

SEPARATE BLACK AND WHITE CONFERENCES—Part 2

The Sin We Don't Want To Overcome

[Article Excerpted from Author's *Must We Be Silent?*]

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Introduction

In part 1 we explained how the current racially segregated conferences came into being. We also argued that, even if the historical circumstances for this concession to racism may be understandable, their continued existence today can not be biblically justified. In this present article, we continue the discussion by looking at other myths being used to prop up the racially segregated church structures in North America.

“The Time Has Not Yet Come to Dismantle the Racially Separate Conference”

Those who still defend the existence of the Black and White conferences see the need to bring the church's practice in line with its biblical teaching. Yet they often argue that the time has not yet arrived to dismantle the racial structures in the church. They contend that the work for Blacks and Whites will not be very successful without the separate organizations. They sometimes misquote Mrs. White's *Testimonies* volume nine statement (“The time has not come for us to work as if there were no [racial] prejudices”; *Testimonies for the Church*, Vol. 9, p. 215) to support their contention that the current arrangement is the best way to reach the different ethnic groups.

In making the above claim, advocates fail to realize that the separate but equal conference system that was put in place in 1944 is a repudiation of the biblical teaching of reconciliation and unity, and an endorsement of the segregationist standard of racism, as the norm for Christian race relations. [28] They also overlook the fact that until Jesus comes, racism will always remain a human problem, and that Christ calls upon His church to transcend this particular sin as evidence of His power to change lives.

▯ **Revisiting A Discredited [Kilgore] Policy.** Given Mrs. White's prophetic voice on the issue of race relations (as discussed in the previous chapter), she would not endorse the non-ideal practice if she were alive today. In fact, the argument that the work among Blacks and Whites will not be very successful without the separate church organizations is a racist argument that Mrs. White challenged in the 1890s when she was responding to what has come to be known as the Kilgore policy. Her commentary on this policy will be useful in our evaluation of the continued legitimacy of the existing Black (Regional) conferences.

In 1889, Charles M. Kinny, the first black minister to be ordained in the Seventh-day Adventist church was confronted by efforts to segregate him and his members at camp meeting. The embarrassing event took place when that year Kinny was ordained by Robert M. Kilgore “to the work of the ministry *among his own people*.” [29] Kilgore was the leader of the SDA work in

the South. [30]

According to Kilgore's report in the *Review and Herald*, that camp meeting at Nashville, Tennessee was not well attended as had been expected. There were several reasons for the poor turnout. But the main reason was this: "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." [31] Later at a workers' meeting at the camp grounds Kilgore suggested that "Colored members [should] be separated from the rest of the audience at the camp meeting."

But Kinny, the Black minister, argued that segregation of Blacks at camp meetings was against "the unity of the third angel's message." Besides, "the recommendation would be one of great embarrassment and humiliation, not only to myself, but to [all] Colored members and future converts."

Despite the thorough discussion, this leader of the Adventist work in the South, Elder Kilgore, maintained his position: "The camp meeting is literally a failure because the White people object to the presence of Colored people at the camp meeting." [32]

It was at this point that Kinny proposed the idea of a separate black conference. For him, a "total separation" was preferable to "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." He then suggested his solution: "To solve this problem, there should be the organization of a Colored conference. Until there are enough Colored members to form a conference, let the Colored churches, companies and individuals pay their tithe and make other contributions to the regular state office. And when Colored conferences are formed, they should bear the same relation to the General Conference that White Conferences do." [33]

Unable to resolve that issue at the Nashville, Tennessee, camp ground, Kilgore brought the issue to the General Conference Committee in 1890, and led out in a resolution to establish a policy of segregated churches: "The work in the South for the White population will not be successful until there is a policy of segregation between the races." [34]

The Kilgore policy of 1890 was significant in that it was the first time a General Conference had voted to endorse racially segregated work. Attempts to do so at previous General Conferences had failed because the policy was deemed to be out of harmony with Scripture. However, in 1890 this Kilgore policy was established on the grounds of expediency, not sound theology. [35]

As the *SDA Encyclopedia* points out, this "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." [36] This so-called Kilgore policy is the same justification being advanced by advocates of the present Black and White conferences.

Was this policy right? Did Ellen White endorse it? And would she endorse similar

arrangements today? We already know what Ellen G. White's position was on the creation of separate conferences. In 1905, she rejected the idea when a proposal was made for separate German and Scandinavian conferences (*Testimonies for the Church*, 1:195-195). But what was her reaction to the Kilgore policy of racially separating the races presumably to advance the work among both Black and White?

Mrs. White addressed this very question in an 1891 appeal titled "Our Duty to the Colored People." In it, she referred to the 1889 meeting and indicated that the matter had been presented to her a year before "as if written with a pen of fire." Her reasons for opposing the Kilgore policy may be applicable to our present Black (Regional) conferences. She wrote:

To The Church: 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. He will adjust all these perplexing questions. 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.

Sin rests upon us as a church because we have not made greater effort for the salvation of souls among the colored people. It will always be a difficult matter to deal with the prejudices of the white people in the South and do missionary work for the colored race. But the way this matter has been treated by some is an offense to God. 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, working according to Christ's order. You have no license from God to exclude the colored people from your places of worship. Treat them as Christ's property, which they are, just as much as yourselves. They should hold membership in the church with the white brethren. Every effort should be made to wipe out the terrible wrong which has been done them. At the same time we must not carry things to extremes and run into fanaticism on this question. Some would think it right to throw down every partition wall and intermarry with the colored people, but this is not the right thing to teach or to practice (*The Southern Work*, 15).

On the basis of the above statement, we conclude that Ellen White would reject the current racially separate conferences in the United States: Her reasons for repudiating the "separate but equal" conference arrangement would be as follows: (1) "It is uncalled for"; (2) It is due to "a heart problem--both white and black"; (3) It will "strengthen prejudices that ought to have died" a long time ago; (4) "Sin rests upon us," for the way we may have handled the matter may be "an offense to God"; (5) Our missionary efforts to the different races must be "on the ground of principle"; (6) Church members must be "educated to be Bible Christians, working according to Christ's order"; (7) Blacks must hold "membership in the church with the white"; (8) Whites must make efforts "to wipe out the terrible wrong which has been done"; (9) Even when doing the right thing, "We must not carry things to the extremes"; (10) "Throwing down every partition wall"--including inter-racial marriage[37] may not always be wise.

Now Is the Time. The above counsel was given at a time when the racial problem in the

United States was far more serious than today's. If the Kilgore policy was "uncalled for" at that time, and if "sin rests upon us" for adopting that policy, what better reason do we have for refusing to break down the walls of separate conferences? If the time has not come to dismantle these separate church structures, when will be the best time to do so?

Let's remember that now is always the best time to do right. For obedience deferred is always disobedience. Now is, therefore, the time to dismantle our racially separate conferences in the North American Division.

"Blacks and Whites Are Different, and Must Be Reached in Different Ways"

Advocates of the separate Black and White conferences often argue that Blacks are different from Whites. Therefore, we need different ways to reach each group. Different worship and evangelistic styles are often cited as reasons why we need the separate churches and conferences.

But this argument also fails to recognize that Blacks and Whites are fundamentally the same. They are both sinners, have the same need of a Savior, and can only be reached by the same gospel. Moreover, the only worship styles the Bible recognizes are not Black and White styles of worship, but true and false worship styles. Every style of worship in the church should be subjected to biblical scrutiny. Culture should not be the norm. In the Jew-Samaritan situation we discussed in an earlier chapter, we showed that Jesus was not interested in any culture's worship style. He insisted that "all who worship the Father must worship Him in spirit and in truth" (John 4).

Finally, to argue for racially separate conferences in the United States on grounds that Blacks and Whites must be reached "in a certain way" also overlooks Ellen White's categorical rejection of this argument. She addressed a similar situation on September 24, 1885, when she addressed the third session of the European Union Council in Basel, Switzerland.

Because of the clash between different nationalities of Europe, she expressed her fears:

I was almost afraid to come to this country because I heard so many say that the different nationalities of Europe were peculiar and had to be reached in a certain way. But the wisdom of God is promised to those who feel their need and who ask for it. *God can bring the people where they will receive the truth. Let the Lord take possession of the mind and mold it as the clay is molded in the hands of the potter, and these differences will not exist. Look to Jesus, brethren; copy His manners and spirit, and you will have no trouble in reaching these different classes.*

We have not six patterns to follow, nor five; we have only one, and that is Christ Jesus. If the Italian brethren, the French brethren, and the German brethren try to be like Him, they will plant their feet upon the same foundation of truth; the same spirit that dwells in one will dwell in the other--Christ in them, the hope of glory. I warn you, brethren and sisters, not to build up a wall of partition between different nationalities. On the contrary, seek to break it down wherever it exists. We should

endeavor to bring all into the harmony that there is in Jesus, laboring for the one object, the salvation of our fellow men (*Testimonies for the Church*, 9:181; emphasis mine).

To encourage the different nationalities of Adventists to work together, avoiding the ethnic conflicts within society, she presented a series of messages on unity. Her topics included “Love and Forbearance Among the Brethren,” “Unity Among Laborers,” and “Unity Among Different Nationalities.” She urged:

Some who have entered these missionary fields have said: ‘You do not understand the French people; you do not understand the Germans. They have to be met in just such a way.’ But I inquire: Does not God understand them? Is it not He who gives His servants a message for the people? He knows just what they need; and if the message comes directly from Him through His servants to the people, it will accomplish the work whereunto it is sent; it will make all one in Christ. Though some are decidedly French, others decidedly German, and others decidedly American, they will be just as decidedly Christlike. . . . God wants the different nationalities to mingle together, to be one in judgment, one in purpose. Then the union that there is in Christ will be exemplified (*Testimonies for the Church*, 9:180-183).

Ellen White’s final warning to the leaders in Europe is applicable to our situation today. Shall we tear down the walls of racially separated conferences in America? We need to heed the prophetic voice:

I warn you, brethren, and sisters not to build up a wall of partition between different nationalities. On the contrary, seek to break it down whenever it exists . . . We are to demonstrate to the world that men of every nationality are one in Christ Jesus. Then let us remove every barrier and come into unity in the service of the Master (ibid, 183-196).

The 1999 Race Summit: Form or Substance?

Recently, the North American Division (NAD) of Seventh-day Adventists organized a Race Summit at the Church’s Headquarters in Silver Spring, Maryland, from October 27-30, 1999. “Rather than merely talk about critical racial issues,” the organizers of the meeting sought to “concentrate on the important question of how to bring about positive change in race relations, recommend bold initiatives for dismantling racism, and create an on-going mechanism to continually motivate, expand, and monitor the progress of those initiatives.” More than 300 administrators and institutional heads were summoned to the summit. About fifty “renowned thought leaders” were invited to speak. [38]

But despite their best intention, it seems that the NAD was not prepared to do the “unglamorous” thing of breaking down the visible expression of racism in the church. Following the much publicized 1999 Summit on Race, the NAD Office of Human Relations prepared a document detailing a set of “bold new initiatives” so that the church’s “public and internal image

will be one of inclusiveness and racial harmony.” The detailed initiatives, and the corresponding timetables for each recommendation, are contained in an 8-page document titled *Suggested Activities Plan and Timetable for North American Division Race Relations Follow-up*. [39]

Consistent with its stated goal “to create a church body that transcends the social barriers of race, culture, class, ethnicity, gender, disabilities, etc., by reflecting the love and oneness of a *new humanity in Christ*,

” [40] the Document offers several laudable suggestions. Among other things, the Document (1) calls for the appointment of a committee to “design and implement” the recommendations of delegates of the 1999 Summit on Race; (2) urges the leadership of NAD to approve October 24-27, 2001 as the dates for a second “Summit on Race”; (3) suggests to the NAD leadership to “build on the moral imperative of Jesus that will lead to a true diversity that incorporates culture, race, gender, and disability”; (4) calls upon the Office of Strategic Planning working with NAD to “create a vision for the future of our church based on values so its public and internal image will be one of inclusiveness and racial harmony”; and (5) urges various entities of the Division “to create a strategic plan to achieve that vision [of inclusiveness and racial harmony].”

▯ **An Intriguing Parenthesis.** Bear in mind that participants at the 1999 Race Summit were “to recommend bold initiatives for dismantling racism” [41] Thus, each of the broad recommendations above contains detailed or specific activities, with their corresponding timetables. But there is an intriguing parenthesis in the Document’s discussion of how to restructure the NAD’s “ecclesiastical [church organizational] structure” [42]

That baffling parenthesis suggests that “inclusiveness and racial harmony” does not extend to the dismantling of the non-ideal Black (Regional) conferences that were occasioned by White racism. This fact is captured in the most intriguing paragraph of the strategic plan regarding “ecclesiastical structure.” For, immediately after it had urged the NAD leadership to conduct “leadership dialogues that will focus on how best to restructure to remove the image of the denomination as two churches—one black and one white,” the Document adds these parenthetical words:

“(Restructuring must not be seen as an attempt to eliminate black conferences and leaders but as an activity that will eliminate conference overlapping and that will result in the possibility of increased conference leadership opportunities for qualified blacks and other people of color.)” [43]

Let’s reflect on the terse statement above. Our church in North America wants a restructuring in the ecclesiastical structure that would “remove the image of the denomination as two churches—one black and one white.” And yet, it is unwilling to “eliminate black conferences and leaders.” Why is this so?

It seems to me that there is only one way to remove the image of the North American church

as two churches: dismantle the Black (Regional) *conferences that were initially created as a concession to White racism. For, once we decide to eliminate Black conferences, the church would immediately be forced to deal with the future of exclusively White conferences.* In other words, the elimination of Black conferences necessarily demand the elimination of White conferences.

The forbidden question then is this: Are we afraid to touch the issue of “Black conferences and leaders” because *Blacks leaders* are afraid to lose their power (hence the assurance of “the possibility of increased conference leadership opportunities for qualified blacks and other people of color”) [44]? Or is it rather the *White leaders* who are afraid of losing their power (as a result of “the possibility of increased conference leadership opportunities for qualified blacks and other people of color”)?

Or must we interpret the parenthetical statement as a calculated attempt to conceal the fears of *both* White and Black leaders in North America? As I see it, Blacks generally think that Whites are racists. And Whites generally think that Blacks hate them. Blacks see Whites as unwilling to relinquish power. Whites think Blacks want quotas to reward their incompetence. Both groups agitate their congregations and constituencies into believing that it is the other race that has racial problems. And both refuse to see the issue as a spiritual one that calls for confession and reconciliation. Are these not the real issues behind the unwillingness of the NAD to break down the racial walls? And are these not evidence that we all need to be converted lest we perish together?

Candid answers to the above questions will reveal whether the 1999 Race Summit really sought “to do more than merely talk about our critical racial issues.” The responses will also make clear to what extent the participants at the summit really sought to “concentrate on the unglamorous but very important question of how to bring about positive change in our race relations.” [45]

I must repeat again. The issue I’m focusing on is not about who is right, but rather, what is right.

The North American Division is correct in noting that “it is through leadership that the outcomes of the Summit will reach communities throughout the Church –particularly [at] the congregational level, which is the place where we really do church!” [46] This is because conference leaders set the racial tone for pastors and members at the congregational levels. In other words, racially exclusive conferences encourage the creation of racially exclusive churches, camp meetings, schools, and workers.

Now, if the conference leaders—Black and White—remain segregated, as the “bold initiatives” of NAD’s *Suggested Activities Plan* indicate, how can we expect church members and pastors at the local levels to work toward racial reconciliation and harmony?

How can we fulfill the stated goal of the Race Summit Follow-Up (namely, “to create a church body that transcends the social barriers of race, culture, class, ethnicity, gender, disabilities, etc., by reflecting the love and oneness of *a new humanity in Christ*”), [47] when we are

unwilling to eliminate the racially segregated conferences created by the racism of a previous generation? Does not our action bolster “the image of the denomination as two churches—one black and one white?” Can we honestly and legitimately speak about “inclusiveness and racial harmony” when our leadership at the Conference administrative levels chooses to live apart? Wouldn’t segregation at the conference level ultimately lead to demands for racially segregated Unions? [48]

□ □ □ **Bold Initiatives or Photo Op?** Unless we are willing to eliminate Black (Regional) conferences (which also necessitates the dismantling of exclusively White conferences), then the elaborate plans for a second summit in October 2001 will be legitimately construed as another photo-op designed to convince no one but us that our refusal to eliminate the racially separate structures do not stem from our lust for power. Let me be more specific.

The *Suggested Activities Plan* Document contains many laudable suggestions for a second summit. But what is the use of hosting “continental prayer breakfasts” and “diversity banquets” for racial healing if we cannot regularly sit at the Lord’s communion table (because we choose to worship in racially exclusive churches)?

What is the use of planning many “burying the hatchet handle services” to “rid participating individuals of all racial prejudices and hindrances to racial reconciliation as a result of being pointed once again to the cross of Jesus Christ” if we are unwilling to talk candidly about why we still need racially separate conferences?

And what value is there in conducting “diversity celebration services” if we are unprepared to remove the organizational structure that discourages us from worshiping together weekly? Occasional diversity services is not the same as worshiping together. Jesus did not commute between heaven and earth to conduct some regular diversity celebration services; He came and dwelt among us.

I want to emphasize again that I am not opposed to the “bold new initiatives” calculated to heal our racial wounds and restore racial harmony. Even though I question some of the cosmetic proposals, I see some merits in some of the suggested activities. My point is simply that unless we are willing to dismantle our racially separate conferences in the United States, the series of NAD proposals will be perceived as nothing more than a photo op—the adoption of meaningless forms without any substance. Here is a summary of those “bold initiatives”:

- highlighting many “successful events . . . with awards ceremonies”
- contracting and paying many “diversity professionals” to conduct “leadership training sessions”
- inviting GC Presidents to “generate enthusiasm” to encourage initiative in other divisions
- purchasing from vendors additional materials “for growth in race relations”
- denouncing racism as “sin, [and] an evil that must be addressed”
- issuing many “public commitments” to all entities of the Division challenging them on how to deal with differences
- instituting many “series of sermons on racism” for the “education of the faith community”
- developing many “organizing principles” as foundations for “anti-racist approaches using

scripture, sacred writings, shared values, human service, human dignity”

- developing or revising “Vision, Values, and Mission Statements” that are not driven by economic or political forces “but by the egalitarian factors of the gospel” [49]
- creating “strategic plans” to achieve the vision of inclusiveness and racial harmony in “*ecclesial structure*,”
- ” a restructuring “to remove the image of the denomination as two churches—one black and one white”
- promoting and adopting the term “inclusion as a new paradigm for the Division,” and making use of it in our programs, policies, personnel appointments, and practices
- developing mechanisms to “conduct policy and practice audits that will eliminate policies and practices which, directly or indirectly, disadvantage people of color and women”
- creating additional “strategic plans” to achieve the vision of inclusiveness and racial harmony in *congregations*, and developing approaches “to increase sensitivity to each other’s history, culture, personal experience, dreams for the future, and the intentional cooperation and exchange of members of diverse congregations” [50]
- creating many more “strategic plans” for racial inclusivity and harmony in “*education*,” utilizing all the media of the Church, “reaching all levels of the church, and presenting practical pathways”
- developing youth programs to address racism and classism “as essential mechanisms to eliminate racism in the life of the individual and the Church structure” [51]
- working at “minimizing racism in schools by carefully examining the total educational program”—its curricula, instructional methods, assessment practices, etc.

Yes, we may do all the above laudable things, and even more, “so that the Holy Spirit may have full say in the community of faith, preparing us on earth for the fellowship of heaven where all forms of diversity will be affirmed and celebrated forever.” But unless we are willing to take the first step of eliminating the racially inspired conferences, none of the above “bold initiatives for dismantling racism” will be effective.

Moreover, do church leaders have the right to demand from local church pastors and members what they themselves are not prepared to do? The rubber meets the road when we decide to take away the color code from our church structure in North America.

We must be prepared to eliminate black conferences *in such a manner as would allow for increased conference leadership opportunities for all qualified Adventists—not just for Blacks*. Qualified Adventists are not necessarily those who have previously patronized and benefitted from the racial structures, nor those with impressive degrees or political acumen. Rather, all leaders for the structures of our church organization must meet the biblical requirements of 1 Timothy 3:1-7, 2 Timothy 4:1-5, and Titus 1:5-9. In other words, all Adventists aspiring for leadership roles must, in the words of Martin Luther King, Jr., not be judged by the color of their skin but by the content of their character.

□ □ □ **Beyond the Prudence of Racial Prejudices.** The current black and white conference arrangement in North America is a concession to racism. It is based on pragmatic expediency, not sound theology. This system, and the separate houses of worship it encourages, must not continue till Jesus comes. The first step in any bold initiative for dismantling racism in the church

must be the elimination of black conferences in North America, a step which necessarily calls into question the existence of separate White conferences.

If we are not willing to dismantle the racial structures now, we must truthfully ask ourselves why not. Is it because we are afraid to admit our own racism and unwilling to do something about the sin? And if we are not prepared to vote the elimination of black and white conferences at the next Summit on Race, we must seriously question the purpose and morality of again spending hundreds of thousands of dollars for an event that will be more talk than substance.

In the words of Ellen G. White, "I call upon every church in our land to look well to your own souls. . . . Whatever may be your prejudices, your wonderful prudence, do not lose sight of this fact, that unless you put on Christ, and His Spirit dwells in you, you are slaves of sin and of Satan" (*Southern Work*, 13).

Is it not time for us to pursue a better way? This may be our finest hour to do something about the wall of racism.

Endnotes

[28] "In some ways, the events of 1944 [when Black conferences were created] put into practice the Supreme Court decision of 1896, which saw the two races, at least in theory, as 'separate but equal.' Given the racial climate in the nation as a whole, it might be thought that the development of black Adventist conferences was inevitable. But this is not necessarily true. The Jehovah's Witnesses, however, showed a markedly greater capacity for racial integration than did the Adventists. The Mormons, on the other hand, unashamedly held to a doctrine of white supremacy, barring blacks from the priesthood and avoiding contact with them. It was Adventism that most closely followed national trends in that it accepted blacks into its community but adopted segregationist policies" (Bull and Lockhart, *Seeking A Sanctuary*, 198).

[29] Robert M. Kilgore, in *Review and Herald*, Oct. 29, 1889, 683. This kind of ministerial ordination to one region of the church, is equivalent to the "division based" women's ordination request at Utrecht in 1995. Or, even the rebellious ordination services for "women pastors" in certain influential churches in North America.

[30] In 1889, the General Conference divided the United States and Canada into six districts. District number 2 included all the Southern States east of the Mississippi (the only exception was Virginia and Maryland). Elder R.M. Kilgore, an Iowan and former officer in the Civil War, was chosen Superintendent of this district in 1890. At the General Conference in April 1901, the nine states of this field were organized into the Southern Union.

[31] Ibid.

[32] It is likely that Kilgore's segregationist policy may have been influenced by his earlier experience in Texas. A noted Adventist historian notes that "Kilgore's eight years of labor in Texas [1877-1885] were not without difficulties; several times he was threatened with lynching, and on one occasion his tent was burned down. Public opposition may have led to the curtailing

of the church's unofficial educational work for blacks. As an ex-Union officer, Kilgore was sensitive to the charge that Adventists were 'Yankees' come 'to preach nigger equality'; a charge he denied. Opposition from prejudiced whites may also have contributed to the early demise of a school for freedmen begun in 1877 by Mrs. H. M. Van Slyke in Ray County, Missouri" (R. W. Schwarz, *Light Bearers to the Remnant* [Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press, 1979], 233-234).

[33] W. W. Fordham, *Righteous Rebel*, 67. Kinny reasoned: "Where the two races cannot meet together without [trouble] in the church, it is better to separate. That missions be established among them [the Colored race], thus raising up separate churches. . . . That in view of the outside [world's] feeling on the race feeling, and the hindrances 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 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 That when Colored conferences are formed they bear the same relation to the General Conference as the White conferences" (see "Statement by C. M. Kinny, Nashville, Tennessee, SDA Camp Ground," October 2, 1889, reproduced as Appendix 6, in Fordham's *Righteous Rebel*, 131-133); cf. Reynolds, *We Have Tommorrow*, 296-297.

[34] Fordham, *Righteous Rebel*, 67; Reynolds, *We Have Tomorrow*, 297; *SDA Encyclopedia*, 1194.

[35] One church historian has accurately pointed out that during the General Conferences of 1877 and 1885, "the question of whether or not to bow to Southern prejudices by establishing separate work and separate churches for blacks was debated. Most speakers believed that to do so would be a denial of true Christianity since God was no respecter of persons. In 1890, however, R. M. Kilgore, the Adventist leader with the most experience relative to the South, argued for separate churches. D. M. Canright had urged this policy as early as 1876 during a brief period of labor in Texas. Eventually their recommendation prevailed, but the policy was never defended on grounds other than those of expediency" (Schwarz, *Light Bearers to the Remnant*, 234).

[36] *SDA Encyclopedia*, 1194. "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" (ibid).

[37] Ellen White's judicious counsel above--as also reflected in her "Counsel Regarding Intermarriage" (*Selected Messages*, 2:343-344)—goes beyond the color line to include any kind of incompatibility (be it of religion, age, social status, ethnicity, etc.) that is likely to adversely affect the couple and the children who are involved in the marriage relationship. Mrs. White points out some of the problems and pressures experienced by couples and children of interracial marriages. These factors add to the stresses commonly experienced in marriage.

[38] The "renowned thought leaders" included: Dr. Samuel Betances, futurist, author, motivational speaker, and senior consultant for Chicago based Souder, Betances, and Associates, Inc.; Dr. Tony Campolo, professor of Sociology at Eastern College in St. Davids, PA, author of 26 books, and producer of "Hashing It Out," a weekly television show on the Odyssey Network; Dr. Edwin Nichols, a Washington, D.C.-based psychologist, motivational speaker, and director of Nichols and Associates, Inc.; Dr. Betty Lentz Siegel, nationally recognized lecturer and president of Kennesaw State University in GA; and Dr. Cain Hope Felder, professor of New Testament in the School of Divinity at Howard University in Washington, D.C. See, Celeste Ryan, "Adventist Church Hosts Race Relations Summit," *Adventist News Network* [ANN], October 19, 1999; cf. *Modeling the Ministry of Christ: Making It Happen!* (the Summit on Race Relations Program Booklet).

[39] *Suggested Activities Plan and Timetable for North American Division Race Relations Follow-up*, 1, 4. The document was prepared by the Office of Human Relations and presented to the President of the North American Division.

[40] *Suggested Activities Plan and Timetable for North American Division Race Relations Follow-up*, 1 (emphasis in original).

[41] Rosa T. Banks, "Making It Happen," in an invitation brochure prepared for potential attendees to the October 27-30, 1999 "Race Summit." See also the "Terms of Reference" in the same brochure.

[42] The Document offers detailed strategic plans to achieve the church's vision of "inclusiveness and racial harmony" in (1) the "ecclesiastical [church organizational] structure," (2) local congregations, and (3) education of various levels of the Church, including the youth department and the institutions of learning. Since this chapter is dealing with the racially segregated church structure in North America, the first item (recommendations dealing with "ecclesiastical structure") is of particular interest to us (*Suggested Activities Plan*, 4-5).

[43] *Suggested Activities Plan and Timetable for North American Division Race Relations Follow-up*, 4-5. The document was prepared by the Office of Human Relations and presented to the President of the North American Division.

[44] The fourth suggestion under the strategic plan for "ecclesiastical structure" aims at "developing a mechanism for encouraging administrators of the North American Division to conduct policy and practice audits that will eliminate policies and practices which, directly or

indirectly, disadvantage people of color and women.” See Suggested Activities Plan, 5.

[45] Rosa T. Banks, “Making It Happen,” in an invitation brochure prepared for potential attendees to the October 27-30, 1999 “Race Summit.”

[46] Ibid.

[47] *Suggested Activities Plan and Timetable for North American Division Race Relations Follow-up*, 1.

[48] Some Black leaders argued in the past for the creation of Black unions, the next level of government in the SDA polity. For example, rightly recognizing the current Black-White conference arrangement as one of racial power, E. E. Cleveland supports Black unions because it is “imperative that black men have someone at Union Conference level to speak for them” (see E. E. Cleveland, “Regional Union Conferences,” *Spectrum* 2:2 [1970]: 44). Calvin Rock also argues for Black unions on the grounds of the genuine cultural differences that exist between Blacks and Whites (Calvin Rock, “Cultural Pluralism and Black Unions,” *Spectrum* 9:3 [1978]: 4-12). Observe that the church has repeatedly rejected the proposals for Black Unions; see Benjamin Reeves, “The Call for Black Unions,” *Spectrum* 9:3 (1978): 2-3; cf. Jonathan Butler, “Race Relations in the Church,” 4, *Insight*, February 20, 1979, 13-14.

[49] In the next chapter I will offer a different perspective on the “egalitarian factors of the gospel.”

[50] My point is simply this: The best way to “to increase sensitivity to each others’ history, culture, personal experience, and dreams for the future” is to encourage people to work together. Also the “intentional cooperation” mentioned in the NAD document can take place only when the different races are working, studying, and worshiping together. When this happens, there would be no need for an “exchange of members of diverse congregations.”

[51] This suggested plan calls upon youth to help in combating racism in the life of the individual “and the Church structure.” But are leaders running the church structures willing to do their part—namely, dismantle the racial structures of church organization