

Blacks

Adventists have not generally been associated with dominant sexual or social groups, but with regard to race, the position has been different. Members of the church have predominantly been drawn from, and have identified with, the dominant ethnic grouping in American society—that of white Anglo-Saxons. Because of this, the black experience in Adventism has few peculiarities; rather, it follows the pattern of development in race relations in the nation as a whole and as such provides a good example of the Adventist tendency to replicate important aspects of the American experience.

If the American revolution can be interpreted in racial terms then it can be viewed, as the sociologist Van den Berghe wrote, as “a movement of political emancipation by a section of . . . white settlers against control from England.”¹ Certainly, the subjugation of the native Indians and the persistence of slavery indicated that the white revolutionaries did not believe the principles of liberty applied equally to all men. Because of this, the problem of race has been, perhaps, the darkest blot on the American dream. Like the founding fathers, the Adventist pioneers were white. It is true that some blacks were connected with the Millerite movement. The black preachers Charles Bowles and John W. Lewis made notable contributions, and another black Millerite William E. Foy had visions in 1842 that were similar to those Ellen White later experienced.² But the Adventism that emerged after the Great Disappointment was essentially an all-white movement that embodied the prejudiced attitudes and experienced the racial problems of America as a whole.

This contrasted with the racial attitudes generally associated with the Millerite movement. Miller himself favored abolitionism, as did many of his associates until their reformist zeal was sapped by the expectation of the Second Advent.³ Furthermore, some of the individuals who were to play important roles in the Seventh-day Adventist church were keen advocates of reform. Joseph Bates participated in the antislavery societies of the 1830s, and John Byington (the first president) and John

P. Kellogg (the father of John Harvey) are said to have offered their homes as stations on the Underground Railroad, which was set up to help fleeing slaves.⁴

It is significant, however, that individuals generally engaged in these activities either before they became Adventists or before the Adventist church became an identifiable unit. In the years after the Great Disappointment, racial attitudes amongst the Sabbath keepers underwent a subtle change. Race ceased to be an issue of social reform and became instead means of demonstrating American hypocrisy. In 1851 J. N. Andrews seized on the racist policies of the United States in order to prove his point about the lamblike beast.⁵ Similarly, James White, in his notorious “Nation” editorial of 1862, linked the practice of slavery to the eschatological damnation of the nation: “For the past ten years the *Review* has taught that the United States of America were a subject of prophecy, and that slavery is pointed out in the prophetic word as the darkest and most damning sin upon this nation. It has taught that Heaven has wrath in store for the nation which it would drink to the very dregs, as due punishment for the sin of slavery.”⁶ To early Adventists, race was largely an abstract concept that had more to do with proving their eschatological understanding than with effecting social reform. This may be one reason why, despite their stated abhorrence of slavery, Adventists gave less-than-wholehearted support to the abolitionist cause during the American Civil War.⁷

The Adventist pioneers had very little personal contact with black people. It was not until the 1870s, when their evangelistic endeavors brought them into the South, that Adventists encountered blacks in significant numbers. They did not, however, set out to evangelize the black communities. Rather, it was blacks who found the church after turning up at Adventist meetings without being directly invited. At these meetings, Adventist ministers discovered the pattern of segregation existing in the South and to which, as northerners, they had never really been exposed. The blacks who came sat in a separate partition or outside the meeting halls. Elbert B. Lane, the first Adventist minister in the South, reported holding meetings in a Tennessee depot building with “white people occupying one room, and the colored the other.”⁸ This self-segregation apparently took some Adventist workers by surprise. In 1876 Dudley M. Canright described a meeting he held near Dallas, Texas. People “came from every direction,” he wrote in the *Review*, “afoot, on horseback . . . with wagons, men, women and children both white and black.” But then he saw “something new—the whites all seated inside the house and the colored people all outside—an invariable custom through the South.”⁹ There is no indication at this stage that Adventists endorsed these practices, although they did accept them as part of life in the region. The reports of Lane and Canright do show, however, that Adventists first saw blacks in the

movement separated from whites or on the back seats outside the church. It was an appropriate beginning to Adventist dealings in race relations, for from that time to the present day, Adventists have never relinquished the idea that good relations between the races are best served by some kind of segregationist policy.

Racial segregation, which is still a marked feature of Adventism in the United States, was prompted first by expediency, then by choice. It was felt that blacks could not be reached without alienating whites unless mission work was divided along racial lines. Canright was one of the first to advocate this. He argued in 1876 that evangelism among the freedmen had to be a distinct mission. "A man cannot labor for them and for the whites too, as the white would not associate with him if he did," he wrote in the *Review*. "There is no objection to laboring for them and teaching them, but it must be separately."¹⁰ This policy was adopted by other Adventist workers, including Edson White, the son of Mrs. White, who sailed down the Mississippi River in the 1890s in the riverboat *The Morning Star*. White went specifically to evangelize the black communities and took great care not to antagonize whites in doing so.¹¹

Prejudiced attitudes thus dictated the Adventist approach to race relations. But soon, Adventism itself began to reflect the racial divide in America. In 1886 the first all-black Adventist church was established in Edgefield, Tennessee. It was followed by another in Louisville, Kentucky, in 1890. In 1895 Oakwood College was started for young Adventist blacks in Huntsville, Alabama. All these institutional developments were perfectly in tune with a nation whose black and white populations were becoming increasingly isolated.¹² When Jim Crow segregation became entrenched in the early 1900s, the Adventist version of it was already firmly in place.

There had, however, been a debate within Adventism about the propriety of this kind of racial segregation. Not all Adventists agreed with it, just as not all Americans—even in the South—accepted a policy of outright segregation before 1900.¹³ The liberal John Harvey Kellogg did not subscribe to the principle of the "color line" and supported other Adventists who defied it. Kellogg's stand upset Edson White, who in 1899 wrote to his mother about the doctor's attitude. White felt that Kellogg and others who wanted to defy segregation would "close up the field" if their ideas gained any credence.¹⁴ His mother, however, had more ambivalent feelings. In the 1890s she urged the integration of the Adventist church and told white Adventists they had no right to exclude blacks from their places of worship.¹⁵ She argued that men who believed the separation of the races to be the best way of meeting the prejudice of white people "have not had the spirit of Christ."¹⁶ But in 1908 in a pamphlet called *Proclaiming the Truth Where There Is Race Antagonism*, Mrs. White bowed to the white racism she had earlier tried

to resist. "Among the white people in many places, there exists a strong prejudice against the colored race. We may desire to ignore this prejudice, but we cannot do it. If we were to act as if this prejudice did not exist, we could not get the light before the white people," she wrote. The prophetess argued for separate white and black churches "in order that the work for the white people may be carried on without serious hindrance."¹⁷ And it was this view that determined Adventist policy as the church moved into the new century.

Before considering how Adventist race relations developed in the twentieth century, it is worth examining another interpretation of the church's early record on race. Within Adventism perhaps the most influential view is that set out in 1970 by Roy Branson in three *Review* articles. In the first, he argues that the Adventist pioneers were in the vanguard of the abolitionist movement and that they took positions that were, for the time, quite liberal. But the evidence cited is based largely on the antislavery activities of Bates, Byington, and J. P. Kellogg, even though the sources indicate that they cut their ties with the abolitionist movement once they became involved with the Adventist community. These pioneers may have had an active pre-Adventist commitment to abolition, but to transpose that commitment to Adventism itself is to exaggerate the church's interest in social reform.¹⁸ Bates, for example, abandoned his career as a social reformer even before the Great Disappointment of 1844.¹⁹ Evidence also suggests that even the early antislavery activity was not all that it has been claimed to be. Byington, for example, may never have used his home as a station on the Underground Railroad.²⁰

In further support of his thesis, Branson cites a statement by Mrs. White in which she instructed church members to disobey the 1850 Fugitive Slave Act that required American citizens to deliver fleeing slaves to their masters.²¹ Considerable doubt arises as to whether Adventists were in any way ahead of other abolitionists on this question. The law was inspired by Southern congressmen and its enactment united Northerners against it. Even people who previously had not shown much interest in the plight of the slave condemned the act. The law was generally regarded as another unwelcome attempt by the Southern states to control the affairs of the entire nation. The Fugitive Slave Act was therefore greeted immediately with widespread protests, public disavowals, and flagrant disregard. In one or two instances, individuals tried under the act were spectacularly acquitted by the courts. Thus Mrs. White brought the church into harmony with mainstream Northern opinion. Indeed, the prophetess, who made her statement in 1859, nine years after the law was enacted, took her time in protesting against what among her neighbors had long been regarded as an unjustifiable act.²²

The point is not that Adventists were silent on racial issues; they were

It was very uncomfortable from the very first. There were a number of southern white people in high positions in the General Conference at the time and they brought their prejudices with them. I could not eat in the General Conference cafeteria with everyone else. Some whites would not even greet you when they saw you in the morning. When they saw you coming, they would look at you, look by you—there would be no greeting at all. This was largely on the part of the womenfolk, but once in while the men would do it too.³⁵

What accounted for all this prejudice? It was certainly true, as Moseley suggests, that many Adventists simply imbibed the deep-seated attitudes of the times. But there were also some specific characteristics of the church that made Adventists susceptible to prejudiced behavior. It is quite likely that the desire to remain aloof from social problems may have made the church rather insensitive to the issue of race.³⁶ The policy on church and state also made white Adventists reluctant to speak out on racial injustice. The question of race was subordinated to what they considered to be the greater good of the church. Adventist leaders believed it was to their advantage to accept the racial policies that existed in America and later to adopt them for their own use. As the Adventist A. W. Spalding explained in an unpublished history of the black work: "Injustice and oppression are repugnant to the Christian; pride and disdain are foreign to his heart; but his Christian experience should not therefore lead him to start a crusade against customs which do not interfere with the Christian's duty."³⁷

As a result of this attitude, the church did not openly support the principle of black equality. Rather, as Abraham Lincoln had done during his senatorial debates with Stephen Douglas in 1858, Adventists denied that blacks were equal to whites for fear of becoming unpopular.³⁸ During his mission down the Mississippi River, Edson White and his associate, F. R. Rogers, often met with hostile opposition from white groups. In Yazoo City, Mississippi, the editor of the city newspaper viciously attacked the Adventist workers for, among other things, teaching equality of the races.³⁹ In a letter to the paper, Rogers wrote: "Understanding the reports that have been circulated about us and our work, I wish to state to the public, in order to right myself on these matters, that we DO NOT believe in social equality, neither do we teach or practise it."⁴⁰ Ellen White, too, made similar statements. She advised that the mingling of whites and blacks in social equality was not to be encouraged.⁴¹ "The colored people," she wrote, "should not urge that they be placed on an equality with white people."⁴² Although not intended for the purpose, these sentiments undoubtedly helped those within the movement who wanted to keep blacks "in their place" and who wanted to justify discrimination against them.

The perpetuation of racial prejudice was also perhaps connected with the changing relationship between the races in America. The Civil War marked the point in American history when the relationship between

whites and blacks changed from a master-servant model to a competitive model. When in 1863 Abraham Lincoln emancipated slaves, he freed them to compete on an equal footing in society. But in order to maintain its position, the white majority created new forms of subordination. Blacks were segregated, disenfranchised, and denied equal opportunities on the labor market. While the master-servant relationship persisted, there was no need for this. But the white majority evidently felt it needed to maintain control of blacks by political means that were supported, through organizations like the Ku Klux Klan, by violence. It was the Emancipation Proclamation that uncorked the potent bottle of white racism.⁴³

Something similar occurred in Adventism. Although the relationship between whites and blacks in the church was never one of master-servant, it was certainly one of master-pupil. In 1903 Edson White revealed to the readers of the *Review* how he saw the blacks in the South. He described them as "a world within a world," "intensely religious" but of having "no refining influence over them, because they have no associations with those who have had the opportunity for education, culture, and refinement." They were "a superstitious people," he wrote. "You could not expect anything else. When we began holding meetings on the boat [the *Morning Star*], the people who came once would always come again, and a story was started that the people who came onto the boat were 'hoodooed.'" He continued: "We need schools in the South, not only to teach these people how to read, but to teach them how to work, to teach them trades, the use of implements, and how to farm."⁴⁴ The Adventist missionary saw it as his duty to educate the uneducated Negro.

But this relationship changed as blacks became literate. The best illustration of the black membership's educational advance was Eva B. Dyke's achievement in becoming the first black woman in America—and possibly in the world—to earn a Ph.D. She completed her doctorate at Harvard in 1921.⁴⁵ Blacks lost their superstitions and began to compete with whites on an equal footing within the movement. As that competition increased, the nature of Adventist discrimination became sharper and more intense, and the white majority became more committed to denying blacks equal status in the church. Precisely when the relationship between the races moved from paternalism to competition is difficult to determine. But the formation of black conferences was the acknowledgment that it had happened.

The competitive phase of race relations helps explain why blacks often revert to a self-imposed segregation. There have always been two poles in the history of the Negro in the United States. One is the push for integration and equal rights. The other, the desire for separation and withdrawal from white society. Integration is perhaps the initial goal, but if competition becomes too fierce and the white majority

opposition from school officials and Ester's brother (although not apparently from her father), the couple managed to maintain the relationship. However, one day Ragland was called into the president's office and was told he could not marry a white woman. "That night," he recalled, "I got up at one o'clock and left the dormitory and walked through the fields to the banks of the St. Joe River, just outside the little town of Berrien Springs, to commit suicide."³² He contemplated his future for an hour before deciding not to jump into the water. Not long afterward, the college sent Ragland to work at the Review and Herald publishing house in Washington, which apparently ended his relationship with Miss Pearce.

The final straw, however, was the situation at Battle Creek Sanitarium, where Ragland went to work a few years later. He recalled that black and white workers were not allowed to eat together. This so insulted him that he decided not only to leave the Adventist church but to leave America altogether. The sanitarium was not at this time an Adventist institution, as Kellogg had maintained control after he left the denomination in 1907. However, in Ragland's mind the sanitarium was still associated with the denomination. Ragland was ninety-three when he related his story, so it is possible that his memory was faulty. But if the sanitarium he described was Kellogg's rather than the church's institution, then Ragland's experience there would cast some doubt on Kellogg's liberal reputation. It suggests that even Kellogg eventually allowed segregationist practices at his institutions.

Ragland moved to Canada but soon returned to Detroit, where he began a successful career as a public official, playing an important part in advancing the cause of blacks in different parts of the country. In the 1920s, as industrial secretary of the Louisville Urban League, he organized what he claimed was the first public housing program for blacks in the United States and saw the first Negroes onto the local police force—apparently, the first south of the Mason-Dixon line. In 1940 he became a racial consultant for Ohio's social security department, and in 1949 he received thirty-two lines in *Who's Who in America*. After a long period of estrangement, he returned to the Adventist church in the late 1960s, vowing never to leave the denomination again over the issue of race.³³

In the end, John Ragland satisfactorily bridged the gap between his deep personal anguish and his belief in the church. J. K. Humphrey was not as lucky. Humphrey was a black Baptist minister who became an Adventist in 1902. He was a man of considerable gifts and was chosen to lead a newly formed black group in New York shortly after his conversion. Later, he founded the First Harlem Seventh-day Adventist Church, which grew rapidly under his leadership. The church, whose membership reached 600 in 1920, spawned the Second Harlem Church in 1924. It was in the 1920s that Humphrey became increas-

ingly concerned with the status of blacks in the Adventist church. Everywhere he looked, he saw discrimination: in the church's schools, hospitals, sanitariums, and conferences. No doubt Humphrey's vision was affected by the stirring events that were then occurring on his doorstep. Harlem in the 1920s was an exciting place to be black. Marcus Garvey's black nationalist movement was in full swing. Humphrey, like Garvey, was a Jamaican, but his own solution to the problem of unyielding racism was the organization of black conferences. Along with several other black leaders, Humphrey canvassed this idea at the denomination's Spring Council meeting in 1929. The General Conference responded by setting up a commission to study the proposal.

Humphrey left the Spring Council convinced—rightly as it turned out—that the General Conference had no intention of accepting the black leadership's wishes. He therefore started work on a secret communitarian project. He called it Utopia Park. It would be situated just outside New York City and would consist of an orphanage, an old people's home, a training school, an industrial area, and health care facilities. If blacks could not go back to Africa as Garvey advocated, at least they could retreat to Utopia Park, "the fortune spot of America for colored people," as Humphrey billed it. The Adventist pastor emphasized that the park would not be just for Adventists but would be open to all blacks in the United States.

Inevitably, word of Humphrey's plans leaked out to his conference superiors. Alarmed at Humphrey's secret project, they decided to defrock him. They had, however, to reckon with the First Harlem Church. When their decision was put to the congregation on November 2, 1929, members closed ranks behind Humphrey and denounced conference leaders for their actions. At one point, the meeting became so heated that only Humphrey's intervention prevented a full-scale riot from developing. Church officials had no option but to disfellowship the church as well. The church reformed under the name United Sabbath-Day Adventist Church. In the black press, Humphrey and his members were viewed as part of the black man's struggle against white oppression. The United Sabbath-Day Adventist Church exists today, but the dream of Utopia Park eventually foundered on legal and financial difficulties. In retrospect, Humphrey's mistake seems only to have been his premature support for black conferences. He was ahead of his time in his efforts to combat racial discrimination.³⁴

The extent of that discrimination pervaded even the General Conference. W. H. Green, who became the first black head of the denomination's Negro department in 1918, and his successors, G. E. Peters and F. L. Peterson, all came up against the color line that operated at church headquarters. Calvin E. Moseley, who became the fourth black to head the Negro department in 1953, recalled the situation when he arrived:

indeed quite vocal. But their readiness to speak out was motivated by their particular view of the end of the world, rather than by their desire to liberate Afro-Americans. Branson himself comes close to recognizing this. In his second article (devoted to the subject of slavery and prophecy) he notes: "Both Uriah Smith and James White related slavery to prophecy. . . . Oppression of blacks in America was more significant evidence that the beast in Revelation 13 was the United States." Indeed, as Branson continued: "Far from being a purely secular concern, Adventists thought race relations were intimately involved with a proper understanding of prophecy and last-day events." These judgments would seem to support the view presented earlier in this chapter that the early Adventists saw the question of race primarily as a stick with which to beat the American beast.²³

The third article in Branson's series attempts to explain Mrs. White's early twentieth-century statements advocating separate white and black churches. He argues that the prophetess's views reflected a worsening of the nation's race relations in the 1890s. The realities of white prejudice forced Mrs. White to reconsider her stand.²⁴ While this explanation is plausible, it would be a mistake to imply that the advocacy of racial segregation was unrepresentative of the Adventist tradition. In an Adventist context Mrs. White's statements were not particularly anomalous. For a time she may have attempted to maintain a liberal position, but when in 1908 she finally advised segregation, she was merely repeating the ideas Canright advanced in 1876. Moreover, the priority she gave to evangelizing white people indicated that Adventism, in racial terms, had changed little during the intervening years. It was still a white movement, with a mission to a white America, and blacks were not allowed to jeopardize the evangelistic objective of the denomination.

But what began as an evangelistic expedient eventually became the denomination's preferred method of dealing with the races, especially as the black membership grew. Between 1894 and 1918, the number of black Adventists increased from 50 to 3,500.²⁵ As more blacks came in, the pattern of institutional segregation became more entrenched. In 1927 a Scottish Adventist, Mrs. Nellie Druillard, established Riverside Sanitarium in Nashville, Tennessee, specifically for blacks. This was followed in 1934 by the founding of the black magazine *Message*, which has since been the voice of black Adventism as well as a major tool for evangelizing American Negroes. The most important institutional development, however, was the formation of black regional conferences in 1944. The black Adventist population then stood at nearly 18,000, approximately 8.5 percent of the Adventist membership in America at that time.²⁶ At the behest of black leaders, the General Conference created conference structures solely for the black churches. Eight of these have so far been formed around the country. The black

conferences, although administered by blacks for blacks, bear the same relationship to the union administration as other Adventist conferences.²⁷

The formation of regional conferences cemented the principle of separate development, which had been implicit from the moment blacks first turned up at Adventist gatherings. In some ways, the events of 1944 put into practice the Supreme Court decision of 1896, which saw the two races, at least in theory, as "separate but equal." Given the racial climate in the nation as a whole, it might be thought that the development of black Adventist conferences was inevitable. But this is not necessarily true. Adventists shared the problem of blacks with other American sects. The Jehovah's Witnesses, however, showed a markedly greater capacity for racial integration than did the Adventists.²⁸ The Mormons, on the other hand, unashamedly held to a doctrine of white supremacy, barring blacks from the priesthood and avoiding contact with them.²⁹ It was Adventism that most closely followed national trends in that it accepted blacks into its community but adopted segregationist policies.

The Adventist church also harbored a great deal of prejudice. Regional conferences had been created in the shadow of a notorious incident of racial discrimination. In 1944 the Adventist Washington Sanitarium refused to treat a black woman after she had fallen ill while visiting the capital. Mrs. Lucy Byard, an Adventist from New York, was then rushed to another hospital in the city. But the delay was fatal. Mrs. Byard died of pneumonia before she could be properly treated. Faced by an outraged constituency, the church's black lay and administrative leadership started the campaign that resulted in the formation of black conferences.³⁰

The policy of not treating blacks in the church's hospitals was only one aspect of Adventist discrimination. Blacks were barred from Adventist schools and, despite their growing numbers and increasing education, were denied equal opportunities within the general church body. These practices put black Adventists in a dilemma. Should they remain within an organization they otherwise felt to be right? Or should they leave a church whose racial policies were, to them, un-Christian? Many stayed. But some, like John M. Ragland, found racial discrimination too much to take, and left. Others like J. K. Humphrey were expelled for pursuing what they considered to be a better deal for the church's blacks.

The case of John Ragland is probably typical of many black Adventists in the first half of the twentieth century. The son of Virginian slaves, Ragland's problems began when he fell foul of the church's dislike of interracial marriages. At the denomination's Emmanuel Missionary College during 1908-9, he had what he described as "a running love affair" with a white woman named Ester Pearce.³¹ In the face of

proves too intransigent, blacks are likely to see separation as the best way forward. Segregation is then seen as the answer to discrimination. Certainly, in the Adventist case, blacks proposed regional conferences after they felt integration was an unobtainable goal. In the next two decades, this general pattern was continued. Black Adventists fought for equal status and participation in the church, but the 1960s ended with many of them calling for greater organizational separation. The Adventist experience was again similar to a nation that in this period produced both Martin Luther King's dream of complete integration and the militant separatism of the Black Muslims.

The Civil Rights movement of the 1960s at first heightened racial tensions in the denomination. An incident that occurred at an Adventist church in Alabama dramatically portrayed the uneasy relationship that existed between the races in the early 1960s. The church, composed mostly of white members, invited a group from Oakwood College to present a Sabbath program. Arriving at the church, the black group found a roped-off section for them to sit in. However, the section could not hold them all, so some of them attempted to find seats elsewhere in the church. As this was against the church's policies, the deacons tried, unsuccessfully, to usher the blacks out. In the midst of the confusion, an elder stood up, pulled out a gun, and declared: "I've got six bullets here and they all say nigger on them." The minister's wife started to cry. "We love you niggers," she said, "but we just don't want you to sit with us."⁴⁶

In other cases, white Adventists linked arms outside their churches to prevent blacks from entering them.⁴⁷ Similar battles were played out in the church's schools. When a black girl was refused admission to an Adventist academy, her parents publicly attacked the denomination for what they considered to be a clear example of racial prejudice. This incident prompted a large protest at the denomination's General Conference session in San Francisco in 1962. About a thousand black Seventh-day Adventists gathered in the city in a demonstration of defiance at the church's racial policies. The event attracted considerable attention in the local press.⁴⁸

Eventually, church leaders responded to the pressure for change. Typically, however, they distanced themselves from the campaigns inside and outside the denomination. In a 1965 editorial in the *Review*, F. D. Nichol implicitly criticized clergymen who took part in the freedom marches. He wrote that the Adventist church sympathized with "those underprivileged," but it did not feel that the answer lay in social protest. Revealing once again the priority given to the church's mission, he stated, "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."⁴⁹

But throughout this period, major pillars of Adventist segregation were falling. In 1965 the *Review* carried actions of the General Conference committee that called for the ending of racial discrimination in the denomination's schools, hospitals, and churches.⁵⁰ The General Conference cafeteria had already been desegregated in the 1950s. But the integration of Adventist schools was a slow process. Southern College in Tennessee, a bastion of white Southern Adventism, admitted its first black students in 1968 after a bitter struggle. Five years after the last state university, Alabama, had integrated its campus.⁵¹ The church also appointed more blacks in leadership positions. In 1962 Frank L. Peterson became the first of several blacks to hold the position of general vice-president of the General Conference. In addition, Adventist publishing houses put out books and articles to educate the membership on racial matters. Among the most significant were Ron Graybill's *E. G. White and Church Race Relations* (1970), which presented the prophetess as a champion of racial equality, and the series of articles by Roy Branson that appeared in the same year.

Despite the moves toward integration, the black conferences remained. Indeed, the controversies of the 1960s convinced many black leaders that only through the creation of black unions, the next level of government in Adventism, could parity be reached with whites. The question, for the black Adventist E. E. Cleveland, was one of power. He saw that union presidents were decisive figures in church administration but that blacks had very little hope of reaching such positions. He thus supported black unions because it was "imperative that black men have someone at Union Conference level to speak for them."⁵² However, Calvin Rock, another black leader, later argued for black unions on the grounds of the genuine cultural differences that exist between the races.⁵³ He also had in his support the fact that the separation of the black work had apparently led to a spectacular increase in the black membership. Between 1944 and 1970, the number of black Adventists rose from around 18,000 to just under 74,000, or 18 percent of the total American membership. Throughout the 1970s, black unions were debated. The proposal was rejected several times during the decade by General Conference committees.⁵⁴ But the black constituency received some consolation when a black man, Charles Bradford, was appointed president of the North American Division in 1979.

In addition to the calls for greater separation, black leaders also raised the level of black consciousness in the 1970s. This was not dissimilar to the "black is beautiful" movement of the 1960s. The roots of this in Adventism, however, went back to 1934, when Frank L. Peterson published *The Hope of the Race*. It contained the traditional Adventist themes, but it differed from all Adventist books before it in the attention it paid to black history. Its pages were sprinkled with photographs of black heroes such as Booker T. Washington and the singer

Roland Hayes. The book celebrated the black experience almost as much as the Adventist message.⁵⁵ E. E. Cleveland wrote a similar book in 1970 called *Free at Last*. The inside cover contained a collage of famous black figures from Jesse Owens to George Washington Carver. The book was dedicated to the black man's hopes and, like Peterson's work, was clearly a black interpretation of Adventism.⁵⁶

Because they have sought to establish a black identity as well as an Adventist identity, black Adventists have drawn inspiration from black role models outside the Adventist community. Conversely, prominent blacks who emerged from Adventism, such as the writer Richard Wright, strongly asserted black pride. Wright's most famous novel, *Native Son* (1940), revolves around a black character who finally discovers a meaning for his existence when he accidentally kills his white employer's daughter.⁵⁷ Little Richard is also noted for his black consciousness. When the rock singer retired in the late 1950s, he attended the black Adventist institution Oakwood College, where he particularly enjoyed classes in black history. Although he resumed his musical career in the early 1960s, he again turned to religion in the 1970s, when he established an independent ministry aimed at Afro-Americans that drew inspiration from, among others, the black Adventist leader, E. E. Cleveland.⁵⁸ The black identity of Prince, the other world-famous singer with an Adventist background, is also marked. Prince's Adventist heritage reveals itself in the strongly apocalyptic content of many of his songs.⁵⁹ In contrast, the black musicians produced by the Jehovah's Witnesses, such as Michael Jackson and George Benson, draw little on their racial or religious heritage.⁶⁰ It would appear that the black artists who emerge from Adventism have a stronger and more aggressive sense of racial identity than do their counterparts from the Jehovah's Witnesses—a sect with a better record of racial integration.

In a famous study of race relations, Robert Park and Ernest Burgess argued in 1921 that blacks would eventually be assimilated into American society.⁶¹ In the equally famous 1944 analysis *An American Dilemma: The Negro Problem and Modern Democracy*, Gunnar Myrdal made the same assumptions. He believed that not only did blacks want to be assimilated but that this was the only viable option.⁶² With the early emergence of individuals such as W. E. B. Dubois, Marcus Garvey, and even Booker T. Washington, it is doubtful if black leaders have seen integration as their only objective. But it was the black nationalist movement of the later 1960s that forced sociologists to recognize the separatist, as well as the integrationist, impulse in black history.⁶³

The paradox of race, observed the writer Joel Williamson, "is that black people have to get out of white society in order to get into it, and they have to get into it in order to get out. They have to get into the society to get a minimum of those palpable things that people need

minimum of justice. . . . Yet because white people are prejudiced and have the power to manifest their prejudices in a multitude of ways, they have to get out . . . to maintain a sense of worth and self-esteem."⁶⁴ In their own experience of race relations, Adventists have provided a small illustration of this aspect of American society. The separation of races in the church witnesses to the continuing tensions between them, and Williamson's paradox appear to apply to the Adventist black, who, although perhaps loved by his white brothers, has never been totally convinced that they want him to sit with them.