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FROM CONSERVATISM TO ACTIVISM: THE EVOLUTION OF SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST PARTICIPATION IN CIVIL RIGHTS POLITICS

A Thesis

Submitted to the Faculty

of

Purdue University

by

Samuel Gene London, Jr.

In Partial Fulfillment of the

Requirements for the Degree

of

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To my parents

Samuel and Mary London

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Page

ABSTRACT vi
INTRODUCTION 1
PART I THE ADVENTISTS: ORIGINS AND DEVELOPMENT OF NON-PARTICIPATORY POLITICS 7
CHAPTER 1 FORAYS INTO SOCIAL ACTIVISM: A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS 8
CHAPTER 2 THEOLOGY, POLITICS, AND THE RETREAT FROM SOCIAL ACTIVISM 30
PART II THE EMERGENCE OF AFRO-ADVENTIST ACTIVISM 48
CHAPTER 3 AFRO-ADVENTIST ACTIVISM IN THE 1930S AND 1940S 49
CHAPTER 4 LAY ACTIVISM 61
CHAPTER 5 MINISTERIAL ACTIVISM IN THE SOUTH CENTRAL CONFERENCE 76
CHAPTER 6 MINISTERIAL ACTIVISM IN THE SOUTH ATLANTIC AND GENERAL CONFERENCES ... 92
CONCLUSION 106
BIBLIOGRAPHY 113
VITA 125

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ABSTRACT

London, Jr., Samuel G. Ph.D., Purdue University, May, 2006. From Conservatism to Activism: The Evolution of Seventh-day Adventist Participation in Civil Rights Politics. Major Professor: Joseph C. Dorsey.

This study examines the history of Seventh-day Adventist participation in civil rights politics. It also considers the extent to which the denomination's theology influenced the way its members responded to sociopolitical activism in the United States. Irony is not lost on the fact that most Adventists did not participate in the Civil Rights Movement. As Christian fundamentalists, Seventh-day Adventists hold political views that are similar to those of other conservative denominations. Consequently, this dissertation explores why some Adventists became involved in sociopolitical issues while others did not. In doing so, it contends that community awareness motivated some black Seventh-day Adventists to participate in the Civil Rights Movement. For them, community awareness took precedence over philosophical and theological aspects of Adventism that discouraged political activity.

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INTRODUCTION

The significance of church-state relations in the United States becomes apparent as religious groups exercise their influence on such ethical and sociopolitical issues as: the faith-based initiative, stem cell research, abortion, euthanasia, and same sex marriage. Thus, an exploration of theology's impact on race politics in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries holds the potential of providing insight into the dynamic of church-state relations in the modern world. To fulfill this objective, the present study examines the Seventh-day Adventist Church to determine if the denomination's theology influenced the way its members responded to sociopolitical activism in the United States.

The existing literature on Seventh-day Adventist activism and political views consists of: two essays (one published and the other unpublished), a dissertation, and two books. Holley Fisher's article of 2003 titled "Oakwood College Students' Quest for Social Justice before and during the Civil Rights Era" points out that the official histories of the Adventist Church do not dwell on the Civil Rights Movement, or the contribution of its members to it. According to Fisher, this erasure is a manifestation of the denomination's conservative and guarded policies on race relations. She maintains that theological beliefs such as: apocalyptic historical eschatology, sectarian ecclesiology, the radical deterministic doctrine of God, and the free-will image of man influenced the Church's position on the race question. In her estimation, apocalyptic historical eschatology, which is the doctrine concerning Christ's Second Coming and the destruction of the world, led Seventh-day Adventists to assume a laissez-faire attitude toward social problems. Since Adventism advocates Christ's return as the only solution for society's problems, adherents perceived sociopolitical activism as unnecessary.

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Sectarian ecclesiology, which is the doctrine that Christians are not to conform to the secular world, led Adventist leaders to admonish members to disassociate themselves from political causes. The radical deterministic doctrine of God is the belief that the Divine intervenes directly in human affairs. In short, this notion, embraced by Adventists, transferred sociopolitical responsibility from human agents to God. Finally, Fisher explains that the doctrine of the free-will image of man, defined as a state in which the condition of an individual or group remains constant until God "moves" to change their plight, caused Adventists to downgrade the necessity of constructing a formal plan to deal with social inequalities in the Church and secular society.

According to Fisher, the adoption of these four concepts contributed to the slow pace of racial reform in the Seventh-day Adventist Church. In her opinion, these theological notions worked to undermine the 1931 student protest for social justice at Oakwood College, the denomination's only historically black institution of higher learning. Overall, she characterized sociopolitical activism among the Adventist students at Oakwood as individualistic and moderate.

Fisher's study does not concern itself with the reasons that prompted some Seventh-day Adventists to become participants in civil rights activism, even though the denomination's theological beliefs acted to suppress direct involvement in sociopolitical reform. Furthermore, her investigation focuses exclusively on civil rights activities at Oakwood College and the surrounding community of Huntsville, Alabama. It does not examine the efforts of Adventists to combat racial injustice in larger segments of American society.[1]

James Lewis Kyle, Jr.'s unpublished essay of 1977 titled "SDAs and the Civil Rights Movement: The First Decade" analyzes the denomination's periodicals to gauge the reaction of the Adventist Church to the Civil Rights Movement.[2] After reviewing various Adventist publications (such as: *The Review and Herald*, *Message Magazine*, *The*

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[1] Holley Fisher, "Oakwood College Students' Quest for Social Justice before and during the Civil Rights Era," *Journal of African American History* 88, no 2 (Spring 2003): 110-125.

[2] The present discussion includes this unpublished essay because it was the first attempt to address the reaction of Seventh-day Adventists to the Civil Rights Movement. Furthermore, a Seventh-day Adventist authored this paper and it is currently housed in the archives of Andrews University (an Adventist institution in Berrien Springs, Michigan).

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North American Informant, and *Liberty* magazine) Kyle concludes that between the years 1956 and 1966, the denomination was practically silent on the issue of civil rights for African Americans. He attributes this to two factors. First, Seventh-day Adventists viewed the Civil Rights Movement as a political rather than a moral issue; therefore, they disavowed direct involvement. Second, Seventh-day Adventists recognized the Social Gospel component of the Civil Rights Movement and rejected it. A problematic feature of Kyle's research is its limited sources. In fact, he concedes that the denomination's literature is virtually silent on matters of civil rights politics.[3]

Citizens of Two Worlds: Religion and Politics among American Seventh-day Adventists (1992) by Rodger Dudley and Edwin Hernández is essentially the publication of the latter's dissertation, titled "Religious Commitment and Its Political Consequences among Seventh-day Adventist in the United States," with some modifications. In the book, Dudley and Hernández draw parallels between Seventh-day Adventists and other Protestant evangelicals, to gain a better understanding of Adventist political behavior.[4] Using data from their own research, as well as information collected from the following sources: Stuart Rothenberg's *The Evangelical Voter* (1984), John Redekop's *The American Far Right* (1968), George Marsden's *Fundamentalism and American Culture* (1980), and Gordon Allport's "The Religious Context of Prejudice" (1966), Dudley and Hernández examine the impact of modernity, individualism, fundamentalism, religious maturity, education, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status on the political views of Protestant evangelicals and Seventh-day Adventists. Overall, they found that Adventists, like most evangelicals, tend to hold conservative political views.[5] However, ethnic minorities within the denomination are more likely to be politically liberal.[6]

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[3] James Lewis Kyle, Jr., "SDAs and the Civil Rights Movement: The First Decade, 1977," TMs (photocopy), p. 1-15, University Archives, James White Library, Andrews University, Berrien Springs, Michigan.
[4] Rodger L. Dudley and Edwin I. Hernández, *Citizens of Two Worlds: Religion and Politics among American Seventh-day Adventists* (Berrien Springs: Andrews University Press, 1992), 4, 5.
[5] Ibid., 229. See also Edwin I. Hernández, "Religious Commitment and Its Political Consequences among Seventh-day Adventists in the United States" (Ph.D. diss, University of Notre Dame, 1989), 168.
[6] Dudley, *Citizens of Two Worlds*, 219, 220, 227, 228. See also Hernández, "Religious Commitment," 168, 169, 174.

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Zdravko Plantak's *The Silent Church: Human Rights and Adventist Social Ethics* (1998) investigates the response of the Seventh-day Adventist Church to human rights in its theology and history.[7] In the book, he examines various issues as they relate to human rights within Adventism. These include: evangelism, premillennialism, belief in the Second Coming of Christ, the Biblical Sabbath, the covenant theme, pragmatism, individualism, class struggle, black identity, holistic theology, and the role of women in the Church. Plantak concludes that the denomination's record on human rights is historically inconsistent. He attributes this short coming to Adventism's lack of a developed social theology.[8]

The present work focuses on the Seventh-day Adventist Church for the following reasons. First, the historical record contains little information on political activism by its members. As a result, this dissertation provides the first in-depth examination of Adventist participation in civil rights politics. However, irony is not lost on the fact that most Seventh-day Adventists did not participate in the Civil Rights Movement. Second, the sociologist Edwin Hernández contends that Adventist theology shows little deviation by way of cultural or political adaptations to different societies; therefore, it has the potential of impacting sociopolitical issues worldwide. [9] Third, research shows that Seventh-day Adventist attitudes on public issues are similar to those of other Protestant evangelical groups.[10] Thus, examining Adventist political views sheds light on those of other conservative denominations.[11] Finally, this work provides insight on why some Seventh-day Adventists became involved in sociopolitical issues while others did not.

The dissertation adheres to the following format. Part One explores the development of non-participatory politics in Adventism. Chapter One examines the origin of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, and relates the efforts of Ellen Gould Harmon White (cofounder of the Seventh-day Adventist Church) and her son, James Edson White, to improve the socioeconomic condition of African Americans.

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[7] Zdravko Plantak, *The Silent Church: Human Rights and Adventist Social Ethics* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1998), 2.
[8] Ibid., 208.
[9] Hernández, "Religious Commitment," 13. Hernández maintains that the beliefs and practices of Seventh-day Adventists in various parts of the world adhere closely to doctrinal norms.
[10] Dudley, *Citizens of Two Worlds*, 4.
[11] Ibid., 5.

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Furthermore, it shows how Southern violence, at the turn of the century, impacted Adventist views on sociopolitical activity. Finally, it compares the problems of Seventh-day Adventist missionaries, working with African Americans in the South, to those of Katharine Drexel and the Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament, a Catholic missionary order serving Native Americans and blacks. Chapter Two examines Adventism's adoption of certain theological and philosophical concepts that discouraged political activism. In addition, it uncovers the roots of these ideas and proceeds to show how Adventist leaders used them to oppose the denomination's entry into the Civil Rights Movement. Finally, it discusses community awareness and presents it as an antidote to beliefs in Adventism that discourage political activity.

Part Two explores the emergence of Afro-Adventist activism. Chapter Three highlights the contribution of Matthew Strachan, a black Adventist minister, and Irene Morgan, a black Adventist laywoman, to sociopolitical reform in the 1940s. It also demonstrates how events during the interwar years increased community awareness among African Americans. In addition, the chapter presents the argument that a heightened sense of community consciousness motivated Strachan and Morgan, as well as other black Seventh-day Adventists, to participate in sociopolitical activism. Chapter Four gives attention to the involvement of black Adventist laypersons in the Civil Rights Movement of the 1950s and 1960s. Accordingly, it examines the activities of: Alfonzo Greene, Terrance Roberts, and Frank Hale in combating social injustice within the Seventh-day Adventist Church and secular society. Based on information gathered from interviews and memoirs, this chapter argues that community awareness, gained from personal experiences with racism, as well as family socialization, motivated the activism of these laymen. Chapter Five focuses on the civil rights work of black Adventist ministers from the South Central Conference such as: Charles Dudley, Charles Joseph, and Earl Moore.[12] It also documents the opposition they encountered because of their

[12] The administration of the Seventh-day Adventist Church adheres to the following organizational structure: local church, local or regional conference, union conference, division, and general conference. The General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists is the highest administrative unit in the Seventh-day Adventist Church. The South Central Conference of Seventh-day Adventists is a regional conference within the denomination made up of predominately black churches in: Kentucky, Tennessee, Alabama,

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activism. This chapter, like the one before it, argues that community awareness, gained from personal experiences with racism, family socialization, and contact with African American parishioners, motivated these ministers to participate in the political process. Chapter Six discusses the contributions to the Civil Rights Movement from black Adventist ministers associated with the South Atlantic and General Conferences.[13] In narrating the experiences of Warren Banfield and Franklin Hill, both from the South Atlantic Conference, it shows the length to which some white Adventists went to oppose their political activities. The chapter also examines the efforts of Edward Earl Cleveland to bring about social change as an official in the Southern Union and General Conferences. As in previous chapters, this one argues that community solidarity motivated the activism of these ministers.

The conclusion reiterates several key points discussed in the dissertation. These include: community awareness, Adventist women activists, doctrine versus politics, the rise of Jim Crow, parallels and contrasts in Catholic and Adventist approaches to sociopolitical activism, differences between Northern and Southern Afro-Adventists, the influence of Oakwood College on black Adventist activism, and the impact of the Second World War on the Civil Rights Movement.

Mississippi, and the portion of Florida lying west of the Apalachicola River. As a result, African Americans hold most of the leadership positions in this conference.

[13] The South Atlantic Conference of Seventh-day Adventists is a regional conference within the denomination made up of predominately black churches in: North Carolina, South Carolina, and Georgia. Prior to January 1981, the South Atlantic Conference held administrative authority over black churches in the state of Florida.

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PART ONE

THE SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTISTS: ORIGINS AND DEVELOPMENT OF NON-PARTICIPATORY POLITICS

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CHAPTER 1

FORAYS INTO SOCIAL ACTIVISM: A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

This chapter examines the origin of the Seventh-day Adventist Church and the efforts of some members, at the turn of the century, to improve the socioeconomic situation of Southern blacks. It also shows how violence aimed at African Americans prompted Ellen White, an Adventist leader, to adopt a moderate approach to social activism in the South. The chapter's discussion of Katharine Drexel, a white Catholic nun who founded the Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament, sheds light on the difficulties religious groups encountered in their work to improve the lives of African Americans. It also points out similarity in the strategies Catholics and Adventists adopted to thwart problems resulting from racism and Jim Crow legislation. In addition, the chapter shows how Ellen White's views on race relations and social justice mirrored those of Drexel – a noted activist for black rights.

The origin of the Seventh-day Adventist Church goes back to William Miller (1782-1849), a self-taught *Bible* scholar. After studying prophecies in the Book of Daniel, Miller concluded that Christ would return to Earth around the years 1843 and 1844.[1] Soon, he began conducting public lectures on the Second Coming of Christ. During the 1830s, Miller's teachings spread from upstate New York into New England, where they attracted adherents from various denominations. Convinced of Christ's

[1] Uriah Smith, *The Prophecies of Daniel and the Revelation*, rev. ed. (Hagerstown: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1974), 162-164, 193-223. William Miller based his prediction for the Second Coming of Christ on Daniel 8:14. Using the day for a year principle found in Ezekiel 4:6 and Numbers 14:34, he added 2300 years to the starting point of the prophecy (457 B.C.E.) alluded to in Daniel 9:25. Taking into account the mathematical rule for tabulating time before the Common Era, Miller calculated that the year 1843 marked the close of the 2300 day prophecy of Daniel 8:14.

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imminent return, some Millerites neglected their farms and businesses. Before long, they formed groups devoted to Biblical study and introspection. As the time for the expected Advent neared, the Millerites declared that Christ's return would take place on October 22, 1844. When Christ failed to appear, the Millerite Movement ended. [2]

Following the "Great Disappointment," some of Miller's followers continued to believe in the accuracy of his calculation. After reexamining the time prophecy of Daniel 8:14, as well as other Scriptural passages, Miller's advocates concluded they erred in their interpretation. Based on Revelation 11:19 and Hebrews 8:1-5, they reasoned that the sanctuary, mentioned in the prophecy of Daniel 8:14, is in heaven. Therefore, the "cleansing of the sanctuary" refers to the investigative or pre-advent judgment – not the Second Coming of Christ and the end of the world.[3] Using Biblical texts, they defined the investigative judgment as the time period in which God reviews the records of the dead and living. At the close of the investigation, Christ returns to Earth and rewards His followers. [4] This explanation provided an answer to their perplexity, but it did not quell their enthusiasm for Christ's Second Coming.[5]

In their study, Miller's proponents came across Scriptural proof validating Saturday, the seventh-day of the week, as the day of worship sanctioned by God.[6] Eventually, this belief became a part of Adventism's doctrinal platform.[7] In 1863, a contingent of former Millerites (accepting the explanation for the Great Disappointment, as well as the Biblical Sabbath) assembled in Battle Creek, Michigan. There, they organized themselves into the Seventh-day Adventist Church – a name denoting their

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[2] Zdravko Plantak, *The Silent Church: Human Rights and Adventist Social Ethics* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1998), 12.

[3] Smith, *The Prophecies of Daniel and the Revelation*, 640. See also Plantak, *The Silent Church*, 12.; Ellen G. White, *Early Writings* (Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1882; reprint, Hagerstown: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 2000), 243. According to Seventh-day Adventists, the investigative judgment began in 1844 and continues until an unspecified time prior to Christ's return. During the investigative judgment God examines the records of the dead and living.

[4] White, *Early Writings*, xvii, xix, 36, 280. Seventh-day Adventists cite Revelation 14:6, 7 as Scriptural proof for the investigative judgment.

[5] Sakae Kubo, introduction to *The Silent Church*, by Zdravko Plantak (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1998), xi.

[6] White, *Early Writings*, xx-xxiv. Seventh-day Adventists cite: Genesis 2:2,3; Exodus 20:8-11; Ezekiel 20:20; Matthew 5:18; Luke 4:16; and Hebrews 4:4-10 as Scriptural evidence for their adherence to the seventh-day Sabbath (Saturday).

[7] White, *Early Writings*, xxii-xxiv.

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devotion to the seventh-day Sabbath, as well as anticipation for Christ's Second Advent. From these beginnings, the Seventh-day Adventist Church developed into an international organization. In 2002, its world membership approached thirteen million. Within its North American Division (consisting of: Canada, the United States of America, Bermuda, the French possession of Saint Pierre et Miquelon, Johnston Island, the Midway Islands and all other islands of the Pacific Ocean not attached to other divisions) there are 974,271 members.[8] Of these, 31 percent or 302,066 are African Americans.[9] The multiethnic composition of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, particularly in North America, adds significance to this study's scrutiny of Adventist theology as it relates to sociopolitical activism in the United States.

Ellen Gould Harmon was born on November 26, 1827, in Gorham, Maine to Robert and Eunice Harmon. In 1840, the Harmon family attended a lecture by William Miller in Portland, Maine. Subsequently, they accepted his prediction for the Second Coming of Christ. Two years later, Ellen became a baptized member of the Pine Street Methodist Church. Her membership was brief. In 1843, the church disfellowshipped the Harmon family because they held Millerite views. Despite the Great Disappointment following the failure of Christ to return on October 22, 1844, the Harmons and others remained convinced of the accuracy of Miller's calculation. Within this group, Ellen emerged as a leader and visionary. In 1846, she married James White (a former Millerite preacher). That same year, they accepted the doctrine of the Biblical Sabbath. The couple, along with Joseph Bates, formed the nucleus responsible for the establishment of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in 1863.

As an advisor and spokesperson for the Seventh-day Adventist Church, Ellen White issued a number of written statements on race relations. In recent years, critics interpreted some of her comments, which helped shape Seventh-day Adventist opinion on racial matters, as antithetical to the Civil Rights Movement.[10] One of White's statements,

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[8] For administrative purposes the Seventh-day Adventist Church places Mexico in its Inter-American Division, even though it is in North America.

[9] Information provided by the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists Department of Archives and Statistics in Silver Spring, Maryland.

[10] Zdravko Plantak, *The Silent Church: Human Rights and Adventist Social Ethics* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1998), 6, 76, 77.

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found in *Testimonies for the Church, Volume Nine*, appears to substantiate their conclusion. "The colored people should not urge that they be placed on an equality with white people."[11] To understand White's remark, an evaluation of its historical context is necessary.

Historians Ronald Graybill and Roy Branson point out that White's controversial statement coincided with the "Crisis of the Nineties," a period marked by deteriorating race relations in the United States.[12] During the 1890s, Southern legislatures nullified the political and legal rights blacks gained during Reconstruction.[13] In 1890, Mississippi instituted a poll tax and literacy test to limit African American participation in the political process. Five years later, South Carolina disenfranchised most of its black residents by requiring them to own property in addition to paying a fee and passing a proficiency exam. In 1898, the Louisiana legislature enacted the grandfather clause, which exempted the progeny of registered voters in 1867 from literacy and property requirements. This exemption benefited white males only – since neither blacks nor women could vote at that time. Other Southern states followed the example set by Mississippi, South Carolina, and Louisiana. [14] By 1910, the South effectively disenfranchised African Americans.[15] Consequently, this allowed Southern governments to establish white supremacy on the basis of legalized segregation.[16] These events created what the historian George Fredrickson calls an "overtly racist regime."[17]

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[11] Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church, Volume Nine* (1909; reprint, Mountain View: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1948), 214.
[12] Roy Branson, "The Crisis of the Nineties," *Review and Herald* 147, no. 17 (April 1970): 4, 5. See also C. Vann Woodward, *Origins of the New South, 1877-1913*, 2nd ed. (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1971), 354.; George M. Fredrickson, *Racism: A Short History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002), 86, 87.; W. E. B. Du Bois, *A Soliloquy on Viewing My Life from the Last Decade of Its First Century: The Autobiography of W. E. B. Du Bois* (New York: International Publishers, 1968), 121.; Plantak, *The Silent Church*, 77.
[13] George M. Fredrickson, *White Supremacy: A Comparative Study in American and South African History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982), 180. See also John Hope Franklin and Alfred A. Moss, Jr. *From Slavery to Freedom: A History of African Americans*, 8th ed. (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2004), 275.
[14] Franklin, *From Slavery to Freedom*, 283-288.
[15] Woodward, *Origins of the New South*, 55.
[16] Franklin, *From Slavery to Freedom*, 275, 289, 290. See also Fredrickson, *White Supremacy*, 183.; Woodward, *Origins of the New South*, 51.
[17] Fredrickson, *Racism*, 100.

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According to Fredrickson, the prevalence of an ideology based on racism characterizes a racist regime.[18] The novels of Southern writer Thomas Dixon, Jr. (1864-1946) exemplify this in their portrayal of blacks as ignorant and bestial. Adapted to the stage and screen, his most popular work, *The Clansman* (1905) gained wide acclaim throughout the South, as well as other parts of the nation.[19] Furthermore, historians William Archibald Dunning and Ulrich Bonnell Phillips rank among the best examples of "old school" writers whose works supported racism as a regime.[20] In the category of legislation, a racist regime establishes laws mandating the separation of the races.[21] Accordingly, Jim Crow legislation sought to reinforce the ideology of white supremacy and to prevent miscegenation.[22] Another feature of the racist regime involves the disenfranchisement of groups deemed racially inferior.[23] When the South denied blacks the right to vote, they deprived them of the means to redress social, political, and economic injustice. This provided the classless illusion of white solidarity in a society that stratified whites and non-whites by economic divides. Thus, poor whites became incorporated in the delusion of superiority.[24] Finally, racist regimes impose limitations on the resources and economic opportunities available to groups targeted as inferior.[25] After Reconstruction, Southern legislatures passed laws strengthening the region's sharecropping system.[26] As a consequence, black sharecroppers found themselves trapped in a system that severely hampered their chances of acquiring financial security.

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[18] Ibid., 101.
[19] Woodward, *Origins of the New South*, 352.
[20] William Archibald Dunning, *Essays on the Civil War and Reconstruction*, new ed. (New York: Harper & Row, 1965). See also Ulrich Bonnell Phillips, *American Negro Slavery: A Survey of the Supply, Employment, and Control of Negro Labor as Determined by the Plantation Regime* (New York: Appleton and Company, 1918).
[21] Fredrickson, *Racism*, 101.
[22] Ibid. See also Franklin, *From Slavery to Freedom*, 289, 290.; Fredrickson, *White Supremacy*, 239.
[23] Fredrickson, *Racism*, 101.
[24] Woodward, *Origins of the New South*, 51.
[25] Fredrickson, *Racism*, 101.
[26] Fredrickson, *White Supremacy*, 181.

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Coinciding with the reestablishment of Southern racist regimes, the 1890s witnessed an erosion of Republican and Northern liberal sympathy for the plight of African Americans in the South.[27] For reasons of political expediency and economic interest, Northern politicians and businessmen assumed a laissez-faire attitude toward race relations in the South.[28] Furthermore, Northern charities and religious groups, while in the South, adopted the Southern practice of drawing the color line.[29]

During the 1890s, violence toward African Americans increased. In this decade, the Southern establishment employed acts of terror such as: rape, flogging, maiming, and lynching to reinforce social boundaries.[30] From 1890 to 1900, 1,691 African Americans died from lynching.[31] In the year 1892, the annual number of lynchings in the United States climaxed at 241.[32] During this period, the states of Mississippi, Alabama, Georgia, and Louisiana led the nation in the number of reported lynchings. Between 1900 and 1914, more than 1,100 blacks died as victims of lynching. Again, the South led the country in the number of reported lynchings.[33]

An incident that epitomized the terror and violence associated with the South, in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, directly influenced Ellen White's views on race relations. On the night of May 11, 1899, twenty-five whites stormed the Seventh-day Adventist mission in Calmar, Mississippi.[34] The group composed of white planters from the areas of Yazoo City and Vicksburg, Mississippi, became irate because Adventist missionaries were in the practice of helping black farmers compete with white-owned commercial plantations.[35] At the mission, Seventh-day Adventists taught approximately

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[27] Branson, "The Crisis of the Nineties," 4. See also Franklin, *From Slavery to Freedom*, 280.; Fredrickson, *White Supremacy*, 183.
[28] Woodward, *Origins of the New South*, 98, 114. See also Franklin, *From Slavery to Freedom*, 281.; Du Bois, *A Soliloquy*, 141.
[29] Woodward, *Origins of the New South*, 219.
[30] Franklin, *From Slavery to Freedom*, 275, 280. See also Du Bois, *A Soliloquy*, 122, 208, 209.
[31] Ida B. Wells-Barnett, *On Lynchings* (New York: Humanity Books, 2002), 201, 202.
[32] Ibid., 201. See also Du Bois, *A Soliloquy*, 208, 209. Although Du Bois's figure of 235 lynchings in 1892 is slightly lower than that quoted by Wells-Barnett, it is still large.
[33] Franklin, *From Slavery to Freedom*, 345.
[34] James R. Nix and Fylvia Fowler Kline, ed., *The Spirit of Sacrifice & Commitment: Experiences of Seventh-day Adventist Pioneers* (Silver Spring: Stewardship Department of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 2000), 177.
[35] Ibid., 172, 173. See also James Edson White, Yazoo City, to Ellen G. White, Cooranbong, 14 May 1899, Ellen G. White Estate, Silver Spring, Maryland.

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200 blacks improved farming techniques to increase the yield of their crops.[36] In addition, the missionaries provided food and clothing for the African American community.[37] Since planters depended on blacks for cheap labor, they viewed any attempt to improve the condition of African Americans as an affront to the status quo.

On entering the mission, the planters seized Dan Stephenson, a white Mississippian who served as the principal of the Calmar Adventist School. They took Stephenson to a rail station in nearby Redwood, Mississippi, and placed him on a train headed out of town.[38] Returning to the mission, the group looted the chapel and school. In the process, they burned books and other instructional materials. Afterward, the mob searched the grounds for William Casey, the mission's black custodian.[39] Unable to locate Casey, they went to the home of N. W. Olvin, a black Adventist sharecropper. There, the group called for him to come out. As he emerged, someone fired a shot into the house striking Olvin's wife in the leg. The crowd seized Olvin and stripped him. Then, three persons took turns flogging him with a cowhide whip. Before long, an unknown man drew a revolver and ordered the assailants to stop. The gang dispersed. However, before leaving the mission they left a notice warning Adventists not to return.[40]

The planters singled out Olvin because of his involvement in helping spread Seventh-day Adventist teachings.[41] His activities enraged both black and white ministers who felt threatened by the presence of a competing denomination. The historian Comer Vann Woodward pointed out that at the turn of the century religious zeal intensified in

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[36] Nix, *The Spirit of Sacrifice*, 172, 173, 177. See also James Edson White, Battle Creek, to Ellen G. White, Cooranbong, 25 May 1899, Ellen G. White Estate, Silver Spring, Maryland.; James Edson White, Yazoo City, to Ellen G. White, Cooranbong, 14 May 1899, Ellen G. White Estate, Silver Spring, Maryland.
[37] Ibid.
[38] Nix, *The Spirit of Sacrifice*, 172. See also James Edson White, Yazoo City, to Ellen G. White, Cooranbong, 14 May 1899, Ellen G. White Estate, Silver Spring, Maryland.
[39] Nix, *The Spirit of Sacrifice*, 173. See also James Edson White, Battle Creek, to Ellen G. White, Cooranbong, 25 May 1899, Ellen G. White Estate, Silver Spring, Maryland.
[40] Nix, *The Spirit of Sacrifice*, 177.
[41] Ibid.

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the South. This fanaticism came primarily from Methodists and Baptist – two Protestant denominations that held a near monopoly on Southern religious life.[42] As institutions of the Southern establishment, Woodward argued that these churches served as centers of resistance to Northern culture.[43]

Given the incident involving the Seventh-day Adventist mission in Mississippi, Ellen White advised missionaries not to arouse the animosity of white Southerners.[44] She regarded this counsel as necessary in an environment of religious intolerance and racial bigotry.[45] On this issue, White wrote:

> As time advances, and race prejudices increase, it will become almost impossible, in many places, for white workers to labor for the colored people. Sometimes the white people who are not in sympathy with our work will unite with colored people to oppose it, claiming that our teaching is an effort to break up churches and bring trouble over the Sabbath question. White ministers and colored ministers will make false statements, arousing in the minds of the people such a feeling of antagonism that they will be ready to destroy and kill.[46]

To ensure the safety of black and white Adventists in the South, White gave the following advice: that missionaries labor for those of their own ethnic group, that blacks not seek equality with whites, and that the races worship in separate facilities.[47]

At the turn of the century, Ellen White perceived any movement for white and black social equality in the South as suicidal. For this reason, she issued a warning to Seventh-day Adventists in the Southern states. "We are not to agitate the color line question, and thus arouse prejudice and bring about a crisis."[48] To avoid bloodshed,

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[42] Woodward, *Origins of the New South*, 170.
[43] Ibid., 172.
[44] White, *Testimonies*, 206, 209, 210, 213.
[45] Ellen G. White, *The Southern Work* (1901; reprint, Hagerstown: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1966), 84.
[46] White, *Testimonies*, 207, 208.
[47] Ibid., 206, 214.
[48] Ibid., 209, 210.

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White advised that missionaries conduct the work of education and evangelism along racial lines.[49] This recommendation came from her concern that integrated Adventist institutions in the South held the potential to provoke the animosity of whites – resulting in violence.

> The same spirit of oppression is still cherished in the minds of many of the white people of the South, and will reveal itself in cruel deeds, which are the manifestation of their religious zeal. Some will oppose in every possible way any action which has a tendency to uplift the colored race and teach them to be self-supporting. When the whites show an inclination to help the colored people by educating them to help themselves, a certain class of the white people are terribly annoyed. They do not want the colored people to earn an independent living. They want them to work their plantations.[50]

White desired that blacks understand that her counsel (advocating separate places of worship) originated from safety concerns – not an attitude of racial bigotry.

> Let the colored [Seventh-day Adventist] 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. . . . Let them understand that this plan is to be followed until the Lord shows us a better way.[51]

As this quote suggests, White's recommendations provided a temporary solution to a specific problem in a particular region of the country. George Butler, president of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists from 1871 to 1874 and from 1880 to 1888, substantiated this position. "The necessity of separate meetings is because of the race feeling existing in portions of the South. Because of this fact, separate churches and separate meetings are found to be preferable to both classes. The state of society makes this necessary."[52] Clearly, White never intended that the Adventist Church reformulate her counsel into a long-term policy of segregation. Nevertheless, during the Civil Rights Era, Seventh-day Adventists used her statements – taken out of historical context – to

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[49] Ibid., 206.
[50] White, *The Southern Work*, 67.
[51] White, *Testimonies*, 206, 207.
[52] George I. Butler, "The Nashville (Tenn.) Camp-Meeting," *The Advent Review and Sabbath Herald* 83, no. 39 (September 1906): 17, 18.

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support a conservative agenda that exhibited hostility toward social justice.[53] There are two possible reasons for this. First, being fifty years removed from the time Ellen White issued her counsel on race relations, it is possible if not probable that Adventist leaders misunderstood it. Second, it is likely that some deliberately distorted the context of her statements to support their own segregationist views.

In the course of her career, White expressed concern for the plight of African Americans in the South.[54] Consequently, she wanted Seventh-day Adventists to play a larger role in helping Southern blacks. The following statement demonstrates her sentiment, as well as the unique difficulties attached to this mission field.

> For many years I have borne a heavy burden in behalf of the Negro race. My heart has ached as I have seen the feeling against this race growing stronger and still stronger, and as I have seen that many Seventh-day Adventists are apparently unable to understand the necessity for an earnest work being done quickly. . . . One of the difficulties attending the work is that many of the white people living where the colored people are numerous are not willing that special efforts should be put forth to uplift them. When they see schools established for them, when they see them being taught to be self-supporting, to follow trades, to provide themselves with comfortable homes instead of continuing to live in hovels, they see the possibility that selfish plans will be interfered with – that they will no longer be able to hire the Negro for a mere pittance; and their enmity is aroused. They feel that they are injured and abused. Some act as if slavery had never been abolished.[55]

The following provide possible explanations for White's concern for the welfare of Southern blacks. The first deals with her ancestry. Current research on White's genealogy uncovered evidence suggesting that she was a woman of mixed ethnicity.[56] Therefore, it is possible that her background provided a sense of community awareness that sensitized her to the difficulties confronting African Americans. Second, White's beliefs obligated her to address the needs of humanity regardless of race or class. Her statement appears to

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[53] Francis David Nichol, "Unity in the Faith," *Review and Herald* 142, no. 17 (April 1965): 12. See also Ruben R. Figuhr, "A Letter from Our President," *Review and Herald* 141, no. 1 (January 1964): 5.
[54] White, *The Southern Work*, 19.
[55] White, *Testimonies for the Church*, 204, 205.
[56] Charles Edward Dudley, Sr., *The Genealogy of Ellen Gould Harmon White: The Prophetess of the Seventh-day Adventist Denomination as it Relates to African-Americans* (Nashville: Dudley Publishing Services, 1999).

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confirm this point. "It was never God's purpose that society should be separated into classes, that there should be an alienation between rich and poor, the high and low, the learned and the unlearned. But the practice of separating society into distinct circles is becoming more and more decided."[57]

Before the 1899 attack on the Adventist mission in Mississippi, White issued several statements supporting racial equality.[58] In 1891, she chided some of the denomination's churches for barring blacks from their assemblies.

> 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.[59]

In addition to speaking out against segregation, White expressed her opinion that both the government of the United States and private citizens make reparation to African Americans – for years of uncompensated labor the race performed while enslaved.[60]

> The Law of God contained in the Ten Commandments reveals to man his duty to love God supremely and his neighbor as himself. The American nation owes a debt of love to the colored race, and God has ordained that they should make restitution for the wrong they have done them in the past. Those who have taken no active part in enforcing slavery upon the colored people are not relieved from the responsibility of making special efforts to remove as far as possible, the sure result of their enslavement.[61]

Accordingly, White called on the Seventh-day Adventist Church to send missionaries to work among the black people of the South. Furthermore, she urged the denomination to construct schools and churches to meet the needs of African Americans in the region.[62] It

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[57] White, *The Southern Work*, 37.
[58] Ibid., 13, 14, 15, 29, 35, 55.
[59] Ibid., 15.
[60] Ibid., 22, 33. See also White, *Testimonies*, 205.
[61] White, *The Southern Work*, 54.
[62] White, *Testimonies*, 201, 207.

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is important to reiterate the fact that Adventist leaders omitted White's missionary zeal toward Southern blacks, along with her commitment to racial equality in carving out their official position against involvement in the Civil Rights Campaign.

In 1894, James Edson White (1849-1928), Ellen's son, assembled a missionary team to help black communities along the Mississippi River. For this purpose he constructed a riverboat, named *The Morning Star*, which served as a base for missionary operations in the South. With the assistance of his wife, Emma MacDearmon-White, and Will Palmer, a white Adventist missionary, he began the work of establishing Seventh-day Adventist schools and churches for blacks in Mississippi.[63] In 1895, James helped organize the Southern Missionary Society to coordinate missionary activities in the region. After the 1899 attack at Calmar, the organization, in adherence to the counsel of Ellen White, began placing African Americans in charge of the black missions. The first African Americans appointed as directors of Adventist missions included: Frank Warnick, Tazwell Buckner, W. H. Sebastian, and Matthew Strachan.[64] James Edson White went on to serve as a founding member of the North American Negro Department, established in 1909, by the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists.[65]

As their social and political rights dwindled, black Southerners viewed education as the only means available for self improvement. Although many white Southerners opposed the education of blacks, they seemed more tolerant of schools than other agencies and institutions designed to improvement the condition of African Americans. Subsequently, religious organizations in the North began contributing resources for the establishment of black schools in the South. These included: Catholics, Presbyterians, Episcopalians, the American Missionary Association, the Freedmen's Aid Society of the Methodist Episcopal Church, and the Baptist Home Mission Society. Soon, the amount of contributions from religious groups exceeded that of secular foundations. The historians John Hope Franklin and Alfred A. Moss, Jr. suggest that interest in improving the status

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[63] Frank L. Peterson, "The North American Negro Department," *The Advent Review and Sabbath Herald* 115, no. 51 (1938): 53, 54.
[64] Peterson, "The North American Negro Department," 53, 54.
[65] W. A. Spicer, "General Conference Committee in Council: North American Negro Department," *The Advent Review and Sabbath Herald* 86, no. 24 (1909): 24.

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of blacks motivated these church groups – not a self-serving desire to strengthen their own denominations.[66] White's statement supports this judgment. "Let national and denominational distinctions be laid aside. Caste and rank are not recognized by God and should not be by His workers."[67]

In 1895, the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, through the prodding and influence of Ellen White and her son, voted to establish an institution of higher learning for black youth. Subsequently, the denomination sent a three-person task force composed of: Ole Olsen (president of the General Conference), George Irwin (director of the Southern District of the General Conference), and Harmon Lindsay (treasurer of the General Conference) to select and purchase property for this purpose. In January 1896, they acquired a 358 acre plantation in Huntsville, Alabama. The Adventist Church transformed the property into the Oakwood Industrial School, which opened in November of that year. This school, currently a college, produced African American leaders like: Charles Dudley, Warren Banfield, Charles Joseph, Earl Moore, Franklin Hill, and Edward Earl Cleveland who carried on the work of social reform begun by the White family.

Up to the time of her death, in 1915, White continued to make financial contributions for the construction of churches for African Americans in the South.[68] In addition, she encouraged the denomination to take an active role in programs designed to aid the black community.[69] Likewise, her son, for the remainder of his life, worked to improve the socioeconomic condition of African Americans. Through publications, missionary endeavors, and monetary donations, he exhibited a willingness to engage in social reform.[70]

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[66] Franklin, *From Slavery to Freedom*, 293, 294.
[67] White, *The Southern Work*, 21.
[68] "Two New Churches for the Colored People," *The Advent Review and Sabbath Herald* 80, no. 49 (1903): 17, 18.
[69] White, *The Southern Work*, 94.
[70] Peterson, "The North American Negro Department," 53, 54. See also "Two New Churches," 17, 18.; "The Morning Star," *The Gospel Herald* 1, no. 1 (May 1898): 2.

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Modern scholarship suggests that holistic theology motivated the work of Ellen and James Edson White.[71] Holism is similar to the Social Gospel divorced from its postmillennialist component.[72] Essentially, it teaches that human beings are whole persons (that is, the physical and spiritual essence of an individual is equally important).[73] Ellen White's statement indicates the impact of holism on her thought. "The union of the Christlike work for the body and the Christlike work for the soul is the true interpretation of the gospel."[74]

It is possible that the *Old Testament's* covenant motif also influenced the activism of Ellen and her son. Biblical scholars define covenants as contracts between God and His people.[75] In her writings, White applied the covenant concept to a variety of topics, among them finance, business, ethics, and childcare.[76] Therefore, it is possible that she associated efforts to help blacks as an extension of Christian duty – under the covenant.

Evangelism played a crucial role in the social activism of the White family.[77] As Seventh-day Adventists expecting the return of Christ, they felt an urgency to help prepare people to meet the Lord. Cognizant of society's inequities, mother and son worked to remove hindrances that prohibited the less fortunate from accepting Adventism. Ellen White's 1895 statement on the Southern missionary field supports this analysis.

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[71] Adventists also refer to holistic theology as "wholism." See Plantak, *The Silent Church*, 126-128.
[72] Postmillennialism refers to the belief that the thousand year reign of peace (discussed in Revelation 20:4-6) occurs before the Second Coming of Christ. Consequently, postmillennialists viewed the Social Gospel Movement as a means of initiating the millennium or Kingdom of God. See Edwin I. Hernández, "Religious Commitment and Its Political Consequences among Seventh-day Adventists in the United States" (Ph.D. diss, University of Notre Dame, 1989), 15.
[73] Hernández, "Religious Commitment," 25.
[74] Ellen G. White, *Welfare Ministry* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1952), 33.
[75] Plantak, *The Silent Church*, 44.
[76] Ibid.
[77] Ibid., 55.

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> As men and women embrace the truth in this field, there will be abundant opportunity for relieving their pressing necessities. Unless this can be done, the work will largely prove a failure. To say, be ye warmed, and be ye clothed, and be ye fed, and take no steps to bring these things to pass, will have a bad influence upon our work. Object lessons will be of far more value than mere precepts.[78]

This quotation shows that her method of evangelism incorporated both holism and the covenant theme. Furthermore, it demonstrates that she understood the necessity of addressing both the physical and spiritual needs of people.

An examination of the life and work of Katharine Drexel (a canonized saint of the Roman Catholic Church) shows that the difficulties Seventh-day Adventists encountered in laboring to improve the lives of black Southerners were not unique to the denomination. The Catholic Church, known for its support of the Civil Rights Movement in the mid twentieth century, adopted some of the same strategies Adventists employed to avert the problems of racial bigotry and Jim Crow. Drexel's story demonstrates the oppressive atmosphere that characterized race relations at the turn of the century. It also reveals the reason behind both her and White's advocacy of controversial policies such as: segregated churches, schools, and missionary endeavors.

Katharine Drexel was born on November 26, 1858, in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, to Francis and Hannah Jane Drexel. Four days later, Katharine's mother died of complications from childbirth. In 1860, Francis married Emma Bouvier. A woman of deep piety, she setup a place of prayer in her home where members of the family could retire for moments of meditation and spiritual reflection. As a devotee of the Blessed Sacrament, Emma took her stepchildren, Elizabeth and Katharine, and daughter, Louise, to the Sacred Heart Convent to mediate on the bodily presence of Christ in the Eucharist. She also encouraged the children to participate in acts of charity. Consequently, they accompanied her as she distributed food and clothing to Philadelphia's poor.[79] These experiences provided the foundation for Katharine's future work.

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[78] White, *The Southern Work*, 49.
[79] Lou Baldwin, *Saint Katharine Drexel: Apostle to the Oppressed* (Philadelphia: The Catholic Standard and Times, 2000), 14-23.

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Francis Drexel's activities also inspired Katharine. As a wealthy financier, he made large contributions to charitable organizations. Francis also sat on the board of various nonprofit groups connected to Philadelphia's Archdiocese. In later years, Katharine, as the mother superior of a religious order, imitated her father's administrative approach to charity.[80]

In 1872, James O'Conner became the priest of Philadelphia's St. Dominic's Church, the home parish of the Drexel family. During his four year stay, O'Conner and Katharine developed a strong friendship. Following his appointment as bishop of Omaha, Nebraska, he continued to correspond with Katharine as her spiritual advisor. In these letters, she shared her thoughts on entering the religious life. Soon, Bishop O'Conner concluded that Katharine should use her wealth to create a religious order dedicated to serving African Americans and Native Americans. O'Conner came to Philadelphia and delivered his directive in person. Faced with the responsibility of founding a new religious order, Katharine expressed apprehension. However, she laid these doubts aside once her confessor, Father D. J. McGoldrick, and Monsignor Joseph Stephan (Jesuit director of the Bureau of Catholic Indian Missions) urged compliance with O'Connor's counsel.[81]

In 1889, Katharine, accompanied by Stephan, visited Cardinal James Gibbons and informed him of her intent to create a new religious congregation. Since white Southerners tolerated schools more than other agencies and institutions designed for the improvement of African Americans, Drexel, like Seventh-day Adventists and other religious groups, chose to serve the black community through education. The focus on teaching also provided her the opportunity to evangelize.[82] In this manner Drexel's strategy mirrored that of Ellen White, who made community service through religious education the basis of her program to ameliorate the lives of African Americans.[83]

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[80] Ibid., 18.
[81] Ibid., 29, 57, 62-71.
[82] Ibid., 79.
[83] White, *The Southern Work*, 32.

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With the Cardinal's blessing, Drexel began her religious training with the Sisters of Mercy. At the end of a six month postulancy, she formally announced her intention to set up a new religious order. As Drexel drew up the plans for the congregation, her mentor, Bishop James O'Conner, died. The news of his death, in 1890, disheartened Katharine.[84] However, with the help of Philadelphia's Archbishop Patrick Ryan, she regained her fortitude and completed the plans for the order.[85] In February 1891, Drexel took the vows of profession marking her entrance into the religious life, as well as the first step toward the establishment of a new order – the Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament.[86]

As a religious order serving the needs of ethnic minorities, the Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament faced many challenges. At the turn of the century, both Indians and blacks received poor treatment in the United States. To complicate matters, racism manifested itself within the Catholic hierarchy.[87] This is demonstrated in the case of Theresa Maxis, an original member of the Oblate Sisters of Providence – the world's first order of black nuns. After working with the Oblates, Maxis left to assist in the establishment of the Servants of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, a Catholic congregation based in Michigan and Pennsylvania. In Michigan, she quarreled with Detroit's Bishop Peter Lefevre. Using a racial epithet to describe her, Lefevre requested that Philadelphia's Archbishop James Wood expel her from the Immaculate Heart Convent in Pennsylvania. Before long, Maxis found herself banned from convents in both Michigan and Pennsylvania.[88]

The general prevalence of racism in the Catholic Church and in the United States, forced Drexel to make difficult policy decisions regarding her congregation. As a rule, the Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament accepted only whites into their membership. Drexel instituted this policy for the following reasons. First, she did not want to draw away

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[84] Baldwin, *Saint Katharine Drexel*, 88.
[85] Ibid., 89.
[86] Ibid., 92, 93. See also Albert J. Raboteau, *Canaan Land: Religious History of African Americans* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 94.
[87] Baldwin, *Saint Katharine Drexel*, 123.
[88] Ibid., 105, 106. See also Immaculata, *Mother M. Theresa Maxis Duchemin: Co-founder with Reverend Louis Florent Gillett, C.SS.R., Founder of the Congregation of the Sisters, Servants of the Immaculate Heart of Mary* (Scranton: Marywood College Press, 1945).

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promising black candidates from existing African American orders such as: the Oblate Sisters of Providence based in Baltimore, and the Sisters of the Holy Family based in New Orleans. Second, racial prejudice made the recruitment of candidates for an integrated order difficult. For Drexel, convincing white women to devote their lives to serving Native and African Americans presented a daunting task, but the proposition that they live with them as equals presented itself as impractical. Third, a congregation composed of whites and nonwhites, living in close quarters, provided an opportunity for internal disruptions that Drexel preferred to avoid. Fourth, though many European orders of Catholic sisters had branches in Africa, Asia, and Latin America, none admitted local, indigenous women into their ranks. Instead, some created separate orders for non-white women.[89] Finally, the South's segregation statutes prohibited integrated orders. These reasons suggest that Drexel's policy of admitting only whites into her order came from necessity, rather than a belief in black inferiority.[90] Likewise, Ellen White, following the attack on the Adventist mission in Mississippi, found it prudent to revise her policy concerning missionary efforts to help African Americans. The prevalence of racism in both the Church and secular society forced Drexel and White to take into consideration the biases of others. As a result, White advised black and white Adventist missionaries in the South to conduct their work along racial divides.[91] By advocating this position, she hoped to avoid arousing the prejudice of white Southerners and prevent incidents like that at Calmar. Overall, both women instituted their policies in response to a bitter and violent racial climate.

As mentioned, Drexel selected the classroom as her venue for improving the lives of blacks. Like other religious groups, the Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament worked to ensure that African Americans received their right to an education. These missionary endeavors came at a time when Southern states slashed appropriations for black schools – resulting in a disparity in the funds allocated for the education of white students versus

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[89] Juan María Lozano, *The Claretians: Their Mission and Spirit in the Church* (Chicago: Claret Center for Resources in Spirituality, 1980).
[90] Baldwin, *Saint Katharine Drexel*, 104, 105.
[91] White, *Testimonies*, 206.

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black.[92] Religious organizations involved in the work of educating African Americans were largely self-supporting. Due to the prejudice against blacks, at the turn of the century, these organizations could not rely on donations from the public. Furthermore, the federal government refused to provide funding for black schools at this time.[93] Consequently, Katharine Drexel and others used their own resources to finance the education of African Americans.

In 1894, Drexel purchased 600 acres in Rock Castle, Virginia, to build a school for black girls in honor of St. Francis de Sales. Before its opening in 1899, a suspicious blaze destroyed a building on the property. Always faced with the threat of arson, Drexel customarily insured her educational facilities. Undaunted by opposition, the school produced thousands of black educators for the African American community.[94] On this point, Drexel's strategy resembles that of Ellen White, who proposed that blacks be trained to work among their own race. In 1905, Drexel opened the Immaculate Mother Academy for African American girls in Nashville, Tennessee. Nashville's Bishop Thomas Byrne tried to persuade Drexel to admit only Catholic students. However, Katharine – in keeping with the congregation's evangelistic and ecumenical mission – refused.[95]

In 1907, Drexel went to the Vatican to seek official recognition for her order and the approval of its constitution. After a series of meetings, Pope Pius X recognized and approved the rule for the Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament for Indians and Colored People. When she returned to Philadelphia, the congregation elected her as its first superior general. Encouraged by the Vatican's vote of confidence, Drexel and her associates expanded their activities by helping establish two more schools for black youth. In 1912, Drexel funded the construction of the Archbishop Ryan Memorial School in Atlanta, Georgia, followed by the St. Peter Claver School in Macon, Georgia. With the opening of the latter, in 1915, the Georgia legislature began deliberations on a bill prohibiting white teachers from instructing black pupils in both state and private

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[92] Franklin, *From Slavery to Freedom*, 296, 297.
[93] Baldwin, *Saint Katharine Drexel*, 110, 117.
[94] Ibid., 114.
[95] Ibid., 125.

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schools.[96] This demonstrates the length to which some white Southerners were willing to go to block efforts aimed at improving the plight of blacks. It also shows the astuteness of Ellen White's counsel to Adventist missionaries to conduct their operations along racial lines. By advocating this position, she hoped to avoid the suspicion of prejudiced whites opposed to efforts aimed at improving the condition of African Americans.

The year 1915 marks the entry of the Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament into the field of higher education. In New Orleans, Louisiana, whites living in the vicinity of Southern University, a state-run institution for blacks, demanded that the Louisiana legislature move the school to Baton Rouge. Once the state government approved the relocation, African American Catholics in New Orleans faced a dilemma. For years, black Catholics attended Southern University to avoid the proselytization found in institutions established by Protestants for the education of African Americans. With the loss of Southern University, black Catholics were in a quandary concerning higher education. New Orleans's Archbishop Joseph Blenk appealed to Drexel for help. On hearing that the state planned to auction off the old Southern University campus, she agreed to participate in the bidding. Drexel purchased the property with a winning bid of eighteen thousand dollars. In the fall of 1915, the Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament reopened the campus as Francis Xavier College (currently Xavier University), which holds the distinction of being the first black Catholic institution of higher learning in the United States. From its founding, Xavier University produced black educators that went on to serve African American communities throughout the country.[97]

Drexel's social activism involved more than education. In addition to subsidizing the ministry of Augustus Tolton, the first black Catholic to be recognized as a priest in the United States, Katharine became a major financial contributor to the Catholic Interracial Movement.[98] She also used her wealth to construct Catholic churches for blacks in the South. Drexel's support for separate worship facilities came as the result of incidents in which white Catholics assaulted black parishioners. In 1925, she visited a church in Glencoe, Louisiana, where a fight broke out after an African American youth

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[96] Ibid., 129-134, 150.
[97] Ibid., 151-153.
[98] Ibid., 105, 191.

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brushed up against a white man. Later, church members forcibly ejected a black man after he approached the rail to receive communion at the same time as whites. The previous year, a fight broke out when a black child dipped his finger in the font of holy water before a white man. In Rayne, Louisiana, white Catholics barred African Americans from attending Sunday Mass at the local church. When apprised of the situation, the Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament informed Lafayette's Bishop Jules Jeanmard, who ordered the parish priest to rescind the policy.[99] Eventually, the Josephite Fathers, a Catholic order dedicated to evangelizing African Americans, built a separate church to accommodate the blacks of Rayne. These incidents demonstrate the racism African Americans faced within the Church – necessitating separate worship facilities. Given the prevalence of racial hostility, at the turn of the century, Katharine Drexel and Ellen White both supported the establishment of black churches that allowed African Americans the opportunity to exercise their right to worship God in dignity – free from harassment.[100]

Drexel received several commendations recognizing her work to improve the lives of African Americans.[101] By the time of her death in 1951 the Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament operated sixty-one educational facilities (forty-eight elementary schools, twelve high schools, and one college) serving American Indian and black communities in the United States.[102] Through these institutions thousands of Native and African American students received the academic and intellectual training needed for the future improvement of their social, economic, and political status. As a tribute to her legacy, Pope John Paul II canonized Katharine Drexel on October 1, 2000.[103]

In summary, this chapter examined the effort by Seventh-day Adventists, at the turn of the century, to ameliorate the socioeconomic situation of Southern blacks. It also showed how violence caused Ellen White to adopt a moderate approach to social activism. The discussion on Katharine Drexel shed comparative light on the difficulties encountered by religious groups working in the South to improve the lives of African

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[99] Ibid., 163-165.
[100] White, *Testimonies*, 206, 207. See also Baldwin, *Saint Katharine Drexel*, 165.
[101] Baldwin, *Saint Katharine Drexel*, 174, 175, 186.
[102] Ibid., 197.
[103] Ibid., 214.

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Americans. In addition, the chapter pointed out the similarity in strategies adopted by Catholics and Adventists to thwart problems posed by racism and legalized segregation. Furthermore, it showed how White's views on race relations and social justice mirrored those of Drexel – a noted activist for black rights. As a Seventh-day Adventist, Ellen White's work on behalf of African Americans prepared the way for other members of the denomination to take a more active role in the sociopolitical arena.

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CHAPTER 2
THEOLOGY, POLITICS, AND THE RETREAT FROM SOCIAL ACTIVISM

This chapter examines the denomination's adoption of theological and philosophical concepts that discouraged political activism. In addition, it uncovers the roots of these ideas and shows how Adventist leaders used them to oppose the Church's entry into the Civil Rights Movement. Furthermore, it discusses community awareness and presents it as an antidote to beliefs within Adventism that discourage political activity.

Premillennialism influenced the denomination's attitude toward politics. As premillennialists, Seventh-day Adventists place the Second Coming of Christ before the start of the millennium (that is, the thousand year reign of peace discussed in Revelation 20:4-6). Adventist premillennialism comes from Millerite thought. Since the Millerites expected Christ's imminent return, they accepted the view that the millennium occurs after the Second Advent. In keeping with this belief, Millerites and most Seventh-day Adventists embraced the notion that Christ's return is the only remedy for society's ills. Consequently, the Adventist Church viewed efforts to correct social and political problems as a waste of time and a diversion of resources from its primary mission – evangelism.[1] This presented a paradox for Seventh-day Adventists. On the one hand, as

[1] Zdravko Plantak, *The Silent Church: Human Rights and Adventist Social Ethics* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1998), 42, 43. See also Roger L. Dudley and Edwin I. Hernández, *Citizens of Two Worlds: Religion and Politics among American Seventh-day Adventists* (Berrien Springs: Andrews University Press, 1992), 29, 30.

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premillennialists, they held the view that until Christ returns to bring in a new age no activity is capable of halting the progression of evil.[2] On the other hand, like other denominations, they promoted Christian values and evangelism as the remedy for society's problems.[3]

In addition to being premillennialists, Seventh-day Adventists adhered to an apocalyptic historical eschatology, defined as a belief in the Second Coming of Christ and the destruction of the world.[4] As a result, most Adventists lost interest in matters of sociopolitical reform. This is exemplified in the experience of Joseph Bates, cofounder of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Before joining the Millerite Movement, Bates worked to advance the cause of abolition. As a Millerite, he came to view sociopolitical activism as less of a priority than preparing for Christ's return.[5]

Sectarian ecclesiology, which is the belief obligating Christians to resist conforming to the secular world, influenced Adventist political views.[6] Like apocalyptic historical eschatology and premillennialism, Adventists adopted sectarian ecclesiology from Millerite thought. In expectation of Christ's return, Millerites viewed political involvement as a secular activity that distracted Christians from their spiritual development. Furthermore, they regarded political activism as unnecessary, since Christ's Second Coming destined worldly governments for eradication.[7] As a result, Millerites and Seventh-day Adventists developed a political outlook favoring the separation of church and state.[8] In fact, Adventist leaders admonished members not to become involved in political affairs.[9]

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[2] William G. McLoughlin, "Revivalism," in *The Rise of Adventism: Religion and Society in Mid-Nineteenth-Century America*, ed. Edwin S. Gaustad (New York: Harper & Row, 1974), 131. See also Dudley, *Citizens of Two Worlds*, 29, 30.; Plantak, *The Silent Church*, 11.
[3] Dudley, *Citizens of Two Worlds*, 32.
[4] Holly Fisher, "Oakwood College Students' Quest for Social Justice Before and During the Civil Rights Era," *Journal of African American History* 88, no. 2 (Spring 2003): 112. See also Plantak, *The Silent Church*, 11, 39, 42, 43.
[5] Plantak, *The Silent Church*, 39. See also Dudley, *Citizens of Two Worlds*, 66, 67.
[6] Holly Fisher, "Oakwood College Students' Quest," 112.
[7] Edwin I. Hernández, "Religious Commitment and Its Political Consequences among Seventh-day Adventists in the United States" (Ph.D. diss, University of Notre Dame, 1989), 16.
[8] Ibid., 161.
[9] Fisher, "Oakwood College Students' Quest," 112.

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In condemning clerical participation in the 1963 March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom, Raymond Cottrell (associate editor of the *Review and Herald* the official organ of the Seventh-day Adventist Church) exemplified Adventism's opposition to political involvement.

> When the church appeals to the strong arm of the state to enforce its opinions by law, it goes far beyond the example and the commission of its Founder. It abdicates its Heaven appointed task and takes up a work God never gave it to do. History is replete with warnings against the danger of a church seeking to accomplish through legislation what its Founder said should be brought about by the gospel message impressed upon human hearts by the Holy Spirit.[10]

Two years later, Cottrell reiterated the Adventist position, while stressing the Church's duty to evangelize rather than engage in sociopolitical activism.

> Seventh-day Adventists are of the firm conviction that political questions not directly involving religion or matters of conscience are strictly out of bounds for churches and church agencies. The increasing tendency of the majority religious bodies in the United States to take a public stand on strictly secular matters and to attempt to influence public policy with respect to them prostitutes their moral authority to affairs that Christ significantly omitted from the gospel commission. The apostles were instructed to teach and baptize, not to discuss politics or to lobby in Congress, lest they blunt their witness to the truth of heaven by becoming involved in controversial matters of an earthly nature.[11]

These quotes demonstrate the impact of sectarian ecclesiology on Adventist thought during the Civil Rights Movement.

Seventh-day Adventist support for the separation of church and state also comes from their belief that the United States will eventually repudiate religious liberty.[12] According to Adventist eschatology (that is, the doctrine concerning last day events) "the mark of the beast" comes from government legislation endorsing compulsory religious

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[10] Raymond F. Cottrell, "Rendering to Caesar What Belongs to God," *Review and Herald* 140, no. 42 (October 1963): 13.
[11] Raymond F. Cottrell, "Churches Meddling in Politics," *Review and Herald* 142, no. 30 (July 1965): 12.
[12] Dudley, *Citizens of Two Worlds*, 218.

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observance on Sunday.[13] After the establishment of this law, those who continue to honor Sunday – rather than the Biblical Sabbath – obtain the mark of the beast.[14] Due to this belief, Adventists are suspicious of political movements that traverse the boundary of church-state separation. Research corroborates this, by showing that a majority of Adventists disapprove of corporate church involvement in issues of a political nature.[15]

Sectarian ecclesiology posed a paradox for Seventh-day Adventists, because it unwittingly contributes to secularization.[16] On the one hand, Adventists embraced sectarian ecclesiology to avoid secular contamination. On the other hand, church-state separation relegates spirituality to the private sphere – leaving social issues subject to principles and values antagonistic to religious thought.[17]

Due to their belief in the infallibility of the *Bible* and its relevancy in modern society, sociologists classify Seventh-day Adventists as Christian fundamentalists.[18] Studies of fundamentalist groups show that they are prone to Manichean thinking (that is, classifying the world and all its phenomena in positive or negative terms).[19] When fundamentalism merges with eschatology, as in Adventism, it frequently gives rise to a doctrine of separation like sectarian ecclesiology.[20] When the pressure to conform threatens the traditional values of these groups, the potential for fanaticism and/or racism arises. Thus, in an effort to maintain their identity, they cling to doctrines associated with intolerance and/or separation.[21]

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[13] Ibid.
[14] White, *Early Writings*, 64-67.
[15] Hernández, "Religious Commitment," 98, 103, 104, 161, 162.
[16] John Allen, Jr., *Conclave: The Politics, Personalities, and Process of the Next Papal Election,* 2nd ed. (New York: Image, 2004), 143. Allen's remarks refer to a specific group within Roman Catholicism, but the basic premise applies to any religious body advocating the separation of church and state.
[17] Ibid.
[18] Hernández, "Religious Commitment," 27, 28. See also Dudley, *Citizens of Two Worlds*, 7, 8.
[19] Dudley, *Citizens of Two Worlds*, 14, 35.
[20] Hernández, "Religious Commitment," 8.
[21] George M. Fredrickson, *Racism: A Short History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002), 149, 150.

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Research shows that Christian fundamentalists tend to back conservative political causes, rather than liberal ones.[22] Adventism's traditional support for the status quo substantiates this finding.[23] Francis David Nichol's characterization of the Civil Rights Movement as a revolution bent on disrupting the social order demonstrates the conservative tenor of some Adventist leaders.

> People long oppressed, people long left in ignorance, and people stirred to new ideas about the dignity of man have increasingly made their presence felt. In fact, nothing short of a revolution has taken place in [the] mid-twentieth century. And this revolution has frequently been marked by bloodshed. Sorrowfully we must add that even in America violence has too often been a factor. One of the most distinctive features of this revolution, at least in America, has been what are called Freedom Marches. And even more striking has been the fact that in the forefront of some such marches have been clergymen of various persuasions.[24]

Indicative of the denomination's conservatism, Nichol and Cottrell's remarks support a laissez-faire attitude toward social issues.[25]

The radical deterministic doctrine of God, which is the belief that the Divine takes a proactive role in human history, also shaped Adventist attitudes on social issues. Radical determinism comes from the fundamentalist tradition of applying literal interpretations to Scripture. Consequently, radical determinists take as fact Biblical stories of God intervening in human affairs. Inevitably, this notion transfers the responsibility of challenging the presence of evil in the world from human beings to God.[26]

The doctrine of the free-will image of man, which advocates the existence of a specific plan designed by God for humanity, influenced Adventist political views. As a result, some Seventh-day Adventists believe that the condition of specific individuals, or groups, will not change unless God "moves" or miraculously intervenes to change their plight.[27] This concept, also known as occasionalism, originated with the Dutch

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[22] Hernández, "Religious Commitment," 168. See also Dudley, *Citizens of Two Worlds*, 9, 14, 216.
[23] Dudley, *Citizens of Two Worlds*, 240.
[24] Francis David Nichol, "Unity in the Faith," *Review and Herald* 142, no. 17 (April 1965): 12.
[25] Hernández, "Religious Commitment," 21, 22.
[26] Fisher, "Oakwood College Students' Quest," 112, 113.
[27] Ibid., 113.

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philosopher Arnold Geulincx (1624-1669). Geulincx argued that the "Divine Mind" exercises complete control over the material world. He explained this in his billiards analogy. According to Geulincx, after a cue strikes a ball and it makes contact with another ball – God causes the second ball to move.[28] Likewise, Adventists who accept occasionalism believe that only God possesses the power to solve social problems. This, in combination with Adventism's other-worldly fixation, explains their disregard for earthly matters, particularly those of a sociopolitical character like the Civil Rights Movement.[29]

In his critique of Geulincx's philosophy, the Frenchman Antoine Arnauld (1612-1694) presented the paradox of occasionalism. He pointed out that if God predetermined all actions in human society, as implied in the metaphysics of occasionalism, freedom ceases to exist. Furthermore, all occurrences even evil ones become a necessary manifestation of God's will.[30] The Danish theologian and philosopher Søren Kierkegaard (1813-1855) rejected the deterministic quality of occasionalism, and made freedom the functional basis of his philosophical discourse.[31]

Although his thought is associated with existentialism, Kierkegaard's philosophy of the ethical sphere lends itself to the Social Gospel and its emphasis that Christians have a responsibility to alleviate the suffering of society's poor and oppressed. Kierkegaard advocated a universal ethic of self-perfection based on a commitment to God and humanity.[32] This philosophy emerged from his dissatisfaction with modern

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[28] Jonathan Hill, *Faith in the Age of Reason: The Enlightenment from Galileo to Kant* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2004), 100,101.
[29] Hernández, "Religious Commitment," 21, 22.
[30] Hill, *Faith in the Age of Reason*, 110.
[31] Søren Kierkegaard, *The Concept of Dread*, trans. Walter Lowrie (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1957). See also Søren Kierkegaard, *Either/Or: A Fragment of Life, Volume Two*, trans. Walter Lowrie (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1944), 39, 180-236.; Michael Watts, *Kierkegaard* (Oxford: Oneworld Publications, 2003), 199.
[32] Kierkegaard, *Either/Or*, 5-278. See also Alastair Hannay, *Kierkegaard: A Biography* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 176-179.

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Christianity, which he characterized as listless and complacent. In contrast, Kierkegaard viewed primitive Christianity, as taught by Jesus and His disciples, as a spiritual revolution that challenged the status quo.[33] Therefore, he set out to develop a philosophy consistent with early Christian thought.

Kierkegaardian ethics emphasized the moral obligation of Christians to resist evil. According to Kierkegaard, a person's actions reflect the sincerity of their beliefs and moral values. Furthermore, he maintained that individuals need to understand that they create the world in which they live – based on their chosen values. Once people accept this responsibility, present considerations become the basis for their decisions – not future expectations or past events.[34] Consequently, Kierkegaard's philosophy requires Christians to address present concerns and live in a manner consistent with their professed morality.

Another contribution to the Social Gospel came from the German theologian Albrecht Ritschl (1822-1889), who redefined the Kingdom of God in strict ethical terms. To Ritschl, the Kingdom refers to those who extend the virtues of love and compassion while tending to the needs of humanity, regardless of ethnicity, class, or gender. He also maintained that the Kingdom of God is a present reality – not an other-worldly abstraction. This definition bears the imprint of Immanuel Kant (1724-1804) who, like Ritschl, believed that the real or present world is also a part of the Kingdom of God.[35] Furthermore, Kant reasoned that religious activity – devoid of a practical aim – is a waste of time.[36]

In the United States, the Social Gospel Movement came about as a response to the poverty, crime, and political corruption associated with the Gilded Age. Inspired by the optimism of the Progressive Era, as well as advances in modern science, religionists set out to solve society's problems. Consequently, advocates of the Social Gospel taught that the establishment of the Kingdom of God depended on Christians alleviating the

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[33] Søren Kierkegaard, *Attack upon Christendom*, trans. Walter Lowrie (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1944). See also Watts, *Kierkegaard*, 149-155.
[34] Søren Kierkegaard, *Concluding Unscientific Postscript to Philosophical Fragments*, trans. Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992), 59-361, 610-617. See also Watts, *Kierkegaard*, 81-88, 199-201.
[35] Plantak, *The Silent Church*, 168.
[36] Ibid., 181.

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suffering of society's poor and oppressed.[37] Scholars attribute the growth and popularity of this belief to the American theologian Walter Rauschenbusch (1861-1918).[38] As the pastor of a Baptist church in an impoverished section of New York City, Rauschenbusch realized the importance of social reform in the mission of Christianity.[39] Ultimately, he came to the conclusion that sin contained a social component.[40]

Adherents of the Social Gospel viewed individuals as products of society (that is, social institutions play a crucial role in fashioning people).[41] Thus, they believed corrupt institutions produce debased persons. To deal effectively with the sin problem, Social Gospel advocates proposed that the work of reform begin with institutions – not individuals. For them, Christianity involved alleviating the pain of the poor and oppressed, as well as transforming the institutions that produce oppression and poverty.[42]

Rauschenbusch's writings had a profound impact on Martin Luther King, Jr., who credits them, along with Gandhi, for providing the theological foundation for his own social activism.[43] Prior to the Montgomery Bus Boycott, King observed a difference in the attitude of African American preachers toward sociopolitical issues. On the one hand, black Christian ministers that professed belief in the Social Gospel generally took part in civil rights activities. On the other hand, those who opposed Social Christianity (that is, the Social Gospel) seemed indifferent to sociopolitical issues.[44] King's observation further demonstrates the impact of theology on political involvement.

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[37] Dudley, *Citizens of Two Worlds*, 46. See also Plantak, *The Silent Church*, 169.
[38] Plantak, *The Silent Church*, 169.
[39] Ralph E. Luker, *The Social Gospel in Black and White: American Radical Reform, 1885-1912* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1991), 315.
[40] Walter Rauschenbusch, *Christianity and the Social Crisis* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1991).
[41] Dudley, *Citizens of Two Worlds*, 258.
[42] Ibid., 46, 236.
[43] Carson, *The Autobiography of Martin Luther King, Jr.*, 17, 18. See also John J. Ansbro, *Martin Luther King, Jr.: Nonviolent Strategies and Tactics for Social Change* (New York: Madison Books, 2000), 163.
[44] Ansbro, *Martin Luther King, Jr.*, 170.

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Research shows that Christian fundamentalists identify Social Christianity with liberalism, which is defined as an openness to new ideas such as: non-literal interpretations of Scripture and Biblical criticism.[45] As fundamentalists, Seventh-day Adventists rejected the Social Gospel. This is exemplified in Francis David Nichol's statement castigating the Social Gospel component of the Civil Rights Movement.

> Sometimes they [clerics supporting the Civil Rights Movement] have made wide-sweeping pronouncements for release to the public press. In fact, such pronouncements and acts have been a part of the present over-all concept of many churchmen that one of the chief functions of the church is to reform the social order. This is known as the social gospel, and has increasingly marked our day, as personal evangelism to save men's souls has departed. Against the emphasis on the social gospel we, in common with all conservative religious groups, have consistently raised our voices, and rightly so.[46]

Incidentally, the historian David Chappell maintains that white ministers opposed to integration frequently issued remarks criticizing the Social Gospel views of the Civil Rights Movement.[47]

Nichol goes on to present evangelism as an alternative to Social Christianity. With a tinge of sarcasm, he affirms the Adventist position that the primary role of the denomination lies in the preparation of souls for Christ's Second Advent.

> We received a letter some time ago from a fervent reader who asked us where all the Adventist ministers were when a certain Freedom March was held – a march that included a number of clergy. We replied that we could not say just where *all* our ministers were at the time, but we did know that many of them were in the hard and dangerous places of the earth preaching the gospel to primitive, depressed peoples, seeking thus to lift them to higher levels. Other thousands of our ministers in the homeland were busy visiting the sick and afflicted and preaching the glad message of the soon coming of Christ. Preaching the 'everlasting gospel' is our great assignment from Heaven.[48]

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[45] Dudley, *Citizens of Two Worlds*, 6-8, 31.
[46] Nichol, "Unity in the Faith,"12.
[47] David L. Chappell, *A Stone of Hope: Prophetic Religion and the Death of Jim Crow* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2004), 122, 123.
[48] Nichol, "Unity in the Faith," 12.

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According to the scholars Roger Dudley and Edwin Hernández the prioritizing of evangelism over practical social concerns comes from Plato's dualistic understanding of the body and the soul. In his teaching, Plato (427-347 B.C.E.) assigned the soul preeminent value over the physical body. Likewise, he esteemed the other-worldly over the earthly.[49] This aspect of Platonic thought is evident in traditional Christian orthodoxy. Consequently, some Adventists, and other conservative Christians, tout evangelism as a reason for excusing themselves from the sociopolitical arena.[50]

Ecumenism also made its presence felt in the Civil Rights Movement. The idea of ecumenism originated in the mind of the Dutch Reformed thinker Hugo Grotius (1583-1645). After the Reformation, Grotius taught that it was possible for Christians of all persuasions to unite on the basis of commonly held beliefs and traditions.[51] During the Civil Rights Movement, various denominations and religious groups participated in efforts to achieve social justice for African Americans. In the march from Selma to Montgomery, Martin Luther King, Jr. observed this ecumenical spirit as Catholics, Protestants, and Jews assembled as a united front protesting the indignities and injustices blacks endured in the South.[52] For him, this expression of Judeo-Christian solidarity brought a renewed relevance to the gospel message of working to improve the present condition of humanity.

Inevitably, ecumenism became a major plank in King's sociopolitical platform.[53] While visiting the Vatican in 1964, he appealed to the papacy to use its political and spiritual influence on behalf of the Civil Rights Movement. In response, Pope Paul VI pledged to assist the Movement.[54] King's hope of obtaining Catholic support came from the ecumenical and sociopolitical thrust of the Second Vatican Council, which Pope John XXIII convened in 1962.[55]

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[49] Dudley, *Citizens of Two Worlds*, 236, 237.
[50] Ibid., 29.
[51] Hill, *Faith in the Age of Reason*, 26.
[52] Carson, *The Autobiography of Martin Luther King, Jr.*, 287.
[53] Ibid., 341.
[54] "Dr. Ralph D. Abernathy Recalls Visit With Pope Paul," *Jet* 54, no. 23 (August 1978): 18.
[55] James F. Findlay, Jr., *Church People in the Struggle: The National Council of Churches and the Black Freedom Movement, 1950-1970* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 58.

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Though ecumenism became a potent force in the Christian world, during the Civil Rights Era, the Seventh-day Adventist Church as a corporate body refused to participate. The denomination's reluctance to involve itself in the Ecumenical Movement of the 1960s came from the latter's emphasis on sociopolitical reform. In adherence to sectarian ecclesiology, Adventists viewed the political objectives of ecumenism as a violation of church-state separation. Consequently, they perceived that the relationship between ecumenism and the Civil Rights Movement was inappropriate.

Mohandas Gandhi (1869-1948) influenced Martin Luther King, Jr. and the Civil Rights Movement. As discussed in his autobiography, *The Story of My Experiments with Truth*, Gandhi's experimental theology sought to obtain absolute truth and self-purification by adherence to the principles of *ahimsa* (nonviolence) and *satyagraha* (truth and firmness).[56] Within this system, he emphasized love and nonviolence as a means of obtaining social reform.[57] This aspect of Gandhi's theology impressed King.[58] Through the advocacy of Martin Luther King, Jr., Bayard Rustin, James Lawson and others, Gandhi's teachings contributed to the development of tactics used during the Civil Rights Movement.[59] As Christian fundamentalists, it is possible that some Adventists did not support the Movement because of its association with Gandhian thought, which drew heavily on Eastern religions like Hinduism and Buddhism.[60] However, among Adventists who participated in the Civil Rights Movement most were familiar with Gandhi's teachings prior to their activism.[61]

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[56] Mohandas K. Gandhi, *Autobiography: The Story of My Experiments with Truth*, trans. Mahadev Desai (Washington, DC: Public Affairs Press, 1948; reprint, New York: Dover Publications, 1983), 242, 243, 284, 285.
[57] Carson, *The Autobiography of Martin Luther King, Jr.*, 26, 67.
[58] Ibid., 24.
[59] Ibid., 67, 121. See also Ansbro, *Martin Luther King, Jr.*, xxi.
[60] Gandhi, *Autobiography*, 29, 140, 293.
[61] Alfonzo Greene, Sr., interviewed by author, 26 May 2004, Huntsville, tape recording, home residence, Huntsville, Alabama.; Warren S. Banfield, interviewed by author, 26 May 2004, Huntsville, tape recording, home residence, Huntsville, Alabama.; Charles Edward Dudley, Sr., interviewed by author, 3 August 2004, Nashville, tape recording, home residence, Nashville, Tennessee.; Charles Joseph, interviewed by author, 29 August 2004, Glenwood, tape recording, home residence, Glenwood, Illinois.; Earl Moore, interviewed by author, 31 May 2004, Decatur, tape recording, home residence, Decatur, Georgia.; Franklin Hill II, interviewed by author, 18 May 2004, Lafayette, tape recording, home residence, Lafayette, Indiana.

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The philosophy of individualism, which is a belief in self-reliance and independence that stresses the primacy of the individual over collective society, influenced Adventist views on sociopolitical activism. A key contribution to individualistic thought came from the Italian philosopher and priest Marsilio Ficino (1433-1499), who sought to merge Platonic philosophy with religious mysticism. He argued that the center of the universe resides in each human soul, which contains everything. Consequently, Ficino proposed that spiritual meditations possess the power to unite an individual's soul with God.[62] Similarly, the Swiss physician and philosopher Paracelsus von Hohenheim (1493-1541) believed humans possess the ability to understand the world, because each soul is a reflection of the universe. Therefore, he concluded that introspection is the source of all true knowledge.[63] The Protestant Reformation – with its emphasis on personal responsibility – also contributed to the growth of individualism.[64] George Fox (1624-1691), the English founder of the Society of Friends (commonly known as the Quakers), taught that an individual's personal relationship with Christ takes precedence over religious dogma and church membership.[65] The Sephardic Jew and Dutch philosopher Baruch de Spinoza (1632-1677) argued that the individual mind – through training – possesses the ability to become like God.[66] Finally, the English theologian William Law (1686-1761) taught that a person finds God within the soul after rejecting the outside world and its values.[67]

Adventists embraced individualism for the following reasons. First, the denomination's adherence to apocalyptic historical eschatology necessitated an emphasis on individual preparation for Christ's return. Second, Seventh-day Adventists maintain that evangelism, which is the saving of individual souls through the dissemination of the

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[62] Hill, *Faith in the Age of Reason*, 14.
[63] Ibid., 17.
[64] Plantak, *The Silent Church*, 49.
[65] Hill, *Faith in the Age of Reason*, 93.
[66] Ibid.,104, 105.
[67] Ibid.

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Gospel, constitutes the primary mission of the Church. Third, as Christian fundamentalists they oppose Social Christianity. In contrast to Social Gospel teaching, Adventists are of the opinion that individuals create society; therefore, the transformation of society lies in personal conversions.[68] Raymond Cottrell's statement reiterates this position.

> Protestants have generally considered that the role of the church in the world is to impress its members, individually, with the great fundamental principles of right and justice, and to leave them to apply these principles in the conduct of public affairs. . . . It is the legitimate work of the gospel to transform individual men and women, and through them to influence society as a whole. Church members may often, and properly, do as individuals that which it would be highly improper for the church to do in its corporate capacity.[69]

This individualist approach conflicts with Adventism's doctrine of the free-will image of man, which maintains that only God can influence or change society. Fourth, Seventh-day Adventists inherited the Protestant Reformation's emphasis on personal responsibility – expressed in the idea that individuals possess the power to appeal to Christ without an intercessor.[70] Finally, the Seventh-day Adventist Church, like other denominations originating in the United States, adopted the American value of self-reliance and independence.[71]

The denomination's advocacy of individualism appeared in articles discussing the creation of the Oakwood Industrial School (currently Oakwood College) and its curriculum. In 1896, the *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald* published an essay by George Butler, the former president of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists. In it, he suggested that the denomination model its program for black education on Booker Taliaferro Washington's individualistic philosophy of self-help.[72]

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[68] Dudley, *Citizens of Two Worlds*, 243, 244, 258.
[69] Cottrell, "Rendering to Caesar," 12.
[70] Plantak, *The Silent Church*, 49.
[71] Dudley, *Citizens of Two Worlds*, 243.
[72] George I. Butler, "Our Duty to the Colored Race in America," *The Adventist Review and Sabbath Herald* (7 January 1896): 9.

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The following month, the journal featured an article by Washington.[73] Two years later, *The Gospel Herald*, another Seventh-day Adventist journal, ran a three part series in which Washington articulated his philosophy on African American education.[74] The problem with Washington's individualism lies in its failure to account for the impact of modern industry and mass production.[75] As a result, his method of self-help (through crafts and other forms of manual labor) became outmoded.[76]

In keeping with their conservative tradition, Adventists maintained that the ultimate responsibility for success or failure remains with the individual.[77] This outlook contributed to the belief that everyone possesses the ability to improve their plight through self-determination. When applied to the problem of racism, this notion results in blaming the victim for their condition.[78] Consequently, individualism desensitized some Seventh-day Adventists to racial injustice.[79]

Church interest invariably dominated the manner in which Seventh-day Adventists approached politics.[80] As a general rule, the denomination involved itself in political activity only to advance its own interests.[81] In keeping with this, the Adventist Church supported religious liberty to maintain the denomination's viability. Likewise, it championed the defeat of Sunday blue laws, which posed problems for the Adventist community. These statutes restricted commercial activity and labor on Sundays. Consequently, the authorities arrested some Adventists for violating these codes. The earliest example of Adventist political involvement took place in 1888 when the denomination successfully opposed the passage of United States Senator Henry William

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[73] Booker T. Washington, "The Progress of the Negro," *The Adventist Review and Sabbath Herald* (25 February 1896): 116-117.
[74] Booker T. Washington, "Industrial Training for the Negro," *The Gospel Herald* 1, no. 1 (May 1898): 8, 9; Booker T. Washington, "Industrial Training for the Negro," *The Gospel Herald* 1, no. 2 (July 1898): 18, 19; Booker T. Washington, "Industrial Training for the Negro," *The Gospel Herald* 1, no. 3 (August 1898): 26, 27.
[75] C. Vann Woodward, *Origins of the New South, 1877-1913*, 2nd ed. (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1971), 367.
[76] Ibid.
[77] Dudley, *Citizens of Two Worlds*, 243, 244.
[78] Ibid., 245.
[79] Plantak, *The Silent Church*, 50, 86.
[80] Dudley, *Citizens of Two Worlds*, 70, 71. See also Sakae Kubo, introduction to *The Silent Church*, by Zdravko Plantak (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1998), xii.
[81] Kubo, introduction to *The Silent Church*, xi, xii.

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Blair's bill to enforce Sunday as a national day of religious observance.[82] Church interest is also seen in the denomination's support for the Temperance Movement and Prohibition. Adventists supported efforts to suppress liquor consumption because they viewed its mind altering effect as a hindrance to successful evangelism.[83] Since the Adventist Church only participated in causes that served its interests, it is possible that the denomination did not perceive social injustice as a threat to its wellbeing.

By advocating nonparticipation or behind-the-scene involvement in matters of public interest, the Seventh-day Adventist Church took a pragmatic approach to advancing its interests. Francis David Nichol's statement substantiates this conclusion. "We have ever felt that we can best reveal true Christianity, and thus best advance the Advent cause, by taking the more quiet and perhaps indirect approach to problems that so often arouse human passions."[84] By refusing to take a public stand on sociopolitical issues, Adventists hoped to broaden the denomination's appeal among social conservatives.[85] Reuben Figuhr (president of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists from 1954 to 1966) insinuates this in the following statement.

> Many questions agitate our tense world today. Among them is the race question. . . . Frequently letters come asking what is the position of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in this matter. Some urge that an extreme position be taken, since it is felt by not a few that the question is a moral one. Others hold and urge an opposite view. From different areas come different urgings. It is clear that no statement satisfactory to all could ever be framed. The subject is too charged with emotionalism and age-old prejudice to make this possible.[86]

By assuming a neutral stance on sociopolitical issues the Seventh-day Adventist Church created inconsistency in its application of moral principles.[87] Furthermore, the denomination's pragmatic approach placed it in a reactive position to world events rather

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[82] Plantak, *The Silent Church*, 13-15.
[83] Dudley, *Citizens of Two Worlds*, 68.
[84] Nichol, "Unity in the Faith," 12.
[85] Dudley, *Citizens of Two Worlds*, 71.
[86] Reuben R. Figuhr, "A Letter from Our President," *Review and Herald* 141, no. 1 (January 1964): 5.
[87] Dudley, *Citizens of Two Worlds*, 242. See also Plantak, *The Silent Church*, 49.

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than on the cutting edge.[88] This development became apparent as the Adventist Church responded to advances in race relations made through the efforts of the Civil Rights Movement.

At the 1965 Spring Meeting of the General Conference Committee, church officials issued a recommendation that the denomination's facilities and institutions desegregate.

> *We recommend*, that the following principles and practices be adopted and carried out in our churches and institutions: 1. Membership and office in all churches and on all levels must be available to anyone who qualifies, without regard to race. 2. In our 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.[89]

These recommendations followed two landmark events: the 1954 *Brown v. Board of Education* decision outlawing racially segregated schools, and the Civil Rights Act of 1964 desegregating public facilities. In addition, the American Baptists, the Church of Christ, Catholics, Lutherans, Methodists, Unitarians, Presbyterians, and the Disciples of Christ began desegregating their institutions and facilities well in advance of the Seventh-day Adventist Church.[90] Finally, the recommendations proposed by the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists are suggestions – not statements of organizational policy.

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[88] Plantak, *The Silent Church*, 48.
[89] "Actions of General Interest: Spring Meeting of the General Conference Committee, April 13, 14, 1965," *Review and Herald* 142, no. 17 (April 1965): 8.
[90] Frank W. Hale, Jr., *Angels Watching Over Me: The Autobiography of Dr. Frank W. Hale, Jr.* (Nashville: James C. Winston Publishing Company, 1996), 159, 184-186.

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Francis David Nichol's commentary on the slow pace of social reform within the denomination demonstrates the impact of pragmatism on Adventist thought.

> [W]e have been striving quietly and continuously within our own ranks to work toward unity of the spirit in the bond of peace, for the Advent Movement includes many races and people. . . . Here at headquarters our representative committee on Human Relations has been busy for quite some time seeking to solve problems of race relations in terms of the gospel. The record clearly shows progress over the years, even though some may have sincerely felt that the progress has not been fast enough. But no one has ever yet found a better protection against explosion, a surer way to maintain unity, than to move measuredly [*sic*] in dealing with difficult matters, where sincere men may hold widely divergent views. . . . But the rate of speed is not so important as the direction in which one travels. . . . As has been true in earlier times, when long-held, divergent, viewpoints have created problems and tensions, even so today the way out of the problem has been by Christian patience and forbearance, and a sincere, sympathetic endeavor to understand differing viewpoints. A continued display of these rare Christian graces is vital to the full activation of this resolution, which, we might add, was especially prepared for North America.[91]

As this statement shows pragmatism retarded the denomination's response to sociopolitical reform.

Research affirms that churches and parochial schools promote exclusivity and disengagement from secular society.[92] However, for religious groups to survive they frequently create ties with the outside world to attract new members.[93] Thus, over time the interests of the surrounding community become intertwined with those of the church.[94] Accordingly, black Seventh-day Adventists forged bonds with the surrounding African-American community.[95] As a result, they became sympathetic to the plight of other blacks.[96] Ironically, this sympathy – in most cases – did not translate into active support for the Civil Rights Movement. This lack of activism, on the part of some black

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[91] Nichol, "Unity in the Faith," 12.
[92] Dudley, *Citizens of Two Worlds*, 214, 215. See also Hernández, "Religious Commitment," 56, 69, 126, 164.
[93] Dudley, *Citizens of Two Worlds*, 118, 119. See also Hernández, "Religious Commitment," 64.
[94] Aldon D. Morris, *The Origins of the Civil Rights Movement: Black Communities Organizing for Change.* (New York: The Free Press, 1984), 11.
[95] Hernández, "Religious Commitment," 54.
[96] Dudley, *Citizens of Two Worlds*, 220.

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Adventists, came from their theological views.[97] Nevertheless, others, possessing a strong sense of solidarity with the African American community, participated in the Movement in spite of the theological and ideological factors within Adventism that discourage sociopolitical activity. In regard to white Seventh-day Adventists, their lack of support for the Civil Rights Movement undoubtedly resulted from a combination of segregationist influences from the Anglo-American community, as well as theological and ideological views.[98] Thus, segregated churches reinforced racial communal ties.[99]

In summary, this chapter established a link between Millerite thought and the denomination's adherence to theological concepts (such as: premillennialism, apocalyptic historical eschatology, sectarian ecclesiology, the radical deterministic doctrine of God, and the free-will image of man) that discouraged political activism. It examined the roots of other theological and philosophical ideas that influenced Adventism (such as: church interest, evangelism, Christian fundamentalism, conservatism, individualism, and pragmatism) and how they contributed to the denomination's development of a non-participatory stance on sociopolitical issues. It also showed how these theological and philosophical concepts caused some Adventists to reject the Civil Rights Movement, as well as certain views associated with it (such as: ecumenism, the Social Gospel, and Gandhi's experimental theology). Finally, the chapter presented the argument that community awareness or community-oriented consciousness, motivated the civil rights activism of some black Adventists. Coincidentally, community awareness caused white Adventists to merge their interests with those of segregationists in the Anglo-American community. For this reason, the vast majority of white Adventists did not assist the Civil Rights Movement.

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[97] Hernández, "Religious Commitment," 134, 174.
[98] Plantak, *The Silent Church*, 89.
[99] Dudley, *Citizens of Two Worlds*, 144, 145. See also Hernández, "Religious Commitment," 49, 50, 147.

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PART TWO

THE EMERGENCE OF AFRO-ADVENTIST ACTIVISM

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CHAPTER 3
AFRO-ADVENTIST ACTIVISM IN THE 1930S AND 1940S

Chapter Three highlights the contributions of Matthew Strachan, a black Adventist minister, and Irene Morgan, a black Adventist laywoman, to sociopolitical reform in the 1940s. It also demonstrates how events during the interwar years increased community awareness among African Americans. Furthermore, it shows how Strachan's work with the Southern Missionary Society and the Negro Department of the Seventh-day Adventist Church enhanced his sociopolitical consciousness. In addition, the chapter presents the argument that a heightened sense of community awareness motivated Strachan and Morgan, as well as other black Seventh-day Adventists, to participate in political activism.

Matthew Strachan was born on May 8, 1875, in Washington, DC. As a youth, he converted to Adventism and attended the denomination's college in Battle Creek, Michigan.[1] In his twenties, Strachan joined James Edson White's Southern Missionary Society.[2] Subsequently, he went to Mississippi and worked for the organization as a school teacher and *Bible* instructor.[3] In 1903, his efforts culminated in the construction of

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[1] In 1874, the Seventh-day Adventist Church established Battle Creek College. The college moved to Berrien Springs, Michigan in 1901. There, it assumed the name Emmanuel Missionary College. In 1960, the institution changed its name to Andrews University – in honor of John Nevins Andrews (1829-1883), the first Adventist missionary sent to work in a foreign field.

[2] Frank L. Peterson, "The North American Negro Department," *The Adventist Review and Sabbath Herald* 115, no. 51 (1938): 53, 54. See also "Obituaries," *The Adventist Review and Sabbath Herald* 128, no. 48 (1951): 20.

[3] A. Barry, W. H. Sebastian, and M. C. Strachan, "Jackson (Mississippi) Camp Meeting," *The Adventist Review and Sabbath Herald* 79, no. 41 (1902): 16, 17. See also W. H. Sebastian, T. Murphy, and M. C.

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a church in Jackson, Mississippi, for black Adventists.[4] Three years later, he became an ordained minister of the Seventh-day Adventist Church.[5] During his ministerial career, Strachan pastored a number of African American churches, and conducted evangelistic crusades for black communities in: Mississippi, Alabama, Florida, Georgia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Maryland, New York, and the District of Columbia.[6] In 1909, he became a founding member of the North American Negro Department – established by the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists to coordinate missionary activities among African Americans.[7] Twice, Strachan served as a

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Strachan, "The Jackson, Miss. (colored), Camp-Meeting," *The Adventist Review and Sabbath Herald* 80, no. 39 (1903): 19.

[4] James Edson White, "Mission Schools for the Colored People," *The Advent Review and Sabbath Herald* 85, no. 39 (1908): 14, 15. See also "Two New Churches for the Colored People," *The Advent Review and Sabbath Herald* 80, no. 49 (1903): 17, 18.

[5] Sydney Scott, and M. C. Strachan, "Nashville (Tenn.) Camp-meeting for Colored People," *The Adventist Review and Sabbath Herald* 83, no. 40 (1906): 15.

[6] "Obituaries," 20. See also K. C. Russell, "District of Columbia," *The Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, no. 24 (1907): 17.; George I. Butler, "The Nashville (Tenn.) Camp-Meeting," *The Adventist Review and Sabbath Herald* 83, no. 39 (1906): 17, 18.; J. W. Christian, "The Cleveland (Tenn.) Camp-Meeting," *The Advent Review and Sabbath Herald* 86, no. 40 (1909): 17.; Annie V. Butler, "Florida (Colored) Camp-Meeting," *The Adventist Review and Sabbath Herald* 87, no. 50 (1910): 21, 22.; J. F. Crichlow, "Work for Colored People in Winnsboro, S. C.," *The Advent Review and Sabbath Herald* 88, no. 34 (1911): 11.; V. O. Cole, "Camp-Meeting and Institute for the Colored Believers of Florida," *The Advent Review and Sabbath Herald* 89, no. 45 (1912): 17.; J. P. Pegues, "Florida," *The Advent Review and Sabbath Herald* 90, no. 40 (1913): 18.; I. H. Evans, "The Florida Conference and Camp Meeting," *The Advent Review and Sabbath Herald* 91, no. 49 (1914): 16.; C. B. Stephenson, "South Carolina Camp Meeting," *The Advent Review and Sabbath Herald* 94, no. 34 (1917): 15.; G. E. Peters, "The Florida Mission Camp-Meeting," *The Advent Review and Sabbath Herald* 94, no. 44 (1917): 16.; Gustavus P. Rodgers, "The Work among the Colored People in the Chesapeake Conference," *The Advent Review and Sabbath Herald* 95, no. 8 (1918): 17.; W. Hawkins Green, "Union Meetings for the Colored People," *The Advent Review and Sabbath Herald* 96, no. 2 (1919): 24.; W. Hawkins Green, "Brief Reports of Camp-Meetings for the Colored People," *The Advent Review and Sabbath Herald* 96, no. 43 (1919): 24.; Emma S. Newcomer, "Chesapeake (Colored) Camp-meeting," *The Advent Review and Sabbath Herald* 96, no. 47 (1919): 25.; F. H. Robbins, "Chesapeake Colored Camp-Meeting," *The Adventist Review and Sabbath Herald* 97, no. 47 (1920): 10.; W. Hawkins Green, "The Negro Department," *The Adventist Review and Sabbath Herald* 103, no. 59 (1926): 22.; W. Hawkins Green, "The Negro Department," *The Adventist Review and Sabbath Herald* 105, no. 4 (1928): 19.; W. Hawkins Green, "Negro Department: Among the Churches and Camp Meetings," *The Advent Review and Sabbath Herald* 105, no. 42 (1928): 21, 22.; C. M. Kinney, "Union Camp Meeting at Huntsville, Alabama," *The Advent Review and Sabbath Herald* 108, no. 50 (1931): 18.; "North American Negro Department," *The Advent Review and Sabbath Herald* 116, no. 41 (1939): 18.; "Southern Union: Camp Meetings of the Negro Department," *The Advent Review and Sabbath Herald* 118, no. 51 (1941): 18.

[7] Peterson, "The North American Negro Department," 53, 54. See also W. Hawkins Green, "A Word Regarding the North American Negro Department," *The Advent Review and Sabbath Herald* 95, no. 22 (1918): 19.

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delegate to General Conference sessions.[8] In 1913, he sat on the committee that organized the North American Division of the Seventh-day Adventist Church.[9] In 1930, the Negro Department selected Strachan as its African American representative to the Southern Union Conference.[10]

From 1926 to 1930, Strachan pastored Harlem's Second Seventh-day Adventist Church (currently the Ephesus Seventh-day Adventist Church). There, he worked with James Humphrey, the black pastor and founder of the First Harlem Seventh-day Adventist Church, and James Moran, the black principal of Harlem's Adventist school, to enlarge the denomination's presence in New York City's African American community.[11]During Strachan's tenure, black Adventists in Harlem began demanding autonomy in the administration of their resources and institutions. Several factors contributed to this sentiment. First, African American Adventists contributed financially to the construction and upkeep of white Adventist institutions, yet the denomination denied them access to these facilities.[12] Second, during the First World War, African Americans embraced the democratic ideals that President Woodrow Wilson voiced, particularly his argument supporting the self-determination of subject peoples.[13] As an oppressed ethnic group, blacks in the United States felt they also had the right to control their destiny. Third, African American veterans of the First World War expressed a determination to obtain – at home – some of the freedoms they enjoyed abroad.[14] This

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[8] "Delegates to the General Conference: May 15 to June 8, 1913," *The Advent Review and Sabbath Herald* 90, no. 21 (1913): 12. See also "Proceedings of the General Conference," *The Advent Review and Sabbath Herald* 103, no. 24 (1926): 7. The Seventh-day Adventist Church holds General Conference sessions every five years. At these meetings, delegates, chosen from various administrative units in the denomination, elect officers to the General Conference (the highest administrative unit in the Seventh-day Adventist Church).

[9] "North American Division Conference," *The Advent Review and Sabbath Herald* 90, no. 23 (1913): 24.

[10] G. E. Peters, "The Negro Department," *The Advent Review and Sabbath Herald* 107, no. 31 (1930): 154. The Southern Union Conference of Seventh-day Adventists is an administrative unit consisting of all local and regional conferences in the states of: Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Tennessee.

[11] Green, "The Negro Department," 22. See also Charles Edward Dudley, Sr., *Thou Who Hast Brought Us Thus Far On Our Way: The Development of the Seventh-day Adventist Denomination among African-Americans* (Nashville: Dudley Publications, 2000), 147.

[12] Dudley, *Thou Who Hast Brought Us Thus Far On Our Way*, 148.

[13] David E. Cronon, *Black Moses: The Story of Marcus Garvey and the Universal Negro Improvement Association*, 2nd ed. (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1969), 21, 22. See also James L. Stokesbury, *A Short History of World War I* (New York: William Morrow and Company, 1981), 302.

[14] Cronon, *Black Moses*, 29, 30.

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attitude influenced the entire black community and reenergized efforts aimed at social reform. Fourth, Marcus Garvey's Universal Negro Improvement Association of the early 1920s, headquartered in Harlem, encouraged blacks around the world to achieve financial and political independence.[15] Fifth, the art and literature of the Harlem Renaissance in the 1920s promoted black assertiveness and pride, while rejecting, or at least challenging, white cultural influences.[16] Sixth, African Americans began to take steps to secure better working conditions and higher wages through collective bargaining. Asa Philip Randolph's establishment of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters and Maids in 1925 demonstrated the desire of blacks to take control over their livelihood.[17] Seventh, in 1929 the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists failed to institute the recommendation of the denomination's black leaders to establish conferences controlled by African Americans.[18] This coincided with the beginning of the Great Depression, which exacerbated the inequalities of American society and contributed to black disillusionment and the desire for autonomy.

Following these developments, James Humphrey proposed the creation of Utopia Park – a nonsectarian black-owned and operated health, retirement, and recreational facility for blacks. Harlem's Adventist community did not hesitate in showing support for the plan. Before long, they raised thousands of dollars for the enterprise.[19] As financial contributions from Harlem's Adventist churches to the denomination's Greater New York Conference declined, white administrators launched an investigation.[20] Once informed of the situation in Harlem, conference officials reprimanded Humphrey and ordered him to cancel the Utopia Park project.[21] When he ignored their demand, the

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[15] Ibid., 3, 51, 60, 196. See also Dudley, *Thou Who Hast Brought Us Thus Far On Our Way*, 158.
[16] John Hope Franklin and Alfred A. Moss, Jr., *From Slavery to Freedom: A History of African Americans*, 8th ed. (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2004), 402. See also Dudley, *Thou Who Hast Brought Us Thus Far On Our Way*, 158.
[17] Franklin, *From Slavery to Freedom*, 419, 420.
[18] Dudley, *Thou Who Hast Brought Us Thus Far On Our Way*, 148, 149.
[19] Ibid., 149, 150.
[20] Ibid. The Greater New York Conference of Seventh-day Adventists is a local conference currently made up of multiethnic churches in New York state. Its territory includes New York City and the counties of: Columbia, Dutches, Greene, Nassau, Orange, Putnam, Rockland, Suffolk, Sullivan, Ulster, and Westchester. During the 1920s and 1930s, whites held all the leading administrative positions in this conference.
[21] Dudley, *Thou Who Hast Brought Us Thus Far On Our Way*, 151.

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conference revoked his pastoral license. Shortly thereafter, white Adventist leaders met with the membership of the First Harlem Church to explain the disciplinary action taken against their pastor. At the meeting, the members rallied to the defense of Humphrey and vociferously criticized the denomination's treatment of both him and the black Adventist community. In 1930, the General Conference voted to disfellowship Humphrey and all 600 members of the First Harlem Adventist Church.[22] Strachan's views on the Utopia Park project and the denomination's action against the First Harlem Church are not known. However, following the showdown with the First Harlem congregation, the General Conference removed Strachan as pastor of the Second Harlem Church and reassigned him to a position in the Southern Union Conference.

The following year, students at Oakwood Junior College initiated a protest against discriminatory practices at the institution. Although the Adventist Church established Oakwood for the higher education of blacks, the administration, faculty, and staff were primarily white. Consequently, the school's administration erected barriers between white employees and the black student body. Students who participated in the protest of 1931 resented the school's segregated dining facilities, as well as the absence of blacks in positions of authority and prestige at the institution. Before long, the school's administration crushed the student revolt and expelled its leaders. Afterward, the Church made a pragmatic decision. To prevent further disruption, it reassigned Oakwood's Anglo personnel to white Adventist schools, and filled their vacated positions with blacks.[23] As a result, James Moran, Strachan's former associate, became the first black president of Oakwood Junior College in 1932.

After working as an evangelist for the Southern Union Conference, Strachan settled in Tampa, Florida. In addition to serving as president of the Tampa Negro Voter's League, he became the president of the Tampa, Florida, Branch of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) in 1940. His willingness

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[22] Ibid., 152, 153. See also Dudley, *Thou Who Hath Brought Us: The Story of the Growth and Development of the Seventh-day Adventist Denomination as it relates to African-Americans* (New York: TEACH Services, Inc., 1997), 165, 166.; Zdravko Plantak, *The Silent Church: Human Rights and Adventist Social Ethics* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1998), 79.

[23] Plantak, *The Silent Church*, 79, 80. See also Holly Fisher, "Oakwood College Students' Quest for Social Justice Before and During the Civil Rights Era," *Journal of African American History* 88, no. 2 (Spring 2003): 110-125.

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to take an active and leading role in sociopolitical reform came from years of service in the Southern Missionary Society and the Negro Department of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, which enhanced his community awareness. As president of the largest NAACP branch in Florida, Strachan set out to address the issue of social injustice in Tampa, while enlarging the organization's presence in the state through membership drives and establishing new branches.[24] Under his leadership, the local NAACP did the following. It convinced Tampa's First National Bank Building to desegregate its elevators.[25] They forced the city's school board to install a drinking fountain in a black elementary school.[26] When a dress shop manager unlawfully strip-searched a black woman, the Tampa Branch sued the establishment and won a five hundred dollar judgment.[27] The organization provided legal assistance in helping a black man bring a charge of police brutality against a Tampa officer.[28] After a report circulated that a white foster family abused a black girl in their care, the Tampa NAACP succeeded in having the child removed from the home.[29] They also convinced Tampa officials to improve accommodations for African Americans at the city's bus and railroad stations.[30] When a white bus driver slapped a black woman, the Tampa Branch sued on the victim's behalf

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[24] "Tampa NAACP Holds Election," *Omaha Star*, 31 December 1947, (Group II, Box C-35) Papers of the NAACP, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, DC. According to information provided in this article, during the 1940s, the Tampa NAACP branch was the largest in Florida.
[25] M. C. Strachan, Tampa, to Roy Wilkins, New York, 12 March 1941, transcript handwritten, (Group II, Box C-35) Papers of the NAACP, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, DC. See also M. C. Strachan, Tampa, to Thurgood Marshall, New York, 17 September 1942, transcript handwritten, (Group II, Box C-35) Papers of the NAACP, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, DC.
[26] M. C. Strachan, Tampa, to Roy Wilkins, New York, 12 March 1941, transcript handwritten, (Group II, Box C-35) Papers of the NAACP, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, DC.
[27] M. C. Strachan, Tampa, to Thurgood Marshall, New York, 17 September 1942, transcript handwritten, (Group II, Box C-35) Papers of the NAACP, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, DC. See also "YOU SHOULD KNOW WHAT THE TAMPA BRANCH OF THE NAACP HAS BEEN DOING," (Group II, Box C-35) Papers of the NAACP, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, DC.
[28] M. C. Strachan, Tampa, to Thurgood Marshall, New York, 17 September 1942, transcript handwritten, (Group II, Box C-35) Papers of the NAACP, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, DC.
[29] Ibid. See also "YOU SHOULD KNOW WHAT THE TAMPA BRANCH OF THE NAACP HAS BEEN DOING," (Group II, Box C-35) Papers of the NAACP, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, DC.
[30] "YOU SHOULD KNOW WHAT THE TAMPA BRANCH OF THE NAACP HAS BEEN DOING," (Group II, Box C-35) Papers of the NAACP, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, DC.

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and won a four hundred dollar decision.[31] The local NAACP assisted the Tampa Negro Voter's League in registering 3000 African Americans to vote in Hillsborough County, Florida. Furthermore, the Tampa NAACP launched an unsuccessful suit against Florida's white Democratic primary.[32]

Under Strachan's direction, the legal team of the Tampa Branch appealed the conviction of Edgar Flowers, a twenty-one year old African American accused of raping a white woman. Six months after the alleged incident, authorities in Hillsborough County arrested Flowers and charged him with rape. Although he provided an alibi, the officers beat him until he confessed. Subsequently, the state of Florida tried, convicted and sentenced Flowers to death by electrocution.[33] Ultimately, the Florida Supreme Court rejected the appeal initiated by Strachan. On June 26, 1944, Flowers died in the electric chair.[34]

Matthew Strachan also took part in the prosecution of a white security guard, who killed a twenty year old black man. According to Strachan, the incident occurred as follows. While walking home from the docks, the young man (employed as a stevedore) stopped to relieve himself in an alley around midnight. As he emerged from the alley a security guard opened fire. Afterward, the watchman phoned the authorities. When the police arrived, they viewed the body and called the black undertaker. On arrival, the undertaker observed that the young man's body lay face down. After closer examination, he noticed that a bullet passed through the young man's neck severing the windpipe.

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[31] M. C. Strachan, Tampa, to Thurgood Marshall, New York, 17 September 1942, transcript handwritten, (Group II, Box C-35) Papers of the NAACP, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, DC. See also "YOU SHOULD KNOW WHAT THE TAMPA BRANCH OF THE NAACP HAS BEEN DOING," (Group II, Box C-35) Papers of the NAACP, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, DC.

[32] M. C. Strachan, Tampa, to Thurgood Marshall, New York, 17 September 1942, transcript handwritten, (Group II, Box C-35) Papers of the NAACP, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, DC.

[33] M. C. Strachan, Tampa, to Thurgood Marshall, New York, 17 September 1942, transcript handwritten, (Group II, Box C-35) Papers of the NAACP, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, DC. See also "YOU SHOULD KNOW WHAT THE TAMPA BRANCH OF THE NAACP HAS BEEN DOING," (Group II, Box C-35) Papers of the NAACP, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, DC.

[34] "Execution List 1924-1964 – Florida Department of Corrections" [database on line] (Tallahassee, Florida: Florida Department of Corrections, ca. 15 September 2005, accessed 20 September 2005); available from http:// www.dc.state.fl.us/oth/deathrow/execlist2.html; Internet.

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Additional bullet wounds were also found in the arm and thigh. Based on his observations, the undertaker concluded that the security guard shot the young man from behind. Without an inquest, the justice of the peace declared the killing a justifiable homicide and refused to issue a warrant for the guard's arrest. When the father of the deceased contacted the Tampa NAACP, Strachan placed the organization's legal team on the case. Eventually, the lawyers obtained a warrant for the watchman's arrest and began legal proceedings against him and his employer. Soon, an investigation revealed that the guard had previously bragged about killing other black youths. The Tampa Branch succeeded in bringing the case before a grand jury, but it is not known if they obtained an indictment.[35]

During his presidency, Strachan reorganized the Tampa Branch into districts to facilitate organizational outreach and response to civil rights violations. He also dispatched his vice president to Miami, Florida, to create that city's first NAACP branch.[36] In 1943, Strachan acquired the services of Ella Josephine Baker (Director of Branches for the NAACP), who conducted a recruitment drive in Tampa.[37] Under Strachan's watch, the membership of the Tampa Branch increased substantially.[38]

The Strachan administration witnessed many achievements, but it also had its difficulties. In 1942, a dispute arose concerning the election of officers for the Tampa Branch. This disagreement resulted in the creation of two competing factions within the Tampa NAACP. The Lacy faction, headed by Norman Lacey and Dan Malloy, argued that Strachan committed an error in the electoral process, which nullified the election

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[35] M. C. Strachan, Tampa, to Thurgood Marshall, New York, 17 September 1942, transcript handwritten, (Group II, Box C-35) Papers of the NAACP, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, DC.
[36] M. C. Strachan, Tampa, to NAACP Headquarters, New York, 25 January 1943, transcript handwritten, (Group II, Box C-35) Papers of the NAACP, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, DC.
[37] M. C. Strachan, Tampa, to Ella J. Baker, New York, 2 March 1943, transcript handwritten, (Group II, Box C-35) Papers of the NAACP, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, DC.; Morris, *The Origins of the Civil Rights Movement*, 102.
[38] Ella J. Baker, New York, to M. C. Strachan, Tampa, 16 June 1943, (Group II, Box C-35) Papers of the NAACP, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, DC.

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results.[39] They also accused him of presiding over the Tampa Branch in a tyrannical manner, and fomenting discord among the members.[40] The Strachan faction, composed of a majority of the membership, maintained that Lacy and Malloy's allegations were baseless.[41]

Ella Baker tried to heal the rift between the factions, but tensions flared again when Strachan won the 1944 special election.[42] Afterward, the Lacy faction withdrew from the Tampa NAACP and formed its own unofficial branch.[43] This situation prompted a series of legal battles between the national headquarters of the NAACP and the Lacy faction.[44] Despite the turmoil, Strachan served as the nationally recognized president of the Tampa NAACP until 1947. In recognition of his dedicated service, the Branch appointed him president emeritus.[45] On August 22, 1951, Matthew Strachan died in Sanford, Florida.[46]

Strachan's civil rights activities are important. According to sociologist Aldon Morris, the Civil Rights Movement of the 1950s and 1960s is directly linked to the sociopolitical activism of the 1940s.[47] During the 1940s, the NAACP (founded in 1909)

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[39] Dan Malloy, and E. Norman Lacy, Tampa, to Walter White, New York, 22 April 1943, (Group II, Box C-35) Papers of the NAACP, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, DC.
[40] Ibid.
[41] Lucille Black, New York, to Ella J. Baker, New York, 9 April 1943, (Group II, Box C-35) Papers of the NAACP, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, DC.
[42] Ella J. Baker, New York, to M. C. Strachan, Tampa, 16 June 1943, (Group II, Box C-35) Papers of the NAACP, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, DC. See also Ella J. Baker, New York, to Tampa Branch of the NAACP, Tampa, 30 September 1944, (Group II, Box C-35) Papers of the NAACP, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, DC.; M. C. Strachan, Tampa, to Ella J. Baker, New York, 13 December 1945, (Group II, Box C-35) Papers of the NAACP, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, DC.
[43] Thurgood Marshall, New York, to Mrs. Waring, New York, 8 November 1945, (Group II, Box C-35) Papers of the NAACP, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, DC. See also M. C. Strachan, Tampa, to Ella J. Baker, New York, 8 January 1946, (Group II, Box C-35) Papers of the NAACP, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, DC.
[44] Ella J. Baker, New York, to M. C. Strachan, Tampa, 5 January 1946, (Group II, Box C-35) Papers of the NAACP, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, DC. See also M. C. Strachan, Tampa, to Ella J. Baker, New York, 8 January 1946, (Group II, Box C-35) Papers of the NAACP, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, DC.
[45] "Tampa NAACP Hold Election," *Omaha Star*, 31 December 1947, (Group II, Box C-35) Papers of the NAACP, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, DC. See also M. C. Strachan, Tampa, to Ella J. Baker, New York, 22 December 1947, transcript handwritten, (Group II, Box C-35) Papers of the NAACP, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, DC.
[46] "Obituaries," *The Adventist Review and Sabbath Herald* 128, no. 48 (1951): 20.
[47] Aldon D. Morris, *The Origins of the Civil Rights Movement: Black Communities Organizing for Change* (New York: The Free Press, 1984), x.

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served as the leading civil rights organization. In this capacity, it aimed to: encourage the American public to accord full rights and opportunities to blacks; fight social injustice through the legal system; support the passage of legislation defending civil liberties; defeat discriminatory bills; secure black voting rights; educate African Americans on civic responsibility; end lynching; and stimulate black cultural life.[48] To accomplish these aims, the NAACP affiliated itself with black churches, which – for the most part – functioned independently from the South's white power structure.[49] As a result, the NAACP received financial backing and attained its local leadership from the ministerial ranks of the black churches.[50] This provides insight on why some black Adventist ministers became affiliated with the NAACP.

An examination of the historical record suggests that the motivation behind Strachan's sociopolitical activism came from a profound sense of community awareness. As a black evangelist and missionary, Strachan came into close contact with various African American communities in the United States. Consequently, he became astutely aware of the social, economic, and political issues confronting black Americans. As an African American religious leader, Strachan undoubtedly felt an obligation to participate in sociopolitical activities benefiting the black community. Like Strachan, another black Adventist, Irene Morgan, felt compelled to participate in sociopolitical activism for the benefit of her community.

Irene Morgan was born into a black Seventh-day Adventist family in 1917. During the Great Depression, she observed the growing disparity between whites and African Americans. As the crisis worsened, Anglo-Americans took the low wage jobs normally reserved for blacks. This made the task of finding work extremely difficult for

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[48] "The NAACP ITS PURPOSE," (Group II, Box C-35) Papers of the NAACP, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, DC.
[49] E. Franklin Frazier, *The Negro Church in America* (New York: Schocken Books, 1963), 27-46. See also Morris, *The Origins of the Civil Rights Movement*, 14-16.
[50] Frazier, *The Negro Church*, 42-44, 49-52. See also Morris, *The Origins of the Civil Rights Movement*, 14-16.

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Irene's father. To help support her family, she dropped out of school and began working as a domestic for white families.[51] Eventually, Morgan married and started a family of her own.

With the onset of the Second World War the economic upheaval that rocked the nation in the 1930s subsided, allowing desperate workers an opportunity to improve their financial standing. At the same time, the African American community launched the Double "V" Campaign. This program called for victory over the double threats of racism at home and fascism abroad.[52] In January 1941, A. Philip Randolph proposed a protest march on Washington, DC, if the defense industry did not stop its discriminatory hiring practices. To avert the demonstration, President Franklin Delano Roosevelt issued Executive Order 8802, which prohibited discrimination in the defense industries.[53] Furthermore, black veterans, returning from overseas, increasingly expressed their determination to secure their full rights as United States citizens. Eventually, this sentiment pervaded the African American community to which Irene Morgan belonged.[54]

In July 1944, Morgan purchased a five dollar ticket and boarded a bus in Gloucester, Virginia, bound for Baltimore, Maryland. There, she hoped to see her physician as a follow up for a miscarriage suffered earlier that summer. On the bus, Morgan sat in an aisle seat four rows from the rear in the section reserved for black passengers. As the white section filled up, the driver called on black riders to give up their seats to accommodate them. Thirty minutes outside of Gloucester, a white couple boarded. The bus driver demanded that Morgan and another black woman relinquish their seats. Irene refused and compelled the woman next to her to remain seated. The driver stopped in the town of Saluda, Virginia, and reported the incident. Afterward, a sheriff's deputy came aboard with a warrant for Morgan's arrest. When the officer served the warrant, Irene tore it up and threw it out the window. Enraged, the deputy reached

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[51] Carol Morello, "The Freedom Fighter a Nation Nearly Forgot," *Adventist Review* 178, no. 5 (February 2001): 10.
[52] Ibid.
[53] Franklin, *From Slavery to Freedom*, 479, 480.
[54] Carol Morello, "The Freedom Fighter a Nation Nearly Forgot," *Adventist Review* 178, no. 5 (February 2001): 10.

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forward and grabbed her by the arm. As soon as he took hold, she kicked the officer in the groin. After hobbling off the bus, his partner came aboard and wrestled Morgan. In the melee, she tore off the deputy's shirt. Eventually, both officers got Morgan off the bus.[55]

After a brief stay in jail, Irene's mother posted the five hundred dollar bail for her release. In court, Morgan pled guilty to resisting arrest, but maintained innocence when charged with violating Virginia's segregation law. In spite of her attorney's argument that segregated travel impeded interstate commerce, they lost. The court fined Morgan one hundred dollars for resisting arrest, and ten dollars for violating the state's segregation statute. NAACP lawyers Thurgood Marshall and William Hastie took up Morgan's case and appealed it all the way to the United States Supreme Court. On June 3, 1946, the Supreme Court, in the case of *Morgan v. Virginia*, banned segregation on interstate travel. This legal victory inspired the "Freedom Rides" of the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) in 1947 and 1961.[56]

Morgan's decision not to relinquish her seat, in 1944, exemplified the mood within black society to resist racial discrimination. This temperament, which manifested itself in the Double "V" Campaign and in the determination of African American veterans to exercise their rights as citizens, motivated the activism of black Adventists like Irene Morgan.

In summary, this chapter highlighted the contribution of Matthew Strachan and Irene Morgan to sociopolitical reform in the 1940s. It demonstrated how events during and between the First and Second World Wars increased community awareness among African Americans. Furthermore, it showed how Strachan's work with the Southern Missionary Society and the Negro Department of the Seventh-day Adventist Church enhanced his sociopolitical consciousness. Overall, the chapter presented the argument that a heightened sense of community awareness motivated Strachan and Morgan, as well as other black Seventh-day Adventists, to participate in political activism.

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[55] Ibid., 8, 10.
[56] Ibid., 10, 11.

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CHAPTER 4
LAY ACTIVISM

This chapter focuses on the involvement of Adventist laypersons in the Civil Rights Movement. Accordingly, it examines the activities of Alfonzo Greene, Terrance Roberts, and Frank Hale in combating social injustice in the Seventh-day Adventist Church and secular society. Based on information gathered from interviews and memoirs, the argument is presented that community awareness, gained from personal experiences with racism, as well as family socialization, motivated the activism of these laymen.

Alfonzo Greene, Sr., was born on August 20, 1926, in Candor, North Carolina. In 1961, he received his bachelor's degree from Andrews University, in Berrien Springs, Michigan. Later on, Greene enrolled in the Master of Business Administration Program at Western Michigan University in Kalamazoo. In 1966, he became the first African American to receive an MBA from that institution. As an educator, Greene taught at Kentucky State University in Frankfort, and Oakwood College in Huntsville, Alabama. Throughout his adult life, he worked in various capacities with the NAACP and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC). [1]

Greene's first exposure to Adventism occurred in 1948 at a North Carolina NAACP convention. There, he met W. R. Saxon (the state vice president of the NAACP and cofounder of the organization's branch in Ashville, North Carolina). Saxon also worked as an insurance agent in Ashville. In their encounter, Greene accepted an offer to work for his company. Saxon, who was a black Seventh-day Adventist, gave him

[1] Alfonzo Greene, Sr., interviewed by author, 26 May 2004, Huntsville, tape recording, home residence, Huntsville, Alabama. Unless noted otherwise, the information provided in this discussion comes from the interview.

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literature on the denomination's doctrines. After working a year in Ashville, the company reassigned Greene to Clinton, North Carolina. In his spare time, he read the pamphlets Saxon gave him. Subsequently, Greene accepted Adventism and began looking for a church to attend. Soon, he discovered that the denomination did not have a church in Clinton, but it did have one in Fayetteville, North Carolina. In 1949, Greene joined the black Adventist church in that city.

Three years prior to joining the Seventh-day Adventist Church, Greene became involved in sociopolitical reform. Since the end of Reconstruction, African Americans in Montgomery County, North Carolina, had not voted. When Greene reached the required voting age, he decided to let nothing deter him from participating in the political process. In 1946, he along with another black man went to register to vote in Montgomery County's Rocky Spring Township. When they arrived, the clerk told them that he did not have the authority to register blacks. Greene retorted, "Well, I'm an American and you have the authority to register me. Blacks should be able to register like anybody else. We're coming back next week to register, and you better have authority to register us. If you do not, we are going to sue." Greene's behavior is consistent with the attitude and spirit that pervaded African American society following the Second World War (that is, blacks in the United States desired to exercise the freedoms they helped defend overseas).

Meanwhile, Greene and his associate went to see the commissioner of elections. They informed him of the clerk's refusal to register them. The commissioner said, "Well, that should not be. We'll see what we can do." When the two men returned, the clerk told them they needed to answer some questions. He explained that the law required voters to be literate and able to comprehend the state constitution. The clerk asked them to recite the preamble of the document. Having memorized it in grade school, both recited it perfectly. After answering other questions, the clerk placed their names on the voting roll. Elated, Greene went back to his community and brought others to the courthouse for registration. He recalls this as his first venture into the Civil Rights Movement.

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Later that year, Greene joined the NAACP and rose quickly through the ranks of the state organization. In 1949, he became vice president of the North Carolina NAACP. Greene held this position until he left for college in 1952. As one of the youngest vice presidents in the history of the state organization, at twenty-three years of age, he organized the first NAACP branch in Clinton, North Carolina. Greene remained active in the NAACP, during and after college. In Michigan, he worked as an officer in a local branch. While teaching at Kentucky State University, Greene served on the executive board of the Kentucky NAACP. He is currently an active member of the Huntsville, Alabama, Branch of the NAACP. In these capacities Greene raised money for the organization's legal fund, served on committees redressing discrimination in schools, and investigated complaints of unfair hiring practices and other workplace irregularities.

In 1952, Greene entered Emmanuel Missionary College, an Adventist institution in Berrien Springs, Michigan. Unbeknown to him, the college enforced a policy of segregated housing. Prior to his arrival, Greene learned the school operated a trailer park for married students. Consequently, he purchased a trailer and moved his family to Berrien Springs. Seeing that Greene and his family were black, college administrators refused to admit them into the park. However, a white Adventist, who owned a lot near the campus, allowed Greene and other black students to move their trailers onto his property. At the time, state law allowed only two trailers on a single lot. More than two required the owner of the lot to obtain a trailer park license. College officials reported this violation to Michigan's housing authority. The lot's owner informed the black students that he could not afford the expense of establishing a trailer park. As a result, Greene and his family had to relocate. Greene searched for available housing near the college, but was unsuccessful. Ultimately, he sold the trailer, purchased an outlying plot, and built a house. The housing crisis disrupted Greene's studies. In fact, it caused him to dropout out of school for five years before resuming his education.

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In 1961, Greene graduated from college and moved to Huntsville, Alabama. During the 1960s, Alabama outlawed the NAACP.[2] As a result, Greene joined the SCLC in 1962. As a member, he participated in civil rights marches and demonstrations in the Huntsville area. In 1965, Greene took part in Huntsville's Selma Sympathy March, which occurred a week after Alabama State Troopers attacked civil rights marchers at the Edmund Pettus Bridge in Selma, Alabama. Greene tried to get the black faculty and staff of Oakwood College to participate in Huntsville's Civil Rights Movement, but most refused. This unwillingness to participate in sociopolitical activism probably resulted from theological beliefs, as well as fear of retaliation. In Greene's opinion, the majority of Oakwood's personnel refused to take part in the march because they were Adventists (that is, their religious beliefs took precedence over community consciousness and political involvement). Nevertheless, he managed to convince three staff persons to join him in the Selma Sympathy March.

In 1965, Greene took a group of Oakwood students to a white Adventist church in Huntsville. When they entered the Huntsville Central Seventh-day Adventist Church, the deacons put them out. The next week, Greene returned with more students. This time, church administrators decided to close the facility. Greene called Channel 31, Huntsville's local television station, and asked them to come and film the confrontation between the black students and the members of the Huntsville Central Church. The following week, Oakwood's president held an emergency meeting of the faculty and staff. At the assembly, the president ordered them not to go to the Huntsville Central Church on Saturday. Greene challenged this order. "Look, you cannot tell me as an individual not to go, because I'm an adult and I will go anywhere I want to go." Nevertheless, the president told him that he could not take the students. Greene said, "I respect that. The students are under your care, so I will tell the students I cannot carry any of them to the church." On Saturday morning, Greene met with the students and told them what transpired at the faculty and staff meeting. One of the students asked him if he intended to go to the white church. Greene replied in the affirmative. The students told

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[2] John Lewis and Michael D'Orso, *Walking with the Wind: A Memoir of the Movement* (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1999), 53.

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him they would also be at the Huntsville Central Church. Sure enough the Oakwood students arrived, and together with Greene they entered into the foyer of the church. After promising to resolve the problem, an Adventist minister convinced the students to leave. Shortly thereafter, the Huntsville Central Church voted to allow blacks into its membership. Evidently, demonstrations and unwanted media coverage caused this local Adventist church to integrate.

The SCLC assisted Greene in providing transportation for the students during their struggle to integrate the Huntsville Central Church. At this time, Greene became personally acquainted with Ralph David Abernathy who conducted a rally in support of the Oakwood students. As an activist, Greene worked with other well-known civil rights leaders such as: Thurgood Marshall, Walter White, Roy Wilkins, Robert Carter, and Constance Baker Motley.

The inspiration behind Alfonzo Greene's activism came from his childhood experience. Greene's grandfather habitually read newspapers and magazines. Often he talked with Alfonzo about racial inequality, social injustice, and other issues impacting the African American community. This made a lasting impression on Greene and gave him a sense of community awareness, which sparked the determination to exercise his civil rights. Besides Greene, social consciousness inspired Terrance Roberts, another black Adventists, to participate in the Civil Rights Movement.

Terrance Roberts was born in 1941, in Little Rock, Arkansas. As Seventh-day Adventists, the Roberts family attended one of the denomination's black churches in Little Rock.[3] During his teens, Terrance became affiliated with the Youth Council of the NAACP.[4] Subsequently, he submitted a request for transfer from the city's black high school to the all-white Little Rock Central High School. In 1957, the school board selected Roberts (a fifteen-year-old eleventh grader) and eight other black students to

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[3] Terrance Roberts did not respond to the author's request for an interview. As a result, the information in this discussion comes from Roberts's article, as well as Daisy Bates's memoir on the Little Rock Central High School integration battle.

[4] Aldon D. Morris, *The Origins of the Civil Rights Movement: Black Communities Organizing for Change* (New York: The Free Press, 1984), 192.

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integrate Central High.[5] Together, they became known as the "Little Rock Nine." Following a turbulent desegregation process, the Roberts family relocated to California. There, Terrance attended the University of California at Los Angeles where he received degrees in sociology and social welfare. He went on to earn a doctorate in psychology from Southern Illinois University in Carbondale.

Roberts's involvement in the Civil Rights Movement is connected to the 1954 Supreme Court decision outlawing racial segregation in public schools. Ten days after the Court's ruling in *Brown v. Board of Education* the Little Rock school board announced its plan to desegregate the city's schools. Tentatively scheduled for the fall of 1957, they proposed to begin the integration process in the senior high schools and gradually implement it in lower levels. Although the board took this step toward desegregation, some African Americans felt that the plan lacked decisiveness and urgency. This sentiment arose from black veterans of the Second World War like William Roberts, Terrance's father.[6] After the war, these veterans joined civil rights groups in large numbers – infusing them with a spirit of determination and militancy.[7] In 1956, black parents, with the assistance of NAACP lawyers, filed a suit against the Little Rock Board of Education demanding the immediate integration of all schools. A federal court decided that the board's plan to commence integration the following year showed good faith (that is, a willingness to comply with the Supreme Court's ruling). Nevertheless, in the event of future litigation the court decided to retain jurisdiction.[8]

African Americans were not the only group apprehensive about the school board's plan to desegregate. Segregationists opposed all measures to integrate the public schools.[9] During the 1954 Arkansas gubernatorial campaign, Orval Eugene Faubus

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[5] Daisy Bates, *The Long Shadow of Little Rock: A Memoir* (New York: David McKay Company, 1963), 59, 123, 124.
[6] Ibid., 49, 52, 138.
[7] Ibid., 44-47. See also Neil A. Wynn, *The Afro-American and the Second World War*, rev. 2d ed. (New York: Holmes & Meier, 1993), 130-133.
[8] Bates, *The Long Shadow of Little Rock*, 52, 53.
[9] John Hope Franklin and Alfred A. Moss, Jr., *From Slavery to Freedom: A History of African Americans*, 8th ed. (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2004), 523. See also W.E.B. Du Bois, *A Soliloquy on Viewing My Life from the Last Decade of Its First Century: The Autobiography of W.E.B. Du Bois* (New York: International Publishers, 1968), 333.

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scored a political victory when he declared his opposition to school integration.[10] In the spring of 1957, Governor Faubus supported the passage of bills in the Arkansas legislature impeding desegregation. These measures called for: the establishment of a sovereignty commission to protect the rights of the state from federal encroachment; noncompulsory attendance at racially integrated schools; allocating state funds to fight discrimination suits; and the registration of all civil rights groups in the state. The Arkansas House of Representatives passed the bills by a vote of eighty-eight to one.[11] In August 1957, Georgia's Governor Samuel Marvin Griffin and Roy Vincent Harris (a Georgia politician and segregationist) held a rally in Arkansas opposing school integration.[12] Five days later, the Mothers' League of Little Rock Central High School filed suit seeking an injunction to preempt the desegregation of the school scheduled for September 4, 1957. A state court granted the injunction. On August 30, attorneys for the NAACP appealed the decision in federal court and the injunction was promptly overturned.[13]

On September 3, Governor Faubus ordered the Arkansas National Guard to prevent Terrance Roberts and the other black pupils from entering Central High. That evening, Daisy Bates (president of the Arkansas State Conference of NAACP Branches, and advocate for the Little Rock Nine) phoned Dunbar Ogden, Jr., a white Presbyterian minister who served as president of Little Rock's Interracial Ministerial Alliance. Bates asked if he could get some ministers to accompany the students to Central. The next day, Ogden along with a white minister from the National Council of Churches and two black Methodist preachers escorted eight of the nine pupils to the high school. The absence of Terrance's pastor suggests that he did not support Roberts's involvement in the integration of Central High School.[14] When the black students arrived at the school, the guardsmen refused to let them enter. Ogden reported this to Bates, who advised that they see the superintendent of schools. After an unsuccessful attempt to meet with the

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[10] Daisy Bates, *The Long Shadow of Little Rock: A Memoir* (New York: David McKay Company, 1963), 48.
[11] Ibid., 53.
[12] Ibid., 3, 4.
[13] Ibid., 56, 57.
[14] This minister and other black Adventists who opposed the denomination's involvement in the Civil Rights Movement declined requests for interviews.

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superintendent, the students and their advocates went to the office of the United States Attorney in Little Rock. Officials took statements from the students and referred them to the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI). There, Roberts and the others provided a detailed report of what transpired at the high school.[15]

On September 20, attorneys for the NAACP argued in federal court for an injunction to stop the governor and the Arkansas National Guard from interfering with the integration of Central High. The court accepted their arguments and granted their request. Two days later, the Little Rock Police escorted Terrance and the other eight students into Central High School through a side entrance. Shortly thereafter, reports circulated in the white community that the blacks were inside. Within minutes, crowds formed in front of the school threatening to forcibly extract the African American students. The situation deteriorated. Fearing for their safety, the police chief ordered the removal of the Little Rock Nine from Central High through a rear exit. After loading them into squad cars, the officers drove the students to the Bates home.[16]

The next day, Roberts and the others made no attempt to enter Central. However, that afternoon, President Dwight Eisenhower federalized the Arkansas National Guard and sent regular army troops to Little Rock to prevent interference with court mandated integration.[17] On the morning of September 25, federal soldiers accompanied the black students as they entered Central High. When classes dismissed, troops escorted the Nine to the Bates home. This routine continued for several days.[18]

In October, Arkansas guardsmen replaced the federal soldiers stationed inside the school. Subsequently, harassment of the black students intensified. One day, as Terrance and another African American student descended a flight of stairs, near the vice principal's office, two white youths, in passing, knocked the books out of their hands. When Roberts and his friend bent over to pick up their textbooks, two boys came from behind and kicked them. Before long, other student started kicking the books down the

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[15] Daisy Bates, *The Long Shadow of Little Rock: A Memoir* (New York: David McKay Company, 1963), 61-67.
[16] Ibid., 83-93.
[17] Ibid., 100. See also Franklin, *From Slavery to Freedom*, 523.
[18] Daisy Bates, *The Long Shadow of Little Rock: A Memoir* (New York: David McKay Company, 1963), 104-106.

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hallway. Hearing the commotion, the vice principal emerged from her office. She grabbed two of the culprits and restored order. Guardsmen, posted a few feet away, observed the entire incident, but did not intervene. The boys, apprehended by the vice principal, received a three day suspension. On their return, one of them punched Roberts in gym class and threatened to beat him up after school. Terrance reported the incident to the school's authorities. The administration told Roberts they could do nothing unless he provided an adult witness to corroborate the story.[19]

On another occasion, a group of students surrounded Roberts on the ball field. As they screamed racial epithets, a boy carrying a baseball bat advanced toward him. Throughout the tense moments, Terrance made persistent eye contact with his would-be assailant. When the two stood face to face, the boy mumbled a derogatory phrase, dropped the bat, and walked away. Roberts maintains that his refusal to become a victim, coupled with a determination to face the would-be assailant as an equal, prevented the attack.[20]

Before the close of the academic year, Little Rock's school board submitted a petition to a federal court seeking permission to remove the black students from the high school and to postpone the integration process until January 1961. Surprisingly, the court granted the request. Lawyers for the NAACP immediately filed an appeal. In August 1958, the Eighth United States Circuit Court of Appeals reversed the decision of the other court. While the state filed an appeal with the Supreme Court, Governor Faubus convened a special session of the Arkansas legislature and submitted a new package of bills designed to subvert the desegregation process. On September 11, the Supreme Court issued a unanimous decision allowing the black students to return to Central High. On hearing the news, Faubus signed into law the measures passed during the special session. One of them gave the governor the authority to close the state's public schools. To prevent their integration, Governor Faubus closed all public high schools in Little Rock. The city's white community placed immense pressure on the families of the black

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[19] Ibid., 116, 124, 125.
[20] Terrance J. Roberts, "Surviving Racism: Life in these United States," *Message* 56, no. 1 (January/February 1990): 28.

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students involved in the integration of Central High. Eventually, the strain became too great for the Roberts family and they relocated to California. In the summer of 1959, a federal court declared the law unconstitutional that granted Arkansas's governor the power to close public schools.[21]

The lingering spirit of the Double "V" Campaign, affiliation with the NAACP Youth Council, and the influence of a father who served in the Second World War gave Roberts a profound sense of community awareness. For him, social consciousness outweighed theological and ideological aspects of Adventism that discouraged sociopolitical activity. In like manner, community awareness motivated the activism of another black Adventist, Frank Hale.

Frank Hale, Jr. was born on March 24, 1927, in Kansas City, Missouri, to Frank and Novella Hale (both Seventh-day Adventists). In January 1944, he began studies at Oakwood College in Huntsville, Alabama. Due to deficiencies in the institution's academic curriculum, Hale transferred to Union College in Lincoln, Nebraska, where in 1950 he received a bachelor's degree. In 1951, Hale obtained a master's degree from the University of Nebraska in Lincoln. Four years later, he earned a doctorate in Speech and Political Science from The Ohio State University in Columbus. During his career, Hale worked at: Oakwood College; Central State University in Wilberforce, Ohio; The Ohio State University in Columbus; and Kenyon College in Gambier, Ohio. From 1966 to 1971, he served as president of Oakwood College.

Hale's involvement in sociopolitical reform began in 1950 at the University of Nebraska. There, he joined the Student Action Council, which initiated a program to integrate establishments in Lincoln. As a member, Hale participated in demonstrations that desegregated some of the city's restaurants and hotels.[22] This experience helped prepare him for future efforts aimed at integrating Adventist institutions.

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[21] Daisy Bates, *The Long Shadow of Little Rock: A Memoir* (New York: David McKay Company, 1963), 152-161.
[22] Frank W. Hale, Jr., *Angels Watching Over Me: The Autobiography of Dr. Frank W. Hale, Jr.* (Nashville: James C. Winston Publishing Company, 1996), 76.

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In 1960, Hale represented Central State College (elevated to university status in 1966) at a conference for human rights held on the campus of the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor. Taking a recess from the conference, he visited Adelphian Academy, a Seventh-day Adventist boarding school for girls in Holly, Michigan. There, Hale sought to obtain information for his daughter who would soon be of age to attend. In an interview with the school's dean, Hale received the impression that African American students were not welcome at the institution. The administrator told him that out of a student body of 300 there were only three blacks. Hale asked if the academy had a quota limiting the number of African American students. The dean replied in the affirmative, and suggested that blacks admitted to the institution must come from families with professional backgrounds. Afterward, Hale learned that other Adventist academies had similar policies. He also discovered that blacks were routinely turned away from the denomination's hospitals, nursing homes, churches, and recreational facilities. This prompted Hale to take action.[23]

On January 7, 1961, at a function sponsored by the Chicago Oakwood Alumni Association, Hale articulated a strategy to correct social injustice in the Adventist Church. His plan involved the creation of an organization for black laypersons. He proposed that the group do the following: establish a network to facilitate the reporting of discriminatory acts; seek ways to improve interracial fellowship; work to integrate local church schools; agitate for equal employment opportunities; and demand the admission of blacks in all Adventist institutions of higher learning. Later that month, Hale arranged a meeting of laypersons to launch the organization. The group assembled on February 26, at the Neighborhood House in Columbus, Ohio. At the gathering, Hale presented a three page outline identifying what he believed to be the principle causes of racial discord in the denomination. These included: a lack of interracial dialogue; bypassing opportunities to create institutions to improve race relations; abandoning the values of Christian love and inclusiveness; catering to the wishes of ultra conservatives; and failure of the Church to follow Ellen White's counsel in *The Southern Work* – specifically, her support for reparations and the establishment of institutions to improve the lives of African

[23] Ibid., 143-159.

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Americans. After his presentation, the assembly developed a platform that included some of the points he mentioned. The group called on the denomination to: adopt a positive stance on race relations; open its institutions of higher learning to blacks; discontinue the quota system; provide equal employment opportunities to all persons irrespective of ethnicity; cease racial discrimination in its churches; create interracial youth camps; establish human relations institutes; and give heed to Biblical principles on matters of race. Finally, the Laymen's Leadership Conference (LLC) demanded that the Adventist Church institute these steps as soon as possible.[24]

From the outset, the LLC received phone calls and letters informing them of various discriminatory acts committed against African Americans. The reports included: accounts of black students denied admission to white schools; African Americans barred from white churches; the collusion of church leaders with segregationists; Adventist pastors using the Biblical narrative of Noah's curse to justify racism; and discrimination in hiring.[25]

Some Adventists opposed the work of the LLC because of the pressure it placed on the denomination to address sociopolitical issues. They argued that taking a partisan position is incompatible with the Church's gospel commission to evangelize the world. In response, Hale contended that the Church is to take the lead in setting community standards – not the other way around. Furthermore, as a denomination professing to have a special knowledge of Christ, it is imperative that the Adventist Church make its position known on sociopolitical and ethical matters.[26]

In preparation for the General Conference Autumn Council, the LLC board voted that its representatives present the following recommendations to Church leaders. First, that the General Conference issue a public statement encouraging all Adventists to reexamine the concepts of love, racial understanding, and Christian fellowship. Second, that ministers emphasize the teachings of Christ when discussing race relations. Third, that pastors receive training to help them develop positive attitudes toward multiculturalism. Fourth, that all union conferences in North America establish human

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[24] Ibid., 161-163.
[25] Ibid., 166-169.
[26] Ibid., 178-200.

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relations institutes. Fifth, that all of the denomination's institutions remove racial barriers from the hiring process. Sixth, that the denomination condemn the existence of racial discrimination and segregation in all of its healthcare and educational facilities. Seventh, that the quota system in Adventist academies and grade schools be abolished. Eighth, that local churches remove ethnicity as a factor in granting membership. Finally, that the General Conference prepare a treatise articulating Adventism's stance on race relations in light of social changes in the mid twentieth century. [27]

On October 23, representatives of the LLC met with several of the denomination's top leaders and delivered their recommendations. Four days later, the General Conference released a statement to the Associated Press and United Press International expressing its conviction that racial segregation is incompatible with Christian doctrine. The memorandum also announced the denomination's intent to reform its hiring practices, and to expand opportunities for minority members to engage in overseas missionary efforts. Following this declaration, the LLC monitored the Church for infractions. The organization also supported a nationwide effort encouraging black Adventist parents to enroll their children in the denomination's white schools. In addition, it urged black students to seek admittance to all Adventist institutions of higher learning.[28] According to Hale, the conservatism of the Seventh-day Adventist Church caused it to lag behind other Christian organizations on matters of social reform and racial understanding.[29] In fact, several denominations and their affiliates denounced segregation prior to the 1961 General Conference memorandum. These included: the United Church of Christ (1956), the Methodist Church (1956), the Presbyterian Church (1956), the American Baptist Convention (1956), the American Unitarian Association (1957), the Disciples of Christ (1957), and the United States Conference of Catholic

[27] Ibid.
[28] Ibid., 178-183.
[29] Ibid., 159.

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Bishops (1958).[30] Between 1950 and 1958, the National Council of Churches passed two dozen resolutions condemning racial segregation.[31] Furthermore, Southern Baptists and Southern Presbyterians, denominations known for their conservatism, went on record in the mid 1950s supporting integration.[32]

After the 1961 memorandum, the LLC continued to receive reports that Adventist institutions were not implementing reform measures.[33] Consequently, Hale sent letters to the media accusing the denomination of reneging on its commitment to integrate.[34] Furthermore, he set in motion plans for a protest at the 1962 General Conference session in San Francisco, California.[35] Soon, the LLC received the support of black Adventist ministers who were eager to let it be known they were not content with social conditions in the denomination.[36] Negotiations between the LLC and white Adventist leaders ensued.[37] The LLC called off its demonstrations when the Church agreed to recommit itself to integration and elect an African American to the vice presidency of the General Conference.[38]

The political pressure Frank Hale and the LLC placed on the Seventh-day Adventist Church forced the denomination to reexamine its position on ethics and social justice. During its 1965 Spring Council, the General Conference focused attention on desegregating its institutions in the United States. Soon, the denomination's Atlantic and Pacific Unions declared full integration. Institutions of higher learning such as Southwestern Union College (currently Southwestern Adventist College) and Southern Missionary College (currently Southern Adventist University) began opening their doors

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[30] Ibid., 184 -186.
[31] James F. Findlay, Jr., *Church People in the Struggle: The National Council of Churches and the Black Freedom Movement, 1950-1970* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 14.
[32] David L. Chappell, *A Stone of Hope: Prophetic Religion and the Death of Jim Crow* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2004), 5, 107, 108.
[33] Hale, *Angels Watching Over Me*, 187, 188.
[34] Ibid., 200, 202.
[35] Ibid., 195, 196. See also E. E. Cleveland, *Let the Church Roll On: An Autobiography* (Nampa: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1997), 57.
[36] Ibid., 202.
[37] Cleveland, *Let the Church Roll On*, 57.
[38] Edward Earl Cleveland, interviewed by author, 25 May 2004, Huntsville, tape recording, home residence, Huntsville, Alabama. See also Cleveland, *Let the Church Roll On*, 57, 58.

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to African Americans. In addition, schools and boarding academies in the Southern Union Conference started accepting black students. Furthermore, the denomination's healthcare facilities began the process of integrating their staff and admitting nonwhite patients.[39]

Hale maintains that Ellen White's progressive views, supporting reparations and the establishment of institutions to improve the lives of black Americans, inspired his sociopolitical activism.[40] In addition, his personal experiences with racism produced a heightened sense of community awareness, which motivated him to participate in efforts aimed at improving the status of blacks in the Adventist Church and secular society. Finally, the knowledge of injustices perpetrated against African American Adventists further intensified Hale's commitment to social reform.

In summary, this chapter gave attention to the involvement of black Adventist laypersons in the Civil Rights Movement of the 1950s and 1960s. Accordingly, it examined the activities of: Alfonzo Greene, Terrance Roberts, and Frank Hale in combating social injustice in the Seventh-day Adventist Church and secular society. Using information gathered from interviews and memoirs, the chapter argued that community awareness motivated the activism of these laymen.

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[39] Hale, *Angels Watching Over Me*, 208.
[40] Ibid., 80, 81, 120, 121.

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CHAPTER 5
MINISTERIAL ACTIVISM IN THE SOUTH CENTRAL CONFERENCE

This chapter assesses the civil rights activities of three ministers from the South Central Conference: Charles Dudley, Charles Joseph, and Earl Moore. It also documents the opposition they encountered because of their activism. Last, this chapter, like the one before it, argues that a heightened sense of community awareness motivated these black Adventist ministers to participate in the political process.

Charles Edward Dudley, Sr., was born on February 1, 1927, in South Bend, Indiana, to Joseph and Julia Dudley. Eventually, Julia and her son became members of South Bend's Berean Seventh-day Adventist Church. In 1943, Charles began studies at Oakwood College in Huntsville, Alabama. Two years later, he transferred to Emmanuel Missionary College, in Berrien Springs, Michigan. Though closer to his family home in South Bend, Indiana, racial segregation at the institution prompted Dudley to return to Oakwood College where he received his bachelor's degree in 1947. Afterward, he entered the ministry. During his career, Dudley pastored black Adventist churches in: Alabama, Mississippi, Tennessee, Louisiana, and Texas. For approximately thirty-two years he served as president of the South Central Conference of Seventh-day Adventists. Consequently, Dudley holds the distinction of working as an administrator longer than anyone in the history of the denomination. In recognition of his service, he received an honorary doctorate from Andrews University in 1992.[1]

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[1] Charles Edward Dudley, Sr., interviewed by author, 3 August 2004, Nashville, tape recording, home residence, Nashville, Tennessee. Unless noted otherwise, the information in this discussion comes from the interview. Dudley is the author of books on the history of African Americans in the Seventh-day Adventist Church. These are: Charles Edward Dudley, Sr., *The Genealogy of Ellen Gould Harmon White: The*

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Dudley's sociopolitical activism began in 1947. That year, he took a bus load of young people to an Adventist youth congress. On the way, they stopped in Centerville, Tennessee. After disembarking, they decided to order refreshments at an ice cream stand near the black waiting room. When the group reached the counter, the white attendant acted as if he did not want to serve them. Daniel Howard, a member of the group, spoke up. "Everybody order something!" They all proceeded to place orders. Grudgingly, the waiter filled the counter with milkshakes, ice cream, and floats. Afterward, Howard told the group, "Don't touch any of it. Just leave it on the counter." Without paying a cent for the refreshments, they all returned to the bus. Dudley recalls this as his first demonstration against the system.

Prior to this incident, Dudley had the opportunity to observe the work of Theodore Roosevelt Mason Howard, a black Adventist physician and activist. Howard was born and raised in Mayfield, Kentucky. His inquisitiveness and love of learning caught the attention of two white doctors who had previously attended the Seventh-day Adventist College in Battle Creek, Michigan. The physicians paid for Howard to attend Oakwood Junior College. Later, they sent him to the College of Medical Evangelists in Loma Linda, California, for surgical training.[2] In 1929, Howard established Friendship Hospital in Mount Bijou, Mississippi, to serve the medical needs of blacks.[3] In an effort to arouse the social consciousness of African Americans in the Mississippi Delta, Howard held political rallies on the hospital grounds. Dudley sang at these events. Howard's activities inevitably drew the ire of local whites, who threatened to kill him. These threats caused Howard to move to Chicago, Illinois. There, he spoke out against injustice and discrimination in the Adventist Church. Following a series of personal

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Prophetess of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, and the Story of the Growth and Development of the Seventh-day Adventist Denomination as it Relates to African-Americans (Nashville: Dudley Publishing Services, 1999).; Charles Edward Dudley, Sr., *Thou Who Hath Brought Us: The Story of the Growth and Development of the Seventh-day Adventist Denomination as it Relates to African-Americans* (New York: TEACH Services, Inc., 1997).; Charles Edward Dudley, Sr., *Thou Who Hath Brought Us Thus Far On Our Way: The Development of the Seventh-day Adventist Denomination among African-Americans* (Nashville: Dudley Publications, 2000).

[2] Charles Edward Dudley, Sr., *Thou Who Hast Brought Us Thus Far on Our Way: The Development of the Seventh-day Adventist Denomination among African-Americans* (Nashville: Dudley Publications, 2000), 187.

[3] Ibid., 194.

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conflicts with white church leaders, he left the denomination. Dudley maintains that Howard's effort to improve the lives of impoverished and disenfranchised African Americans in Mississippi influenced him tremendously. In retrospect, Howard's activities cast a favorable impression on Dudley, which inspired him to participate in future efforts aimed at addressing the needs of the black community.

At the 1962 General Conference session in San Francisco, California, Dudley supported the LLC in its demonstrations against discriminatory practices in the Adventist Church. During the session, the group protested the refusal of Mount Vernon Academy, an Adventist school, to admit black students. They also demanded that the General Conference select a black person to be among its ranking officials. As a result of pressure placed on the Church by the LLC, delegates at the session elected an African American to serve as vice president of the General Conference.[4]

As the chief administrator of the South Central Conference, Dudley had the opportunity of working with Leroy Leiske (president of the Southern Union Conference of Seventh-day Adventists from 1964 to 1965). Leiske, a white man, exhibited a strong commitment to integration. When he took office, Leiske told his constituents, "We are going to integrate everything in this union." Some of the powerbrokers in the audience uttered, "You won't be president of this union very long." Leiske integrated Southern Missionary College and authorized the hiring of nonwhite faculty. He also allowed the black presidents of the regional conferences to become voting members of the institution's governing board. As a result, Charles Dudley and Warren Banfield (president of the South Atlantic Conference of Seventh-day Adventists) became the first African American voting members of the Southern Missionary College Board. After a mere thirteen months on the job, the Southern Union Conference removed Leiske from the presidency.

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[4] Ibid., 116. See also Frank W. Hale, Jr., *Angels Watching Over Me: The Autobiography of Dr. Frank W. Hale, Jr.* (Nashville: James C. Winston Publishing Company, 1996), 157-211.

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In 1965, Dudley received reports about an integration struggle involving Adventists in Huntsville, Alabama. That year, two black women from Oakwood College decided to visit one of the denomination's white churches in the city. On a Saturday they went to the Huntsville Central Seventh-day Adventist Church, but its members refused to admit them. On campus, the story of what occurred to the women spread. The following week, a group of Oakwood students attempted to enter the same church. A deacon met them at the door and said, "I have a gun in my pocket that has six bullets for six niggers!" This report strengthened Dudley's resolve to combat discrimination in the Adventist Church.

That same year, Dudley supported members of the South Central Conference who sued the Seventh-day Adventist Church because its white schools refused to admit black students. United States Attorney General Nicholas Katzenbach, and the Meridian, Mississippi, Branch of the NAACP joined in the suit. Katzenbach phoned the General Conference and said, "Eleven years after the *Brown* decision, we understand that you folks are still segregated. Are you going to desegregate, or not? Now, you don't have to desegregate, but we're going to take away all your tax exemptions if you don't." Church officials told Katzenbach they needed time to confer with the Alabama Mississippi Conference (that is, the Gulf States Conference of Seventh-day Adventists).[5] Katzenbach said, "Alright, I'll call you back in two weeks." Once apprised of the situation, the Alabama Mississippi Conference voted to integrate their schools. Two weeks later, Katzenbach called the General Conference and asked, "What did you decide?" They responded, "The Alabama Mississippi Conference decided to desegregate its schools." Katzenbach added, "That's not just for Alabama and Mississippi, but for everything that you Adventists have!" Afterward, Katzenbach authored a statement on nondiscrimination in Adventist schools, which appeared in a periodical of the Southern Union Conference. Later, Dudley told a group of white church officials, "I don't give you any laurels for this

[5] The Alabama Mississippi Conference (also known as the Gulf States Conference of Seventh-day Adventists) is a local conference within the denomination made up of predominantly white churches in Alabama and Mississippi, as well as the following Florida counties: Bay, Calhoun, Escambia, Gulf, Holmes, Jackson, Okaloosa, Santa Rosa, Walton, and Washington. As a result, whites hold most of the leadership positions in this conference.

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statement of policy. The reason I don't give you any laurels for it is because you let the federal government become the Good Samaritan. You didn't do this on your own. You did it because the law said so." Dudley points to this lawsuit as one of the events that helped desegregate the Adventist Church.

In 1968, Dudley participated in the Poor Peoples' Campaign, the brainchild of Martin Luther King, Jr. Following King's assassination, Ralph Abernathy took up the idea and brought it to fruition. During this event, Dudley transported demonstrators from Mississippi, Tennessee, and Virginia to Washington, DC. He also dispatched a medical van from the South Central Conference to provide healthcare for the occupants of Resurrection City, a shantytown setup on the National Mall. Dudley stayed in Resurrection City for six weeks. There, he received an urgent message from the Southern Union Conference demanding his immediate presence at headquarters. When Dudley arrived, the union leader asked him, "What is South Central's van doing in Washington?" They added, "Don't you think that maybe black conferences have lost their usefulness? You are getting into Social Gospel." Dudley replied, "We're in Washington, at Resurrection City, because our people are there. They have come out of Tennessee and Mississippi. We have also sent doctors to take care of these people while they are at Resurrection City."

In the aftermath of the Poor Peoples' Campaign, the federal government gave the South Central Conference fifty thousand dollars to research the condition of African Americans in five Mississippi counties. Dudley recalls the danger Adventists encountered in carrying out this mission. On one occasion, workers from the Conference were in the process of canvassing a home when a group of whites came and surrounded it. One of the workers managed to get out of the house and phone U. S. Senator John Cornelius Stennis of Mississippi. Within half an hour, the crowd dispersed.

During the 1970s, Dudley traveled extensively in Africa. Before long, he learned that white Adventist missionaries were in the practice of telling the Africans that blacks in the United States wanted nothing to do with them. Consequently, some Africans developed a negative attitude toward black Americans. On several occasions, African natives asked him, "Why don't some of you come over to be missionaries? You don't

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want to come!" Dudley told them, "That's not true. We are not allowed to come." He explained that nearly all of the missionaries to Africa were white, because the denomination's leaders set it up that way. However, with the rise of African nationalism, in the 1950s and 1960s, the leaders of African nations began requesting black missionaries. This caused the denomination to alter its discriminatory practices regarding missionary work. Consequently, African Americans got the opportunity to participate in Adventist missionary activities in Africa. Finally, Dudley reassured them that black Adventists genuinely care about their brothers and sisters in Africa.

Dudley's sociopolitical activism came from an acute sense of community awareness. As a child, he learned from his family to appreciate the value of freedom. They also taught him to stand up for his rights, and to be proud of his heritage. Furthermore, observing the sociopolitical activism of Theodore Roosevelt Mason Howard reinforced his social consciousness. The following quote reflects Dudley's affinity for the African American community and his repugnance for racism. "My concept is that you ask the Lord to help you do your thing for your people. The white folk in the Seventh-day Adventist Church are worse than those outside the Church. Racism still exists in the denomination, albeit in a subtle way." This statement shows the prominent role community awareness played in his activism. Likewise, this consciousness also fueled the actions of Charles Joseph, a black Adventist minister of the South Central Conference.

Charles Joseph was born on July 30, 1936, in Centerville, Alabama, to Walash and Avie Joseph. Charles's mother converted to Adventism in 1941. Afterward, her son also became an Adventist. In 1957, Joseph earned a bachelor's degree in chemistry and agriculture from Oakwood College in Huntsville, Alabama. Following graduation, he began advanced studies in chemical engineering at the Illinois Institute of Technology in Chicago. Before long, he withdrew and returned to Oakwood to pursue a career in the ministry. In 1960, Joseph continued his theological training at Andrews University in Berrien Springs, Michigan. Two years later, he obtained a master's degree in theology

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and began working in Mississippi as a minister for the South Central Conference. In 1974, Joseph earned a doctorate in ministry from Vanderbilt University in Nashville, Tennessee. From 1977 to 1986, he served as president of the Lake Region Conference of Seventh-day Adventists.[6]

Joseph's sociopolitical activism began in the late 1950s. While attending graduate school at the Illinois Institute of Technology, he found employment as a bus driver in Chicago's transit system. Soon, the absence of black administrators in the transportation department aggravated Joseph. A local newspaper published his views on the matter. In the article, he argued that a glass ceiling prevented minorities from attaining administrative positions. Consequently, Joseph called on the city to provide equal opportunity for both employment and promotion.

During the 1960s, Joseph joined the Urban League, the NAACP, the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), and CORE. Of these groups, he developed a close working relationship with SNCC and CORE. In fact, Joseph helped organize some of their activities in Mississippi. These included: pressuring housing authorities to desegregate, campaigning for improved childcare facilities, advocating the Head Start Program, and agitating for black voting rights. He also contacted members of Congress to persuade them to support the civil rights initiatives of SNCC and CORE.

In Mississippi, longstanding legislative requirements prevented blacks from exercising their right to vote.[7] Civil rights activists in Greenwood, Mississippi, frequently challenged these measures. Joseph recalls his registration attempt at the Leflore County Courthouse. The clerk asked him to quote various sections of the state constitution from memory. Joseph replied, "Why don't you answer one of those!" His response irritated the officers of the court who had him detained. On being released, Joseph asked for a record

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[6] Charles Joseph, interviewed by author, 29 August 2004, Glenwood, tape recording, home residence, Glenwood, Illinois. Unless noted otherwise, the information provided in this discussion comes from the interview. The Lake Region Conference of Seventh-day Adventists is a regional conference within the denomination made up of predominately black churches in: Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Minnesota, and Wisconsin. As a result, African Americans hold most of the leadership positions in this conference.
[7] John Hope Franklin and Alfred A. Moss, Jr., *From Slavery to Freedom: A History of African Americans*, 8th ed. (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2004), 286, 287.

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of his arrest. They told him, "You weren't in jail, but if you don't leave you will be." Joseph retorted, "Well, I'm going to stay here till I get it." He hoped to make his incarceration a matter of public record, to be challenged in court. Shrewdly, local authorities refrained from making a formal arrest.

Joseph participated in several protest marches. These included: the 1963 March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom, the 1965 march from Selma to Montgomery, the 1966 March Against Fear, and the Poor Peoples' March of 1968. However, the most memorable demonstration in which he took part occurred at the courthouse in Greenwood. During the protest, policemen unleashed dogs from their canine unit on the demonstrators. In the commotion, Joseph rescued a mauled Methodist minister.

In 1964, college students descended on Mississippi for the Freedom Summer Campaign – an initiative designed to increase black participation in civil government.[8] As a local activist, Joseph briefed incoming students and civil rights leaders on the sociopolitical situation in Greenwood, as well as other parts of the Mississippi Delta. In gratitude for their assistance, he invited them to have a meal at his home. On several occasions, Joseph entertained fellow CORE members Michael Schwerner and James Earl Chaney. He also became acquainted with Andrew Goodman, Stokely Carmichael, Hubert Gerold Brown (known as H. Rap Brown), John Lewis, A. Philip Randolph, Ralph Abernathy, Andrew Young, Fred Shuttlesworth, and Martin Luther King, Jr.

As pastor of the Greenwood Seventh-day Adventist Church, Joseph allowed civil rights groups to use the facility for rallies and meetings. Consequently, the building became a target for criminal maleficence. Unable to rely on local law enforcement for protection, Joseph acquired the assistance of the FBI. On Saturdays, agents setup a defensive perimeter around the church. Joseph's consent in permitting civil rights activists to use an Adventist facility alarmed the denomination's white officials. Some advised him to cease holding functions of a political nature in the church. Others warned

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[8] Clayborne Carson, *In Struggle: SNCC and the Black Awakening of the 1960s* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1981; reprint, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1995), 96-131. See also John Lewis and Michael D'Orso, *Walking with the Wind: A Memoir of the Movement* (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1999), 247-258.

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that if he persisted, the government would eventually revoke his tax exempt status. Joseph's employment with the South Central Conference, a black administrative unit, shielded him from direct accountability to white Adventist leaders. Therefore, he dismissed their admonitions.

Charles Joseph's activism prompted opponents to make an attempt on his life. During a trip from Greenwood to Itta Bena, Mississippi, a car pulled up alongside Joseph's vehicle. As the automobile passed, an unknown assailant fired a shot and sped away. The bullet shattered the window, narrowly missing Joseph. When Joseph returned home, he received a phone call. The voice on the other end said, "We missed you nigger but we gonna get you." Joseph's detractors initiated an intense campaign of harassment. At one of his outdoor evangelistic meetings, a crop duster dropped leaflets containing threats. As the frequency and number of death threats increased, Joseph made arrangements for his wife to leave the Mississippi Delta until the situation cooled.

In 1965, Joseph accepted a ministerial position at a black Adventist church in Jackson, Mississippi. Soon, he notified his wife that it was safe for her to return. In Jackson, he acquired a home next door to that of Charles Evers, the brother of slain civil rights activist Medgar Evers. Joseph's employment occasionally required him to leave Jackson to attend meetings of the South Central Conference in Nashville, Tennessee. When he returned from one of these gathering, Joseph learned that an unknown party, drove-by and shot up his home along with that of Charles Evers. Amazingly, no one was hurt. Segregationists targeted the homes of Joseph and Evers, because of their active involvement in the Civil Rights Movement.

Responding to the healthcare needs of Mississippi's impoverished African American communities, Charles Joseph and Earl Moore, a black Adventist minister, organized a fund raising trip called "The Mississippi Story." The men visited Adventist churches in Arizona and California, and reported on the deplorable conditions of some areas of Mississippi. With their donations, the ministers purchased a van, which they outfitted with various medicines and supplies. With the assistance of black healthcare professionals, Joseph and Moore used the vehicle to bring medical services to African Americans in underdeveloped sections of Mississippi. During demonstrations, they

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employed it to provide medical treatment for civil rights activists. In 1967, Joseph and Moore took the ambulance to Detroit, Michigan, to help victims of the riot. The following year, despite objections from white Adventist officials, the South Central Conference utilized the van to provide care for participants in the Poor Peoples' March.

On May 14, 1970, Charles Joseph took part in a demonstration at Mississippi's Jackson State College (elevated to university status in 1974). He recalls standing with local activists and students behind a barricade on Lynch Street. Across from them were a group of city policemen, Mississippi State Troopers, and National Guardsmen. According to Joseph, one of the troopers fired a shotgun. The blast struck James Earl Green, a high school student, in the chest, killing him instantly. As the protestors fled, state troopers and guardsmen fired additional shots, killing Phillip Lafayette Gibbs, a student of Jackson State College. In all, the barrage killed two people and wounded twelve others.[9]

Joseph's willingness to participate in the Civil Rights Movement resulted from personal experiences with discrimination that raised his sociopolitical consciousness. Furthermore, what he witnessed in Mississippi, as a humanitarian and social activist, strengthened his commitment to fight injustice. Joseph's statement substantiates this conclusion. "I agreed that whatever could bring about change in terms of eliminating prejudices, as well as oppressive kinds of arrangements and institutions should be done. I agreed that it needed to be done and that I could not stand along the sideline and watch it happen. I needed to get involved. So I did." This quote indicates that Joseph possessed intimate knowledge of the social, political, and economic problems confronting the African American community. This awareness prompted him to become a participant in the Civil Rights Movement, in spite of the theological and philosophical aspects of Adventism that discouraged political activity. Similarly, community awareness motivated the activism of Earl Moore, another black Adventist minister of the South Central Conference.

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[9] Tim Spofford, *Lynch Street: The May 1970 Slayings at Jackson State College* (Kent: Kent State University Press, 1988).

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Earl Moore was born on February 9, 1925, in South Carolina. Later, Earl's mother moved the family to Brooklyn, New York. In 1955, Moore received his bachelor's from Oakwood College in Huntsville, Alabama. The following year, he earned a master's degree in theology from Emmanuel Missionary College in Berrien Springs, Michigan. After graduation, Moore started working as a minister for the Lake Region Conference of Seventh-day Adventists. Eight years later, he became the head of community services for the South Central Conference. In 1985, Moore earned a master's degree in public health from Loma Linda University in Loma Linda, California.[10]

Moore first became acquainted with Adventism in 1945. After receiving an honorable discharge from the armed forces, at the close of the Second World War, he returned to his family home in Brooklyn, New York. One morning, Moore awoke to find his mother preparing to leave. He asked, "Where are you going?" She answered, "I'm going to church." Inquisitively he replied, "Going to church so early on Saturday morning?" She said, "Yes." His mother had always been a deeply religious person, so her going to church on a Saturday morning did not cause immediate concern. Nevertheless, the following week it happened again. "Mama, it's Saturday morning! Where are you going so early?" She responded, "I'm going to Sabbath School." He inquired, "Sabbath School?" She replied, "Yes, I am a Seventh-day Adventist." Fearful that his mother belonged to some type of cult, Moore became agitated and alarmed. He retorted, "What do you mean you're a Seventh-day Adventist?" She told him, "Son, I don't have time to explain now, because I don't want to be late for Sabbath School. I'll explain it to you when I come back home." Moore woke up his brother. "Did you know mother was a Seventh-day Adventist?" His brother responded in the affirmative. Moore asked him, "What are we going to do about it?" Moore's brother answered, "Nothing, she can do whatever she pleases." Later, Moore informed both his aunt and his Baptist pastor, but they did not appear troubled by the news. In fact, the minister told him, "You know, Saturday is the Sabbath. Your mother is right." This remark infuriated Moore. As

[10] Earl Moore, interviewed by author, 31 May 2004, Decatur, tape recording, home residence, Decatur, Georgia. Unless noted otherwise the information in this discussion comes from the interview.

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promised, when his mother returned she explained her reason for becoming an Adventist. Nevertheless, it failed to put Moore's mind at ease. Subsequently, he searched the *Bible* – looking for evidence to prove his mother wrong. In his research, Moore came to the conclusion that her new beliefs came from Biblical principles. In 1949, he joined the Adventist Church.

As a veteran of the Second World War, Moore qualified for the GI Bill, which subsidized educational expenses of returning soldiers. Though ambivalent about the prospect of attending college, he applied for the grant and received it. In a subsequent interview, a staff officer asked Moore what college he wanted to attend. Familiar with only one Seventh-day Adventist school, he answered, "Oakwood College." Next, the officer asked what he wanted to major in. Having just converted to Adventism Moore felt very spiritual, so he replied, "I want to take the ministerial course." Due to his uncertainty about attending college, Moore did not send the grant to Oakwood for processing. Instead, he placed the forms on his nightstand and forgot about them.

When his mother moved to New Jersey, Moore opted to stay in New York. However, on weekends he provided transportation for her to attend worship services in New York City. One Saturday, without his assistance, she went to church in Brooklyn. Spotting his mother in the congregation, Moore asked why she did not call him to pick her up for church. His mother said that the Lord had impressed her to come and persuade him to attend Oakwood College. This disclosure startled Moore. That evening, he made up his mind to study theology at Oakwood.

Moore's career as a minister and activist began in 1956. As pastor of a Seventh-day Adventist church in Ecorse, Michigan, he joined an ecumenical group that tackled an assortment of racial issues including school desegregation, and diversity in law enforcement. In 1964, Moore became the head of community services for the South Central Conference of Seventh-day Adventists. Soon, he recognized a need for medical care in rural Mississippi. Moore met with Charles Joseph and discussed plans for the creation of a mobile medical unit. Campaigning from New York to California, they collected approximately thirty eight thousand dollars in donations. In 1966, Moore and Joseph purchased a van and equipped it for medical service. The ministers also acquired

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the assistance of volunteer doctors and nurses. In 1968, Moore took the medical unit to Memphis, Tennessee, to provide care for those involved in the garbage workers' strike. After a while, he left and went to Jackson, Mississippi, to have repairs done on the van. In Jackson, Moore stayed at the home of Charles Joseph, who – as noted earlier – lived next door to the brother of Medgar Evers. When word arrived of Martin Luther King, Jr.'s assassination, Moore and Joseph went to the home of Charles Evers. As the three conversed, the phone rang and Charles Evers answered. It was Robert Kennedy. Kennedy asked him to deliver a message on national radio to calm the black community. Evers said, "Well, Bobby I'll do what I can. You work on the hook up and I'll do that. I hope that it'll help, but this is a tragedy that America does not need." Sensing that violence was imminent, Moore left for Memphis the following day to provide medical care for the injured.

During the months of May and June 1968, Moore volunteered his services to the Poor Peoples' Campaign. When the Poor People's March came through Nashville, Tennessee, he contacted James Bevel. Moore told him he had a medical van for use. Bevel welcomed the assistance. Subsequently, Moore accompanied the demonstrators from Tennessee to the District of Columbia. There, he remained for six weeks providing medical services to the inhabitants of Resurrection City.

In Washington, DC, Earl Moore and Charles Dudley received a telegram from the Southern Union Conference demanding they return to headquarters to explain their activities in the Poor Peoples' Campaign. Soon, they flew to Atlanta, Georgia, to meet with Adventist officials. The presidents of the denomination's white conferences told them, "You know, brethren we're here because the whites have noticed your van up in Resurrection City. The white brethren are wandering if the blacks have lost their way." At that point, Dudley, president of the South Central Conference, said, "No we've just found our way. For a long time black Adventists have not become involved in sociopolitical issues, because the white brethren act as if anything we do to alleviate poverty and discrimination is against Church policy." As soon as Dudley concluded his remarks, Moore said, "May I answer the question? You asked why we are at Resurrection City. We are there because we are representing our people, our people from Marks,

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Mississippi, and other places of poverty. You wouldn't help them. You discriminated against them. So we are addressing the needs of our people." He continued. "You are asking about the van being there. That is our van! That came from black money! No white money is in that van! We solicited from black constituents, and we purchased it and used it. And we are using it for black people." After giving their explanations, Moore and Dudley returned to Washington, DC, and resumed their work in assisting the people of Resurrection City.

During the 1960s, Moore became a member of the NAACP and the SCLC. He also provided financial support to the Urban League. While living in Nashville, Tennessee, Moore participated in the sit-ins organized by SNCC. In 1983, he joined the Concerned Black Clergy of Atlanta, Georgia. For ten years Moore served as vice president of the organization, which involved itself in sociopolitical issues affecting the city's African American community.

In 1999, two black Adventists from the Atlanta area requested a meeting with Moore. Moore asked, "What seems to be the problem?" They said, "Well, we need some guidance. We work at a local aircraft company, and they are discriminating against us. We want to know how we can get some help." Surprised by the allegation, Moore replied, "I hear that is one of the highest paying jobs in this community, and I understand it's a pretty good job." They replied, "Yes, it pays well, but it discriminates in promotions and it discriminates in pay and in so many other ways." Moore suggested that they consult Joseph Echols Lowery (a former president of the SCLC). Lowery heard the arguments of the disgruntled employees and advised them to sue for discrimination in the workplace. Moore assisted them in obtaining legal counsel. Together they brought the case to the attention of the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, who found merit in their cause. Nevertheless, the court threw the case out – leaving the plaintiffs with no recourse. Moore maintains that the presiding judge predetermined not to grant anymore class action suits to blacks. Consequently, he made sure that the case did not advance.

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Two years later, Moore noticed an article in the newspaper announcing the hiring of an African American as vice president of operations for the aircraft manufacturer. Later, he learned that the company hired the executive to improve its standing in the African American community given the legal action of the black Adventist employees. Subsequently, Moore called the new administrator and to offered his congratulations. Soon, he arranged a meeting between the executive and some of Atlanta's black leaders. At the gathering, a representative to the Georgia legislature said, "I understand that on yesterday there was a black woman who had her mouth taped with duct tape by a white supervisor. Did you hear about that?" The company's vice president responded, "Yes, I did." The representative replied, "Well, what are you going to do about it?" The administrator remarked, "Nothing." In astonishment, the assembly refrained, "Nothing!" Sensing their unease, the executive said, "Well, the reason why I'm not going to do anything is because I have already fired him." He continued. "When I fired him, a bunch of his cronies came up to me wanting to know why I had fired him. Was it because he had done this to a black woman? I told them no. If he had done it to a white woman, I would have fired him." His response delighted the audience.

Soon, the black Adventists who brought the suit told Moore about the improvement in race relations at the company, particularly in the areas of hiring and promotions. Shortly thereafter, the vice president asked Moore and Lowery to speak with the company's chief executive officer about doing something for the two Adventist personnel. After the meeting, the workers received compensation.

As with many of his predecessors and contemporaries, Earl Moore's humanitarian efforts and sociopolitical involvement came from a strong sense of community awareness. This consciousness grew when he took the helm of the Community Services Department for the South Central Conference. Moore's work among impoverished African Americans in Mississippi, and his contact with black Adventist parishioners brought the needs of the community to the forefront of his consciousness. These necessities included: medical care, jobs, and political

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representation. Furthermore, like other black veterans, Moore's experience in the Second World War deepened his commitment to combating injustice at home. Together, these factors overruled philosophical and theological aspects of Adventism that discouraged sociopolitical activity.

In summary, this chapter related the assistance black Adventist ministers of the South Central Conference gave to the Civil Rights Movement. It also documented the opposition they encountered because of their efforts, many of which were successful. This chapter, like the preceding one, argued that a deepening sense of community awareness resulting from personal experiences with racism, family socialization, and contact with African American parishioners motivated these black Adventist ministers to participate in the political process.

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CHAPTER 6
MINISTERIAL ACTIVISM IN THE SOUTH ATLANTIC AND GENERAL CONFERENCES

This chapter discusses the contributions black Adventist ministers associated with the South Atlantic and General Conferences made to the Civil Rights Movement. In relating the experiences of Warren Banfield and Franklin Hill (both of the South Atlantic Conference) it shows the length to which some white Adventists went to oppose their political activities. The chapter also examines the efforts of Edward Earl Cleveland to bring about social change as an official of the Southern Union and General Conferences. As in previous chapters, this one argues that community solidarity motivated the activism of these ministers.

Warren St. Claire Banfield, Jr., was born on April 6, 1922, in Charleston, West Virginia, to black Seventh-day Adventist parents. In 1943, he graduated from Oakwood Junior College in Huntsville, Alabama. Banfield continued his studies at Pacific Union College in Angwin, California, where in 1946 he earned a bachelor's degree in theology. Three years later, he pursued advanced studies at the Adventist Theological Seminary in Washington, DC. In 1951, following his ordination, Banfield became a minister in the South Atlantic Conference of Seventh-day Adventists. From 1956 to 1962, he pastored the Mount Calvary Seventh-day Adventist Church in Tampa, Florida. During his tenure, Banfield took time to address the social, economic, and political needs of the city's black community. In 1957 and 1958, he served as president of the Tampa Branch of the NAACP. Banfield also chaired the Industrial Relations Committee of the Tampa Urban League, which had the responsibility of locating employment opportunities for the city's

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black residents. In recognition of his dedicated service to the African American community, he received the NAACP's Frontiers of America Community Service Award in 1959 and 1963. In 1962, Banfield moved to Atlanta, Georgia. There, he served as president of the South Atlantic Conference until 1971. From 1971 to 1976, Banfield worked as the associate secretary of the Southern Union Conference of Seventh-day Adventists.[1] Afterward, he helped establish the Human Relations Department for the North American Division – dedicated to solving problems of race, class, and gender in the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

In Tampa, Banfield became involved in civil rights organizations. Soon, his skills as a leader and administrator caught the attention of the black community. When the president of the Tampa NAACP resigned, Banfield assisted in the search for a replacement. Before one could be found, he left to attend a meeting in another city. In his absence, the city's black Interdenominational Ministerial Alliance recommended that Banfield become the next leader of the Tampa NAACP. Members of the Tampa Branch accepted the nomination and voted on it. On his return, Banfield learned that the Tampa NAACP elected him to fill the presidential vacancy. Initially, he hesitated to take the job, because of the ramifications it posed to his relationship with the Seventh-day Adventist Church. When Banfield consulted some of his Adventist colleagues about the possibility of serving as president of an NAACP branch, they all cautioned him against it. They argued that accepting a position of leadership in the NAACP jeopardized the wellbeing of the Church, as well as the safety of its members. Furthermore, they told him that the denomination did not believe in getting involved in sociopolitical activity. Banfield found these reasons disagreeable, so he accepted the presidency.

As a local leader of the NAACP, Banfield kept the city's political power structure informed of the needs of the black community. In addition, he set the city's civil rights agenda, organized local demonstrations, raised funds, and planned community meetings. Banfield also brought in guest speakers to energize the organization. He recalls the time

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[1] Warren S. Banfield, Jr., interviewed by author, 26 May 2004, Huntsville, tape recording, home residence, Huntsville, Alabama. Unless noted otherwise, the information in this discussion comes from the interview. See also Dwain Neilson Esmond, "In the Crossfire: The Ministry of Warren S. Banfield," *Adventist Review* 179, no. 6 (February 2002): 22.

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Adam Clayton Powell, Jr., the black congressman and pastor of Harlem's famous Abyssinian Baptist Church, accepted his invitation to speak. Powell spoke on nearly all the social issues confronting blacks throughout North America. He also talked at length about his civil rights experiences in New York City. Moreover, Powell stressed the importance of action. He challenged them not to be complacent or submissive. Banfield maintains that Powell gave them strategies and techniques to get out of the sociopolitical quagmire in which they found themselves.

During Banfield's tenure as NAACP president, a number of white Adventists took exception to his activities. They initiated a letter writing campaign to the denomination's headquarters. These letters contained charges that Banfield's activism stigmatized the reputation of the Adventist Church, which made it difficult to evangelize. Reuben Figuhr, president of the General Conference, attached a message to the letters and forwarded them to John Wagner, Sr., president of the South Atlantic Conference of Seventh-day Adventists. The communication instructed Wagner to "Go down there and see what you can do with that young man Banfield." After looking through the letters, Wagner placed them in a package and sent it to Banfield with a note that read: "Keep up the good work!" Wagner's show of support left an indelible impression. Consequently, Banfield maintains that the security the black conferences provided allowed him to remain in the ministry.

Reflecting on the situation, Banfield contends that other denominations moved ahead so rapidly in trying to bring down racial barriers that Adventists "began to stick out like a sore thumb." He also points out that conservatives in the denomination made it difficult for the Adventist Church to make changes as quickly as it needed. When Banfield took the helm of the South Atlantic Conference, he became privy to the sentiments of high ranking Adventist officials. When Southern Missionary College began hiring black faculty, a white administrator told him, "You know we wouldn't have voluntarily integrated this college. The Holy Ghost didn't make us do this. We were not responding to the Holy Spirit. We were responding to political pressure. If the government wouldn't have threatened to cut off our accreditation, or funding we would have never integrated this school as soon as we did."

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In the 1970s, Banfield suggested that the North American Division create a department to address social problems in the Adventist Church. Officials in the denomination agreed, and the Office of Human Relations for the North American Division came into being with Banfield as its director. Under his guidance, the Office of Human Relations put forward a sixteen point plan to address matters of race in the Church.[2] To increase interracial dialogue, the plan proposed the exchanging of pulpits, (that is, black ministers preaching in white churches and vice versa). It also promoted opportunities for minority leadership in church administration, particularly on the union conference level. Furthermore, it aimed to break down barriers that preventing nonwhites from attending certain Adventist schools. Subsequently, African Americans and Hispanics increasingly found employment in the denomination's educational system, and the practice of separating students based on ethnicity ceased.[3] As the head of Human Relations for the North American Division, Banfield sat on the committee that formulated and approved the denomination's doctrinal manifesto – *The 27 Fundamental Beliefs of the Seventh-day Adventist Church*. During their deliberations, Banfield pointed out that the book did not contain a statement dealing with Christian brotherhood or race relations. The committee made the necessary changes.

In the 1970s, black Adventists continued to express dismay at the lack of minority representation in the higher ranks of the Church. As a result, some African American leaders, like Edward Earl Cleveland and Calvin Bradford Rock, began to press for the creation of black-controlled union conferences within the denomination's administrative system. Banfield sided with those that opposed the formation of black or regional union conferences. His stance came from the belief that the Civil Rights Movement was a fight for integration. As a result, he viewed the establishment of black union conferences as a continuation of "separate but unequal," and a departure from the vision of Martin Luther

[2] Esmond, "In the Crossfire," 23.
[3] Ibid., 24.

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King, Jr. Furthermore, he reasoned that the plentitude of union conferences already in existence would inevitably provide job opportunities for blacks, as the ethnic diversity of the North American Division increased. In retrospect, Banfield thought that the union conference level was the ideal place for black Adventists to learn how to work with other groups.

Banfield's commitment to integration and social justice came from his personal experiences with racism. When visiting white Adventist churches, he had to sit on the back row or in the balcony. At the close of an evangelistic series, Banfield asked one of the denomination's white churches if he could use their baptistery to baptize converts from the African American community. The church refused his request because they did not want blacks to defile their place of worship. Some of the churches Banfield pastored did not have schools of their own, so occasionally he sent the black children to white Adventist academies. When the students arrived at these institutions, administrators turned them away. Banfield remembers attending segregated meetings of the Southern Union Conference. At these sessions, African American pastors were not allowed to stay at the same hotels as white ministers. Later, Banfield learned that the hotels did not stipulate this policy. A manager from one of the establishments told him that the denomination requested that blacks stay at a separate facility.

Banfield maintains that these and other encounters with discrimination, as well as the detrimental impact of racism on the psyche of his parishioners, motivated him to become a civil rights activist. Overall, these experiences enhanced Banfield's community awareness – to the degree that it superseded aspects of Adventism that discouraged political activity. In a similar manner, community awareness sparked the sociopolitical consciousness of Franklin Hill, a black Adventist minister of the South Atlantic Conference.

Franklin Hill II was born on March 1, 1923, in Chattanooga, Tennessee, to Franklin and Flora Lee Hill. In 1929, Flora converted to Adventism. Afterward, her son also became an Adventist. From 1942 to 1946, Hill studied at Oakwood College in Huntsville, Alabama, where he received a bachelor's degree in theology. After

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graduating, he became a minister in the South Atlantic Conference of Seventh-day Adventists. During his career, Hill pastored black Adventist churches in: Florida, North Carolina, Georgia, Texas, Tennessee, and Wisconsin.[4]

In 1946, Hill joined the black Interdenominational Ministerial Alliance of St. Augustine, Florida. Apart from providing a forum for the dissemination of ministerial ethics, the organization worked to unite the African American community behind programs designed to correct social and political problems such as police brutality, segregated schools, and the disenfranchisement of blacks. At its meetings, the Alliance provided opportunities for political candidates to speak on issues relevant to African Americans. Furthermore, the group used its political leverage to persuade the city's politicians to keep promises made to black residents.

In the early 1960s, Hill became the pastor of Savannah, Georgia's First Seventh-day Adventist Church. On joining the city's black Interdenominational Ministerial Alliance, his sociopolitical involvement intensified. Hill and his family took part in protest marches and sit-ins. Over the objections of white Adventist leaders, he gave permission for civil rights groups to hold meetings in the church. In 1963, Hill allowed Martin Luther King, Jr. to conduct a rally at Savannah's First Seventh-day Adventist Church. His decision is notable, because other denominations – fearing retaliation – refused to let King use their facilities for the mass meeting.

That same year, Hill became a member of Savannah's NAACP. Before long, he became personally acquainted with Hosea Williams. As vice-president of the Savannah, Georgia, Branch of the NAACP, Williams placed voter registration and citizenship education at the top of the organization's agenda.[5] He also adopted King's strategy of nonviolent direct action.[6] Consequently, Hosea organized the sit-ins and protest marches in which Hill participated. On joining the SCLC staff in 1963, Williams made the arrangement for King to speak at the Adventist church in Savannah. In bringing King to Savannah, Williams hoped to energize the city's Civil Rights Movement.

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[4] Franklin Hill II, interviewed by author, 18 May 2004, Lafayette, tape recording, home residence, Lafayette, Indiana. Unless noted otherwise, the information in this discussion comes from the interview.
[5] Aldon D. Morris, *The Origins of the Civil Rights Movement: Black Communities Organizing for Change* (New York: The Free Press, 1984), 154-155.
[6] Ibid, 155.

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According to Hill, the denomination's conservative views discouraged other black Adventists in Savannah from taking part in the Civil Rights Movement. Furthermore, the white leadership of the Adventist Church warned its black ministers not to become involved in political affairs. As a result, Hill and other socially progressive Adventists felt isolated.

Hill's activism came from community awareness nurtured in groups like the Interdenominational Ministerial Alliance and the NAACP. These organizations promoted sociopolitical consciousness. Consequently, Hill came to support civil rights initiatives designed to help the African American community. For him, these community based programs took precedence over ideological and theological aspects of Adventism that discouraged political activity. Likewise, community consciousness motivated the social activism of Edward Earl Cleveland.

Edward Earl Cleveland was born on March 11, 1921, in Huntsville, Alabama, to William and Eunice Cleveland (black Seventh-day Adventists). In 1939, he began studies at Oakwood Junior College in Huntsville, Alabama. Two years later, Cleveland graduated and entered the ministry – specializing in evangelistic outreach. In 1950, the Southern Union Conference selected him to join its Department of Evangelism. Four years later, Cleveland became the first African American appointed to an office in the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists. There, he worked for twenty three years as the associate director of the General Conference Ministerial Association. Apart from administrative duties, Cleveland taught religion at Oakwood College. As a faculty member, he established a campus chapter of the NAACP.[7] Cleveland is the recipient of various accolades. In 1989, the governor of Alabama cited him as the state's most

[7] Edward Earl Cleveland, interviewed by author, 25 May 2004, Huntsville, tape recording, home residence, Huntsville, Alabama. See also E. E. Cleveland, *Let the Church Roll On: An Autobiography* (Nampa: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1997), 112.

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distinguished black clergyman.[8] Four years later, Morehouse College in Atlanta, Georgia, inducted Cleveland into its prestigious Martin Luther King, Jr. Board of Preachers.[9] In 2001, Alabama Congressman Robert Cramer, Jr. paid tribute to him in the United States House of Representatives.[10]

Early in life, Cleveland's parents instilled in him the importance of community. William Cleveland, a veteran of the First World War, took his son to meetings of the Negro Voters' League. There, Edward heard speeches – advocating black participation in the political process.[11] During the years of the Great Depression, his father gathered perishable items from various grocery stores and distributed them in African American neighborhoods. Frequently, the Clevelands took in stranded black travelers and the destitute. As a result, the family became known in the community for their charity and hospitality.[12] William also instructed his children not to ride segregated buses and streetcars. Consequently, Edward and his siblings walked a total of fifteen miles round trip to and from school.[13] Through these lessons, Edward Earl Cleveland became cognizant of the socioeconomic and political needs of the black community.

On entering the ministry, Cleveland's involvement in social reform increased. In 1943, he attended an Adventist workers' meeting in Charlotte, North Carolina. At the gathering, the white pastors sat on one side of the church while the blacks sat on the other. When the time came for them to report on their local congregations, only white ministers spoke. This bothered Cleveland tremendously, so he decided to do something about it. At the next meeting, he sat with the whites and delivered a report. His actions shocked the assembly.[14]

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[8] Cleveland, *Let the Church Roll On*, 104.
[9] Ibid., 103, 104.
[10] "Tribute to Elder Edward Earl Cleveland of Oakwood College – Hon. Robert E. (Bud) Cramer, Jr. (Extension of Remarks – February 07, 2001) (Washington, DC: Library of Congress, 2001, accessed 5 December 2005); available from http://thomas.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/z?r107:E07FE1-0013; Internet.
[11] Edward Earl Cleveland, interviewed by author, 25 May 2004, Huntsville, tape recording, home residence, Huntsville, Alabama. See also Cleveland, *Let the Church Roll On*, 10-12.
[12] Cleveland, *Let the Church Roll On*, 16.
[13] Ibid., 15.
[14] Ibid., 55, 56.

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The following year, a number of black Adventists called on the denomination to integrate its facilities immediately. This demand arose when Lucille Byard, a black Adventist woman, died because one of the denomination's white hospitals refused to admit her for medical treatment. Instead of desegregating its institutions, white Adventist leaders decided to create black regional conferences. The first ones established were the Lake Region Conference of Seventh-day Adventists based in Chicago and the Northeastern Conference of Seventh-day Adventists based in New York City. Eventually, the number of black regional conferences expanded to nine. Although the denomination refused to integrate, some blacks were happy to have their own conferences. For years, black Adventist leaders desired a larger role in the administration of the Church. With the creation of these conferences, African Americans had a voice in how the denomination operated in their communities. It also provided them new job opportunities.[15] For the first time, blacks could aspire to be conference presidents, treasurers, and secretaries in the Adventist Church.

On becoming an official of the Southern Union Conference, Cleveland took part in a committee meeting on the campus of Southern Missionary College in Collegedale, Tennessee. He recalls being one of only seven blacks in attendance. Around noon, the president of the Southern Union Conference announced that it was time for everyone to line up and make their way to the cafeteria. Cleveland got in line. Looking around, he noticed that the other African Americans remained seated. As a new addition to the committee, Cleveland did not know that blacks were not allowed in the dining hall. His white colleagues began whispering. Soon, Cleveland's action caught the attention of the president. With a stern expression on his face, he approached. Cleveland was now fully

[15] Edward Earl Cleveland, interviewed by author, 25 May 2004, Huntsville, tape recording, home residence, Huntsville, Alabama. See also Charles Edward Dudley, Sr., *Thou Who Hast Brought Us Thus Far On Our Way: The Development of the Seventh-day Adventist Denomination among African-Americans* (Nashville: Dudley Publications, 2000), 159.

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aware of the issue and decided not to move. Face to face, the two stared at each other without saying word. At last, the president ordered the other blacks to get in line. This marked the first time African Americans dined in the cafeteria at Southern Missionary College. [16]

On joining the staff of the General Conference in 1954, Cleveland received an invitation to speak during a workers' meeting at the Florida Hospital, an Adventist institution in Orlando. Delighted at the prospect of conducting a three-day seminar, he accepted. With his wife and children, Cleveland drove to Orlando. After checking his family into a motel, he proceeded to the hospital's auditorium. Three hours into his talk, Cleveland paused and told the audience, "I will have to cut this lecture short because I got to go and get my wife and kids and come back here to have dinner with you in the cafeteria." A high ranking Adventist official sprang to his feet and left the room. He did not reenter until the presentation was concluded. As the assembly exited, the officer came in and pulled Cleveland aside. "Earl, I got a problem." Cleveland asked, "What's this?" He said, "The manager of the hospital says if you bring your family he will close the cafeteria. Earl, I have two more days of workers' meetings. What if this gets out among the workers? What would that do? Wouldn't it poison the atmosphere? Can't we work something out?" Cleveland inquired, "Something like what?" He replied, "If you take your family somewhere else to eat, by sunrise tomorrow this manager will be out of a job. I will bring a man from New York, and we will totally desegregate this hospital." Cleveland took him at his word and they shook hands. The next day, church officials dismissed the hospital's administrator and instituted a program to integrate the entire facility.[17]

In 1955, Cleveland went to East Africa to conduct an aggressive evangelistic campaign. The General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists noticed that its congregations in East Africa consisted mainly of impoverished Africans from the interior. Conversely, Anglican and Catholic churches in the region had a considerable number of wealthy, educated Africans. Eventually, the General Conference dispatched one of its

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[16] Cleveland, *Let the Church Roll On*, 27-29.
[17] Edward Earl Cleveland, interviewed by author, 25 May 2004, Huntsville, tape recording, home residence, Huntsville, Alabama. See also Cleveland, *Let the Church Roll On*, 29.

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most talented African American evangelists to Kampala, Uganda, to increase the denomination's urban membership. In Kampala, Cleveland conducted an evangelistic series that attracted potential converts. Soon, the East Africa Division learned that he was in the process of preparing thirty-five native Africans for baptism.[18] This raised concern among the Division's white officials who felt that black Africans lacked the mental sophistication to grasp the finer points of Adventist theology. Eventually, the president of the East Africa Division flew to Kampala to discuss the situation with Cleveland. "Earl, I'm sure you'll find this disappointing, but you know there is a policy that we put the people in classes and give them time to absorb more fully what you have taught. You understand that this is division policy?" Cleveland replied, "I understand." The president continued. "And you understand that you cannot baptize them under division policy?" Again he said, "I understand." Satisfied, the president got back on the plane and left. One of the student missionaries asked, "Teacher, are you going to baptize the people?" Cleveland answered, "Did the sun rise this morning?" Elated, the missionary exclaimed, "I am so happy, they don't know what we have here. These are the first city dwelling converts from this area!"

Before long, the number of educated Adventists in Uganda grew, and the revenue collected from the church in Kampala steadily increased. These events prompted the East Africa Division to change its baptismal policy. Within months, the General Conference asked Cleveland to deliver a report on the work in East Africa. Following the presentation, the President of the General Conference Reuben Figuhr said, "Brother Cleveland, we've been anxious to see how this would turn out." Turning to the audience, he continued, "Brother Cleveland baptized a hundred and eight city Africans – tithe paying Africans!" Addressing Cleveland, he said, "Good work, you have revolutionized evangelism in East Africa."[19]

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[18] The East Africa Division is currently known as the East-Central Africa Division of Seventh-day Adventists. The territory of the East-Central Africa Division is comprised of the following: Burundi, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, Rwanda, Tanzania, and Uganda. Before the onset of African nationalism in the mid 1950s, whites held most of the leadership positions in this division.

[19] Edward Earl Cleveland, interviewed by author, 25 May 2004, Huntsville, tape recording, home residence, Huntsville, Alabama.

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Apart from holding a visiting professorship at Oakwood College, Cleveland headed the Department of Church Missions, which oversaw the student missionary program. In this capacity, he occasionally dealt with racial problems. Once, a Japanese church official, on the recommendation of a white counterpart, requested that the denomination stop sending black student missionaries to Japan. When informed of the situation, Cleveland protested. Before long, the General Conference sent a memorandum to its Asian affiliates informing them that unless they accept all students none would be sent. The Japanese withdrew their request. The other case involved the white director of an Adventist mission in Nepal, who rejected the application of an African American student wanting to do missionary work there. In the rejection letter, the director wrote that the Nepalese shunned blacks because they were incompatible with their culture. After an inquiry, Cleveland learned that the government of Nepal did not advocate, condone, or practice such a policy. Subsequently, he sent a letter to the Southern Asia Division calling for the expulsion of the mission director. They complied. [20]

Following Martin Luther King, Jr.'s assassination on April 4, 1968, violence erupted in many cities across the United States. Arriving in Washington, DC, Cleveland found it ablaze. Soon, he learned that there were food shortages in the city. With the assistance of John Trusty, a black Adventist, Cleveland turned the city's First Seventh-day Adventist Church into a food distribution center, where volunteers – under their direction – fed thousands of hapless persons during the crisis.[21]

Afterward, Cleveland took part in the Poor Peoples' Campaign. In fact, he sat on the committee responsible for the planning of Resurrection City.[22] In one of the meetings, the chairperson asked Cleveland to take charge of feeding of the demonstrators. Since his employment with the Church required him to travel frequently, Cleveland declined. However, he promised to provide the committee with fifteen thousand dollars to help cover food expenses. Cleveland also pledged to provide blankets and cots for the residents of Resurrection City. Relying on his contacts in the General Conference, he

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[20] Cleveland, *Let the Church Roll On*, 112.
[21] Ibid., 45.
[22] Edward Earl Cleveland, interviewed by author, 25 May 2004, Huntsville, tape recording, home residence, Huntsville, Alabama. See also Stephen Chavez, "A Life in the Spotlight," *Adventist Review* 175, no. 5 (February 1999): 11.; Cleveland, *Let the Church Roll On*, 45.

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knew that obtaining the money would not be difficult. After the meeting, Cleveland went to see Robert Pierson (president of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists from 1966 to 1979) to request the money and supplies.[23] Pierson granted his request and also gave him authorization to use one of the denomination's eighteen wheeler trucks to transport the cots and blankets. Through Cleveland's effort the demonstrators at Resurrection City received the food, facilities, and supplies they needed.[24] At the close of the Poor Peoples' Campaign, Cleveland and Walter Fordham, another black Adventist minister, arranged to have the leftover food distributed in impoverished areas of the South. The Adventist Church paid the bill.[25]

In the 1970s, Cleveland and Calvin Rock spearheaded a movement for the creation of black union conferences in the Seventh-day Adventist Church.[26] This corresponded with the Black Power Movement. Advocates of the Movement emphasized the need for African Americans to choose their own leaders, organized their own programs, controlled their own resources, and established their own institutions in order to free themselves from white oppression.[27] Similarly, Cleveland believed that black Adventists needed more control over the spending of their monetary contributions.[28] By establishing black, or regional, union conferences the white monopoly on financial management would end – thereby releasing funds to go into programs benefiting the African American community.[29] Although the movement did not succeed in creating black union conferences, it provoked change within existing administrative units.[30]

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[23] Chavez, "A Life in the Spotlight," 11.
[24] Ibid. See also Cleveland, *Let the Church Roll On*, 45.
[25] Cleveland, *Let the Church Roll On*, 45.
[26] Edward Earl Cleveland, interviewed by author, 25 May 2004, Huntsville, tape recording, home residence, Huntsville. See also Zdravko Plantak, *The Silent Church: Human Rights and Adventist Social Ethics* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1998), 81.; Cleveland, *Let the Church Roll On*, 63.
[27] Mark L. Chapman, *Christianity on Trial: African-American Religious Thought Before and After Black Power* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1996), 74.
[28] Edward Earl Cleveland, interviewed by author, 25 May 2004, Huntsville, tape recording, home residence, Huntsville, Alabama.
[29] Ibid. See also Cleveland, *Let the Church Roll On*, 63.; Rodger L. Dudley and Edwin I. Hernandez, *Citizens of Two Worlds: Religion and Politics among American Seventh-day Adventists* (Berrien Springs: Andrews University Press, 1992), 288.; Plantak, *The Silent Church*, 81. Although blacks exercised some authority in their own regional conferences, union conferences (dominated by whites) possessed greater control over the allocation of the denomination's resources.
[30] Edward Earl Cleveland, interviewed by author, 25 May 2004, Huntsville, tape recording, home residence, Huntsville, Alabama. See also Cleveland, *Let the Church Roll On*, 63, 64.

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Gradually, African Americans rose to authoritative positions in the denomination's union conferences. Cleveland maintains that this development would not have occurred if the movement for separate union conferences had not taken place.[31]

In the 1980s, Cleveland served on the General Conference Human Relations Committee.[32] Consequently, he managed to get the Adventist Church to reexamine the issue of mixed-race marriages. In Canada, a white Adventist minister agreed to officiate at the marriage of a black woman to a white man. However, at the last moment, he refused. The incident, reported in local papers, caused uproar. Cleveland obtained the article and showed it to Neal Wilson, Jr. (president of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists from 1979 to 1990). Wilson called a meeting of the Human Relations Committee. The group voted to revoke the credentials of any minister refusing to marry Adventist couples composed of persons from different races.[33]

In retrospect, Cleveland's activism came from familial lessons in community awareness. Later on, contact with African American parishioners who shared concerns regarding discrimination in the Adventist Church and secular society enhanced his sociopolitical consciousness. Consequently, for Cleveland community-based issues such as racial discrimination, the control of black resources, and representation took priority over aspects of Adventism that discouraged political involvement.

This chapter discussed the contributions black Adventist ministers associated with the South Atlantic and General Conferences made to the Civil Rights Movement. In narrating the experiences of Warren Banfield and Franklin Hill, it showed the length to which some persons in the denomination worked to oppose their political activities. The chapter also examined Edward Earl Cleveland's efforts to bring about social change as an official of the Southern Union and General Conferences. As in previous chapters, this one argued that community awareness motivated the activism of these ministers.

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[31] Ibid.

[32] Edward Earl Cleveland, interviewed by author, 25 May 2004, Huntsville, tape recording, home residence, Huntsville. See also Cleveland, *Let the Church Roll On*, 58.; Chavez, "A Life in the Spotlight," 11.

[33] Edward Earl Cleveland, interviewed by author, 25 May 2004, Huntsville, tape recording, home residence, Huntsville.

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CONCLUSION

Historical hindsight teaches us that conflicts between church and state are not new. Throughout the Middle Ages, for example, kings and popes fought over who had the final say over the lives of Europeans in Christendom. In the Renaissance, the Reformation was as much about politics as it was about religion. Furthermore, in the nineteenth century, Christian missionaries, of various denominations, grappled with their consciousness over whom they owed their first loyalty: to the Africans among whom they proselytized or to their national governments in Europe, who colonized Africa and exploited the labor of its peoples in the name of capital gain. Thus, irony is not lost on the fact that most Seventh-day Adventists, regardless of ethnicity, refused to participate in civil rights politics. The denomination's non-participatory politics came from theological and ideological views in Adventism that discouraged sociopolitical activism. These include: 1. premillennialism, the belief that the Second Coming of Christ takes place before the millennium; 2. apocalyptic historical eschatology, a doctrine concerning the Second Coming of Christ and the end of the world; 3. sectarian ecclesiology, a doctrine that Christians are not to conform to the secular world; 4. the radical deterministic doctrine of God, a doctrine that assents that God takes a proactive role in human affairs; 5. the free-will image of man/occasionalism, a belief in the existence of a Divine plan for humanity; 6. evangelism, a belief in disseminating the gospel for the salvation of souls; 7. individualism, a belief in the primacy of the individual over collective society; 8. church interest and pragmatism, processes of decision-making in which one seeks to advance his or her own cause; 9. conservatism, a belief in maintaining the status quo; 10. Christian fundamentalism, a belief in the infallibility of the *Bible* and its relevancy in modern

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society. These principles conflicted with popular views within the Civil Rights Movement such as: 1. the Social Gospel, a doctrine that Christians – through alleviating the suffering of the unfortunate – help to establishment God's Kingdom on Earth; 2. ecumenism, a belief in establishing or promoting unity among churches/religions; 3. Gandhi's experimental theology, a belief system aimed at obtaining absolute truth and self-purification, which drew heavily on Eastern religions like Hinduism and Buddhism. Adventist leaders frequently emphasized these differences to oppose the denomination's entry into the Civil Rights Movement.

Ellen Gould Harmon White (cofounder of the Seventh-day Adventists Church) advocated racial equality, and reparations for African Americans. However, with the rise of Jim Crow segregation and increased violence toward blacks at the turn of the century, she modified her policy on race relations. Consequently, White advised African Americans not to seek equality with whites, and counseled Adventist missionaries to work among their own ethnic groups. Furthermore, she supported the construction of separate schools and worship facilities for blacks. White gave this advice in the hope of avoiding violent confrontations with prejudiced whites – like the one that occurred in 1899 at the Adventist Mission in Calmar, Mississippi.

In many ways, White's strategy in dealing with Jim Crow mirrors that of Katharine Drexel – known for advocating black rights. Both supported the establishment of black educational facilities, which Southern whites tolerated more than other institutions for the improvement of African Americans. Furthermore, both contributed to the construction of black churches, which allowed African Americans to exercise their right to worship God in a dignified manner – free of harassment. In summary, White and Drexel instituted these policies to avoid conflicts in the racial charged atmosphere of the American South. Thus, albeit inadvertently, the campaign for racial equality, in the context of religious culture, was an ecumenical one.

The difference between Adventist and Catholic approaches to sociopolitical issues lies in the fact that Adventism is a product of American society and culture. Accordingly, it adopted the American ideal of the separation of church and state. As a result, the Adventist Church has always felt uneasy when addressing political problems. In contrast,

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the Roman Catholic Church as a centralized conglomerate of ecclesiastical and state power, based in Vatican City, has no qualms in voicing its opinion on sociopolitical matters. For this reason, Catholicism, increasingly in the twentieth century, is frequently on the forefront of movements involving social and ethical problems with political consequences.

Community awareness played a vital role in motivating black Adventists participation in civil rights politics. Some gained this consciousness through personal experiences with racism. For instance, a policy of segregation at Emmanuel Missionary College, an Adventist institution, prevented Alfonzo Greene and his family from moving into the school's "whites only" trailer park.[1] In Alabama, white members of the Huntsville Central Church refused to allow Greene and a group of black Oakwood students to worship in their facility.[2] When Frank Hale inquired about Adelphian Academy, an Adventist boarding school, the institution's administrator told him that they had a quota – restricting the number of black students.[3] Like Greene, Charles Dudley encountered segregation as a student at Emmanuel Missionary College. The experience was so disconcerting that he returned to Oakwood.[4] Law enforcement detained Charles Joseph, and his opponents tried to kill him on two occasions – because he campaigned for the right of African Americans to exercise their civil liberties.[5] When Warren Banfield visited white Adventist churches, he had to sit on the back row or in a balcony reserved for blacks. On one occasion, Banfield asked a white Adventist church if he could use their baptistery to baptize converts from the African American community. The church refused because they did not want blacks to defile their sanctuary. At ministerial conferences, white Adventist leaders made arrangements with hotel managers to prohibit

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[1] Alfonzo Greene, Sr., interviewed by author, 26 May 2004, Huntsville, tape recording, home residence, Huntsville, Alabama.
[2] Alfonzo Greene, Sr., interviewed by author, 26 May 2004, Huntsville, tape recording, home residence, Huntsville, Alabama.; Charles Edward Dudley, Sr., interviewed by author, 3 August 2004, Nashville, tape recording, home residence, Nashville, Tennessee.
[3] Frank W. Hale, Jr., *Angels Watching Over Me: The Autobiography of Dr. Frank W. Hale, Jr.* (Nashville: James C. Winston Publishing Company, 1996), 158, 159.
[4] Charles Edward Dudley, Sr., interviewed by author, 3 August 2004, Nashville, tape recording, home residence, Nashville, Tennessee.
[5] Charles Joseph, interviewed by author, 29 August 2004, Glenwood, tape recording, home residence, Glenwood, Illinois.

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Banfield and other African American ministers from residing at the same establishments as their white counterparts.[6] Overall, personal encounters with racism served to increase community awareness/sociopolitical consciousness, which motivated the activism of these black Adventists.

Events during the interwar years also contributed to community awareness among black Adventists. The request for the creation of black Adventist conferences in 1929; James Humphrey's Utopia Health Benevolent Association; and the 1931 student protests at Oakwood coincided with: 1. President Woodrow Wilson's argument, during and after the First World War, supporting the self-determination of subject peoples; 2. Marcus Garvey's call, in the early 1920s, for blacks to achieve financial and political independence; 3. the promotion of African American assertiveness and pride during the Harlem Renaissance of the 1920s; 4. A. Philip Randolph's establishment of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters and Maids in 1925 – signifying the desire of blacks to take control of their livelihood through collective bargaining; and 5. the Great Depression (1929-1941), which exacerbated the inequalities of American society. Likewise, the sociopolitical activism of Irene Morgan, Alfonzo Greene, and Terrance Roberts came from community awareness sparked by the Double "V" Campaign of the Second World War, which aimed to defeat the double threats of racism in the United States and fascism abroad.[7] When black veterans of the First and Second World Wars returned to the United States, they brought with them an unyielding determination to resist discrimination and to obtain the freedoms they fought for overseas. This is particularly true following the Second World War when African American veterans

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[6] Warren S. Banfield, Jr., interviewed by author, 26 May 2004, Huntsville, tape recording, home residence, Huntsville, Alabama.
[7] Carol Morello, "The Freedom Fighter a Nation Nearly Forgot," *Adventist Review* 178, no. 5 (February 2001): 10.

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joined civil rights groups, like the NAACP, in large numbers.[8] The militant attitude they brought to the Civil Rights Movement pervaded African American society and it was not lost on black Adventists like: Edward Earl Cleveland, son of a World War One veteran; Irene Morgan; Earl Moore, a World War Two veteran; and Terrance Roberts, son of a World War Two veteran.

This study showed that family socialization played an instrumental part in conveying community awareness. Alfonzo Greene's grandfather educated him on issues impacting the African American community like racial inequality and social injustice.[9] Charles Dudley's family instilled in him the values of freedom, standing up for one's rights, and black pride.[10] Likewise, Edward Earl Cleveland's parents taught him to resist discrimination and to respond to the needs of the African American community.[11] In retrospect, these childhood lessons formed the foundation of their future activities in combating discrimination in the Adventist Church and secular society.

Community awareness among black Adventist ministers received a boost from dialogue with African American parishioners who shared their concerns regarding racism in the Church and American society. During his career as an evangelist for the Southern Missionary Society and the North American Negro Department of the General Conference, Strachan came into contact with various black communities in the United States. Consequently, he became astute concerning the social, economic, and political issues confronting African American society. As a black religious leader, Strachan felt an obligation to participate in sociopolitical activities benefiting his community. Similarly, Warren Banfield observed the detrimental effect racism had on the psyche of his parishioners. This motivated him to become a civil rights activist.[12] Again, this situation

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[8] Neil A. Wynn, *The Afro-American and the Second World War*, rev. 2d ed. (New York: Holmes & Meier, 1993), 130-133. See also Daisy Bates, *The Long Shadow of Little Rock: A Memoir* (New York: David McKay Company, 1963), 44-47.
[9] Alfonzo Greene, Sr., interviewed by author, 26 May 2004, Huntsville, tape recording, home residence, Huntsville, Alabama.
[10] Charles Edward Dudley, Sr., interviewed by author, 3 August 2004, Nashville, tape recording, home residence, Nashville, Tennessee.
[11] Edward Earl Cleveland, interviewed by author, 25 May 2004, Huntsville, tape recording, home residence, Huntsville, Alabama.
[12] Warren S. Banfield, Jr., interviewed by author, 26 May 2004, Huntsville, tape recording, home residence, Huntsville, Alabama.

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repeated itself in the experiences of Charles Dudley, Charles Joseph, Earl Moore, Franklin Hill, and Edward Earl Cleveland.[13] Though Frank Hale was not a minister, his Laymen's Leadership Conference kept in contact with black Adventists across the country. As reports of discrimination against African American parishioners flowed into the offices of the LLC, it increased Hale's community awareness and strengthened his resolve to fight discrimination in the Adventist Church.

Overall, the Adventists discussed in this dissertation found motivation for their sociopolitical activism in community awareness. This consciousness came about from various factors such as: personal experiences with racism, historical developments (that is, events during the interwar years), family socialization, and dialogue between black ministers and their parishioners.

For many years Oakwood was the only option for blacks wishing to acquire a higher education at a Seventh-day Adventist institution. For this reason, most of the persons discussed in this project attended Oakwood College. Based on their testimonies, community awareness – acquired though the means previous addressed – motivated their participation in the Civil Rights Movement. Furthermore, Greene's testimony points out that the president of Oakwood College discouraged sociopolitical activity among the faculty and student body. As a result, only a few of Oakwood's personnel joined him in Huntsville's Selma Sympathy March. In addition, the Oakwood students that participated in the protest against discrimination at the Huntsville Central Adventist Church, did not receive assistance from the college. Finally, the curriculum of Oakwood College, in

[13] The ministers interviewed in this study reported that contact with their parishioners helped motivate their activism.

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accordance with the conservative views of the denomination did not include coursework on the Social Gospel or Gandhi's experimental theology.[14] Consequently, black students who exhibited sociopolitical conscious acquired their community awareness elsewhere and brought it with them to Oakwood, where they shared this knowledge with school mates.

Women like Ellen Gould Harmon White, Emma MacDearmon-White, and Irene Morgan ranked among Seventh-day Adventist activists. As far as this research shows, these women did not have separate activist agendas from the men. Likewise, there does not appear to be a notable difference in the level of sociopolitical activism between Northern and Southern Afro-Adventist activists.

In summary, this study shows that mixed forces motivated some African American Adventists to participate in civil rights politics. Among these determinants, community awareness played the most prominent role. For them, this factor superseded theological and ideological aspects of Adventism that discouraged political activity. It is the hope of the author that this research provided insight into why some Adventists became involved in sociopolitical issues while and others did not.

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[14] Frank W. Hale, Jr., *Angels Watching Over Me: The Autobiography of Dr. Frank W. Hale, Jr.* (Nashville: James C. Winston Publishing Company, 1996), 36.; Warren S. Banfield, Jr., interviewed by author, 26 May 2004, Huntsville, tape recording, home residence, Huntsville, Alabama.; Edward Earl Cleveland, interviewed by author, 25 May 2004, Huntsville, tape recording, home residence, Huntsville, Alabama.; Charles Edward Dudley, Sr., interviewed by author, 3 August 2004, Nashville, tape recording, home residence, Nashville, Tennessee.; Charles Joseph, interviewed by author, 29 August 2004, Glenwood, tape recording, home residence, Glenwood, Illinois.; Earl Moore, interviewed by author, 31 May 2004, Decatur, tape recording, home residence, Decatur, Georgia.; Franklin Hill II, interviewed by author, 18 May 2004, Lafayette, tape recording, home residence, Lafayette, Indiana.

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VITA

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VITA

EDUCATION

Doctorate of Philosophy, American History, Expected May 2006
Purdue University, West Lafayette, IN
Concentrations: African American history, United States history, African history, and twentieth century Caribbean history
Advisor: Joseph C. Dorsey

Master of Arts, History, August 2002
Sam Houston State University, Huntsville, TX
Concentrations: United States history, African American history, and American religious history
Advisor: James S. Olson

Bachelor of Science, Biology, May 1997
Prairie View A&M University, Prairie View, TX

WORK EXPERIENCE

Instructor of United States history, Department of History, Purdue University, West Lafayette, IN, spring semester 2005

- Taught undergraduate survey course in United States history
- Designed course syllabus
- Prepared exams
- Graded tests and assignments
- Advised undergraduate students during office hours

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Teaching Assistant for global history, Department of History, Purdue University, West Lafayette, IN, fall semester 2004

- Lectured undergraduate students
- Graded exams and assignments
- Advised undergraduate students during office hours

Teaching Assistant for African history, Department of History, Purdue University, West Lafayette, IN, fall semester 2003 and spring semester 2004

- Prepared exams
- Graded tests and assignments
- Advised undergraduate students during office hours

Assistant Librarian, Black Cultural Center Library, Purdue University, West Lafayette, IN, September 2002 - May 2004

- Supervised library aids
- Ordered materials for the collection
- Directed research
- Prepared press releases
- Oversaw the upkeep of the collection
- Conducted tours of the facility
- Led public book discussions
- Participated in community outreach

Teaching Assistant for United States history, Department of History, Sam Houston State University, Huntsville, TX, fall semester 2001 and spring semester 2002

- Graded exams and assignments
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TEACHING INTERESTS

- Undergraduate courses on African American history, United States history, African history, global history, and American religious history
- Graduate courses focusing on issues relevant to the African American experience

RESEARCH INTERESTS

- All areas relevant to the African American experience

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PUBLICATIONS

London, Jr., Samuel G. Review of *A Mediation of Fire: The Art of James C. Watkins*, by Kippra D. Hopper. *West Texas Historical Association Year Book* 77 (2001): 238-240.

PRESENTATIONS

"The Social Gospel and the Civil Rights Movement," presented on February 28, 2004 at the twenty-fourth annual meeting of the Indiana Association of Historians in Indianapolis, IN

HONORS AND AWARDS:

- Bilsland Dissertation Fellowship (Purdue University), 2005-2006
- Purdue Research Fellowship Summer Research Grant, 2005
- Purdue Research Fellowship Summer Research Grant, 2004
- Ross Fellowship (Purdue University), 2002-2003
- Joan Verrilli Scholarship Award (Sam Houston State University), 2002
- Graduate Scholarship Award (Sam Houston State University), 2001
- John Payne Scholarship Award (Sam Houston State University), 2001

PROFESSIONAL ORGANIZATIONS:

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- Phi Alpha Theta
- National Honor Society

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