are G. E. Peters, R. L. Peterson, C. E. W. Moses, H. D. Singleton, and W. W. Fordham. The name changed to North American Colored Department in 1941, and changed to North American Regional Department in 1953; the department is discontinued in 1978.

**1973**


**1974**

Office of Regional Affairs in the Pacific Union Conference created, with F. L. Peterson as its first secretary, 1,300 Black members in the union at this time. Ezra Wendinghall is the current director.

**1985**

The first Black SDA church at Edgefield Junction, Tennessee, is established by Harry Love, a former Baptist preacher.

**1895**

Edson White, son of James and Ellen White, and Will Palmer begin to evangelize Black people via the Navigator Morning Star. They land in Vicksburg, Mississippi.

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*Message. Special Supplement*  
Baker, Delbert W., and Charles E. Dudley

*About Regional Conferences*
Although generally it is discharged when it is discovered that the patient is Black, transferred to Freedman's Hospital, she is pronounced dead on arrival. This incident, along with others, stirs black leadership and laypersons to press the General Conference to act to ensure that such discrimination and unequal treatment does not occur again in church institutions.

The incident galvanizes the cause of the Committee for the Advancement of Workable Negro Among Colored Seventh-day Adventists. Among the prominent Black clergy signing an eight-page set of demands from the committee to the General Conference is Eve B. Dykes, the first Black woman in the United States to complete the requirements for a Ph.D.

Three principal demands are: (1) integration of Adventist institutions; (2) greater Black representation at all levels of denominational administration; and (3) greater accountability from denominational agencies of Black members' financial contributions to the church.

Black membership in the Seventh-day Adventist Church comes to 50,000.

The General Conference Committee approved Regional Black self-governing conferences. J. G. Darant from the General Conference President, informs representatives of the committee that integration of the SDA church on the scale desired by the committee is impossible to achieve.

1943

Allegheny Conference is organized with 4,000 members; J. R. Wagner elected first president. Divided into Allegheny East and West in 1967.

1945

Lake Region Conference becomes the first Regional conference, with 2,330 members; J. G. Darant elected first president.

Current membership: 21,776
President: Norman Miles
Churches: 84

1946

South Atlantic Conference is organized with 3,356 members; H. B. Singleton elected first president.

Current membership: 24,926
President: Ralph Peay
Churches: 139

1947

Southwest Region Conference is organized with 1,959 members; H. W. Farham elected first president.

Current membership: 15,843
President: Robert Lister
Churches: 86

Northeastern Conference is organized with 6,403 members; L. H. Blaisd elected first president.

Current membership: 40,946
President: Bennett Brooks
Churches: 116
ADVENTIST PREACHERS ON BLACK MINISTRY:

No lack of Regional Conferences came to life and power in the need to evangelize 30 million Afro-Americans. They have permitted the expansion of the abilities and exposed the genius of dormant talents. If we were just confined to pulpit preaching, we would never know how to balance budgets and set strategies for the finishing of the work among Blacks.

ERIC C. WARD
Pastor

There is a tremendous need and interest in Blacks working for Blacks. There is very little that people of other races can do for us because of the current social climate. We have a special way of presenting the truth, different from other people. We can get closer to our own folks. However, where there is not a Black evangelist, people who are looking for truth will still seek it.

C. HEVRI
Former Missionary to Ghana, Veteran Evangelist

Lack preaching is warm, dynamic, and sincere. It starts from a base of faith. Black preachers have a God-given gift of imagery. They can paint a picture while maintaining the substance that satisfies hungry, longing hearts. Because this is the everlasting gospel, I almost fear innovation. Truth does not change. I would like to see us use the illustrative material from the news of the day. I would like to see us keep our message positive and Christ-centered.

CHARLES D. DOUGLAS
Evangelist; Director, Breath of Life

Lack theology is very practical because it has had to deal with the suffering and oppression of its people. Adventist ministers have taken concepts that were clearly developed in the minds of Caucasian males and made them exciting, even palatable, to their listeners while they are in the midst of suffering.

The system that necessitated formation of the regional conferences still exists today. We wholeheartedly believe in an Inclusive ministry, however. Our church is making a big mistake in not drawing upon the talents and abilities of all people. The greatest innovation would be to become one church and one conference.

HYVETH WILLIAMS
Pastor; Boston Temple SDA Church

He Black work will and must continue. The evidence of our continued growth proves that we have found the formula. Our function is simply to make every man and woman a “Harriet Tubman.” Like her, we have a mission to free the oppressed and rescue our people from slavery, whether it be spiritual, physical, or mental. We have to lead them to the Promised Land.

CALVIN WATKINS
Personal Ministries Director, South Atlantic Conference

MESSAGE Special Supplement

Contributors: Delbert W. Baker, Ph.D., is an administrator at Loma Linda University. He is formerly a pastor and editor of Message Magazine. Charles E. Dudley, is the former president of the South Central Conference of Seventh-day Adventists.

FRAN-THEOLOGY AND RACISM

African-American preachers are true descendants of the Old Testament prophets, who thundered millennia ago against injustice. He or she features a this-worldly and an other-worldly salvation synthesis that brings deliverance to captives. They energize lifeless theology and dead dogma with a powerful electrical charge. The African-American preacher arouses congregations from lethargy, purges despair, cleans anguish, and revitalizes spindles with the gospel’s intoxicating elixir.

BARRY C. BLACK
First Black SDA Fleet Chaplain, United States Navy

The leadership roles are not volunteered to Black folks in the SDA Church, and unfortunately, I see a surrendering, a losing, of the things we’ve fought for the past 30 to 40 years. Our folks are selling out, not thinking of those who come behind us, and that’s bad.

We’re giving up our historically Black institutions—Riverside Hospital, Sadley Memorial Hospital. In doing away with those institutions, we’re doing away with leadership roles for Blacks.

CHARLES E. DUDLEY
Former president, South Central Conference of Seventh-day Adventists

The Black experience in North America leads Black people to identify more fully with Christ’s experience. Having gone through what Christ went through in a measure, our preaching takes on the color of crucifixion and resurrection, of oppression and suppression, and resiliency.

E. EBBE CLEVELAND
Veteran Evangelist

The system of Regional conferences allows the conference to focus on their own target group. But we cannot zero in on our responsibility to the exclusion of others. The church is a single body. There is no part of the church that operates without reference to the total church. The African-American regional leaders in the church have had this unusual experience and this heavy responsibility; it is a pity when their expertise is denied the rest of the body.

CHARLES E. BRADFORD
Former president, NAD; Evangelist
REGIONAL CONFERENCES

For your Information:

This chapter will introduce you to great aymen who loved their church and how working within constituted authority with great leaders within the church, they helped effect a great change. You will know more about them and their work if you look up these terms.


James O. Montgomery usually wore a smile; he saw the humor in life; his wit was quick and his laughter stimulating. But he was not smiling this Sabbath morning October 16, 1943, as he stood in front of the pulpit of the Ephesus (now Du Pont Park) Church in Washington DC. As Elder T.M. Fountain stood to dismiss, Montgomery declared, “Think it not strange! Yes, I think it very strange that there is an adventist college (Washington Missionary, now Columbia Union) nearly to which I cannot send my children. Yes, I think it is strange! A denominational cafeteria in which I cannot be served, and now this incident - I think it mighty strange!” (1)

The strange event to which Montgomery referred was that Brother Byard, long time member of the Linden Boulevard Church of Springfield Gardens, New York City, a light skinned mulatto had taken his wife, Lucy, also very light skinned to the denomination’s Washington Sanitarium and Hospital, Taloma Park, Maryland, to which she was being admitted. When Byard’s true racial identity was secured by writing rather than by appearance, he was told a mistake had been made and his wife wheeled into a hallway. Calls were placed to various hospitals and Mark Cox, native Washingtonian, Loma Linda graduate interning at Freedman’s Hospital remembers with chagrin welcoming Sister Byard to Freedman’s. (2) She died shortly thereafter of pneumonia, whether contracted while waiting in the hallway of the Sanitarium, as hasty rumor put it, eternity alone can tell. (3)

To quiet the Ephesus Church, upset by her removal from the sanitarium, Elder W.G. Turner, Australian, and President of the North American Division, although forewarned by G.E. Peters of the Calibre of the membership, came to attempt pacification. He chose his text 1 Peter 4:12, “Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you.” He had hardly sat down when Montgomery placed his violin in the seat he occupied near the organ, faced the
congregation, delivered his speech saying among other things, "I am not prepared to hear you say Servants obey your masters, meaning the General Conference is our master."

After service a select group gathered around him. Ephesus, New York, has long been known as the largest Negro church, but Eshesus, Washington D.C., as the sophisticated one; it was proven by the composition of the committee formed by this group. Joseph T. Dodson, chairman, operated his own funeral limousine service and at one time, with Union conference approval, pastored the church for one year. Alma James Scott vice-chairman, was founder of the first social settlement house among Negroes in the entire world. Willie, Dodson's wife, was working toward her Ph.D. in psychology and principal of a Washington, D.C., Junior High School. Mrs. L.B.D. Cox was critic teacher in the public schools, but she quit the next day so as not to jeopardize her son. Mark who was planning a denominational career. Helen Suggs grew up under the pastorate of Lewis C. Sheafe, who sought Negro conferences in the teens and was public school teacher par excellence. Eva B. Dykes was the first Seventh-Day Adventist Negro and Negro woman in the world to receive a Ph.D. and Varie Justiss, corresponding secretary would soon be the Second Negro Seventh-Day Adventist to receive a Ph.D. Allen A. Anderson was just beginning his career as systems engineer which would lead him to Division Chief in the government. Brother Daniels represented the laity of the First Church as recording secretary. Later, Laetitia Gillis joined him as treasurer. It was Alma J. Scott, Settlement House founder of international repute, who gave the immediate direction to the committee. As president of Howard University Alumni, when Marcella Johnson was under attack, she had organized the alumni worldwide overnight. She proposed the Black constituency be come likewise.

The group by strange coincidence met that same night in the back room of Dodson's Book Store that was destined to be the first office of the Allegheny Conference. They passed the hat to help on the telephone bill and began calling various persons to apprise them of their actions, viz: J.G. Dasey, New Orleans, Anna Botterps, Nashville, Tennessee, O.A. Troy, Pasadena, California, and I.H. Bland, Baltimore.

These-agreed to have their names placed on a letter head. Because several persons outside the United States were contacted the committee named itself "The National Association for the Advancement of World-Wide Work Among Colored Seventh-Day Adventists." Elder J.H. Wagner, colored secretary of the Columbia Union, accepted the position as Advisor and the meeting closed officially after Elder J.L. McElhaney, President of the General Conference agreed to meet the Committee at the General Conference Office Building the next day, Sunday, October 17, 1943. Dodson was chosen to present the work of the committee.

Doctor Valerie Justiss Vance remembers that Mrs. Dodson could find only twenty sheets of bond paper. Albert Burgess was aroused out of bed past midnight and asked to print the letter heads. It was almost morning time the next day before Dr. Vance had completed and mailed out letters to a chosen list of individuals. W.G. Turner noted the absence of certain names and inquired concerning them. Dr. Cherry of Pittsburgh even came to town shortly saying he had been called and asked what he knew about it. Because of Elder McElhaney's promise to report all the proceedings to the General Conference Committee and the very pointed discussion, the Committee counted the visit a success, as also was a longer one Sunday, October 31, 1943.

The Committee for the Advancement of World Wide Work among Colored Seventh-Day Adventists had joined counter to its stated objective of complete integration and certainly without the historical intent, that group of Negro Churchmen who through the years had thought a separate organization was the answer to the color question. There was one difference, they were lawyers, the others had been ministers.

On the 3rd of May, 1922, Elder J.K. Humphrey was invited to preach at the General Conference session. At one part of his sermon he said:

In 1905 a brother came to my house and urged me to cut loose from the Seventh-Day Adventist denomination. That man was about twenty years my senior. I flatly refused to do it ... That brother went away and the next thing I heard of him, he had written a letter to the General Conference, withdrawing from this denomination. There is nothing to his movement today. Since that time others, white and black, have apostatized and come to New York City and endeavored to split that large church in two.

No doubt, the first person he mentioned was Lewis C. Sheafe, who pastored at 10th and V Streets in North West Washington D.C. In 1907, Sheafe turned in his credentials to A.G. Daniels, President of the General Conference and the church went with him. Elder Sheafe returned bringing the church back with him and almost immediately was sent to pastor in Los Angeles. By 1917, he had returned East and was preaching in "first day churches" in Kansas City. John Manns visited J.K. Humphrey after he and the conference differed in Savannah, but the two came to no agreement.
Elder J.H. Wagner, Colored Secretary for the Columbia Union Conference, apprized the Committee of the most recent attempt to secure Negro conferences with which he quite correctly equated their ultimate end from the very beginning. When W.H. Green died suddenly in October of 1928 his position as Colored Secretary was not filled immediately, partly due to a memorial from the colored ministers “that the only way to improve the work among Negroes of the country is to organize colored conferences, whereby the colored people may handle their own money employ their own workers and do so develop administrative ability and all cultural lines of work ... to organize Negro conferences that would function in exactly the same relation to the General Conference as the white conferences.” (9) After a thorough discussion it was decided to appoint a Negro commission of eleven whites and five Negroes to study the financial income, numerical strength, and territorial division. J.K. Humphrey alleged that the committee met without Negro members and then asked them in a meeting just prior to the Autumn Council in Columbus, Ohio to rubber stamp the actions of the whites who had decided it was not time for a colored conference. The commission alleged that it had sent Humphrey letters, and he had fled unseen. As many of the discussions concerning the Negro work occurred in ad hoc committees it is difficult at times to find the records.

When the report was given to the Colored brethren at the 1930 General Conference session in San Francisco, a young minister was heard from for the first time. C.F. Mosely, later a field secretary of the General Conference, remonstrated against the report but was silenced by elder ministers. (10) But J.H. Wagner was referring to more than this when he counseled the committee March 7, 1944. He told them they were following the right tact that of allowing everyone, students, ministers, workers, to know what was happening. The mistake of 1930 had been that the involvement had not been broad enough. At that time the General Brethren had taken the ministerial memorial to the leading lady who had said that they didn’t know a thing about it and that it was the program of a few men who wanted to sit behind swivel chairs. “So keep the minsters with you,” was his counsel. (11)

This corroborates an earlier talk to the committee by G.E. Peters, who had felt the need for a stronger organization since 1929. From his office, however, he was getting several points of view. Some ministers were writing in against the organization, mainly, he thought, because it was new to have lattley lead out. One secretary in the Southern Union had even written his opposition in to the General Conference. California didn’t go along with the idea either. He felt that Elder McElhaney was fair, but be careful for he felt that the committee might be forcing its way. (12)

G.E. Peters was right; it certainly was the Committee and much of the forcing was done by the Secretary, Valarie Justiss Vance. This brilliant young woman called by Lucy D. Sbow, Dean of Women at Howard University one of the brainiest black students produced by the University, worked all night that first memorable Saturday night, put through calls, wrote the letters, and helped shape the agenda. It was her assiduousness as corresponding and recording secretary that activated the cohesive momentum that pressed home the issue. Her kinestico coupled with the sagacity of Alma J. Scott, planning ability of J.T. and Willie Dodson was just the right combination for just such a task.

The General Conference Committee voted to call in the Negro Union Departmental men and pastors of the leading churches from all over America in order to discuss the problem at a special meeting during the Spring Council April 8-19, 1944. J.T. Dodson and A.V. Pinckney because of bereavement of the committee treasury paid their own train fare to Chicago taking a supply of their “Agenda,” an eight page pamphlet entitled, “Shall the Four Freedoms Function Among Seventh-Day Adventists?” Its flawless printing was again the work of Albert Burgess, brother to Monroe Burgess. A. Pinckney school teacher and NAACP leader had been added after his stand had been ascertained by Dodson his wife and Miss Justiss.

During Sabbath School, while Dodson was sitting with the delegates in Shiloh Church, it occurred to him that he and Pinckney were not authorized to attend the meetings. Finding Pinckney, Dodson with him bravely the blustery winds to the Stevens Hotel roof auditorium and called Elder McElhaney from the rostrum of the white delegates. They were told to check with Elder W.H. Robbins, President of the Columbia Union. They found Elder Robbins in his room, and he suggested they meet him fifteen minutes before the 7:30 p.m. meeting. When they arrived on time he said, “You’ll have to get someone else represent you.” He had been unable to secure entrance into the meeting for them. Dodson asked if he might see Elder McElhaney before the meeting began and with Robbins’ affirmation they approached Elder McElhaney, who received them warmly and asked pointed questions about the agenda they presented to him. Finally he said, “Well, we’ve been talking a half-hour, and if you wish to stay to the meeting I’ll convene a General Conference Committee meeting and take a vote on it.” Pinckney recounts that to his amazement he saw it was 7:55 p.m. and the room filled with delegates. Feeling they might lose the vote and that McElhaney held the key to their success, they demurred, thanked him profusely, quickly passed agenda to members of the committee, and left. As they passed out of the door, F.L. Peterson spoke out, “Those two influential men ought to be allowed to stay to the meeting.” (13)
In the meeting that followed Elder McElhaney was so successful in fielding questions with answers that Dodson and Pinckney and the agenda furnished that the basic need of a different type organization for the Negro work, that of Negro conferences was evolved and not the integration of white conferences asked for by the agenda. The General Conference Committee of course would have the final recommendation.

G.E. Peters remembered his consternation the next morning to find Elder McElhaney absent and someone else in the chair. He was told the president was ill. Peters asked the song leader to sing an extra song or two until he returned and went at once to Elder McElhaney’s room. The elder was in bed; nevertheless, Peters informed him that if anything should go wrong in this meeting, and no program made for the colored work, he didn’t see how Elder McElhaney could ever face the colored constituency again and he was sure that he, G.E. Peters, never would. Elder McElhaney said very earnestly, “If you feel that strongly, then ill as I am, I’ll chair the meeting.” They walked down the stairs together.

The Secretary of the Colored Work has not been overacting in the foregoing drama. Many pressures were bearing down upon him the least of which was a movement among young people northeast and northwest called the National Association for the Advancement of Advent Youth. It resulted from the pooling of three distinct movements in Chicago, Detroit, and Pittsburgh. The central uniting theme was the acceleration among the conferences in the renting and purchasing of Jr. camp sites during the ‘30’s and ‘40’s and the segregated policy that denied access to these camps and their facilities to Negro youth in the conferences.

In the Chicago area Elder Thomas Allison fielded the sticky problem by purchasing a farm near Cassopolis, Michigan. There near the shores of Paradise Lake he set up a Jr. camp that for several years was the gathering place for Negro youth from around the country. While it partially satisfied the social and educational needs its primitiveness pointed up the discrepancies between it and the conference sponsored Illinois Youth Camp. Responsible young people in the Shiloh Church, Herron Clayton, Michael Blanchard, Avis Graham, Valarie Justiss, Roland Barton and John Green, Jr. were quick to point this out. They argued the pros and cons time and again at Narve ne Joneses home which was the common meeting place.

At the other end of Michigan Ave. at the Hartford Church in Detroit, J.E. Johnson, fresh from Washington, D.C., where he had established a “y” program for the Ephesus Church and a name for himself as a young people’s man, wrestled with the same problem. Under the leadership of Don W. Hunter the Michigan Conference had rented an island camp site but there was a “restricted covenant.” The Pioneer Club of the Hartford Church reacted. The president, Jonathan Roache, members Bert Williams, Addison Prince, Rothaker Childs, Smith, the Cantrells, E.Z. Watts, and V.B. Watts, Clarence Benjamin, Henry Hammond, and I, remonstrated with Elder Johnson to the effect that he approached Taylor G. Eunich, president of the Michigan Conference. A campsite near Ann Arbor, Michigan, Camp Norcom was rented for the Detroit area Negro youth with Elder Johnson as Camp Director and I as his assistant.

Perhaps these groups and their endeavours might have remained isolated incidents had it not been for the penchant of Adventist youth to travel. Jonathan Roache was called to prinicipaship of the Baltimore Berea Academy by L.H. Bland. Roache meeting with the other church school teachers found that a group in Pittsburgh was deeply concerned over the youth-educational plight and discussing the feasibility of a Negro educational secretary in the Negro Department. Their leader was none other than fiery, progressive W.W. Fordham who a decade earlier had helped effect a far-reaching change in the educational policies of Oakwood College. More recently he had won national notice in the drive to build the Center Ave. Branch of the Pittsburgh Y.M.C.A. Now, he, his wife Maybelle, the church school teacher, Mildred Evelyn, Celeste Joy, the Mosbys - Ruth, Simon, Lillian and the ever-militant John Green, Jr., began constructive thinking about a national youth organization.

Through letters and phone calls a meeting was set up in Detroit in the summer of 1941. Elder Monroe A. Burgess fresh from his evangelism in Petersburgh Virginia where he had won many converts and the beautiful Willa Mae Herbin as a wife was the speaker. Elder A.W. Petersen MV Secretary of the General Conference was asked to attend as was G.E. Peters of the Colored Department. Herman Clayton was elected president and Mildred Evelyn, secretary of the National Assn. for the Advancement of Adventist Youth. Then in the future meetings in New York, A.W. Petersen, speaker; Pittsburgh, W.W. Fordham, speaker; Baltimrre, T.M. Fountain, speaker, and under the new president Jonathan Roache they pressed toward the training of a person to fill a new General Conference office as Youth Secretary of the Colored Work.

This was one group the Secretary of the Colored Work knew he dare not face unless he could report progress in some quarter.

Jay J. Nethery, President of the Lake Union Conference, had persuaded the brethren it was time for cooped conferences in a separate meeting. On April 10, 1944, the General Conference Committee voted:
We recommend

1. That in unions where the colored constituency is considered by the Union Conference Committee to be sufficiently large, and where the financial income and territory warrant colored conferences be organized.

2. That these colored conferences be administered by colored officers and committees,

3. That in the organization of these conferences the present boundaries within each union need not be recognized,

4. That colored conferences sustain the same relationship to their respective Union Conference as do white conferences.

(Decision of the Spring Meeting of the General Conference Committee, April 15-16, 1944 p. 15-16.) (16)

J. L. McElhaney asked Dodson to disband his committee which he did with reluctance.

Perhaps it was due to Jay Nethery's faith in his own program that the Lake Union Conference piloted the way, voting to adopt the General Conference recommendation July 17, 1944. A special meeting of the colored constituency was called to meet in the Shiloh Church in Chicago, Illinois. W.H. Branson chaired the spirited meeting with the laity offering many challenges. Brother A. B. Thomas, businessman and soul winner in Chicago, argued that Negroes were not like Europeans and needed no conferences. Avis Graham and I answered with the argument for job opportunities and experience. The ayes carried, and the conference was accepted. The General Conference proposal for president was J. L. Morar, but Avis Graham and other young folks, apparently enamored with college administration, met the committee and his name was replaced by Peterson, roy, and others. At last a committee was sent out to select all personnel except a conference president, it being hoped that this delaying tactic would forestall the formation of the conference.

From the extreme east rear of the auditorium where happened next as viewed from the Michigan delegation there appeared in this wise. The secretary of the committee began to read his report in a normal clear voice, "Charles E. Galley, Secretary-Treasurer, Virgil Gibbons, Publishing Secretary, W.J. Kingsley, Missionary Secretary and Educational Secretary, L.B. Baker, Book and Bible House," then in an almost inaudible voice, "and J. Gershon D. D. President." The Indiana delegation had moved and seconded it from the front row while those in the rear were still calling, "Mr. Secretary, we don't hear you." The ayes again carried and Elder D. D. was ushered to the platform to make a few remarks. Order never was completely restored, and the meeting ended in confusion. (17) W.H. Branson, Jay J. Nethery, T.G. Bunch, and H.J. Kooiker left almost immediately, and J.G. D. D. was left with a most uncertain constituency. Fred N. Crowe was selected Sec'y-Treas. temporarily, but served 1945-1960. Miniam Christian was appointed first office secretary of a colored conference.

On October 3, 1944, the Negro constituency of the Atlantic Union Conference met in New York City to organize the Northeastern Conference. I.H. Bland, President; Lionel Irons, Secretary-Treasurer; Jonathan E. Roache, Missionary Volunteer and Educational Secretary; James J. North, Home Missionary and Sabbath School. They moved into temporary quarters on 127th Street until a building was purchased at 560 West 150th Street, off Broadway. Here a group from Ephesus formed a new church, City Tabernacle. The building also housed the Book and Bible House and the church school. (18)

A camp ground rear Elbertown, New York, and also near one of Father Divine's areas proved too rocky and was released in favor of another near Hyde Park, New York. Here in later years Elder Leon Davis maintained with the help of a diversified staff one of the finest youth camps in North America. Here also later was built the camp meeting pavilion, and now a nursing home is being operated.

Elder Irons died, and then Elder Bland began to suffer from a crippling illness. As did Moses, he took Willie Lee for his annon and carried on. Strange diseases were no stranger to him. He had often recounted how his oldest daughter, when a child, had caught spinal meningitis just about incurable at that time and had begun to bend with its progression; and how he knelt in prayer at her bedside praying far into the night to be awakened at bird song by the heaved child playing with his hair.

The constituency voted their confidence by re-electing him until the end. So passed one whom E.W. Straw, when head of the Theological Department at Emmanuel Missionary College, termed a most logical craftsman and master preacher. (19) One of the handsomest, gentle and understanding, beloved and charismatic ministers, evangelist and administrator the denomination has ever produced. He was followed by H.D. Singleton, a literal workhorse, quiet, observant, and administratively responsible for much of the large scale evangelism in the South. R.T. Hudson with imaginative programs and a voice just as big passed while preaching a funeral sermon. George Earle, present incumbent well-known and liked by all is over the fastest growing of all Negro conferences.
Who would think of Northeastern Conference without first thinking of the Ephesus Church? It was the outgrowth of company and church number 2 in Harlem. In 1904, it met in 134th Street with twelve members. Unlike Harlem Church Number One, which grew rapidly in the 20's under J.K. Humphrey, Number Two was not given a strong boost until about the time Elder Humphrey had founded the United Sabbath Day Adventists.

A little before the misunderstanding, the Greater New York Conference had called in Matthew C. Strachan to pastor the church now on 127th Street and help stem the tide. After the storm broke G.E. Peters, successful evangelist and Secretary of the Colored Department, was called. He almost immediately changed the name of the church to Ephesus and by his preaching drew such crowds into the newly purchased Harlem Academy Auditorium that the congregation rented a church and parsonage at 123rd and Lenox. Elder Peters set up the arrangements to purchase this edifice before he went to Philadelphia and subsequently returned to the Negro Department. Under T.M. Rowe the church was purchased. (20) It had grown to 1600 members by the mid 1950’s, when R.T. Hudson, the pastor, began a series on historical perspective. He invited in United Nation representatives and the church membership swelled to 2200 then to reportedly 2500 in 1969, when a fire gutted it. Symbolic of how Adventists could carry the gospel is that George Earle, Conference President, was notified of the fire via long-distance telephone from California, and he still arrived on the scene in New York simultaneously with much of the fire-fighting equipment. With Pastor Calvin B. Rock, recently called to the presidency of Oakwood College, the church enters the pastorate of Edwin Humphrey with a building program a necessity.

Northeastern Conference Statistics 1970:
Membership 13,695, Ministers, Churches 46, Tithe $2,705,532.33, Offerings $355,620.63, Institutions.

The Allegheny Conference was the third to be formed. A: a meeting in Philadelphia the General and Union brethren again met decided resistance from those who viewed separation as a forced segregation. Laymen especially from Pittsburgh, Elders T.M. Fountain, and Eric Dillet made strong speeches against the conference idea. The motion carried, however, and the name Sisquiahanna Conference was chosen. When G.E. Peters suggested it was too hard to spell, F.D. Robins reopened the floor, and “Allegheny” Conference was voted in. (21) J.H. Wagner, Columbia Union Conference Colored Secretary, was voted in as president. In ten years he was challenged only once and unsuccessfully by A.A. Arrington and the Cleveland delegation. J.L. Moran, still at Oakwood College, was voted Secretary - Treasurer with C.H. Kelty of the Columbia Union serving until he arrived. W.R. Robinson was Home Missionary Secretary; Monroe A. Burgess, Missionary Volunteer and Temperance; H.D. Warner Publishing, and Juanita Jones, Book and Bible House.

The first office was located in J.T. Dodson’s Book Store on Georgia Avenue across the street from the Miner Teachers’ College. Elder Wagner’s desk was the sink with a board across it so that during his travels Alta Williams and Florence Langford, the secretaries, could easily transfer his desk back to its original purpose. (22) The cause of this drastic poverty was that the Columbia Union had given a small sum to start the conference off and then taken back the major portion for bad debts, colporter, Book and Bible House, etc. A home was shortly purchased at 1209 Irving Street North East, and it was here Moran joined the staff, and Juanita Jones left.

It was Brother Walter Caution, who notified his pastor F.L. Bland of the availability of the Ritter Farm near Pottstown, Pennsylvania that the E. Pa. Conf. had already passed by, as a possible educational site. J.T. Dodson drove Elder Wagner and Elder Warner up for a look and after a committee of Brothers Burgess, Dobbins, Dodson, Laurence, Robinson, Warner, and Wagner voted to purchase it. Dr. Grace Kimbrough, Battle Creek physician who had helped young struggling Maian Anderson with money for music lessons, now helped the struggling conference by lending the money to bind the deal. Elder Wagner toured the churches of the young conference picking what he called the “Allegheny Spirit,” borrowing from them much of the purchase price repayable as the conference treasury dictated. (23) In 1946 as the Pine Forge Institute teachers arrived, they found not only a new school being set up but a new conference as well. Joe Davidson level eyed brick mason (level-eyed meant that most rare ability to go into a field and without surveying instruments set up a square, squared up building) sighted J.H. Wagner pegged and stretched the string to lay out the first local conference office building in North America to be constructed from the ground up. Previously Elders Wagner and G.E. Peters had assisted Elder W.A. Thompson in dedicating the Huntington West Virginia Church, the first church to be dedicated under complete Black supervision. (24)

One of the attractions of the new grounds was a hill adjacent to the property sheer Eysian in its projection. Unwittingly some have called it Elder Wagner’s hill because he mentioned it so often. But “Wagner’s Hill” was a name given to a long grade on the trail of the Great Miguas, Pennsylvania Route 202, that Elder Wagner’s 1942 Pontiac at times refused to climb in no other way than to be backed up!
H.T. Saulter replaced Prof. M. Harvey and A.V. Pinckney, Monroe Burgess as Educational and M.V. and with this team Allegheny Conference began to lead the other regional conferences as when Monroe Burgess working with the Home Missionary Department was the first to surpass the $100,000.00 mark in Ingathering. The literature evangelists with such men as L.C. Brantley, H.D. Warner, Virgil Gibbons, J. R. Britt, A.A. Arrington, George Anderson, C.D. Morris, Samuel Barber and C.N. Willis led not only the Columbia Union but the World Field.

Wagner leaned heavily upon the popularity, tremendous capacity for hard work, and extremely good mind of W.R. Robinson to help build up the conference. Robinson, a staccato evangelistic type preacher, sometimes traveled with Monroe A. Burgess, fluid, philosophic and spellbinding, and the two were unbeatable as ambassadors of good will. Sometimes H.D. Warner immaculately attired, driving the latest model Lincoln or Cadillac troupe shot in his suave and homey way. By this time the membership of near 13,000 was crowding it into the upper ten largest conferences in the North American Division. This successful growth during less than one-quarter century led to the division of the conference into East and West Allegheny.

It had been decided during the organization of the conference that because of the size of the territory when 10,000 population was reached to divide it. In 1962, when I became Missionary Volunteer and Temperance Secretary and realized the tremendous administrative burden, I began comparing the monthly reports and saw that Allegheny, west of the mountains, was capable of maintaining itself. I showed my breakdowns to Donald Simons, Home Missionary Secretary, and Aan Anderson, who confirmed my findings. W.L. Cheatham, who had succeeded J.H. Wagner as president, and remembered the organizational pronouncement, took it under advisement and on trips into Ohio explained the idea to the membership who found it acceptable. (25)

The Allegheny West Conference as it was called might well have chosen Cheatham as president as he was then dean of the Black conference presidents, an able administrator. They elected Walter Starks, experienced departmental man and evangelist, but he was shortly called to head the new stewardship program in the General Conference. Donald B. Simons was elected in his place and served until 1972 when Harold Cleveland was elected. Secretary Treasurers have been Aaron Brogden and James Washington Home Missionary, Samuel Thomas, Missionary Volunteer and Temperance, C.Lewis; Publishing Henry Freeman; Stewardship, Nelson Bliss.

Conference Statistics 1970: Combined Allegheny East and West
Membership 15,361, Ministers, Churches 84, Tithe $2,273,589.87, Offerings $263,319.74, Institutions.

Quite a bit of detail has been given of the development of the three above mentioned conferences, for the work was new ground. The next two conferences were the cradle of the Negro work and have been and will be covered in various other ways so that mere set-ups will be mentioned here.

In December, 1945, the Southern Union met to organize its mission department into Negro Conferences. The South Atlantic Conference included the eastern section of the mission field, i.e. North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, and Florida east of the Apalachicola River. There were 393 regular delegates and 19 at large. The officers elected were: H.D. Singleton, President, Home Missionary and Religious Liberty; L.S. Follette, Secretary-Treasurer; F.H. Jenkins, Educational and Missionary Volunteer; Richard Robinson, Publishing Secretary. (26)

Where H.D. Singleton was called to Northeastern Conference, J.H. Wagner came to South Atlantic. The Hawthorne Camp ground became a challenge of the Allegheny camp meeting, a new office building was erected and the building of modern churches given priority. Elder Wagner succumbed at Riverside just following the 1962 General Conference Session. Many ministers traveled cross-country to be at his funeral. His successor W.S. Banfield, continued an aggressive policy until called into the union in 1971.

The South Central Conference territory of North West Florida, Alabama, Mississippi, and Kentucky and Tennessee, which had seen the birth of four of the first five Negro churches was organized in December, 1945. Herman R. Murphy was President, V. Lindsay, Secretary-Treasurer.

The office was first located at 1410 Hawkins Street in Nashville, Tennessee, later in a renovated house at 1914 Charlotte Avenue, then in its present modern office building opposite the Riverside Sanitarium and Hospital. (27)

So much of the work of the conference has been and will be discussed further that only mention will be made that the denomination's only two Negro institutions, Oakwood College and Riverside Sanitarium are in this conference. Its early financial difficulties were straightened out by F.L. Bland, who was earning quite a name as a financier. W.W. Fordham increased evangelism. Fate then called C.E. Dudley to the presidency and under his leadership almost phenomenal progress has been made.
On January 1, 1947, in the Jefferson Hotel in St. Louis, Missouri the Central States Mission was organized with 798 colored members of the Central Union Conference forming the constituency. T.M. Rowe was elected president and J.H. Jones, Secretary-Treasurer with Robert E. White Publishing Secretary. Organization added greatly in membership from 798 to 1,408 in 1952. The state of Iowa with Des Moines Church had been added in 1948. When financial difficulties struck F.L. Bland was called in. J.H. Jones went to Union College and H.F. Sautler was called in as Secretary-Treasurer. On November 9, 1952 a constituency meeting held in the Beacon Light Church in Kansas City, Missouri, organized the Central States Conference with F.L. Bland President. H.T. Sautler, Secretary-Treasurer. Monroe Burgess was called in for Home Missionary; Xavier Butler for Missionary Volunteer. Churches established since then include those at Kinlock, a St. Louis suburb, Sikeston, Missouri; Junction City, Kansas; Kirwood Missouri, and Springfield, Missouri. Membership rose from 1408 in 1952 to 2,326 in 1961, the proportionate gain by profession of faith and baptism being second largest in North America. During practically the same period eight new church buildings were acquired or constructed including a $250,000.00 church in St. Louis, a modern stone structure in Omaha, and on May 25, 1968, the dedication of the Denver Colorado Park Hill Seventh-Day Adventist Church. Because of greater concentration of population the pattern of church school integration was not followed in St Louis anc an intermediate school was built there. In 1965 a new church building and a new elementary school building were erected in St. Louis and church homes purchased in Wichita, Kansas and Pueblo, Colorado.

There have been two memorable crusades in recent years. One was the "Contacts for Christ" program whereby laymen of St. Louis averaged 1,000 enlistments a month in Bible correspondence courses preparatory to "Voice of Prophecy" meetings. One hundred baptisms resulted. The 1964 summer Field School of Evangelism conducted by E.E. Cleveland. One-hundred-fifty were added to the Shreve Avenue Church.

On December 16, 1946, the colored constituency of the Arkansas - Louisiana - Oklahoma - Texas and Texico Conferences were combined and organized into the Southwestern Mission. The headquarters was at 3711 Oakland Avenue, Dallas, Texas with W.W. Fordham, President, V.L. Roberts Secretary - Treasurer and Home Missionary Secretary; J.H. Jones, Publishing Secretary; Helen Wiggins Beckett, Sabbath School Secretary. At the close of the biennial the membership was 1589.

On January 17, 1950, the Southwestern Mission constituency met in the Friendship Baptist Church in Dallas, Texas to hold its first biennial session. W.W. Fordham's report was so splendid that J.C. Kaelin Secretary - Treasurer of the South Western Union Conference, chairman of the meeting, took back to the Union Conference a motion to convert the organization to conference status. The officers were W.W. Fordham, President and Religious Liberty Secretary; V.L. Roberts, Secretary - Treasurer and Book and Bible House Manager and Press Secretary; C. C. Cunningham, Educational; Missionary Volunteer and Sabbath School and Temperance Secretary; and O. Dunn, assisted by his assiduous wife, publishing secretary.

Southwestern Conference Statistics 1970:

Membership 5,506, Ministers, Churches 56. Tithe $494,354.81, Offerings $61,254.36.

In 1945, T.M. Fountain, pastor of the Ephesus Church in Washington D.C. advertised as his Sabbath morning message a question deep in the hearts of many negro laymen, "Negro Conferences, are they of God?" Although as he was taking his text, J.H. Wagner, newly elected president of the recently organized Allegheny Conference, calmly took a seat on the rostrum, Fountain did not allow the high drama of the moment to distract him but continued his theme.

There is nothing as powerful as a great truth that has reached its maturity. The National Association for the Advancement of the Wide Work Among Colored Seventh-Day Adventists did not ask for Negro conferences either in their original presentation or in their agenda. They asked for complete integration. The time for what the Shaefes, Manns, Humphreys, and ministerial memorialists had asked for had finally come. J.T. Dodson framed it in these words to a Washington Post reporter twenty-seven years later:

They gave us our conferences instead of integration. We didn't have a choice. In the end it was better to have segregation with power, than segregation without power.

Regardless as to how one views the change from "principle of policy" to in J.T. Dodson's words, "segregation with power," the Negro work in North America has made great strides since 1944.

Negro Department Statistics, 1971:

Churches 459, Tithe $10,499,331.09, Inghah $802,685.48, Members 77,517, Offering $1,198,033.92, Local Church Funds $5,301,399.97.
How Do You Feel About It?
1. J.T. Dodson’s statement that Regional Conferences were “segregation with power.”
2. The work among Negroes has grown. What lesson is there in this for the church?
3. Should the next logical step to be taken, Black Unions? Is it the logical step?
4. Do Negro Conference officials have anywhere to go—“upward mobility”—when conference positions end?

Project

Secure from the White Estates the pamphlet “J.K. Humphries” also “?”, about the same person. What do you think he had in mind?

LIST OF REGIONAL PRESIDENTS

DO WE STILL NEED REGIONAL (BLACK) CONFERENCES?

by Helvius L. Thompson

Matthew 28:19 "Go ye therefore and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost."

Mark 16:15 "And He said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature."

1995 stands as a powerful, prodigious, and pivotal year for the 50-year commemoration and celebration of many important historical events that occurred in 1945.

This year marks the 50th commemoration of the end of the catastrophic Second World War on both the European theater, with the surrender of Germany in May of '45, and the Pacific theater, with the surrender of Japan in August of '45.

This year marks the sad 50th remembrance of the beginning of the atomic and nuclear age and the atomic bombing of Japan.

This year marks the 50th year celebration of the official establishment of the United Nations with its charter members.

But 1995 is also a significant year of celebration for African American Seventh-day Adventists. For this year marks the 50th-year, golden anniversary of the establishment of Regional or Black Conferences in the Seventh-day Adventist Church back in 1945. At this coming General Conference Session in Utrecht, Netherlands, there will be a commemoration and a booth display of the 50-year history and progress of Regional (Black) Conferences.

And so, in light of this important milestone for Regional Conferences and with the theme of Black History month, I raise the question, Do we still need Regional or Black Conferences?

Now the question may seem absurd, unnecessary, and uncalled for, especially since there are currently nine Black Conferences that are well established in the United States and the North American Division. Only in the Pacific Union and the North Pacific Union are there Regional (Black) Conferences.

My sermonic questior does not nearly have the impact or drama that it had in 1945 when Elder T.M. Fountain, then Pastor of the Epesus S.D.A. Church in Washington D.C., was opposed to the establishment of Regional Conferences, announced his subject one Sabbath morning, which was entitled, "Negro Conferences, Are They Of God?" What made this moment more tense and dramatic was that when he took his text and began his sermon Elder J.H. Wagner, the newly elected President of the recently organized Black Allegheny Conference, calmly entered the sanctuary and took a seat on the rostrum.

But why would we need to examine the question or explore this issue? It is because, recently, there are voices that are questioning the need for the continued existence of Regional Conferences. Some of these voices are heard from some of the higher leaders in the General Conference. And some of these voices are heard from Adventists, White and Black. Many Adventists today are embarrassed that in 1995 we still seem to be a segregated church, with Black and White conferences.

When the General Conference brethren tried to unite the racially divided church in South Africa, it was pointed out to the brethren that they still have Black and White Conferences in America.

One Black Adventist said that, "It seems strange that Martin Luther King worked all his life for integration, and Seventh-day Adventist Blacks have undone what he has accomplished and promote segregation against their White brethren."

Someone in California drew a silly cartoon that pictured a little Black boy coming home with a little white dog. When his mother saw him at the door with the white dog, she said, "Take that white dog back where you got him from, because we are in a Black Conference."

What has recently added fuel to the fire is the development in Southeastern California. A number of Black Pastors, Laymen, and Adventist churches voted to request of the Southeastern California conference and the Pacific Union Conference to be allowed to form the first Regional (Black) Conference in California and the Pacific Union. They have me: all kind of opposition from the brethren of the local, the Union, the Division, and the General Conference.

Voices Black and White have been raised condemning such an act. A few years ago, a White Adventist wrote in the Review and Herald, "A Regional Conference in the Pacific Union would be an embarrassing great leap backward for our church. We should be phasing out Regional conferences, not establishing new ones."

And that is the whole point. If it is wrong or inadvisable to establish a new Regional conference in California, then it is wrong to have Regional conferences anywhere else. Therefore, as the uncertain future of California Black Adventists hangs in the balance, and voices are being raised questioning the viability of the established Regional conferences, I think it is quite appropriate to ask, in 1995, do we still need Regional (Black)
First, I think it would be helpful to review how and why regional conferences were established in the first place. The reports of early Adventist history reveal that Black people were there in the very beginning of the Adventist movement.

Negroes such as Charles Bowls, John Lewis, William Still, and William Foy not only accepted William Miller's teaching on the coming of Christ, but they also helped to preach and spread the Millerite message. Later, when Adventists embraced the Sabbath truth in New Hampshire, Adventist pioneer O. Farnsworth said that negroes were among the first believers.

Scjourner Truth, famous outspoken Negro woman Abolitionist, attended the Millerite campmeetings and was associated with many well-known Adventist pioneer leaders. It was reported that she later joined the newly-organized Seventh-day Church in Battle Creek, Michigan and was baptized by Elder Uriah Smith.

In 1886, the first Black Adventist church was formed in Edgefield Junction, Tennessee from the preaching of Elder Elbert Lane in a segregated railway station. Later, in 1901, this little church hosted the first Black Adventist campmeeting.

In 1878, a young ex-slave was baptized into the church by John Loughborough. This bright young man was named Charles Kinney, and, after attending Heraldburg College, he became the first African American to be ordained as a Seventh-day Adventist minister in 1889. Elder Kinney was the first person to suggest the concept of Regional conferences when he was confronted by efforts to segregate him and his members at campmeeting on the very day of his ordination.

By 1890, there were about 50 Black Adventists in the South. That same year, a second Black Adventist church was organized in Louisville, Kentucky by Black Evangelist A. Berry.

In 1891, Ellen White, the Prophetic Messenger, challenged the church to send missionaries to the south with her impassioned presentation to the General Conference Session, "Our Duty to the Colored People."

It was her own son Edson White who answered the call. He and Will Palmer built a steamship named "The Morning Star," and began to evangelize Black people along the banks of the Mississippi. Finally, in 1894, they landed at Vicksburg, Mississippi, where they established a school.

A third Black Adventist church was organized in Bowling Green, Kentucky in 1891, and a fourth was established by Elder Charles Kinney in New Orleans, Louisiana in 1892. The fifth Black Adventist Church was formed in Nashville, Tennessee, in 1894.

As a result of Edson White's fruitful work and the urging of Ellen White, a school for Negroes was opened in 1896, in Huntsville, Alabama. It was named Oakwood Industrial School, and, by the 1940's, it became Oakwood College.

In 1904, the first Black Adventist church in New York City came into being. Two years later, in 1906, the first Black Adventist church in Los Angeles, California, was organized, that later became the University S.D.A. Church.

By 1909, the Black work had grown to the extent that the General Conference decided to organize the Negro Department, although strangely the first elected secretary was White. It was not until 1918 that the first Black man, Elder W.H. Green, was elected to head the Negro Department.

When Elder Green died suddenly on one of his trips due to overwork, Black Adventist pastors proposed to the General Conference that the Negro Department be replaced with Regional (Black) Conferences. But the White leadership would not support the concept and voted it down.

By 1910, the Black membership in the Adventist church had reached a thousand. But as the Black membership began to increase, with a more educated clergy and laity, Black Adventists began to demand equality, integration, and leadership positions in the church. There were two important incidents that led directly to the establishment of Regional (Black) Conferences.

1. In 1929, Elder J.R. Humphrey, outstanding pastor of the large First Harlem S.D.A. Church in New York City, began to formulate plans for the creation of Utopia Park. This grand facility was designed to serve the needs of Black people of that area, with plans for the construction of an orphanage, a nursing home, a training school, an industrial area, and a health care facility.

The Greater New York Conference and its White president reprimanded Elder Humphrey for purchasing property without conference approval. When Elder Humphrey refused to discontinue his Utopia Park Project, he was defrocked from the Adventist ministry and his entire congregation was disfellowshipped from the conference. They later formed the United Sabbath-day Adventist Church.

Elder Humphrey was not the only Black minister who was dropped from the ministry for trying to fight for equity and expand the ministry for Black people. Elder Lewis Shaefer and Elder John Manns were among many others.
who left the church or were dropped from the ministry because of racism and injustice.

2. However, the main tragic event that brought the final push for Regional conferences occurred in 1943, due to an unfortunate racial incident that happened at the Adventist Washington Sanitarium and Hospital in Takoma Park, Maryland.

Lucy Byard, a longtime Adventist member of the Linden Boulevard S.D.A. Church in Springfield Gardens, New York, became ill and was taken to the Washington Sanitarium, where she was admitted and placed in a hospital room.

However, Mrs. Byard was very light complexioned, being a fair mulatto. When it was discovered that she was really a negro, she was taken out of the room and wheeled into a hallway, waiting to be transferred to the Black Freedman's Hospital. Shortly, after being there, she died of pneumonia. But it was believed that her condition became worse, and may have caused her death, when she was placed in the drafty hallway of the Washington Sanitarium.

Understandably, Black Adventists were appalled and enraged. This had not been the only incident like this one at this hospital. Not only that, but Black Adventists were upset about the whole gamut of inequalities in the church; the racial quotas in White Adventist schools, the policy of segregation in the dining room of the Review and Herald, the lack of employment of Black people in church institutions, and the inequity of pay for black ministers.

However, this time they were determined to do something about it. A group of well-educated laity formed an organization called "the National Association of World-wide Work Among Colored Seventh-day Adventists." Interestingly, what they demanded was not Regional Conferences, but full integration in the church. To the General Conference President, they sent three principal demands:

1. The integration of all Adventist institutions.

2. Greater Black representation at all levels of denominational administration.

3. Greater accountability from denominational leadership in regards to the financial contributions of Black people to the church.

By now, the Black Adventist membership was nearly 20,000, and the tithe base had reached over $200,000.00.

Finally, these Black concerns were introduced at the spring council of the General Conference, held on April 8-19, 1944, in Chicago, Illinois. The General Conference President, Elder J.L. McElhenny, recognizing that integration of the Adventist Church on the scale outlined by this Black laity organization was impossible to achieve, proposed that Black conferences be organized and given jurisdiction over Black churches that were then in White dominated conferences, for increased self-determination.

Elder G.E. Peters, the Secretary of the North American Colored Department, still had to strongly urge for the endorsement and vote of the plan for Regional Conferences. At the final crucial meeting, Elder Peters had to get Elder McElhenny out of his sick bed for support of this historic decision. After it was presented, the White Lake Union President gave a speech in support of it, and the historic resolution for the establishment of Regional (Black) conferences was finally voted into being.

It authorized union committees that where colored constituency is considered to be sufficiently large, and where the financial income and territory warranted it, the Union Conference could organize separate conferences for the colored membership. These Regional conferences were to be administered by colored officers and committees.

And so, it came to pass. The Lake Region Conference was the first Regional (Black) Conference established. It was voted into being on September 26, 1944 in Chicago, Illinois, with Elder J. Gershon Dantès being elected the first President. The new Regional conference began operation in the beginning of 1945.

On October 3, 1944, the Second Regional conference was the Northeastern Conference, which became the largest Regional conferences. It was organized in New York City, with Elder Louis H. B. and being elected its first President, and it too began operation in 1945.

The Allegheny Conference became the third Regional conference organized in 1945, in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Elder J.H. Wagner was elected its first President.

The South Atlantic Conference was the fourth Regional conference organized in 1945, in Atlanta, Georgia. Elder H.D. Singleton was chosen as its first President.

The fifth and last Regional conference organized between 1944 and 1945 was the South Central Conference in Nashville, Tennessee. This was the historic territory where the Black work had begun over fifty years before. Elder H.R. Murphy was elected its first President.
After only one year of the operation of Regional conferences, the Black membership had grown to over 20,000, and the Black tithe reached over a million dollars.

In 1947, the Southwest Region Conference came into being at Dallas, Texas, becoming the sixth Regional conference. Elder E.W. Fordham was elected to be its first President.

The last Regional conference organized in the 1940's was the Central States Mission in 1947, at Kansas City, Missouri. Elder T.M. Rowe was chosen to be the first President.

These seven Regional (Black) conferences continued to grow, until in 1967, the Allegheny Conference split into two separate conferences: the Allegheny East Conference at Pine Forge, Pennsylvania, with Elder W.A. Thompson as its first President, and the Allegheny West Conference, with headquarters in Columbus, Ohio, and Elder Walter Starks as the first President.

Fourteen years later, in 1981, the South Atlantic Conference gave birth to a new conference as it split. The Florida area of the South Atlantic Conference became the Southeastern Conference, with headquarters in Orlando, Florida. Elder James Edgecomb became its first President.

God has indeed blessed the growth of these Regional conferences with new churches, schools, housing projects, campgrounds, and nursing homes. While some White conferences have had to merge to remain viable and financially stable because of lack of growth, two Regional conferences have split and given birth to two new conferences because of the phenomenal growth. The future is yet to reveal if there will be further Regional conferences splits, or if the Pacific or North Pacific Union will establish new Regional (Black) conferences.

When Regional conferences were first organized in 1945, there were 15,008 members, and a tithe base of $1,384,543.00. In only five years, the membership more than doubled to 44,000, and the tithe tripled to over three million dollars. At the end of 1994 the Black membership of Regional Conferences was over 220,000, and the tithe was over ninety million dollars.

African Americans in Regional Conferences give more in tithe than any World Division, with the exception of the North American Division. In the North American Division, the tithe of Regional conferences represents 15.37% of the total tithe of the Division. And this does not include the tithe of Black members in integrated churches, or the tithe of Black Churches in White or integrated conferences. In fact, Regional conferences give more tithe than eight World Divisions combined. Indeed, God has blessed the work of Regional conferences, Black churches, and Black Adventists.

However, we must come back and answer the important question: do we still need Regional conferences? Are Regional conferences still viable and valuable to the church today? Have conditions and circumstances changed enough to make Regional Conferences obsolete? Does the existence of Regional conferences diminish the portrait and prospect of a united church? In 1995, with all the improvements to try and make the church racially balanced, do we still need the Regional conferences of the 1940's?

The affirming answer is, not only do we still need them, but they provide a unique and important role and function that the church still needs. They have been spiritually blessed by God with tremendous growth and expansion. And it would be disastrous to destroy something that is prosperous and blessed by God. Let me list seven important reasons why Regional conferences are still relevant and needed today.

1. We still need Regional conferences because of the special posture and position of the Black Church. As long as we have the Black church and Black churches, we will need Regional conferences. A Regional (Black) conference is merely an executive, administrative extension of the Black church. Because we have a representative church government and organization, the needs, plans, and direction of the local church are delegated to the local conference administration. Regional conferences have the freedom, authority, and empowerment to organize, unify, strengthen, plan, coordinate, and give directions for advancing the mission and the ministry of the of the Black church.

The Black church has always been a haven of hope for Black people suffering from the cruel injustice of racism and the residual scars of slavery and segregation. For years, it was the only place where Black people were accepted, respected, recognized, and encouraged. It was the place of comforting fellowship and expressive celebration for them to endure the oppressive storms of hate and hardship.

The African American Church of all denominations played a significant role in the progress, advancement, and accomplishment of Black people down through the centuries. It would not an exaggeration to say that African American culture was, to a great degree, developed and nurtured in the Black church. Social and economic solidarity was developed in the Black church. Political unity and empowerment began in the Black church. The unique art forms of Black music and the arts were developed in the Black church. Black leaders in many different fields emerged from the Black church. Even the birth of the civil and human rights movement began in the Black church with a Black preacher named Martin Luther King.
Some misguided Adventists, Black and White, have called Regional conferences "church-structured segregation." However, they fail to realize that there is a big difference between segregation and separation. Segregation is forced separation and degrading isolation. But voluntary separation is the freedom to choose or decide where you want to go and who you want to be with. Black conferences are no more segregated than your choice of which church you attend and hold membership in.

Though there are Regional conferences, there are White members in Black churches and Black members in White churches. There are Black students and teachers in predominately White Adventist colleges and White students and teachers at Oakwood College. And even more significantly, there are White churches in Black conferences and Black churches in White conferences. You have a choice. And by simply having that choice, you are not segregated by being in a Regional or predominately White conference, any more than you are segregated by joining a Black or a White church.

It would be wonderfully ideal if all Adventist churches were racially mixed and balanced without any racial, cultural, or language divisions; without any trace of racism, just as it would be wonderfully ideal if there were no sin in the church. But we do not have racially idealistic churches, with idealistic, perfect people. We do not have completely righteous churches, and neither do we have churches with a complete absence of racism.

If it would also be wonderfully ideal if Adventist pastors could be assigned to churches, regardless of their race or the racial dominance of the church. Our General Conference leaders and others must recognize and understand that as long as we have Black churches that minister in Black communities and Black ghettos, and as long as we cannot move pastors around regardless of the racial composition of the church, we still need Regional (Black) conferences, and we cannot do without them. Ellen White said, "The relation of the two races has been a matter hard to deal with, and I fear that it will ever remain a most perplexing problem. ... The time has not come for us to work as if there were no prejudice." (Testimonies, Vol. 5, pp. 214, 215)

Racism has even shown its ugly head in the Adventist Church in recent times. Integrated churches have become all or predominately Black, when Whites moved away because there were either too many Black members or too many Black church officers. At La Sierra Academy, it was reported that a White Bible teacher said about the Rodney King trial in Los Angeles, that he deserved that beating by the police, because he was Black. At Southwestern Adventist College a White Associate Professor wrote in the school’s paper that Black History month is a symbol of a new segregation. And there have been other racial incidents in predominately White Adventist churches and schools.
the heart.

Integration is not fair or adequate when it occurs is an unequal, inferior, and subordinate level. That is not integration; it’s tokenism. In order for integration to be fair and just, it must occur with individuals recognizing each other as equals. Just because black people are the minority in the North American church does not mean that the majority should take advantage of the minority, to impose the will of the majority.

Just to be integrated does not have real, substantive meaning if one side is subject and controlled by the other side, without due leadership representation and voice. One veteran Black Adventist leader said, “If you put a lamb in the same room with a lion, and tell them to integrate, when you come back later, you will find that the lamb is gone, but they are integrated.”

Regional conferences provide credible, elected, Black church leaders and administrators, who can sit at the same table with the same authority as White church leaders. Black church leaders can represent and speak on issues for their Black churches and Black constituents at church councils. They can request funds for evangelistic and educational programs for their conferences. If Regional conferences did not exist, there could be no elected Black leaders to solely represent Black churches and Black people. Hence, the Black Adventist work would be leaderless.

In fact, more than 90% of all Black Administrative leaders in the Adventist Church, on the local conference, union, Division, and General Conference levels, are products of Regional conferences. This is where they had the opportunity and privilege to hone their skills in administrative leadership. They would not be where they are, if it had not been for the opportunity to be an administrator, a conference departmental director, a conference treasurer, or a conference president. If they were in a predominantly White or integrated conference, they would not have the same number of opportunities.

4. We need Regional conferences with the freedom of self determination. Self determination allows Black Adventists to focus on the needs and problems of African Americans living in poverty, crime, and racism. Self determination allows for Black Adventists to manage and control the financial resources of Black churches, which determines the direction of ministry, and allows them the opportunity to direct their own future, progress, and growth. This gives Black Adventists a greater ownership and voice in the Adventist Church. It provides more employment opportunities for Black Adventists in the Church. And most importantly, it initiates programs to meet the needs of Black youth, who must deal with the vices of their inner-city environment.

The freedom of self determination gives Regional conferences the united ability to support Black institutions of the church, and develop new ones that can aid in the ministry to Black people. Oakwood College, Mensana, and the Breath of Life Telecast have proven to be invaluable assets to the educational outreach of the Black church. Without Regional conferences, the support, strength, and maintenance of these historic Black institutions would be minimal or nonexistent.

5. Regional conferences reflect what the Apostle Paul calls “unity in diversity.” He declared in I Corinthians 12:1-4-7,

“Now concerning spiritual gifts, brethren, I would not have you ignorant. . . . Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. And there are diversities of administration, but the same Lord. And there are diversities of operations, but it is the same God which worketh all in all. But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal.”

In this profound passage, the Apostle Paul establishes the Divine principle of unity in diversity. He first confirms the fact that there is oneness of unity in the Lord’s Church. It is a oneness of the Spirit, a oneness of the word, a oneness in Christ. This is the essential unity of the church. But there is diversity in this unity and variation in this oneness. There can be differences without disorder and variety without variance. The unified body can have connected divisions and still be unified.

Paul has established here a case for church organization that allows for different administrations and different operations in the church, to achieve the same mission and purpose of fulfilling the Gospel commission of Christ. The Ministry of Black churches and Regional conferences reflect this difference of administration, variety of ministry, and diversity of operation that is still within the unity and oneness of the church.

Many believe that Regional conferences bring unnecessary separation. But Regional Conferences are not separation from the main body of the church. They are merely an important extension of the church. They do not reflect a distinct disconnection from the unity of the church. Regional conferences embody that difference of administration and diversity of ministry given by the Holy Spirit, as outlined by the Apostle Paul.

Unity does not mean uniformity. God has given a diversity of gifts and differences of administrations for the spreading of the Gospel and the unity of the church. This unity in diversity is
often seen in nature. For example, the beautiful glory of rainbow is a united band of different colors of light. Each different color adds variety and diversity to the unity of the rainbow.

The Bible has many examples of this principle of unity in diversity. The Jochhead is composed of three Divine, distinct personages: Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, and these Three are one. God established Israel as twelve distinct tribes that formed one united nation. Jesus chose twelve apostles as the foundation of His church. The early Christian Church chose seven deacons to assist the Apostles with a unique ministry for the church. Even in heaven, we will see this unity in diversity. There are twelve gates to the Heavenly city. The Tree of Life bears twelve different kinds of fruits. God has created and ordained this principle of unity in diversity as a part of His perfect will. It operates in the Church as His way of making sure that the Gospel reaches all people.

6. Finally, the greatest reason why we still need Regional (Black) conferences is because of God’s plan for effective world evangelism. It is a plan to reach all the different nations, tongues, races, and peoples of the earth with the saving Gospel of Jesus Christ. However, it is the plan of God for every race, every tongue, and every people to primarily work to reach their own people, race, or tongue with the Gospel.

The Apostle Paul said in Romans 1:16,

"For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also the Greek."

Now the Apostle Paul was the Apostle sent to the Gentiles. But Paul said that the gospel should go to the Jew first. Why did he say to the Jew first, when he was the Apostle to the Gentiles? It was because he was a Jew. And though he was the Apostle to the Gentiles, he was still deeply concerned about his own race and people receiving the gospel first. He was first concerned about his own people and his own race. Paul is implying here that we should all be concerned about our own people and race receiving the gospel from us first.

Even our Lord Jesus had this same perspective and purpose. It says of Him in John 1:11,

"He came to HIS OWN, and His own received Him not."

When our Lord came to this world, He came to His own people. He was born a Jew, in a little Jewish village, to Jewish parents, and ministered, for the most part, to Jewish people. And even though they rejected Him, He still came to His own and was identified with them. If Jesus went to His own to minister, then we should go to our own with the saving Gospel of Christ.

Christ even gave the early church a specific, priority plan for world evangelism. He said in Acts 1:8,

"But ye shall receive power, after the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto Me both in JERUSALEM, and in all JUDEA, and in SAMARIA, and unto the uttermost part of the earth."

Notice that Christ instructed His followers to begin their evangelistic activities in Jerusalem, not in China or India or Africa. Start at home first, with your own people. Then go to your country. And after your have evangelized your own Jewish people in Jerusalem and Judea, then cross the tracks and go over to Samaria and witness to those of a different race and ethnic identity. Then, finally, go to every part of the earth and preach to all the people of the earth. But first start with your own race and people.

This is the plan and procedure that Christ has outlined for the spreading of the Gospel to all the world. This is the same plan for the Adventist church to follow, whether we be Black, White, Red, Brown, or Yellow; Negro, Caucasian, Hispanic, or Oriental. Start to evangelize your own people first; start with your own kindred and race: start with your own family and friends; start with your own!

I believe the wise admonition of Ellen White, the Inspired Messenger to the church, still applies today, when she said,

"Let the colored people work chiefly for those of their own race.

Let our colored brethren and sisters devote themselves to missionary work among the colored people.

Let colored workers labor for their people. . . . . . .

Let each company be zealous to do genuine missionary work for its own people."

(Testimonies, Vol. 9, pp. 206, 199, 210)

1. Mark 5:1-19, there is the remarkable story of Jesus casting out the demon from a possessed man among the tombs. On the morning after Christ and His disciples had crossed the Sea of Galilee, having come through a shattering storm that was calmed by the Master, a demon-possessed man rushed frantically upon them, screaming and shrieking, with broken chairs on his arms and legs.

11

14
The fearful disciples ran from him like little, frightened children before a barking dog. But Jesus stood calmly, unmove
d before this menacing madman, with commanding power. He cast out
the demons and set the demoniac free. After the man had been set
peacefully in his right mind, he bowed humbly before the Lord,
thanking Him for his demonic release and complete restoration.

Then he made an unusual request of Jesus. He said, "Lord,
you mean so much to me that I want to go wherever you go and be
with you all the time. I want to witness the miracles of your
ministry and hear your message of truth. I want to be one of your
disciples. Since you already have twelve disciples, Lord, let me be
your thirteenth disciple?" Jesus looked him in the eye and said,
"No, I don't want you to go with me. I love you and would
like to have you with me. I would be happy to have you as my
thirteenth disciple, but I have something bigger and better I need you to do
for me. What I need you to do is to,

"Go home to thy friends and tell
them how great things the Lord
hath done for thee, and hath had
compassion on thee." (Mark 5:19)

Jesus was saying to him, "I want you to go home to your
own people; go back to your own race; find the people of your own
ethnic heritage and tell them what great things I have done for
you. Show them that you are now clothed in your right mind. Let
them see that you are now drug-free, alcohol-free, and crime-free.
Let them see that you are now cleansed, changed, and converted.
Let them see what a wonderful change in your life has been wrought,
since Jesus came into your heart. Let them see that you belong to
Me, and even though you will not be with Me physically, you will
still be following Me. Don't worry about being with Me; just go
back and witness about Me to your own people, and I will be with
you. Son, go home to your own people."

Until we have done the job of taking the gospel to our own
people, we need the Black church, Black schools, Black church
institutions. We need Oakwood College, the Message Magazine, and
the Breath-Of-Life, and we need Regional conferences. We need them
all, until we have made an impact with our own people. There are
too many Black people who are in darkness, looking for the light.
There are too many in error, who are looking for the truth. There
are too many trapped in sin, who are looking for salvation. We
must lead them to Jesus before time ends.

But the good news is, before the end comes, God's people will
be united, and there will be no racial or ethnic barriers. The
Inspired Messenger said about the near future of race relations in
the church, "When the Holy Spirit is poured out, there will be a
triumph of humanity over prejudice in seeking the salvation of the
souls of human beings. God will control minds. Human hearts will
love as Christ loved. And the color line will be regarded by many
very differently from the way in which it is now regarded." (Testimonies, Vol. 9, p. 209)

One day, when the latter rain falls and the saints of God are
sealed with the seal of the living God, it will not matter what
race or color we are. Then, we will all love one another, share
with each other, and care for each other as Christ loves and cares
for us all. And when persecution breaks out upon the church, all
racial barriers will fall and the church will be perfected. Then
Christ will gather and unite His people, and they will be without
spot, wrinkle, or blemish, but holy and blameless before God, ready
for translation to heaven.

But until then, God is calling for us to finish His work in
the world and hasten His coming. I wonder how He can count on you and
me, to go to our own, minister to our own, and reach them with the
saving gospel of a dying, risen, and soon-coming Saviour before the
final end? If we will start with our own, He will empower and
equip us to carry the gospel to all races, all nations, all
tongues, and all people, and Christ will come.

love as Christ loved. And the color line will be regarded by many
very differently from the way in which it is now regarded." (Testimonies, Vol. 9, p. 209)
Separate Conferences—A Road to Fellowship

For America in the early 1940s, the news seemed all bad. At Pearl Harbor the Pacific fleet had been severely crippled, and Wake Island and Guam had fallen to the Japanese. Then came the agonizing defeat of U.S. forces in the Philippines.

On the domestic front, black districts in the large cities were seething with discontent six months before the Pearl Harbor attack. This was reflected by outspoken statements of ordinarily conservative black leaders, by editorials in the Negro press, and by inflammatory letters to the editors. Political observers were manifestly worried, fearing the resentment would burst into a social holocaust, perhaps to rival any ghetto riot the nation had known.

Typical of the anguished editorials was this statement in Harlem's Amsterdam-Star News:

"Where there was once tolerance and acceptance of a position believed to be gradually changing for the better, now the Negro is showing a 'democratic upsurge of rebellion,' bordering on open hostility."

This unrest had been brought to a head by, among other things, the frustration blacks experienced when they were routinely denied jobs in defense industries. One million and more Negroes were unemployed—but no longer did the black man have the cold comfort of the Depression, when white men too were unemployed. His had become a black fate. According to the 1940 census, there were 5,389,000 blacks in the labor force, 3,582,000 of whom were men. A government survey found that of 29,215 employees in ten war plants in the New York area, only 142 were blacks. In fifty-six war-contract factories in St. Louis, each employed an average of three blacks. Outside the National Youth Administration and Works Progress Administration programs, there were practically no provisions for blacks in the program of defense-employment training, despite the need for manpower and the increasing number of blacks on the WPA rolls. The United States Employment Service sent out an inquiry to a selected number of defense industries seeking information about the number of job openings and whether they would employ blacks. More than 50 percent stated flatly that they would not. In Texas, of 17,435 defense jobs, 9,117 were barred to blacks—and in Michigan the figure was 22,042 out of 26,904. Moreover, contrary to the assumption that blacks were barred only when they sought skilled work, no less than thirty-five thousand out of eighty-three thousand unskilled jobs were declared closed to black applicants.

Against this national backdrop of discrimination—with blacks being shuttled between employer and union, each claiming that the other discriminated—an unfortunate racial incident occurred at an Adventist hospital in Takoma Park, Maryland. Lucy Byard, a gravely ill black woman and a longtime Adventist from Brooklyn, New York, was brought to the Washington Sanitarium and Hospital (now Washington Adventist Hospital) for treatment. Fair-skinned, at first she was admitted, but later when admittance forms were scrutinized and her racial identity discovered, she was told a mistake had been made. Without examination or treatment she was wheeled out into the corridor and transferred across the State line to Freedmen's
Hospital, where she later died of pneumonia. This incident, along with another similar case where no death was involved, stirred the black constituency in Washington to demand that the General Conference act to ensure that such discriminatory and inhumane treatment of blacks would not occur again. Not only were black members concerned about admittance to hospitals, but the whole question of quotas in schools, lack of employment in church institutions, and a general absence of solicitude for them in the church were subjects of their protest. Press and pulpit played decisive roles, whipping up sentiment in their favor.

As an outcome, a group of laymen from Ephesus church (now Du Pont church, in Washington, D.C.) me: Saturday night, October 16, 1943, in the back room of Joseph Dodson’s bookstore and hastily organized the National Association for the Advancement of World-wide Work Among Colored Seventh-day Adventists. Joseph Dodson was elected as chairman and Alma J. Scott as vice-chairman. To arouse black members throughout the country, they made telephone calls and, after a quick printing of stationery, dispatched scores of letters. John H. Wagner, secretary of the colored department in the Columbia Union, acted as adviser. The group asked the General Conference president, J. Lamar McElhaney, to act immediately in addressing the issue of separate conferences for blacks. In the hope of preserving unity in the church, McElhaney introduced the issue at the General Conference Committee’s Spring Council held April 8-19, 1944, in Chicago.

At the hour appointed for the crucial session, McElhaney was in his hotel room, sick in bed. When he did not appear as scheduled, George E. Peters, spokesman for the black membership, arranged to delay the meeting while he talked with the president in his room. In spite of McElhaney’s illness, Peters urged him to get out of bed and make his appearance before the committee. Peters warned that it would be disastrous to fail the black constituency at such a crucial moment. He also convinced McElhaney that the black conference idea would be more acceptable to all—black and white—if it came from him. On the other hand, Peters said, if no solution to the problem emerged from this Spring Council, he didn’t see how McElhaney ‘could ever face the colored constituency again,” and he was sure that he, George E. Peters, never would.

Of all speeches made by white leaders in attendance that year, McElhaney’s statement represented perhaps the most for bright or the issue of separate conferences for blacks: “To me it is wonderful to see that the colored have large churches efficiently led and directed by colored men. We have some colored churches with more members than we have in some conferences. I think our colored men do a very good job. This gives me confidence in their being leaders. To say that a man could be a pastor of a thousand membership [church] but couldn’t direct a thousand membership if they were divided into conferences seems to me to be inconsistent in reasoning.”

Understandably, there were many fears associated with the introduction of a second church administration within the same geographic territory. Only the chief officer could allay those fears. McElhaney’s speech was followed by a strong supporting speech by Jay J. Nethery, Lake Union president, and the historic resolution passed. It authorized union committees “when the colored constituency is considered... to be sufficiently large, and where the financial income and territory warrant” the organization of separate conferences for the black membership. These conferences were to be administered by black officers and committees.

The plans were referred to the respective fields whose delegates composed the general meeting, and in a majority of cases the constituencies agreed to accept the decision recommended by Spring Council leaders. Plans were modified in the Pacific Union because local black leaders felt regional conferences would not be acceptable to the membership in the Far West. The Pacific Union was thus the only union with large black congregations that did not organize a separate administration for its minority membership.
Although it took the church nearly thirty years to accumulate three thousand black members, it took less than four years after reorganization to show an increase of more than 3,500 additional members. From 1944 to 1982 approximately 120,000 black American converts entered the Adventist Church by baptism or profession of faith.

The Seventh-day Adventist Encyclopedia, referring to the Regional Conference success story, commented that this separate administration, "though church leaders admit it is not ideal, has been responsible for an evangelistic penetration into the Negro community that had not been possible under the organization that formerly administered the work among the nation's Negro membership. The Regional conferences also have created more opportunities for leadership and other participation by gifted and trained Negro young people of the church, whose selection in the same or similar capacities had not worked out in the years prior to the formation of the Regional conferences. Another practical result has been that colored members of the SDA Church have been more readily and more naturally represented in elected offices and on boards and committees outside the Regional conferences than appears to have been true formerly."

The idea of a separate church jurisdiction composed exclusively of black converts within the territory of a predominantly white membership, was not new. Charles M. Kinney, the first black minister to be ordained in the Seventh-day Adventist Church, when confronted by efforts to segregate him and his members at camp meeting on the day of his ordination, suggested the black conference as a solution to this embarrassing encounter. The year was 1889, and Robert M. Kilgore, leader of the Southern district, had officiated in the ordination ceremony, which he said set aside Kinney "to the work of the ministry among his own people."

In a report to the Review and Herald Kilgore noted that the camp meeting had not been as well attended as he had expected. He gave several reasons for the poor turnout, but the main cause centered upon objections to the presence of black worshipers: "Another reason offered was the race question (the mingling of the colored brethren and sisters with those on the ground), the prejudices of the people keeping many away."

Kilgore suggested at a workers' meeting at the camp that blacks be separated from the rest of the audience. Kinney responded that such an arrangement "in the general meetings would have a tendency to destroy the unity of the third angel's message." He further declared the proposal to be one "of great embarrassment and humiliation."

Annexus that his members and future converts "not be driven from the truth" by an unofficial position of the church; on this question, Kinney discussed the matter at length with Kilgore and those gathered for the workers' meeting. Declaring his faith that the Advent message could remove all prejudice, Kinney, perhaps foreseeing the inevitable, made this recommendation, among others:

"Until there is enough to form a conference of colored people, let the colored churches, companies, or individuals pay their tithes and other contributions to the regular state officers, . . . that when colored conferences are formed, they bear the same relation to the General Conference that white conferences do."

Stirred by the provocative discussions and uneasy because Adventists had no definitive position on race relations, Kilgore brought the issue before the General Conference Committee in 1889 and led out in a resolution to establish a policy of segregated churches.

Ellen White chose what she considered to be the best platform to comment on this questionable arrangement. In 1891 she issued her appeal entitled "Our Duty to the Colored People," referred to in chapter 3. In this appeal she made reference to the 1889 meeting and the matter that she said had been presented to her a year before "as if written with a pen of fire." She gave these reasons for opposing the plan of action voted by church leaders:
"At the General Conference of 1889, resolutions were presented in regard to the color line. Such action is not called for. Let not men take the place of God, but stand aside in awe, and let God work upon human hearts, both white and black, in His own way. . . . We need not prescribe a definite plan of working. Leave an opportunity for God to do something. We should be careful not to strengthen prejudices that ought to have died just as soon as Christ redeemed the soul from the bondage of sin. . . .

"We need not expect that all will be accomplished in the South that God would do until in our missionary efforts we place this question on the ground of principle, and let those who accept the truth be educated to be Bible Christians. . . . You have no license from God to exclude the colored people from your places of worship. . . . They should hold membership in the church with the white brethren.

"Is it not time for us to live so fully in the light of God's countenance that we who receive so many favors and blessings from Him may know how to treat those less favored, not working from the world's standpoint, but from the Bible standpoint? . . . it is not here that our influence should be brought to bear against the customs and practices of the world?" 12

"Men have thought it necessary to plan in such a way as to meet the prejudice of the white people; and a wall of separation in religious worship has been built up between the colored people and the white people." 13

About this time there was beginning in the South a resurgence of racial antagonism that quickly spread across the nation. C. Vann Woodward, commenting on this phenomenon, wrote: "At the dawn of the new century the wave of Southern racism came in as a swell upon a mounting tide of national sentiment and was very much a part of that sentiment." 14

The black citizen was being systematically disenfranchised throughout the country, but by 1908 the hatred and violence had swollen to fever pitch. Booker T. Washington reported that year that within a sixty-day period twenty-five blacks had been lynched in the United States. Ellen White wrote words of caution calculated to save white Adventists from the raids of night riders and black members from Klan lynchings. Compared to her earlier statements it seemed in about-face position:

"In regard to white and colored people worshiping in the same building, this cannot be followed as a general custom with profit to either party—especially in the South. The best thing will be to provide the colored people who accept the truth, with places of worship of their own, in which they can carry on their services by themselves. That is particularly necessary in the South in order that he work for the white people may be carried on without serious hindrance."

This drastic turnaround was partly a result of her awareness of the tense racial climate that existed and that threatened to get worse for the newly emancipated Negro. In 1898 Edson White had organized the Southern Missionary Society, with headquarters first in Yazoo City and then in Nashville. By 1902 it was necessary to replace white teachers with black teachers in the schools he had established. That Mrs. White and other Adventist leaders were sensitive to this situation is clear from a publication by the church's Pacific Press entitled An Agitation and an Opportunity, in which the author describes how God was "staying the progress of the 'reactionary movement'" in the South that the Adventist message might be presented to the vast population of blacks. The writer fully expected this "reactionary movement" to take "complete control" of the Negro's destiny, thrusting him back into bondage. He refers to a threatened "semislavery," and it was no doubt out of such a pervading attitude of urgency and expediency that Mrs. White gave her counsel of separate work "until the Lord shows us a better way." 15

In his book Ellen G. White and Church Race Relations, R. M. Graybill...
makes a case for the wisdom of Mrs. White’s counsel offered in the midst of an unprecedented upsurge in racial hostility. He shows a correlation between the rise of racist violence and the necessity for prudence in approaching the work in the South. Graybill also points out that the year 1895, the very year James Edson White arrived in Vicksburg, Mississippi, was the year of Booker T. Washington’s Atlanta Exposition speech. Washington and Mrs. White both died in 1915, ending what Graybill has called an era of compromise against a backdrop of overwhelming bigotry and violence.

In 1895 Booker T. Washington was winning the heart of white America, and as far as this majority group was concerned, he spoke for blacks America when he said: “The wise: among my race understand that the agitation of questions of social equality is the extremists’ folly and that progress and the enjoyment of all the privileges that will come to us must be the result of severe constant struggle rather than of artificial forcing.”

Commenting on this speech, Dr. Rayford W. Logan wrote some years afterward: “The national fame that Washington achieved overnight by his Atlanta speech constitutes an excellent yardstick for measuring the victory of the ‘new South’ since he accepted a subordinate place for Negroes in American life.”

While Washington was giving his Atlanta speech Ellen White was putting together material for Volume 9 of Testimonies for the Church. Her words suggest a plaintive cry for God’s special guidance through that trying period: “Let the colored believers be provided with neat, tasteful houses of worship. Let them be shown that this is done not to exclude them from worshiping with white people, because they are black, but in order that the progress of the truth may be advanced. Let them understand that this plan is to be followed until the Lord shows us a better way.”

Another event that brought the black conference idea to the forefront was the Utopian Park affair, involving James K. Humphrey, pastor of First Harlem church, in New York City. In seeking relief for those of his members who were old and infirm and had no place to go, he began to formulate a benevolent association to provide health, educational, and recreational facilities. In order to finance “Utopia Park,” Humphrey proposed to sell lots to any black person “of good moral standing.” The Greater New York Conference president, Louis K. Dickson, apparently unaware of the pressures to which Humphrey was subjected, had called him to task for making a purchase of property for this purpose without conference approval.

The matter reached a serious impasse when Humphrey applied at the city public welfare office for special Ingathering solicitation permits. When municipal authorities questioned Dickson about the project Humphrey was promoting, he had to confess ignorance. Later, when Dickson approached Humphrey about the matter, the latter thanked the president for his “kindly interest” and “desire to cooperate in this good work,” but he said Utopia Park was “not a denominational effort” and was “absolutely a problem for the colored people.” That was as much information as he chose to give.

Dickson interpreted this as an act of insubordination and summoned Humphrey to appear before the local conference committee, and eventually before the union committee, to defend his actions. When Humphrey failed to appear before them, the union committee counseled Greater New York Conference “to revoke his credentials until such time as he shall straighten out this situation in a way that will remove the reproach that his course has brought upon the cause.” Within four days Humphrey was told he could no longer serve as pastor of First Harlem church and that his membership on local and union conference committees had been revoked.

The Harlem congregation, however, stood almost solidly behind Humphrey. Dickson then sought the help of General Conference president W. A. Spicer. The two attended a business meeting at Harlem First church to explain the pastor’s dismissal. One witness who was present at the stormy five-hour session said the presence of white leaders, appearing in what many took to be an adversary role,
nearly precipitated a riot.

Prior to this confrontation, a member of Humphrey's church had inquired at the Greater New York Conference office about securing a title to the church property. Dickson is said to have told him that by policy the local church did not own property. When this was reported at Harlem First Church, a local elder stated they would fight for their deed through the courts, and if they failed there, they would burn the building down! At some point Humphrey proposed the organization of separate conferences in the Seventh-day Adventist Church, but the idea was turned down.

Eventually the Greater New York Conference committee voted to drop the First Harlem congregation from its fellowship of churches. Humphrey proceeded to organize his congregation into what he called the United Sabbath Day Adventist Church. Although Humphrey died out of the church, there are reports that he came back to apologize for his earlier actions. However, when he talked of rejoining the Seventh-day Adventists, leaders in his offshoot movement threatened to withdraw monthly retirement benefits, which would, presumably, have left him without financial support.

Since the Adventist Church was made up largely of white people from mainline denominations where slacks traditionally had been denied membership, and since most white communicants appeared to be comfortable with a segregated worship, its congregations were not likely to be greatly different from other religious groups in regard to the color line. H. Richard Niebuhr, on the religion faculty at Harvard University, at one time addressed the question of segregated churches in America. He concluded that his own research had pointed to a certain pattern: "Complete fellowship without any racial discriminations has been very rare in the history of American Christianity. It has existed only where the number of Negroes belonging to the church was exceptionally small in proportion to the total membership, where the cultural status of the racial groups in the church was essentially similar, or where, as among some Quakers, racial consciousness was consciously overcome."21

Niebuhr also discussed a church situation that in many respects paralleled the difficulty faced earlier by black members in the Adventist Church. One primary factor in any integration, he said, was "equal privileges of participation in the government of the particular unit of church organization."22 Since in 1944 Adventist leaders were not disposed either to "consciously overcome" racial consciousness—in light of what seemed to be a hopelessly segregated society—or to provide "equal privileges of participation in the government," it was clearly necessary for black communicants to take the route of separate conferences. Therefore, at its 1944 Spring Meeting, held in Chicago's Stevens Hotel, the General Conference Committee formally voted approval of this new and distinct governing entity.

LAKE REGION CONFERENCE

Lake Region, formally organized September 26, 1944, was the first regional conference to be set up. Today it comprises Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Minnesota, and Wisconsin. In 1982 its membership stood at 16,784, with sixty-six churches, fifty-one ministers, seven Bible instructors, and eighteen literature evangelists. All conferences in the Lake Union, except Lake Region, date their beginnings back more than a hundred years, with the oldest having been established in 1861, the year the Civil War began. Yet Lake Region, after only thirty-seven years of existence, is the second-largest conference in the union and shows the fastest rate of growth in the area. Its first president was J. Gershon Dasent, for years a successful pastor and State evangelist in the Southwest. Fred N. Crowe was insta as the first treasurer; Walter J. Kinsac, educational and youth director; J. E. Johnson, home missionar y and Sabbath school; and Virgil Gibbons, publishing director. L. B. Baker took over Book and Bible House responsibilities.

Their campground at Cassopolis, Michigan, intended first as the
site of a boarding academy, has been a gathering point almost year-round for conference events, including a large annual camp meeting. Lake Region fosters one housing project in East Chicago Heights and another in Detroit, and a hospital in Southside Chicago.

Charles Joseph, elected to the presidency in 1977, is a native of Birmingham, Alabama, and an Oakwood graduate. He holds a Master of Divinity degree from Andrews University and a Doctor of Ministry degree from Vanderbilt University. The secretary is Richard E. Brown, a native of Kansas City, Missouri, and also an Oakwood graduate. The treasurer is Dennis Keith, formerly a missionary to Africa and Korea and more recently an auditor with the General Conference Treasury Department.

Sabbath school director and personal ministries director is James Wray. The educational director is R. D. Earnes, youth, Conrad L. Gill; stewardship, Samuel Flagg; and communication and trust services, Harold L. Lindsey.

Thomas M. Fountain, an intense and provocative revivalist, served as president for two years. He was followed by Harvey W. Kibble, who carried the banner forward for ten years, evangelizing and building churches.

Charles E. Bradford, at the helm for nine years, came from New York to lead the conference in 1961. He demonstrated wise church management, focusing on select goals and objectives. Membership grew, the campground was upgraded to receive larger annual crowds, and education and publishing efforts were given a new emphasis.

Jesse R. Wagner, elected in 1970, brought to the office a remarkable sense of organization and detail. His conference reports demonstrated executive planning and good taste, and he received excellent cooperation from the churches and their pastors. His ministry was cut short by sudden death in the summer of 1977. The camp, which he greatly improved, is named in his honor.

In a two-month period during 1982, Lake Region’s literature evangelists sold more than $250,000 worth of small books and magazines. Under the leadership of T. S. Barber, conference publishing director, and Mrs. Barber, a new church of seventy-two members was established in Champaign, Illinois, as a result of the small-literature program. In his publishing rallies involving church school children, Barber reported one 6-year-old who delivered more than $2,000 worth of literature over a ten-week period.

In 1979 the Shiloh Academy administration, told by Chicago’s board of accreditation that its physical facility would have to be totally renovated or a new building erected, was on the horns of a serious dilemma. Renovation costs alone would exceed $2 million, and the school property would still fall short of required playground and parking space.

Three years later an almost miraculous development provided Shiloh Academy with a practically new building having a market value of $5.2 million and a replacement value of $10 million. Kitchen equipment already installed was estimated at $250,000. Some twenty-four acres of housing development, sponsored by Lake Region, had made possible the amortization of a building that could easily be altered to meet the needs of Shiloh Academy.

The tithe reported by Lake Region Conference for 1981 stood at $3,939,469, and baptisms for that year totaled 1,056.

NORTHEASTERN CONFERENCE

After thirty-seven years of intensive evangelism, Northeastern is the largest conference in the Atlantic Union and one of the five largest conferences in the North American Division. Its membership of about twenty-five thousand exceeds the combined total of all other conferences in the northeastern corridor; historic cradle of nineteenth-century Adventism. Three of the other conferences have been organized for more than a hundred years, and the remaining two have functioned for more than eighty years.

Comprising the States of New York, Connecticut, Maine, New
Hampshire, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, and Vermont, Northeastern owns a modern office building or a main thoroughfare of St. Albans, New York. The new structure has been the subject of wide acclaim from neighborhood clubs, and the conference received an award of excellence from the local chamber of commerce. Organized in 1945 with 2,400 members, it had a 198 tally of 24,042 in seventy-nine congregations. There were eighty-four ministers, 123 teachers, and twelve literature evangelists in the field. The conference has four churches of Spanish-speaking communicants and five congregations composed of French-speaking members Northeastern Academy, a continuation of the old Harlen Academy, has an enrollment of 230, with sixteen teachers besides custodial staff and other personnel. The academy is housed in a fully equipped building on 179th Street.

On October 3, 1944, the black constituency meeting in New York City elected Louis H. Bland as its first president; Lionel H. Irons, secretary-treasurer; Jonathan E. Roache, director for the educational and youth departments; and James J. North, director of home missionary and Sabbath school departments.

Commencing its operations January 1, 1945, the conference occupied temporary quarters on 127th Street until it could purchase a building at 560 West 150th Street. This former church and parish office thereafter housed the conference staff, book center, church school, and a newly organized congregation known as City Tabernacle.

When L. H. Bland died in 1953 he was succeeded by H. D. Singleton. The latter served as president until 1962, when he was called to the General Conference as director of the North American Regional Department. During this period V. L. Roberts and F. L. Jones served as secretary-treasurer. Evangelism was strongly promoted.

Membership at the close of 1945 was 2,468, with a working force of twenty-one, plus twenty-seven literature evangelists. At the close of 1961 it was 7,179, with a working force of approximately forty-five. In 1952 there were 163 baptisms; in 1973 there were 1,437. From 1963 to 1973 membership doubled, from 8,097 to 16,328, and statistics seemed to build dramatically every year.

George R. Earle, an Oakwood graduate, president since 1966, has spent nearly all his ministerial career in New York and New England. He understands the people, and his evangelistic preaching to large audiences has met with outstanding success. Earle succeeded R. T. Hudson, a pastor-evangelist who for many years served congregations in Washington, D.C.; Cleveland, Ohio; and New York City. His ministry in Ephesus church reached many important people, including foreign diplomats who frequented his Sunday night meetings. The secretary, H. W. Baptiste, has also spent many years in the New York area. Stennett Brooks, treasurer since 1962, is a graduate of Oakwood College, with most of his undergraduate education at West Indies College in Jamaica. Present departmental leaders are Lee A. Paschal, communication; Sandra Herndon, education; Samuel W. Stevall, health; Clarence Richardson, publishing; R. L. Lister, personal ministries; James P. Willis, Sabbath school and religious liberty; and Leonard G. Newton, stewardship and development. Northeastern reported a tithe for 1981 of $7,662,809 and 1,585 baptisms.

ALLEGHENY EAST CONFERENCE

Allegheny Conference, begun in the rear of a bookstore near Howard University, was reorganized in 1966 (effective January 1, 1967) to form Allegheny East and Allegheny West. In 1982 the two conferences represented one third the total membership of Columbia Union. In less than fifteen years Allegheny East Conference has added enough members to bring its total to the 1967 predivision figure.

The conference includes part of Pennsylvania, all of New Jersey, all of Delaware, most of Maryland, the District of Columbia, and eastern Virginia. With offices at Pine Forge, Pennsylvania, the
organization continues its operation in most major cities of the original Allegheny Conference. Its 1982 membership was 15,276; there were sixty-nine congregations with forty-four ministers and eleven Bible instructors. The reported for 1981 was $4,976,152, and there were 966 baptisms.

Pine Forge, the conference academy, begun two years after office quarters were established, has an enrollment of 135, with seventeen faculty and staff members. Facilities of the institution are used for annual Pathfinder and youth camps, as well as for summer camp meetings.

Meade C. Van Putten, conference president, is the son of an Adventist minister whose career was spent largely in Barbados and the Virgin Islands. Van Putten is a graduate of Andrews University, having acquired his early education in Caribbean Island schools. He served as treasurer of Lake Region Conference and Allegheny East Conference before his election to the presidency. The conference secretary is Paul Cartrell, Jr., and the treasurer is Bennie W. Mann. Departmental leaders include Ulysses L. Willis, Sabbath school; Alfred R. Jones, personal ministries; Daniel L. Davis, youth; Robert Booker, education; Noah Beasley, publishing; Harold Lee, stewardship; and Roland Newman, trust services.

The administration at Pine Forge began with John H. Wagner as president and James L. Moran as secretary-treasurer. Associated with him was a staff of departmental leaders, all new to their jobs but all eager to establish records in their respective fields. The publishing department, under Howard D. Warner, took to the streets with such zest that shortly its sales amounted to more than all the other conferences in the union combined.

Other departmental leaders were William R. Robinson, director of lay activities and Sabbath school; Jacob Justiss, educational and youth; and Gertrude Jones, Praise and Bible House. William L. Cheatham followed as president of Allegheny; he was the one who recommended the division of the conference. W. Albert Thompson was the first president of the new Allegheny East, succeeded by Edward Dorsey, Luther R. Palmer, Jr., and Meade C. Van Putten.

ALLEGHENY WEST CONFERENCE

Claiming a membership well over ten thousand, Allegheny West, even with a late start, is the fourth-largest conference in Columbia Union. This conference covers Ohio, western Pennsylvania, part of Maryland, part of Virginia, and the entire State of West Virginia. It was organized in 1967 at Columbus, Ohio, with Walter M. Starks as president and Aaron N. Brogden as secretary-treasurer. A. T. Westney directed education and youth; Donald B. Simons, Sabbath school and lay activities; and Henry S. Freeman, publishing.

Within a short time Starks was elected director of the new stewardship department in the General Conference, and Donald B. Simons was chosen to succeed him as conference president. Thus a major share of organizational details in setting up the new conference fell to Simons. Membership in 1982 was 8,703 in forty-four congregations, served by twenty-four ministers, two Bible instructors, thirteen teachers, and forty-seven literature evangelists. The reported for 1981 was $2,438,905, and for that year there were 546 baptisms. In an arrangement with the Ohio Conference, Allegheny West uses its camp facilities and the Mount Vernon Academy cafeteria and dormitory accommodations for summer camp meetings.

Harold L. Cleveland, conference president from 1972 to 1983, is a native of Chattanooga, Tennessee, and a graduate of Oakwood College. As a pastor and evangelist, he held large campaigns in Atlanta and Savannah, Georgia, and in Cleveland, Ohio, before assuming his duties with Allegheny West. The current president, Henry Wright, was an associate professor of religion at Oakwood College. K. S. Smallwood is the secretary, and W. G. McDonald is treasurer.

Departmental leaders include Walter Wright, Sabbath school;
James D. Best, personal ministries; Carl R. Rogers, youth; Beverly McDonald, education; Robert C. Lewis, publishing; and Willie Lewis, stewardship and trust services.

Despite strikes and unemployment affecting every large city of Allegheny West, Harold Cleveland managed to keep alive a constant evangelism program involving both laymen and ministers. Members, aware of the Lord's special blessing in their abundant soil and their plentiful supply of fresh water, do not take such riches for granted, but accept a responsibility to use them in trust. Harold Cleveland's calls for financial backing for his broad plans, therefore, did not go unheeded. Members living in farm communities were especially generous. Hopelessness is alien to the people of Allegheny West. They are a rugged lot, and they work and persevere and then they work some more.

SOUTH ATLANTIC CONFERENCE

South Atlantic Conference, organized in 1946 with Harold D. Singleton as president and Lysle S. Follette as secretary-treasurer, covers South Carolina, North Carolina, Georgia, and most of Florida. Since its founding, offices of the conference have been located in Atlanta. At the time of its organization South Atlantic Conference consisted of sixty-two churches, with a membership of 3,614. Departmental leaders were Norman G. Simons, lay activities and Sabbath school; Fitzgerald H. Jenkins, education and youth; and Richard P. Robinson, publishing.

As first president, Singleton moved cautiously with finances but boldly with soul winning, and his efforts paid off handsomely. Everywhere there was enthusiasm for the new conference and its goals. Membership rose steadily. John H. Wagen, who followed, had had experience as president of Allegheny Conference, and he too was strong on evangelism. Under his administration a new office was erected in an upper-class suburb. Upon his death, Warren S. Banfield came into office, engendering the same loyalties, following the same hectic pace. He was followed by Robert L. Woodfork, who pushed for annual offerings to be devoted to conference evangelism. Woodfork also led in the construction of a larger and more contemporary office building.

Ralph B. Hairston, the present conference president, was formerly conference secretary. He had been a pastor and evangelist in the South Atlantic territory. A veteran of World War II, he completed college studies at Oakwood and entered the ministry in Macon, Georgia. The secretary-treasurer is John A. Simons, also a veteran of World War II. After graduation from Oakwood he spent a few years as contractor for housing projects in Atlanta. He was later elected treasurer in South Central and Central States conferences. C. Dunbar Henri is the administrative assistant. Departmental leaders in South Atlantic include Joseph T. Hinson, personal ministries; G. Herfin Taylor, Sabbath school and trust services; V. J. Mendinghull, education and youth; Samuel Gooden, communication and religious liberty; Fred W. Parker, stewardship; Robert T. Smith, publishing; Earl W. Moore, director of the Bible school; and Olise Brown, manager of the Adventist Book Center.

South Atlantic's campsite at Hawthorne, Florida, where camp meetings and junior, senior, and friendship camps are held annually, was acquired in 1949 at a total purchase and development cost approaching $250,000. Its present value would easily exceed a million dollars.

In 1981 membership had grown to 21,541. In that year the conference was divided to form the Southeastern Conference. The new organization had a membership of 3,210, which left 13,331 members for South Atlantic. The yearly tithe before separation had climbed to $4,5 million, and an evangelism and development offering had reached an annual total of more than $100,000. The conference had also built a spacious office complex on Hightower Road. The contractor was Jonathan Walker, whose membership is in the Atlanta Berean church.
SOUTHEASTERN CONFERENCE

Southeastern Conference includes most of Florida and a part of Georgia. Temporary office quarters are at Altamonte Springs, near Orlando, heart of the fruit belt. Membership at the beginning of 1982 was 9,112 and the total for 1981 was $2,549,010. There were 918 baptisms for its first year of operation and more than 1,100 for its second. Projected baptisms for 1983 were 2,300.

James Edgecombe, president, was born in Miami and spent several years as a missionary in Port of Spain, Trinidad. He is a graduate of Oakwood College and has completed a Master's degree at the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary. Donald A. Walker, formerly an Army captain in the Korean War, with treasurer experience in the Columbia Union and South Central conferences, is secretary-treasurer. Departmental leaders include: Ira L. Harrell, Sabbath school and personal ministries; Keith Dennis, education and youth; Roy Brown, communication and stewardship; and Robert T. Smith, serving both South Atlantic and Southeastern as publishing director.

A big event for the young conference was the opening of a headquarters church in Orlando, pastored by Oster Paul.

SOUTH CENTRAL CONFERENCE

South Central Conference, including the States of Kentucky, Tennessee, Alabama, Mississippi, and the portion of Florida lying west of the Apalachicola River, was organized in 1946 with 2,233 members. At the close of 1981 membership stood at 14,626. Its offices, first set up in a private dwelling, were shortly moved to Charlotte Avenue, in Nashville, and later to the present building, constructed for the purpose on Young's Lane, opposite Riverside Adventist Hospital.

The first president of South Central was Herman R. Murphy, an Oakwood graduate who later earned a Bachelor's degree and a Master's degree from New York University. The secretary-treasurer was Vonolene Lindsay, formerly a high school instructor in Birmingham, who became a minister in the early forties. Departmental leaders included Walter M. Starks, Sabbath school and lay activities; Frederick B. Slater, education and youth; M. G. Cato, publishing; and Paul C. Winley, Adventist Book Center.

South Central has sponsored three low-rent housing projects with a total of 352 apartments: Haynes Gardens in Nashville, with 206; Abel Courts in Bowling Green, Kentucky, with forty-six; and Dudley Apartments in Paducah, Kentucky, with ninety-six. More recently it has sponsored two apartment buildings for senior citizens, both bearing the name “South Central Village.” One is in Cleveland, Mississippi, with sixty units; and the other in Clarksville, Tennessee, with 134 units.

Charles E. Dudley, president for twenty-one years, is a native of South Bend, Indiana, and a ministerial graduate of Oakwood College. His half brother, A. Gaynes Thompson, who died in 1938, was also a minister; he pioneered Adventist congregations in Minneapolis and St. Paul, Minnesota. Dudley has worked to ensure representative church buildings throughout South Central and has continually emphasized membership growth. In a program to recruit physicians, aided by Dr. Carl A. Dent, he has attracted six new doctors to the field. The “dark county” evangelism fostered by these professional men has resulted in seven new churches. The reported for 1981 was $3,073,672; there were 1,261 baptisms for the same period. At least twenty-five ministerial graduates without official assignments are working in South Central to raise up churches in places where none have been established.

Fred N. Crowe, conference secretary-treasurer, is a native of California, with years of experience as treasurer in the early development of Lake Region Conference. Departmental leaders include Murray E. Joiner, Sabbath school and personal ministries; Nathaniel Higgs, education; Joseph W. McCoy, youth and temper-
ance; Stephen Ruff, publishing; George I. Pearson, manager, Adventist Book Center; and Isaac J. Johnson, field representative.

Other presidents of South Central have been Herman R. Murphy, Walter W. Fordham, and Frank L. Bland.

A demographic study of Southern Union members, completed in 1982 by the staff of Southern Tidings, shows the three predominantly black conferences with a total membership of 40,288 and the five predominantly white conferences with 63,307 members. The ratio of black members to black population was 1 to 195, while the ratio of white members to white population was 1 to 467. The white conferences had been organized from eighty to a hundred years previous to the study, while the black conferences had been in existence only thirty-six years. In that relatively brief time they had accounted for more than one-third of the union membership.

SOUTHWEST REGION CONFERENCE

Southwest Region Conference, which includes congregations in Arkansas, Louisiana, New Mexico, Oklahoma, and Texas, is one of five conferences that make up the Southwestern Union. In 1982 the conference had seventy churches and a membership of 8,796, with thirty-one ministers, eight church schools, and forty teachers. Tithe for 1981 was $2,237,956, and baptisms totaled 627. Begun as a mission January 1, 1947, its first leaders were Walter W. Fordham, president; Vincent L. Roberts, secretary-treasurer and lay activities director; Helen Wiggins Beckett, Sabbath school director; and J. H. Jones, publishing director. At the end of two years as a mission, the membership was organized into a conference with 1,939 members.

Herman R. Murphy served as president in Southwest Region shortly after its organization as a conference. He was followed in office by Vincent L. Roberts, who served thirteen years. Under his administration the conference office was moved from Oakland Avenue to 1900 South Boulevard, in Dallas, and many churches were added to the Southwest Region fellowship. William J. Cleveland, who served many years in the Northwest as well as in the Southwest, became president in 1969. A gifted pulpit orator himself, he inspired good preaching in the entire working force.

William C. Jones, the president in 1982, grew up in Detroit, Michigan, attended church school there, and was later graduated from Oakwood College. He has pastored large churches, including Bethel in Brooklyn and the City Temple congregation in Dallas. The secretary and director of stewardship is Milton M. Young, son of an Adventist minister, who also served congregations in the Southwest. Helen Turner, Southwest's treasurer, is the first woman to hold this key position in a regional conference. She holds a Bachelor's and a Master's degree in business administration and has begun work on a doctoral program. Departmental leaders include James Ford, Sabbath school and education; Rawdon Brown, personal ministries; James Marshall, publishing, and Billy E. Wright, youth director.

CENTRAL STATES CONFERENCE

Central States Conference comprises the black constituency of Colorado, Iowa, Kansas, Missouri, Nebraska, Wyoming, San Juan County of New Mexico, Minnesota, North Dakota, and South Dakota. In 1982 there were thirty-two churches, 6,304 members, two church schools, twenty ministers, two Bible instructors, and five church school teachers. The conference is included in the newly formed Mid-America Union, which combines the Central and Northern unions.

Central States was organized as a mission in a meeting at Jefferson Hotel, in St. Louis, Missouri, January 1, 1947. Thomas M. Rowe, a veteran preacher who has pastored New York's Ephesus congregation and Chicago's Shiloh congregation, was elected president. James H. Jones was elected secretary-treasurer. The membership, including small and widely scattered congregations, numbered a modest 798. A converted house at 2528 Benton Boulevard provided office quarters for the new organization.
Within five years membership increased 76 percent—from 798 in 1947 to 1408 in 1952, with baptisms averaging more than a hundred a year. In 1948 the State of Iowa, of the former Northern Union Conference, was added to the territory of the mission, thereby including the Des Moines church in the membership total.

Frank L. Bland was elected president in 1952 when the Central States became a conference. Henry T. Sauter was elected secretary-treasurer. Membership increased from 1108 in 1952 to 2,326 at the end of 1961. The proportional gain by baptism and profession of faith was the second-largest in North America.

Walter W. Fordham, who became president in 1959, brought a fresh emphasis to evangelism. This was reflected in the erection of a new church building and a new elementary school in St. Louis, also new churches in Wichita, Kansas, and Pueblo, Colorado.

In St. Louis a 1963 soul-winning program called “Contacts for Christ” involved laymen in Bible correspondence course enrollments preparatory to a Voice of Prophecy evangelistic campaign. Enrollments averaged a thousand a month, and members were delighted at campaign’s end when a hundred converts were baptized. The next year, 1964, E. Earl Cleveland, of the General Conference Ministerial Association, joined with Andrews University Seminary faculty and students to conduct a field school of evangelism in St. Louis. The campaign, blessed with 150 converts, resulted in the organization of the Shreve Avenue church.

Willie S. Lee became the fourth president of Central States in 1966. For several years he had been director of the office of Regional Affairs in Pacific Union Conference; he also had wide experience as pastor of some of the largest churches in the denomination. Lee continued the aggressive evangelism in Central States and led out in the construction of a new office complex.

Donald L. Crowder, who followed as fifth president, saw a dramatic rise in membership, to 4,246 at the end of 1974. During that year the Central States’ income amounted to more than $500,000, with $103,000 of this amount coming from the Denver Park Hill church.

Samuel D. Meyers came from California to be the sixth president; he found much he could do. The Shady Hill campground needed refurbishing—the shuttering of cabin windows, the erection of a chain-link fence, the reroofing of the pavilion. Having cared for these, Meyers led out in the construction of a two-story book center, snack bar, and registration complex. He and his staff also built a new camp dormitory with bathroom facilities for each room.

Sherman H. Cox, who became the seventh president, emphasized more large-scale evangelism in big cities of Mid-America, where large populations of black citizens needed the gospel of hope. Cox is a native of Baltimore and a graduate of Oakwood College. He served Central States as a departmental director prior to taking up duties as conference president.

LeRoy B. Hampton, who served for many years in the finance department of Oakwood College, is secretary-treasurer. Leaders of the departments are Eugene F. Carter, stewardship, Sabbath school, and personal ministries; Nathaniel Miller, education and youth.

Because of these separate church administrations, black administrators have been quickly added to union and institutional boards, thus increasing minority participation in high-level decisions of the church. Prior to 1951 there was only one elected black leader on the General Conference staff—George E. Peters, secretary of the Colored Department. The name of Calvin E. Moseley, Jr., was later added as an associate secretary of the department, and eventually both Peters and Moseley were elected to the office of general field secretary.

To aid further the integration of black leaders into the church structure, the 1961 Autumn Council established a biracial committee on human relations to frame appropriate resolutions. With the specific aim of eliminating discrimination against blacks in churches, the 1965 Spring Council of the General Conference Committee voted that "membership and office in all churches and on all levels must be..."
available to anyone who qualifies, without regard to race.” This included hospitals, schools, and every facility operated by the church.

When this proved insufficient, and black Adventists found themselves still unwelcome in some Seventh-day Adventist churches and schools, regional conference administrators suggested that perhaps the organization of two union conferences with a predominantly black membership might add weight and substance to what, up to now, were only resolutions. There would be union presidents, advocates said, who could talk from the advantage of a constituency, and they could more easily make themselves heard in the higher echelons of church government. This, they said, would also give Adventists a better image in communities where they lived and worked. A recommendation was made that the annual Autumn Council study the feasibility of forming black unions.

Meanwhile, North American Division president Nea C. Wilson urged union officers to place black men in responsible positions on their staffs. Eventually nearly every union placed black representatives in office. Aaron Braden is the secretary in Atlantic Union, Earl Parchment is Sabbath school director, and Leon H. Davis is editor of the Gleaner. In Columbia Union, Luther R. Palmer, Jr., is secretary, Adrian T. Westrey is associate in education, and Samuel Thomas is Sabbath school director. The president in Lake Union is Robert H. Carter, and Charles Woods is assistant treasurer. The Mid-America Union elected George Timpson as associate secretary. During the final illness of R. H. Nightingale, Willie S. Lee was acting president of Central Union Conference. North Pacific Union elected Edward A. White as its president, and Pacific Union named Major C. White as secretary. John E. Collins serves in Pacific as associate personal ministries secretary, Joseph W. Hutchinson as associate in publishing, and Earl Canson, director of regional affairs. In Southwestern Union Vincent L. Roberts was the first black leader in North America to be elected union treasurer. In 1982, Elbert W. Shepard was elected director of youth programs in the same union. In Southern Union, Ward Sumpter was associate secretary, and Ralph P. Peay was youth director. For many years M. G. Cato and Odell Mackey were associate directors of the union publishing department. The list changes almost every year.

The black union proposal was debated for ten years and presented formally before two sessions of the General Conference Autumn Council. However, it failed to attract sufficient votes to be inaugurated into the system of Adventist church government. Perhaps an approaching recession, reminiscent of the prolonged depression in the 1930s, had its influence. But black observers declare that the very discussion of separate unions undoubtedly improved opportunities for black members to hold meaningful offices in union conferences of North America and in many other parts of the world.

Membership gain was always a lever in discussions of black unions because with increased membership came increased tithes and other offerings. Public evangelism was usually considered the primary key to church growth, but it is known that door-to-door efforts of literature evangelists has had a steady influence in bringing new converts into the church. Many Adventists today declare that they read themselves into church fellowship, that they found periodicals and books decisive in their choice to be Seventh-day Adventists. At one point in the late forties, Allegheny Conference amassed sales greater than the combined totals of all other conferences in the union. Persons who have made outstanding records have been Howard D. Warner, J. R. Britt, Matthew Dennis, Mary Morrison Dennis, Paul C. Winley, T. S. Barber, Mabel Barber, Odell W. Mackey, Richard P. Robinson, Joe Hutchinson, T. F. Smith, Robert Smith, George Anderson, and M. G. Cato.

Message magazine, introduced as a trial number in 1934, was an immediate success, with students seeking money to meet academy or college expenses acting as a sales force. Regularly scheduled publication, first as a quarterly, was inaugurated in 1935; in 1943 it
became a monthly. Circulation has exceeded 260,000 for one issue; in the fifties a large New York advertising agency listed Message as one of the leading religious publications in America. It has featured as writers many outstanding leaders in the Seventh-day Adventist Church and other denominations.

J. Paul Monk, Jr., editor since early 1981, and his assistant editor, Kym Hinson, produce a thirty-two-page magazine on coated paper with a four-color treatment possible throughout. Louis B. Reynolds, first back editor of this major denominational publication, was also for thirteen years editor of senior Sabbath school publications in the General Conference. Other editors of Message have been Robert Bruce Thurber, James E. Shulz, Frank A. Coffin (acting), Robert L. Odor, James E. Dykes, Garland J. Millet, William R. Robinson, and Ted T. Jones, an associate.

Garland J. Millet and Victor Griffiths have been editors for the Journal of Adventist Education, and Natellica E. Burrell coedited a series of sixty-one basic readers and guidebooks for the Adventist Basic Reading Series.

Bible instructors have also laid a broad base of support for large city evangelism. In the vanguard of career people in this field have been E. Van Nockay Porter, Rosa Lee Jones, Zilda Forde, Celia Cleveland, Rawline Troxler, Vivian Boyce, Jessie Gulley, Maude Masters, Edith Young Rice, Alice Terrell Valentine, Elizabeth Coleman, Margaret Daniels Humphrey, Ola Mae Harris, Lillie Todd Evans, Alice Bowden, Elizabeth Carter Cleveland, Billie Rowe, Bonnie Dobbins Stewart, Josephine Flowers, Sadie Richardson, Ella Lee Wiley, Ruth Strother, Dorothy Smith, Bertha Bailey Leatres, Charles Miller, Ella Miller, Eva Jeltz, Beatrice Hampton, Nina Addison, Beulah Cross, Birdie McCluster, Jesse Bentley, and Rosa Pugh.


Amid winds of doctrinal dispute and what has been termed the "Omega" of apostasy, black Adventists seem largely unshaken. They are not inclined to cast away anchors and moorings, or to drift idly about on the sea of doctrine, moving in no particular direction, arriving at no port. Bemused by a past both tragic and disastrous, this pious people accept the existing situation and move with confidence into the future. As they believe in love—which is to say, as they have love—they do not have fear.

If all Seventh-day Adventists could rise to the level of loving passionately not only their academies, colleges, medical institutions, and their missions installations, as they do, but also the rich and varied configuration of people—brown, black, and white—who dwell therein, with the untold possibilities for achievement that lie in such association, they not only would solve their greatest problem but also would be prepared with gallantry and courage to face the difficult circumstances of the future. When "the heirs of God . . . come from garrets; from hovels, from cungoens, from scaffolds, from mountains, from deserts, from the caves of the earth, from the caverns of the sea," there will be no caste or color distinctions. The people of the covenant will love much because they have been forgiven much. "The rebuke of his people shall he take away" (Isa. 25:8). "They shall call them, The holy people, The redeemed of the Lord" (chap. 62:12). For the disadvantaged, the dispossessed, God has appointed "to give unto them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness" (chap. 6:3).
WE HAVE TOMORROW

3 Minutes of Spring Council meeting of General Conference Committee, held at Stevens Hotel, Chicago, April 8-19, 1944.
4 Minutes of the first meeting of block delegates at a special meeting of Lake Union Conference held in Shiloh church, Chicago, Illinois, September 25, 1944.
8 Ibid.
9 Minutes of district workers’ meeting, Nashville, Tennessee, Seventh-day Adventists campground, Oct. 2, 1899.
10 Ibid.
11 E. G. White, The Southern Work, p. 11.
12 Ibid., pp. 15, 36.
13 Ibid., p. 19.
15 E. G. White, Testimonies, vol. 9, p. 205.
16 Ibid., p. 287.
19 Ibid., p. 45.

Roll Jordan, Roll

Roll Jordan, roll,
Roll Jordan, roll,
I want go to heav’n when I die,
To hear ol’ Jordan roll.

O, bretheren,
Roll Jordan, roll,
Roll Jordan, roll,
I want go to heav’n when I die,
To hear ol’ Jordan roll.

Oh, brothers you oughter been dere,
Yes my Lord a sittin’ up in de kingdon,
To hear ol’ Jordan roll,
Sing it ovah,

Oh, sinner you oughter been dere,
Yes my Lord a sittin’ up in de kingdom,
To hear ol’ Jordan roll

O, Roll Jordan, roll,
Roll Jordan, roll,
I want go to heav’n when I die,
To hear ol’ Jordan roll.
HISTORIC MEETING IN CHICAGO

Historic Meeting in Chicago—Organization of Regional Conferences—Bricks Without Straw

I was a delegate to the historic meeting in Chicago, called by the General Conference to discuss the advisability of the organization of Regional conferences. In 1929, Black leaders had received the bitter response “Black should never again mention the desire for the organization of Colored conferences.” Now 15 years later here we are in Chicago to consider the recommendation of the General Conference for the organization of Regional conferences.

I was representing the Black constituency of the Florida Conference. Our workers and laity knew that state were already convinced that this was a wise step. Elder W. S. Lee, one of our senior pastors, also attended this meeting. We checked into the Stevens Hotel the night before the meeting and had time to participate in discussions with those advocating the new form of administration.

We knew in advance that some of our Black pastors were opposed to the idea of a separate organization. They remembered the “Humphrey defection” and were fearful that the decision for the organization of Black conferences might lead ultimately to a complete separation from the Adventist Church. Furthermore, some of our Black brethren were suspicious that some of the leaders had ulterior motives. So as a strategy move, Elder J. E. Peters proposed to Elder McElhany that he present the request. “Black leaders who oppose the idea of a separate administrative organization will readily accept the proposal if it comes from the General Conference president.” Peters pointed out. “It will receive support from the White leadership as well.”

The ears of some of our Black brethren were put to rest by the unequivocal support subsequently voiced by the General Conference president for the organization of Black conferences. In his speech he stated, “There are some Black churches that have a much larger membership than some [entire] White conferences.” Elder W. A. Spicer, former president of the General Conference, spoke also in favor of separate conferences under the leadership of Blacks. “Brethren,” he said, “in Europe we have German conferences, French conferences, Swedish and Polish conferences; why not Black conferences?”

Elder J. J. Nethery, president of the Lake Union Conference, delivered a powerful speech in support of the resolution. He stated, “There are Black leaders who are qualified to become administrators.”

There were a number of speeches, both pro and con. Among those who spoke were Thomas Cooperwood, J. G. Dasent, Eric Dellett, J. G. Thomas, L. H. Bland, Monroe Jurgess, J. E. Wagner, T. M. Fountan, T. M. Rowe, and G. E. Peters. In his remarks F. L. Peterson referred back to the Annual Council of 1929 when Black leaders last requested the organization of Black conferences. He reminded the brethren, “We were told, ‘Never ask again for a Black conference.’ And we didn’t ask.”

Nevertheless, now the time had come to ask again—the question was presented to the floor for the vote: “Shall Regional conferences be organized?” The vote to accept and implement the proposal was almost unanimous.

The following plan was adopted: “In union conferences, when the Colored constituency is considered to be sufficiently large enough, and when the income and territory warrant, separate conferences for the Colored membership shall be organized. Such conferences are to be administered by Colored officials and Colored committees.”

Constituency meetings were immediately scheduled in the following unions for the organization of Black conferences: Lake, Atlantic, Columbia, Southern, Central, and Southwestern. The Black brethren from the Pacific Union felt the Black constituency from their territory was not prepared to accept a Black conference.

The organizational particulars of the Regional conferences are as follows: The Lake Region Conference held its constituency meeting in 1944 in the city of Chicago, Illinois; elected were J. G. Dasent, president, and F. N. Crowe, secretary-treasurer. (F. N. Crowe and A. R. Carothers are the only two of the original secretary-treasurers who are still living. As of this writing, Elder Crowe...
is serving as treasurer of the South Central Conference.) The Northeastern Conference held its constituency meeting in New York City in 1944; elected were L. H. Bland, president, and Lionel Irons, secretary-treasurer. The Allegheny Conference held its constituency meeting in Pine Forge, Pennsylvania, in 1945; elected were J. H. Wagner, president, and J. L. Moran, secretary-treasurer. The South Atlantic Conference held its constituency meeting in Atlanta, Georgia, in 1945; elected were H. E. Singleton, president, and L. S. Follie, secretary-treasurer. The South Central Conference held its constituency meeting in Birmingham, Alabama, in 1945; elected were H. R. Murphy, president, and Vongente Lindsay, secretary-treasurer. The Southwest Region Conference held its constituency meeting in Dallas, Texas, in 1946; elected were W. W. Fordham, president, and A. R. Carothers, secretary-treasurer. The Central States Conference held its constituency meeting in Kansas City, Missouri, in 1947; elected were T. M. Rowe, president, and J. H. Jones, secretary-treasurer. (Elder Rowe served as president for only one year. F. L. Bland was elected as president in 1948.)

These men were pioneers; they helped lay the foundation and initiate the administration structure for the Regional conferences as we know them today. Eighteen of the original group are now sleeping, waiting for Jesus to come to awaken them to everlasting life. We owe them a debt of gratitude. Of the original group of presidents, the following still live in retirement as of 1990: H. D. Singleton, H. R. Murphy, and W. W. Fordham.

From the 1989 Seven-day Adventist Yearbook we find these encouraging reports of those who continue to follow in the footsteps of the pioneers:

**Conference President Membership**

- **Bermuda**..............E. L. Richardson..........2,455
- **Northeastern**...........Stennett Brooks.............31,156
- **Allegheny East**........Alvin K. Babbie............19,026
- **Allegheny West**........W. S. Lewis.................9,586
- **Lake Region**...........L. R. Palmer..............19,528
- **Central States**.........J. Paul Monk, Jr..........7,495
- **South Central**...........C. E. Dudley............18,907
- **Southeastern**...........Jackson Doggette........14,008
- **South Atlantic**...........Ralph Peay.............20,907
- **Southwest Region**.......Richard Barron........12,367

In 1989 the membership of the Regional conferences in North America, including the Pacific Union, totaled 179,960. That same year the tithe income was more than $60 million. Baptisms were 8,457. This is a record of outstanding success.

However, the account of how the Israelites had to find their own straw to make bricks, recorded in Exodus 5:6-13, reminds me of the difficulties we faced in trying to operate those newborn conferences back in the mid-1940s. We were forced to cope without necessary funds. Doubters and critics said, "You will never make it. You will come back begging."

However, by the constant help and intervention of the Holy Spirit, we beat the odds. It was a time of sacrifice. It was a time of blood, sweat, and tears. I believe it is safe to say, though, that we succeeded in laying solid foundations for those who followed us.

It was rough going for those of us who first filled the administrative offices of the new Regional conferences. The financial plan outlined by the unions and the General Conference for the support of the newly organized conferences was as follows: "The union conference will make an appropriation based on the tithe income from the Colored membership of each conference in that particular union." In the Southwestern Union there were four conferences; the Regional conference would make five. In addition to the financial plan, each local conference would contribute such equipment as office furniture and supplies, tents, chairs, etc., in order to get the work of the new conference off the ground.

Unfortunately, the Southwest Region Conference had a very small Black membership, and the appropriation based on the tithe income was inadequate. We were poor, even when the union and the General Conference made their appropriations. In spite of having to make use of raggedy tents and rickety chairs, most hardly usable, the Lord blessed us with success. These handicaps failed to deter our progress in winning souls.

The work force of the conference, composed mainly of young men, agreed that if we were going to survive, our first priority must be to increase the membership of the conference. Evangelism was the answer. As president I decided to set the pace for evangelism. I conducted major efforts in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma; Dallas and Houston, Texas; and Baton Rouge, Louisiana. The Lord blessed in a marvelous way. Hundreds were added to the church. I challenged all of our pastors to conduct meetings in their districts.
RIGHTeous REEl

Church memberships began to swell remarkably throughout the field. Though we were forced by circumstances to ‘make bricks without straw,’ the Lord made up for our deficiencies in an astonishing way. The record shows that the conference membership doubled in the very first year.

Here let me pay tribute to some of the men whom I challenged to make bricks without straw: W. S. Lee, Vincent Roberts, Charles Bradford, Samuel Meyers, Jessie Wagner, Jeter Cox, William Jones, Henry Fordham, Charles Cunningham, Frank Jones, Leon Cox, R. F. Warnick, Milton Young, Clayton Prichard, W. J. Cleveland, John Smith, Hilliard Fettway, Fred Parker, D. J. Dixon, Van Runnels, R. E. Tottress, and others whom I may not recollect as I write.

Today the Southwest Region Conference is one of the strongest of the Regional conferences. V. L. Roberts, W. J. Cleveland, and W. C. Jones, three of those young men who served under me, later served as presidents of the conference.

In less than half a century God’s faithful Black workers have brought the light of God’s Word to thousands of precious souls. However, millions still grope in the darkness. They too must be reached by the gospel before Jesus comes, and time is running out!

The organization of Regional conferences opened the doors of opportunity. For the first time in Seventh-day Adventist Church history it was possible for Black workers to sit where the action is. They now serve where decisions are made, where policies are framed for the Seventh-day Adventist Church worldwide. They sit there, not as observers, but as participants.

With the organization of Regional conferences in 1945-1947, Black administrators were added to union conference committees. They were made members of institutional boards. Today Black leaders now serve on all administrative levels, including the North American Division and the General Conference, as evidenced by the presence and labor of such leaders as G. Ralph Thompson, secretary of the General Conference, and Charles Bradford, former president of the North American Division.

At one General Conference session alone (1975) 17 Black leaders were elected as members of the General Conference staff. What a contrast with the action of the 1951 General Conference session in San Francisco, in which only three Black leaders were chosen. F. L. Peterson was elected associate secretary, the first Black ever chosen to serve as an officer of the General Conference. (In 1962 F. L. Peterson was elected vice president of the General Conference.) E. E. Cleveland was elected as an associate secretary of the Ministerial Association, and C. E. Moseley became field secretary of the General Conference.

Among the men responsible for ‘oil[ing] the hinges’ of the door so they could swing open for Black leaders to enter, special recognition should go to Robert Pierson, late president of the General Conference, and Neal Wilson, former president of the North American Division, who succeeded Elder Pierson as president of the General Conference.

Indeed, we have come a long way since 1929, when the leadership roles for Blacks in the Seventh-day Adventist Church could best be illustrated as mere ‘crumbs from the Master’s table.’
James Weldon Johnson
(1871-1938)

Lift Ev’ry Voice and Sing

Lift ev’ry voice and sing,
Till earth and heaven ring,
Ring with the harmonies of Liberty;
Let out rejoicing rise
High is the list’ning skies,
Let it resound loud as the rolling sea.
Sing a song full of the faith that the dace past
has taught us
Sing a song full of the hope that the present has
brought us
Facing the rising sun of our new day begun,
Let us march on till victory is won.

Stony the road we trod,
Bitter the chast’ning rod,
Felt in the days when hope asborn had died;
Yet with a steady beat,
Have not our weary feet
Come to the place for which our fathers sighed?
We have come over a way that with tears has
been watered
We have come, tracling our sath thro’ the
blood of the slaughtered,
Out from the gloomy past, til now we stand at last
Where the white gleam of our bright star is cast.

God of our weary years,
God of our silent tears,
Thou who hast brought us thus far on the way;
Thou who hast by Thy might,
Led us into the light,
Keep is forever in the path, we pray.

Lest our feet stray from the places, our Goc,
where we met Thee,
Lest our hearts yearn with the wine of the
world, we forget thee;
Shadowed beneath Thy hand, may we forever stand,
True to our God, true to our native land.

Poet, novelist, lyricist, essayist, critic and anthologist, Johnson remains one
of the preeminent figures in African-American letters. He was born James
William Johnson in Jacksonville, Florida, into a family with a deep appreci-
ation of the arts. He attended the Stetson Normal School for Blacks, where
his mother taught, and later Atlanta University. He returned to
Jacksonville in 1894 as a teacher and principal and began "teaching law,"
becoming the first black lawyer to pass the Florida bar examination. With
his brother John Rosamond Johnson (1873-1954), who had studied music
and worked in the theater in Boston, he wrote "Lift Ev’ry Voice and Sing"
for a Lincoln’s birthday celebration in 1900. Sing for schoolchildren
throughout the country, it became known as the "Negro National An-
them".

In 1900 Johnson went to New York, where he studied drama and
literature at Columbia University from 1903 to 1906, and, together with
his brother and Bob Cole, wrote a number of highly successful songs for
black musicals. Proposed by Booker T. Washington (the source of most
political patronage at the time) for the post, from 1906 to 1911 Johnson
served as consul to Venezuela and Picaraatoga, where he wrote the novel
The Autobiography of an Ex-Coloured Man, which was published anony-
mously in 1912.

If the early narratives of the Middle Passage form the ladder bridge
between the Old World and the New, Johnson’s novel represents a similar
leap from African-American writing of the nineteenth century to the mod-
ern novel. Written as if it were a autobiography—his dominant African-
American literary form up to that point—it is in fact an imaginative work
of fiction, its unnamed protagonist a literary antecedent of Ralph Ellison’s
Invisible Man? And while Johnson’s fast-talking hero, who passes for
white, feels a “sort of dual personality” that is reminiscent of the dichoto-
my expressed by Dunbar in “We Wear the Mask!” or Du Bois state-
ment that a black man “ever feels his woman—the American, a Negro,” in
his restless migrations from the South, to New York, through Europe and
back, and in his entrapment in the materialism of the twentieth century, he
is as well a thoroughly modern man.

Johnson returned to New York in 1914, where he became the editor of
the New Age, and embarked upon a regex career with the
NAACP, serving as field secretary from 1916 to 1920 and General Sec-
retary from 1920 to 1930 At the same time, he published numerous vol-
umes of poetry and prose, including Fifty Years and Other Poems (1917);
God’s Trombones: Seven Negro Sermons in Verse (1927); The Negro:
American History and culture of New York, Black Manhattan (1930);
Saint Price Estates an Incident (1930). He also contributed the essay
“The Making of Harlem” to the influential collection The New Ne-
ger, published in 1925. In 1930 Johnson became a professor of creative
literature at Fisk University, publishing his autobiography, Along This
Way, in 1933 and his last work, Negro Americans, What Now? in 1914.

In addition to his own creative works, as an anthologist and essayist,
Johnson sought to establish a critical foundation for the recovery and
study of African-American culture. In his two volumes of Negro spirituals
(1925, 1926), he traced the history of what he called “America’s only folk
music and, up to this time, the finest distinctive artistic contribution she
has to offer the world.” And in his groundbreaking Book of American
Negro Poetry (1922), he sought to establish a critical framework for the
appreciation and discussion of African-American verse. In his preface,
Johnson argues, “A people may become great through many means, but
there is only one measure by which its greatness is recognized and
acknowledged. The first measure of the greatness of all peoples is the
amount and standard of the literature and art they have produced...”