

FRE SPRING COUNCIL

April 8, 1944

7:30 P. M.

Prayer: Elder Spicer

J. L. McElhany

Previous to the last autumn council, the General Conference officers met with our Union Conference leaders and gave some preliminary study to the steps to be taken in creating some method or means whereby study could be given to the colored work or phases of its interest. As a result of that preliminary study, the officers and Union Presidents brought to the General Conference Committee the following recommendation:

"WE RECOMMEND to the Autumn Council that a meeting be held prior to, and in the same place as, the Spring Meeting of the General Conference Committee, for the purpose of studying the future development of our colored work in North America, and that the General Conference Committee be authorized to make all the necessary preparation and arrangements for this meeting, including the naming of those who shall be invited to attend, it being understood that there shall be representatives of our colored work invited. "

Following the Council the General Conference Committee designated the number to be invited from each Union Conference. A little later on it was agreed by the General Conference Committee to suggest to the Union to select a representative layman to sit with us in this session.

If I may be permitted to speak, personally, I am delighted to say that I have reasons for a deep and abiding interest in the welfare of our colored work. I come from an ancestry that for more than 300 years has been closely associated with colored people. 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 layity. We can't do what larger and more influential denominations do. We are hated and despised by the world at large. I sometime think we deceive ourselves in thinking that we are popular in the world. Just let some little incident happen and every S.D.A. will be a marked man, hunted and persecuted. We are a small layity; our only help and hope is in God.

J. L. McElhany (cont.)

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 lots 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.

Whether the present plan should still operate or whether the work has grown to the place where something different should be adopted as a means of strengthening our Colored Department I do not know. Every self interest ought to be laid aside. I understand that in certain sections some brethren have already decided the presidents and officers. I think that this is only a rumor.

Should we continue to operate on the status quo? The greatest test of a man to lead is his ability to work with those who disagree. You must make it a rule to allow the brethren to make their opinions if they agree with you or not. We want you brethren to express yourselves, whether we continue as we are or has the time come when we ought to proceed to organize conferences? If we should decide to organize conferences I do not feel that it could cover every Union in the North American field, as example the Northern Union. We don't want to undertake anything that will make us ashamed, I have known conferences to be organized with only 800 members which proved to be successful.

A. Wellington Clarke

Is there a necessity for a change or are you brethren forcing this upon us? Is it because of the widening extent of our work?

J. L. McElhany

No, this is nothing that has been forced upon the brethren. The General Conference has not come here with cut and dry answers. You might be waiting for us to hand out another sheet. We don't have it. We are anxious that the Lord will lead us in developing a plan that will be for the best interest of developing the work.

J. L. McElhany (cont.)

Were we to organize in a Union a colored conference what would be the relationship of that conference to the Union? It would be in the sisterhood of that Union conference. In the Southern Union where this plan is operating would the present plan be continued in addition to the organizing of colored conferences? I don't see how that would be possible. You would have a dual administration. We would not have two forms of organizations operating in the same field.

F. D. Dick

In the event of this organization would the boundaries of a colored conference be exactly the same as the local conference relationship to the Union Conference? Do we have any experience of such an organization?

L. H. Christian

Yes, we have experienced this organization in Europe. It has worked very well. In Africa it was not as successful because of the scattered churches.

Note: Meeting adjourned

April 9, 1944

T. M. Fountain

I have been studying the Council at Jerusalem. The same situation as far as race is concerned is involved now. I believe that the S. D. A. movement is superior to any organization on the earth Baptist or Methodist. I do not think that we ought to compare this movement with Baptist or Methodist.

I was called to represent all the ministers in the City of Nashville to speak at a ministers' association. The chairman of the committee was a Baptist minister that knew something about the early work of our message. He was once interested in this message. He thought he would have been a better man if he had been an Adventist. I asked the church to pray for me. I spoke on better feeling between the races; also the difficulty that first came into the church. I presented the message. After the meeting Dr. Small, the leading Baptist, said "that he was pleased with the message and wanted me to present this message to his church. ~~The Seventh-day Adventist organization is superior to any organization on the face of the earth.~~ The man's message was good, but there was only one thing that I had against him, he ought to be a Baptist."

In regard to the colored conferences; I want to say here that the laymen's movement was born in Washington. Some of these same laymen told me that they were not in favor with colored conferences. Most of the laymen in our churches are not in favor with colored conferences. If there are those in favor with the conferences they are very few. I can't believe that anyone would like to be a president. I don't believe a word of it. None of our churches are in favor of pulling out.

(Referred to the three points on the agenda)

I don't believe anyone is in favor of the colored conferences here in this place. We have three propositions offered here. We don't want colored conferences.

G. E. Peters

What do they want?

T. M. Fountain

That we maintain Status quo. At this point, T. M. Fountain moved that we maintain status quo.

E. S. Dillett

Seconded Fountain's motion.

O. A. Troy

What is the Status quo?

M. A. Burgess

If we continue on Status quo, improvements should be considered.

A. Wellington Clarke

(Asked to read an address prepared by him.)

J. L. McElhany

To me it is wonderful to see that the colored have large churches, efficiently led and directed by colored men. We have some colored churches with more members than we have in some conferences. I think our colored men do a very good job. This gives me confidence in their being leaders. To say that a man could be a pastor of a 1000 members, but he couldn't direct a 1000 members if they were divided into conferences seems to me, to be inconsistent in reasoning.

This message has spread out into all the world and when this present war broke out, we found we had to turn the work over to the natives. We had to call our missionaries from some of these countries. It was for the sake of the believers. A native believer to be seen with a foreign man might be sentenced to death and made a marked man. We have had to turn our management over to the native workers, viz. So. Pacific, China, Philippines, Japan, Korea, and Manchuria. Wherever the native administration has taken over God is helping.

We must help those that are taking over responsibilities.

If I thought anybody was proposing a Conference organization that would drive a wedge between the races I would oppose it. I do feel anxious for us to develop every resource. We ought to develop every source of strength in our leadership and in our ministry. If a man could lead a large congregation, I do not see why he couldn't be a conference leader. We must keep together and maintain the spirit of council and helpfulness. Every great man has been looked upon as being dangerous. When we first organized churches peopled looked upon it as dangerous. Some people felt that it was wrong to have conferences. The same is true when we organized Y.P.M.V.