

**Impact of SDA Eschatological Assumptions  
on Certain Issues of Social Policy**

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Thesis: Certain Adventist predictions about last day events had very important social consequences within Seventh-day Adventism

Illustrations:

1. shut door: 1844-1851 how we treat our neighbors, impact upon evangelism--if shut door theology had continued beyond 1851, most likely the first GC president and anti-slavery activist John Byington, would have been rendered ineligible to enter the Sabbatarian Adventist body

2. during Russian Revolution in teens, some SDA preachers taught that Red Dragon of Rev 12 was Bolshevism and according to L H Christian "this folly of a few cost hundreds of believers their lives"

3. R H Pierson and equal wages for women--if SDAs succumbed to EEOC and suit of Meri Kay Silver, we would be allowing government to control our institutions and anyway, bringing suit illustrated that "traitors" within the church would provide basis for the "two-horned" beast to gain control over SDAs

This presentation argues that Sabbatarian Adventist views of eschatology during the 1850s and 1860s hindered what should have been done to advance work amongst soon-to-be freed slaves in the South

The presentation also suggests that later eschatological assumptions hindered SDAs from taking positions in advance of society relative to integration

**Christian Connection Activism Against Slavery**

Elsewhere I have written concerning the close relationship between the Christian Connection movement and that of early Sabbatarian Adventists. The ties are extremely close in organizational, theological and especially social areas. Within

the realm of social freedoms, Sabbatarian Adventists inherited a strong antislavery perspective from the Christian Connection movement.

Such major early Sabbatarian Adventists as James White, Joseph Bates and the Farnsworth family as well as the Washington, NH, church all illustrate the linkage between "Christians" and Sabbatarian Adventists.

From the inception of America's first indigenous religion, the Christians worked against slavery.

The founder of its branch in the North, Elias Smith, who likewise founded the first religious periodical Herald of Gospel Liberty, 1808, was a strong opponent of slavery and used the pages of the religious liberty paper to agitate against it.

Joseph Bates as a Christian fostered the abolition cause until the 1840s, when he devoted himself totally to proclaiming the soon advent of Christ

William Kinkade, major theologian of the group, worked with fellow Christian minister, David McGahe and the two were largely instrumental in keeping slavery out of the constitution of Illinois. Both had served several terms within the Illinois legislature.

Kinkade is several times quoted by James White in RH on theological matters

Interestingly, Kinkade in his major book, The Bible Doctrine, analyzed Rev 18: "In Babylon were found slaves and souls of men; then cease from enslaving your fellow-creatures. Remember, the dealers in human flesh, who continually oppress their fellow-creatures in both soul and body, must themselves continue in spiritual bondage."

The "Christian" reading of this prophecy stressed an activist position. Make the world better by abolishing slavery.

Sabbatarian Adventists would read the same prophecy but come to far different non-activist conclusions.

Southern Christian minister David Purviance, was extremely active in Kentucky in working against slavery. As a member of the House of Representatives, Purviance fought a losing battle

to preclude slavery. Purviance influenced both his father and father-in-law to liberate their slaves.

Purviance in 1809-12 worked in the Ohio legislature against slavery

Joshua Himes as a Christian minister likewise believed that Christians must participate in causes designed to further the establishment of the kingdom of God and was among the earliest supporters of abolitionist William Lloyd Garrison, who became a lifelong friend.

### **Two-Horned Beast and Sabbatarian Adventist Positions on Slavery**

As already suggested, Sabbatarian Adventists inherited a strong anti-slavery perspective from their roots in the Christian Connection movement

Notice this apocalyptic anti-slavery Ellen White language written in 1858:

"The cries and sufferings of the oppressed have reached unto heaven, and angels stand amazed at the hard-hearted, untold, agonizing suffering, man in the image of his Maker, causes his fellow-man.

"Said the angel, The name of such are written in blood, crossed with stripes, and flooded with agonizing, burning tears of suffering.

"God's anger will not cease until he has caused the land of light to drink the dregs of the cup of his fury, and until he has rewarded you, double unto her double according to her works: in the cup which she hath filled, fill to her double." (1SG, 192-93)

In a series of articles initially appearing in the Review of 1970, Roy Branson has shown Seventh-day Adventists as being kissing cousins of the radical abolitionists in terms of their opposition to slavery.

Says Branson: "If anyone had told the founding fathers of our denomination that their attitudes toward race had nothing to do

with their theology, they would have shaken their heads in disbelief.

"For Ellen and James White, Uriah Smith, and J N Andrews, proper attitudes toward race relations were part of a true understanding of the Bible and its doctrines."

Branson analyzed Ellen White's writings of the 1890s and observes: "As we study Ellen White to find clues to the proper pace for implementing equality, let us remember that she supposed achievement of racial justice at the earliest moment possible."

Branson concludes:

"If we are to learn one lesson from this brief glance at our denominational forebears, it is that circumstances sometimes dictate moderation in achieving justice, but that equally often, the times demand we be nothing less than militant reformers."  
(Roy Branson, RH, April 9,16,23, 1970)

Notice, however, these Ellen White perspectives of what SDAs should have done after the Civil War. She makes these statements in the 1890s and early 1900s:

"We need to repent before God, because we have neglected missionary work in the most abandoned part of God's moral vineyard...."

"We cannot heap advantages upon ourselves and upon those who are not in need, and pass by those who are in utter want, and be approved of God. This neglect is charged against those who have had great light, who have had marvelous opportunities, and who yet leave so large a portion of God's moral vineyard unworked. For years Satan has been sowing his tares among the colored people, and the field cannot be worked as easily now as it could have been worked years ago...."

"Shall not this long-neglected work of enlightening the colored people be entered into perseveringly, and be carried forward all the more diligently because it has been so long neglected? (all in "An Appeal for the South #2, RH, Dec 3, 1895)

The next month she urged SDAs to redeem the time they wasted:  
"It is not our place to study consequences; but we are to go to the field and labor for the colored people as earnestly as for

the white people, and leave results with God. It is our part to work with all our God-given capabilities to redeem the time that we have wasted in planning how to avoid unhappy results in working the Southern fields." (RH, "Am I My Brother's Keeper?" Jan 21, 1896)

Feb 26, 1900 Mrs White wrote this: "The Lord is grieved at the indifference manifested by His professed followers toward the ignorant and oppressed colored people. If our people had taken up this work at the close of the Civil War, their faithful labor would have done much to prevent the present condition of suffering and sin." (Ltr 37 ½, 1900)

In 1902, Ellen White quoted a heavenly voice berating "Christians" for neglecting the recently emancipated slaves:

Says Mrs White: "Then the words were spoken; 'The South is a most unpromising field; but how changed would it be from what it is now if, after the colored people had been released from slavery, men and women had worked for them as Christians ought to work, teaching them how to care for themselves?'" (7T 225)

This presenter believes that evidence supports the conclusion that Sabbatarian Adventist views of eschatology precluded an immediate post-Civil War activist role for the former slaves of the South up to and following the Civil War and explains why, in the 1890s, Ellen White would be urging SDAs to "redeem the time" so tragically lost.

The following texts from Revelation seemed to support the SDA eschatological position:

Rev 6:15-17: "And the kings of the earth and the great men and the commanders and the rich and the strong and every slave and freeman, hid themselves in the caves and among the rocks of the mountains; and they said to the mountains and to the rocks, 'Fall on us and hide us from the presence of Him who sits on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb; for the great day of their wrath has come; and who is able to stand?'"

Slavery must exist until Christ returns, they read.

Rev 13: 16-17: "And he (the beast with two horns like a lamb that spoke as a dragon) causes all, the small and the great, and the rich and the poor, and the free men and the slaves, to be

given a mark on their right hand, or on their forehead, and he provides that no one should be able to buy or to sell, except the one who has the mark, either the name of the beast or the number of his name."

There must be slaves to receive the mark of the beast, they read.

Rev 18:9-13: Just prior to the destruction of spiritual Babylon, kings and merchants lament because only at this point are they deprived amongst other things of "cargoes of horses and chariots and slaves and human lives."

Prophetic spokesperson Uriah Smith set forth "The Present State of the World," in an article with that title in the RH: "That the world is ripening for destruction, needs no proof," he said.

He also expressed the Sabbatarian Adventist views of the horrors of slavery:

"We sometimes almost wonder why such a diabolical abomination as slavery should ever have been permitted to take such deep root in the very bosom of this country, and how a nation can act so signally contrary to its own profession; but we must remember, that, to fulfill the prophecy, this two-horned beast must speak as a dragon. Rev 13:11. How much more of the same spirit which is manifested on the slavery question by the United States as a nation, would it require to pass the decree of verse 15? It would only be a little further development of the same principle: a few steps more taken in the same path which they are now treading."

It was only a short step from practicing slavery to worshipping the image to the beast and the death decree.

"We behold all the necessary ingredients for a 'time of trouble such as never was'" affirmed Smith. (RH, June 20, 1854)

In an editorial two years later, Smith outlined the implications of the two-horned beast position:

"Some are laboring for reforms which they never will see accomplished. As much as any one, from our very soul we detest and abhor that foul blot of our country--slavery! and our sympathies are with those in whose hearts burns the love of

freedom, and who would desire to see the bondman loosed from his chains.

"But he who expects to see the land freed entirely from this curse, or even to see slavery contentedly confine itself within certain limits, we can but regard as laboring under a false hope; for the character which the prophetic pencil has given to the two-horned beast, [Rev 13:1] a symbol of our country, is that he shall speak as a dragon!...

"Prophecy gives us no ground to hope for reform here: the beast speaks like a dragon...."

"The prophecy does not say that at first he spake like a dragon, but at length reformed his speech, and breathed forth a just and Christ-like spirit. His future history presents no redeeming feature. He will continue to bellow forth his dragon voice, till he shall be cast into the burning flame, and the remnant whom he will persecute shall take their stand of victory on mount Zion with the Lamb...."

"The theology of the world needs reforming....We claim to be reformers; and we claim to be engaged in the noblest and most essential reform--even that of restoring the claims of the royal law of God, that men may conform their lives thereto." (Smith, "True Reforms and Reformers," editorial, RH, June 26, 1856)

Smith reiterated the relationship between eschatological assumptions and social activism a few months later in an editorial entitled "Politics."

"We consider that the sympathies of all merciful and humane persons must be with those who desire to see the chains of the bondman broken, and the slave go free; or who desire that the foul demon, Slavery, should at least be confined to its present limits. With the belief that the people generally entertain, that there is yet a long future before the world, we cannot blame them for using every effort to prevent soil which is now free from being blasted by the mildew of Slavery...."

"Again, we say, we cannot blame any who love justice and freedom, viewing things as they are generally viewed, for using every possible means to prevent such a result:--every possible means to stunt this great evil...."

"To the question, why we do not with our votes and influence, labor against the evil tendency of the times, we reply, that our views of prophecy lead us to the conclusion that things will not be bettered.

"This country, if we are correct in believing it to be symbolized by the two-horned beast of Rev 13, will finally sustain such an abominable character, that it will be landed in the Lake of fire. Rev 19:20. The two-horned beast will speak like a dragon. Rev 13:11.

"We do not therefore feel it incumbent upon us to labor, in this respect, either to hasten or retard the fulfillment of prophecy.

"God's purposes will surely be accomplished. And we feel it our duty to confine our efforts to preparing ourselves, and others as far as in us lies, for the great and final issue already pressing upon us--the revelation of the Son of man from heaven, the destruction of all earthly governments, the establishment of the glorious, universal and eternal kingdom of the King of kings, and the redemption and deliverance of all his subjects." (Smith, RH, Sept 11, 1856)

Similar examples abound in Sabbatarian Adventist writers as J N Loughborough, R F Cottrell, J H Waggoner, James White

Indeed Anson Byington, brother of the first GC president, who had actively worked as an antislavery activist for the past 25 years, addressed the position of the Review: "Alas! we saw the slave in prison, but on reading the prophecy that there will be bondmen as well as freemen at Christ's coming, we have excused ourselves from any efforts for his emancipation."

In his response, Smith denied that the Review had modified positions that it had always held. "If he refers to the sentiments which some of our brethren had occasion to utter during the late campaign (1860 presidential election), against participating in political matters, we have only to say that such has always been the position of the Review; there is no change in this respect....

"We do not tell the slave that he can afford to be content in slavery, nor that he should not escape from it whenever he can, nor that all good men should not aid him to the extent of their power, nor that this great evil should not be resisted by any and all means which afford any hope of success. All this should

be done. And we rejoice when we hear of one of the suffering race escaping beyond the jurisdiction of this dragon-hearted power. But we would not hold out to him a false ground of expectation. We would point him to the coming of the Messiah as his true hope....

"But this gigantic evil will still exist. Men and things will continue to grow worse and worse; and the end draweth nigh. What better then can we do than to endeavor, as the primary object of our efforts, to emancipate our fellow-men, from that worst of all bondage, the service of sin, the wages of which is death, and lead them to a preparation for the coming Kingdom." (RH, March 10, 1859)

William S Foote expressed the prevailing Sabbatarian Adventist position in 1860: "I have no right to enter into the political field and get into discussion with pro-slavery men. But there are things which I can and ought to do. I should let the 'two horned beast' take care of his own business; I should mind my own; I can pray for the oppressed and down trodden; if opportunity offers I can assist them otherwise, but to do anything towards the abolition of slavery, I cannot, for several reasons.

"One is, that I consider our country hopelessly in the hands of Satan, and that it will continue to be until he who is stronger than the strong man armed shall come and take from him all the armor wherein he trusts, and with him shall divide the spoils.

"Another reasons. The Apocalyptic Babylon is to be destroyed when in the very height of her temporal prosperity and glory.

"She is then to be dealing in 'gold, silver, precious stones, etc, slaves and souls of men,' and consequently human slavery will continue until the advent of our King. Lord hasten the day, for our souls are sick with every day's report of wrong and outrage with which the earth is filled." (W S Foote, "Slavery," RH, March 1, 1860)

James White believed similarly. In 1862 he wrote: "We have taught that slavery would exist till the second coming of Christ and that the prosperity of the nation was gone forever." (RH, Sept 9, 1862)

SDA attitudes relating to continuance of slavery persisted beyond the Emancipation Proclamation, the Civil War and even into Reconstruction. While slavery forces received a temporary

setback, they would regroup and slavery would be reinstated. The SDA reading of the prophecy would not lie.

Besides, the last reform message was the Sabbath. The three angel's messages of Revelation 14 were given in chronological order and since the early 1850s, the last warning message of the seventh day Sabbath was the great reform that would prepare the world for the return of Jesus.

In 1868, Uriah Smith defended Mrs White from those who attacked her on the basis of her 1862 vision when she said: "It looked to me like an impossibility now for slavery to be done away. God alone can wrench the slave from the hand of his desperate, relentless oppressor." Smith stressed:

"It does not yet appear that slavery is really dead. Men of quite as much erudition and scope of discernment as any who are now engaged in a petty warfare against the visions, assert and reiterate, from personal knowledge of things in the South, that slavery is as much a fact today, in some portions of those States, as it was five years ago; that it is abolished only in name. It is beginning to look even to some of these, like an impossibility, under the present state of things, for it to be done away." (Uriah Smith, "The Visions of Mrs E G White," 1868, pp 52-53)

As late as 1874, Uriah Smith wrote similarly: "Slavery, to be sure, on the ground of political expediency, has been abolished. For the time being, the ballots and bayonets of its opponents have outnumbered those of its partisans. But has this changed the disposition by which it has heretofore been fostered?

"Has it converted the South? Have they been brought to look upon it as an evil which should be given up on account of its own intrinsic wrong?

"We would that we could answer these questions in the affirmative. But there are acts too patent to be denied, which show that the virus of this great iniquity still rankles in the body politic; that the system of slavery has been given up by the people of the South simply as a matter of necessity; that if they had the power they would reinstate it again though they should rend and ruin the Republic in their attempt; and hundreds of thousands in the North would sympathize with them in the movement, and second them in their efforts.

"The disease is driven from the surface, but it is not cured. It may be a source of serious trouble hereafter."

While it is certainly true that Ellen White's 1862 statement harmonized with eschatological thinking of the time, her later approach to the subject suggests her willingness to come to a new set of eschatological conclusions:

During the 1880s and 1890s when Adventists were actually being persecuted for so-called Sunday violations and a national Sunday law seemed on the horizon, Northern Adventists had taken the position that the fourth commandment involved SDAs laboring six days for the commandment literally read, "Six days shall you labor." Mrs White warned against taking any such position in the South. Far from it being inevitable that slavery would be reinstated by the two-horned beast, SDA understanding of eschatology could bring about the persecution they feared.

Mrs White stated:

"Should the colored people in the Southern States be educated, as they receive the truth, that they should work on Sunday, there would be excited a most unreasonable and unjust prejudice. Judges and jurors, lawyers and citizens, would, if they had a chance, bring decisions which would bind about them rites which would cause much suffering, not only to the ones whom they term guilty of breaking the laws of their state, but all the colored people everywhere would be placed in a position of surveillance, and under cruel treatment by the white people, that would be no less than slavery."

False assumptions about eschatology would result in needless persecution. Rather than pushing traditional literal interpretations of last-day events, why not use the sixth day to engage in missionary work rather than as a so-called witness to the accuracy of SDA interpretations?

Mrs White's view of the Sunday labor question in the 1890s no doubt alleviated persecution of SDAs in the South and in Australia and would later save some SDA institutions in Europe.

Far from pressing prophecies into a set eschatological mold, Mrs White, without saying she was doing so, pointed another direction.

Alonzo Jones, however, saw the direction and he would later attack Seventh-day Adventists as having given up the Sabbath because of the position embraced by Mrs White.

### **"The Next Best Plan"--Formation of Black Conferences**

The issue of a separate conference structure for black Adventists surfaced periodically from the late 1880s when SDAs began such work.

In general, it appears that when a policy of integration seemed at least plausible, the momentum for black conferences was dormant. But when segregation overwhelmingly prevailed (as in 1889--C M Kinney proposal; 1929--J K Humphrey and others proposal; and 1943--results from Lucy Byard incident) the momentum for black conferences became "the next best plan."

In 1921, the momentum for black conferences was allayed when integration within SDA institutions in the North seemed possible.

Secretary of the North American Negro Department, W H Green wrote this to black "fellow-laborers" in the aftermath of the 1921 Spring Meeting:

"Coming next to the educational problems affecting our people in the north where the public schools and colleges of the world do not generally discriminate against us, this is the understanding reached: first of all, that the denomination has not taken any position shutting our people out, or discouraging them from attending our northern institutions where upon merit, and worthiness, they are qualified and are able to pay their way by money, and useful labor as any other student. This also applies to our sanitariums in the north where persons of our race desire to enter for training--not to patients."

Green concludes: "Our General Conference brethren and our brethren generally, are fair, and just, and that when they come face to face with issues they are not only disposed to do the right thing by us, but are striving toward that end."

General Conference President W H Spicer reflected on that 1921 Spring Meeting and the issue of black conferences:

"You know that was the plan that really seemed imminent [that is, the black conference plan] when we gathered in that spring council, but contrary to our expectations, the negro brethren themselves swung this plan of having the work under one management, with negro members on the committees."

In urging the president of the Southern Union to move with the "spirit of democracy [that] is in the air," Spicer asked: "Can you work out a plan that will answer to the spirit of representative responsibility and self-development. To be merely handed something by the white conference and treated nicely will not, I suppose, satisfy at all the sentiment that calls for responsibility and voice in managing their own work and a constitutional basis of representation in the denominational councils.

"Personally, I sincerely wish it might be possible to work out a plan that would head up in the union. I am prepared for that or for separate conferences heading up either in the union or the General Conference."

Spicer concluded: "The question is, will the democratic spirit of this new time, which touches the colored race as well as the white, be met by new plans that we can form?"

Jeter Cox had been a black Adventist minister at least since the 1920s when he sang a solo at the 1926 GC session. He knew a lot about the past when he made arrangements for Lucy Byard to receive treatment at the Washington Sanitarium. He certainly knew from the past that the Washington Sanitarium had provision for receiving black patients.

A month and a half after the arrangements made by Cox, Mrs Byard died at Freedman's Hospital in the District of Columbia. Cox had the funeral service in Brooklyn, New York. Even before the death of Mrs Byard, it was obvious that the incident demanded a new focus on the needs of black Adventists. Mrs Byard could have stayed in New York City and received treatment at a non-SDA hospital. Her decision to seek treatment at an SDA facility was obviously tied to strong denominational loyalty.

Mrs Ruth Chambers, a close friend of Lucy, wrote J L McElhany after Lucy's death:

"This must be a white man's religion. I don't think God wants that. I love this message and will always keep the faith as long as God helps me to. What you do there will never make me give it up and lose my soul. I don't care where I die so I am ready for it....

"I am really thinking serious of what would become of me if I had to go to some san or hospital. I could go to the Catholic one here [Hornell in western New York State] and they treat all and every one alike....

"Get the love of Christ in your hearts and you will not be looking at a man's skin to wound him. You have got to get rid of that or you will never get to the kingdom. You cannot take it into heaven.

"We have a sister here like that and when the Sabbath School is at her house she don't want the black members there or to bring any one with them. She thinks what the neighbors will think of her. I would like to tell her what God thinks of her. But she will know some day. That is not a Christian at all....

"Just imagine being sick unto death and then going to what you think is a Christian place to get a bed to lie in and being turned away, just because God made you black. My! My! What a thing to have happen to one. Such a dear person as our Sister Byard was. All for the cause and doing all she could for the church, then having this put on her. Thank God she don't have to have it any more. I myself will never have it. I would not go to one of those places if I had to lie down and die in the barn. Christ was born in a stable. I could die in one.

"Why have the name of Adventist blackened with such doings. If there is no place for us in the buildings, why not make a place where we can go and have a place to die in and not be in the way of the lilly whites....

"Pray for me that this will not turn me bitter. It was a hard blow to Sr Byard's husband and all her friends. I am trying not to think it was done in a spirit of hatred. But it was done and it has made very hard feelings in all the Negro churches that I have heard talk about it....

"Please tell me if you will where there is any place one of us can go and get in. I am alone and I might have to have a place to go some day. I'd like to know if there is one such place

provided for the black man or woman...." (Mrs Ruth Chambers to J L McElhany, Jan 21, 1944)

It seems clear that the momentum from General Conference headquarters for movement toward black conferences sprang from a realization that SDA institutions were unwilling for integration to occur.

The report that recommended black conferences to the 1944 Spring Meeting also suggested an "Advanced School in the North and a "Sanitarium in the North" for black Adventists. Black conferences were born, at least in the thinking of church leadership, with the apparent intention of maintaining segregation.

GC President J L McElhany, emerging from his sick bed during the 1944 pre spring council meeting, even interjected Adventist eschatology into the subject. Remember the timing seemed pertinent. It was one month before the Normandy invasion in World War II:

"For 34 years I have had direct and continuous administrative contacts with our colored churches and believers, and there has developed in my heart a deep interest in their welfare. I have never sensed more keenly, than I have at any time, the great need of our laying wise and adequate plans for the development of the work. I greatly rejoice over what has been accomplished in the growth and development of this work.

"There is one thing I want to say to you, tonight, and that is we ought to frankly face it and admit that a Seventh-day Adventist regardless of race and color, face an antagonistic world. We are a very small laity. We can't do what larger and more influential denominations do [i.e. move toward integration?]. We are hated and despised by the world at large. I sometimes think we deceive ourselves in thinking that we are popular in the world. Just let some little incident happen and every SDA will be a marked man, hunted and persecuted. We are a small laity; our only help and hope is in God. The thing for us to do is to get this work finished just as soon as we can and go to our eternal home where these racial conditions do not exist.

"I am thankful in my soul for the council of the Spirit of Prophecy when followed, saves us from a lot of trouble. I pray that God will guide us in this meeting. May God speed the day when this message will be through and the Lord shall come. It

will be a glorious thing when we can go to our eternal home. We will forget all the things that have troubled us in this world." (J L McElhany at Pre Spring Council meeting, April 8, 1944)

Correspondence reveals that at the very same meeting where McElhany made that speech, the incident at the Washington Sanitarium was also discussed. Here's a portion from a letter of the GC treasurer, W E Nelson to R A Hare, administrator of the Washington Sanitarium:

"These colored folks talk about different hospitals in the District of Columbia and also in Maryland where there are wards in the hospital that receive colored patients; but our institution is not a hospital, primarily it is a sanitarium and as such is entirely different as far as its social standing is concerned....

"It would be absolutely disastrous at the present time for the Washington Sanitarium to carry a mixed clientele....

"As I view the whole situation, Dr Hare, it is not a matter of the colored people wanting a little sanitarium of their own where they can receive attention, but what they want is racial and social equality." (Nelson to Hare, April 9, 1944)

Black minister William L Cheatham polled the black constituency of the Columbia Union and found "that every one who would rather not have a colored conference want equality in the present setup. That is in offices, sanitariums, publishing houses and the like.

"Of course it is said that the latter will not work therefore it seems to me that the next best plan would be the colored conference."(William L Cheatham to J l McElhany, Nov 26, 1944)

### **Conclusion**

The conclusion of this study stresses a rather obvious point: Seventh-day Adventists should exhibit to the world that they know what the kingdom of God is like and thus should live NOW as they expect to in the kingdom.

In July of 1953, G C President W H Branson sat in a meeting of GC officers that heard this report from Denton Rebok, GC Secretary:

"Washington Missionary College Board is not clear to admit colored students, even resident students from the Washington area, fearing that it will mean an overall loss in enrollment."

Oct 18, 1953, William Henry Branson, called a special meeting of the "Current Issue" Committee

"After prayer and discussion, it was

AGREED, To recommend that our institutions in the North American Division that have not already opened their doors to all, regardless of race or color, be encouraged to do so as soon as possible."

The "Current Issues Committee" of the Columbia Union, however, seemed a little slow and voted this recommendation to the Washington Mission College Board:

"Recognizing the need for correcting certain racial inequities in the college educational program of the Columbia Union, we wish to voice our conviction and willingness to open Washington Missionary College to colored students immediately upon such general action by the other liberal arts colleges of Maryland. It is our opinion that we should not run ahead of our community." (Action of Columbia Union Current Issues Committee, April 12, 1954)

Branson reacted the next day by sending a letter regarding "Racial Segregation" to NAD union and local conference presidents and managers of SDA institutions:

He got right to the point:

"The Christian churches of North America are altogether outstripping us in the matter of racial segregation. Many of them are moving forward toward the goal of total integration of all races into Christian fellowship on the basis that 'All ye are brethren.'...

Branson turned traditional SDA eschatology on its head by quoting a number of non-SDA religious leaders who expressed integration positions far in advance of SDAs. He continued:

"Perhaps no religious group in the United States, or the world, claims so loudly that it is international in its attitudes and

services as does the Seventh-day Adventists and yet, in this matter of Negro segregation, we are trailing behind the procession....Shall we be the last of the Christian bodies to break away from our historic attitudes and chart a new course in our human relationships....

"Shall we wait until our hands are forced on this matter, or shall we move forward carefully but surely as men who believe that 'All ye are brethren?' (W H Branson statement, April 13, 1954)

One month later the US Supreme Court ruled that "racial segregation in the public schools of America is unconstitutional."

Thirty years later another General Conference president came up with a statement on racism. Neal Wilson released this at the 1985 GC session:

"Racism is among the worst of ingrained prejudices that characterize sinful human beings....

"Racism is really a heresy and in essence a form of idolatry, for it limits the fatherhood of God by denying the brotherhood of all mankind and by exalting the superiority of one's own race....

"As a worldwide community of faith, the Seventh-day Adventist Church wishes to witness to and exhibit in her own ranks the unity and love that transcend racial differences and overcomes past alienation between races." (June 27, 1985)