Heaven bound, earthly good: an historical analysis of race relations in the Seventh-Day Adventist Church

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HEAVEN BOUND, EARTHLY GOOD: AN HISTORICAL ANALYSIS OF RACE RELATIONS IN THE SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH

A THESIS
SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF CLARK ATLANTA UNIVERSITY
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THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF ARTS

BY
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DEPARTMENT OF AFRICAN-AMERICAN STUDIES
STUDIES

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ABSTRACT

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HEAVEN BOUND, EARTHLY GOOD: AN HISTORICAL ANALYSIS OF RACE RELATIONS IN THE SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH

Advisor: Dr. Josephine Bradley

Thesis dated May 2010

The Seventh-day Adventist Church is a denomination that has contributed much to the development of American society. Although the Church is a religious and social institution, its views on race in America have changed over the years, from its abolitionist approach during the mid 19th century to its stance of non-involvement during the Civil Rights Movement. By studying the race relations in the Adventist Church, this thesis reveals the factors that may have caused its position of non-intervention during the Civil Rights Movement. The thesis analyzes the development of black/white race relations in the Seventh-day Adventist Church, and how it has led to the Church’s stance regarding race during the Civil Rights Movement. The functionalist theory is utilized to elucidate the Church’s racial approach from a sociological perspective. This thesis allows for future research of other religious organizations and how those institutions have helped advance or delay the quest for social freedom amongst African Americans.
The author of this document acknowledges, first and foremost, his Lord and Savior Jesus Christ for allowing this manuscript to become a success. The author extends many thanks to his parents, Leonard and Wanda Grant, for their patience, support, and prayers regarding this effort. A sincere note of appreciation is extended to his wife Sarah Grant for her constant love, encouragement, and support during this thesis project. The author is forever indebted to Dr. Mary Twining for her countless hours of dedication and patience. Thank you, Dr. Twining, for bestowing upon me the wisdom and experience needed to complete this project. The student offers much thanks to Dr. Bradley for the time and effort she has given to this manuscript. Thank you for the many sacrifices you have made to make sure that this thesis was a success. Much gratitude is shown to Oakwood University for allowing the researcher to access the resources needed for this document. Brothers Kayin Shabazz and Melvin Collier, thank you for your counsel and guidance during this thesis period. For all those who were not mentioned, thank you for your financial, academic, and moral support.
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CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

This study investigated the Seventh-day Adventist Church’s role as an agent for social change by examining its involvement in the Abolitionist Movement (1830s-1863), and its detachment from the Civil Rights Movement. The researcher examined the impact of theological teachings, traditions, events, and religious leaders of the church in order to find out if a decline took place in social awareness, social stability, and social justice by the church’s leadership. The research reveals factors that may have caused the Adventist Church to remove itself from the racial struggle in the Civil Rights Movement. This investigation was done in order to understand the racial barriers that lie deep inside the origins, teachings, and practices of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Although there is an insufficiency of material relative to the Seventh-day Adventist Church’s activist involvement in social equality and social justice, this study may result in a model for the consideration of race relations by the Seventh-day Adventist Church (SDA) and other religious organizations.

Problem

A social problem, according to Donald E. Ratcliff is:

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a condition affecting a significant number of people in ways considered undesirable, about which it is felt something can be done through collective social action. The first phase of the definition suggests that the number of people affected by a problem must reach a level of significance. Secondly, social problems must affect people in a manner which is undesirable. The problem must be a concern that has a solution. Lastly, the social dilemma should be solved via the collective organization of groups.²

The problem is the Seventh-day Adventist Church maintained a stance of noninvolvement during the Civil Rights Movement. This stance constituted a problem because the black constituents of the church and the black communities surrounding the Adventist Churches were in a struggle for human rights. Injustice was evident in the lives of Adventist people, and the church appeared to separate itself from the fight for social freedom, justice and equality for this oppressed group. There were social and political issues going on in African-American communities. Adequate educational opportunities were not being provided for African Americans during this time. Blacks were fighting for universal manhood suffrage, voting was prohibited to the people of African descent living in the Southern States, yet they were still forced to abide by laws mandated to contain their behavior. Segregation and inferiority were also prevalent during this time. Not only were African Americans victims of forced separation from whites, but their institutions and resources were not equal to that of their white counterparts. They were forced to learn in second-rate facilities with second hand materials. Inferiority and racism were accepted ways of life that were internalized by southerners, black and white, as the norm that divided the two cultures. Not much was

being done to reverse the heinous crimes of slavery and Jim Crow. The Adventist Church was a part of American society, and all of these concerns inadvertently affected the SDA Church. Black SDA members were also victims of the mistreatment imposed by American society. The more militant black constituents attempted to evoke change because of the revolutionary spirit induced by the movement; yet, the church did not feel the need to get involved in the racial struggle. The Adventist institution may not have showed an interest in the movement for several reasons. First, the church may have suffered from the comfort of white privilege. The institution may have enjoyed the notion of white superiority, since the administration of the church was predominantly white. In addition to this, the problem of segregation may have been too big for the church too handle. Maybe the Church wanted to stay out of the affairs of the state by upholding the American tradition advocating separation of church and state. The SDA denomination may not have been familiar with the struggle of African Americans, and did not see a need to get involved with a resistance that was not their struggle. Maybe there was not enough black leadership in the church to promote integration or the fight for equality. It is a possibility that the church did not espouse the beliefs of integration and intended to advance the notion of a racially separate America. The researcher believes the Seventh-day Adventist Church maintained a stance of noninvolvement during the Civil Rights Movement because they subscribed to a belief of white superiority. The lack of interest in African Americans, especially those inside and outside the denomination, may have caused the church to exclude itself from the struggle that changed the face of American society.
History of Social Reform in the Adventist Church

The Seventh-day Adventist Church is a denomination that has a history of social reform. During the inception of the Millerite Movement, early Adventists adopted a mindset similar to other religions of the Second Great Awakening. The heightened awareness of the millennium and a concern for social reform was common amongst religions of the early to middle 19th century. Contrary to the norms of the time, Millerites (early Adventists) proselytized to a number of different racial and ethnic groups, including blacks. Africans were believed to have no soul or humanity, no culture or civilization worthy of respect, and that they were outside of the grace of God. The Millerites ignored this racist supposition and broke social barriers by accepting Africans into their fold. In addition to accepting blacks into the denomination, Africans in America were also permitted to preach the Advent message and work alongside the leaders of the movement. Though no major social developments took place during the Millerite years, the integration of blacks and whites in this movement spoke volumes to their outlook on race in America.

In 1850, the Adventist publishing company, The Adventist Review, contributed to the changes that Seventh-day Adventists were making in the world. The magazine (The Adventist Review and Sabbath Herald) was comprised of reviews concerning Christ’s

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Second Coming and the proclamation of the Seventh-day Sabbath. In addition to the theological teachings portrayed through the publication, it also became a voice for the antislavery movement. The Seventh-day Adventist Church took a strong stance against slavery. Through the apparatus of the printing press, they expressed the religious and social significance of abolitionists. The editors of the *Adventist Review and Sabbath Herald* (presently the *Review and Herald*) conveyed God's disdain for slavery and the hypocrisy America perpetuated by allowing its existence to continue. This magazine not only helped increase the membership of the Adventist Church, but also raised awareness for abolitionists.

Once the Seventh-day Adventist Church achieved recognition as an authorized religious organization, they began to function as an official social institution, as exemplified through the social activities in which they engaged. City missions were popular amidst the Adventists of the mid 19th century. Ciro Sepulveda states, “Adventists have always had a deep concern for the poor. The fact that most of the Seventh-day Adventists came from poverty helped them identify with the plight of those that lived in the broken down quarters of the large cities.”5 The city missions provided meals and Bible study for the destitute and down trodden. Years before the occupation of social workers in the United States, Adventists worked the slums and ghettos of the Northern cities. Furthermore, social reform was evident through the Seventh-day Adventist contribution to the medical profession.

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5 Ibid., 143.
These modifications were due to the number of SDA preachers working in the tenement houses and ghettos of the large cities. During their work hours, they were susceptible to illnesses and disease. *The Health Reformer*, an Adventist medical magazine, emerged on to the American literary scene.\(^6\) By the turn of the twentieth century John Harvey Kellogg, a leading physician in the Adventist community, established six health and social reform institutions in the inner city of Chicago. The Seventh-day Adventist Medical Missionary Benevolent Association started health reform institutions in 17 American cities. The *Life Boat*, by Dr. David Paulson, was the Adventist influence of urban mission. This manuscript published articles on social reform topics as juvenile delinquency, child labor, and prison reform. The *Life Boat* reached an astonishing 200,000 subscribers.\(^7\)

The education system of the Seventh-day Adventist Church was centered on the notion of service. In the 1880s, Adventist training schools made their appearance in the American education system. SDA institutions accepted anyone who was willing to learn and serve. In the 1890’s, an all-black training school was set up to train African Americans who had an interest in education.\(^8\) Adventist schools were designed for people who had a desire to assist those less fortunate. SDA teachers trained their pupils to work in the health sanitariums and social reform programs. Degrees, professions, and

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\(^6\) Ibid., 103.


\(^8\) Sepulveda, *On the Margins of Empires*, 166.
financial stability were not the primary goals of these early Adventist educators. They prepared students for social improvement and the second coming of Christ.

During the tumultuous times of the 1960s, Seventh-day Adventists involved themselves with the Civil Rights Movement and its spirit of social change. Significant leaders such as Dr. E.E. Cleveland, C.E. Bradford, Frank Hale, and others assisted Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. in demanding justice and equality for all people regardless of race, color, and creed. Seventh-day Adventist students from various institutions marched alongside the Civil Rights activists in Alabama in hopes of a more racially unified America. Even after the assassination of Dr. King, Adventists played a major role in the Poor People’s March on Washington. Seventh-day Adventists helped reinforce the egalitarian ideas of the Civil Rights Movement and advanced the fight for social change in the 1950s and 60s. However, the Adventist Church as a whole took a stance of noninvolvement and refrained from inciting the spirit of racial reform.

**Significance of Study**

This study is significant to the Seventh-day Adventist institution. The historical background of this research provides a history of black Adventism, as well as the Church’s recognition and inclusion of black Adventists. In particular, this study highlights the two significant movements that have influenced black Adventists in America: the Abolitionist Movement and the Civil Rights Movement. Therefore, if one looks to investigate either of these two subjects, this research offers an analysis of

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Adventist history and the relationship of the Seventh-day Adventist Church to its African-American members struggle for social equality and social justice.

In addition to the historical background, the Adventist institution is, not solely a religious institution, but a social institution as well. Social reform in Adventism is a topic that has been discussed, but according to the research, no one has worked with the functionalist theory to show how it explicates the interdependence of social institutions, such that it ensures an analysis of the relevance of each part of the social structures to the whole of society.

This research is not only significant to the institution of Seventh day Adventism, but to all religious organizations supported by African Americans. The research is designed to provide guidelines and tools for people to critique the sacred institutions which they espouse. The functionalist theory in this piece is one way to assess the role of one’s religious organization and its effects on the black community. This research can be utilized by other scholars in studies pertaining to religions they support, and means by which those institutions seek to increase their efforts in bringing about social change and equality.

Theoretical Framework

The research used the functionalist theory to explain the ways social institutions fill community needs, especially social stability. Functionalism, or functionalist theory, deals with the structures and workings of society. It is centered on the belief that all of society is made up of components that are needed to help make that society function. If a
society is functioning properly, it is attributed to the components that make up that society.

There are many viewpoints on the definition of the functionalist theory. The researcher will use the definition found in *The Sociological Approach to Social Problems* stating:

A society from a functionalist perspective is to visualize society as a system where all parts act together even though each part may be doing different things. Associated with the system is structure. In society, institutions, such as family, education, and religion are the parts of the social system. They are structures in society that social activity is organized around. The overall of the various structures (parts) is to maintain order in society. The structures in society promote integration, stability, consensus, and balance in society.¹⁰

A change in one part of society can impact the total society. Some of the “functional prerequisites” that a social system must meet to survive include developing routinized interpersonal arrangements structures, defining relations to the external environment, fixing boundaries, and recruiting and controlling members.¹¹ Though many have used functionalism as a means of class domination. Functionalism was never intended to be used as a tool of oppression. Kitano states, “Inequalities were attributed to differences in ability and talent, and the notion that one group could use its power to dominate another group was never central to Durkheim's analysis.”¹² According to the

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theory of functionalism, “tasks should be carried out and those tasks should be consistent with the structures and norms of society . . . When there is a disturbance in the social world, the various roles and organizations have means to return the society to a more normal state of affairs.”

Functional analysis does not emphasize conflict, does or consider conflict to be an integral part of the social world, and generally does not consider change to be dramatic but rather to be evolutionary. At the same time, the structural functional approach is in the tradition of western liberalism – arguing for equality of opportunity, a liberal democracy, and social reforms that would encourage these. In addition, some Christian sociologists indicate that functionalism would lack an emphasis upon change, which is perceived as central to the Christian message. The early components of the functionalist theory come from Emile Durkheim positing that the interrelations between the parts of society contribute to social unity. A social influence that is studied from group to individual supplies the framework for a new science of sociology that would be later coined as “functionalism.” The functional approach underwent development from the 1930s until about the 1960s. Later, anthropologists Bronislaw Malinowski and Alfred Radcliffe-Brown built on the doctrine of structural functionalism after theorizing that a change in any single element would

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14 Ibid.


produce a general disturbance in the whole society. Some social anthropologists advocated a policy of indifference. They believed that interference may lead to disorganization.

Talcott Parsons is one of the major contributors to the functionalist approach. This approach began to dominate schools of sociology in the 1950s. Parsons contributed to the modification of functionalism by establishing the functional prerequisites needed for any social system of action: adaptation, goal attainment, integrative system, and latency, or pattern maintenance. Functionalism studies the roles of institutions and social behavior in society, the way these are related to other social features, and developed explanations of society in social terms. Functionalism was one of the theories of classical sociologists, however, its emphasis centers around function, interdependence, consensus, equilibrium, and evolutionary change. Macro sociology, institution and structures in a whole society, is the focus of functionalism. Functionalism explains the relationship of different parts of the system to each other. Every social institution is working together moving towards equilibrium. Changes inside of functionalist societies appear orderly and evolutionary as opposed to the revolutionary change of the conflict theory. Each society has certain needs in that there are a number of activities that must be carried out for social life to survive and develop. Goods and services must be produced and distributed in order for people to survive, there must be


some administration of justice, a political system must exist, and some family structure must operate to provide a means to reproduce the population and maintain social life on a daily basis. In the structural functional model, individuals carry out each of the tasks in various institutions and roles that are consistent with the structures and norms of the society. A change in one part of the society causes other parts to modify to this evolution. This concept is the significance of interdependence. So long as roles are performed, the structures function smoothly. Disturbances from a normal state of affairs, from outside of the society, affect the social system because the different parts are not operating properly.¹⁹ Functionalist theory is based upon three major concepts. The first concept is that society is a set of interdependent parts that are working towards equilibrium. Secondly, there are functional requirements that must be met for a society to survive. Lastly, events are seen to exist because they serve a function. The inter-related social institutions that make up a society include education, governments, families, economic systems, religions, etc. All of these institutions function together in order maintain social stability.²⁰

Functionalism is the theory that will be used to explicate this research, because it views religious organizations as social institutions and explains their purposes as an interrelated part of a society. While in this position, it is required to meet the needs of society. These needs include the right to freedom, justice, and equality. The functionalist theory explains how the SDA Church, or any religious institution, helps society maintain

¹⁹ Ibid.

a level of stability. The theory helps society maintain or restabilize itself after a social revolution that leads to a breakdown in religious and governmental institutions.

The first concept of the functionalist theory is to ensure that all parts of society realize that they are interdependent with each other. This notion will not allow the Seventh-day Adventist Church to exclude itself from the community. Also, this theory compels the Seventh-day Adventist Church to work alongside other social institutions in order to bring about significant change in society.

The second concept is that all social institutions have functional requirements that must be met for the people involved to survive. This means that the Seventh-day Adventist Church not only needs the people in the community, but the community needs the Seventh-day Adventist Church to fulfill its societal requirements. The functionalist theory gives religious denominations a social purpose for its existence, thus allowing them to function in society by serving the people that make up society's institutions.

The final concept of the functionalist theory is that events exist due to the functions social institutions serve in society. This theory alludes to the idea that Seventh-day Adventist Churches are responsible for the positive and negative events that occur in their communities. There is no one institution that should be praised or blamed for the events that take place in a community. All social institutions should be held accountable for social stability or lack thereof. Therefore, if a Seventh-day Adventist institution exists in a particular area, then that institution shares communal responsibility with all the social institutions in that vicinity.
The author studied the methods early Adventists used to uphold the standards of the functionalist theory and how their behavior affected its role in American communities. The church was studied and analyzed as a social institution. The researcher observed the role of Adventist literature and the people's response to its anti slavery spirit. In addition to these observations, he examined the ways in which the church interrelated with other parts of society. Social institutions such as hospitals, schools, and legislatures may have played a major role in the development of the Adventist organization.

**Examining the Causes**

The researcher surveyed the theological interpretations of the church. He looked at the teachings and principles of the SDA Church to see if it expressed a concern for the downtrodden and those treated unjustly. This study observed the Adventist Church as a social institution. Instead of viewing the theological beliefs of the Church in light of spiritual understanding, the author examined Adventist beliefs and teachings while taking into account their effects on social reform and equality. Evaluating the Church in this manner disclosed the racial problems that lie within the core principles of the Adventist system. The author examined the 28 fundamental beliefs and the Church Manual. These texts are some of the foremost extra biblical sources that provide the moral framework for the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Analyzing these texts, while taking into account social stability, allowed the researcher to see if the code of standard for the church is counterproductive to racial justice and social balance.
In addition to studying Adventist religious literature, the researcher critiqued the traditions, events, and religious leaders in the period between the Abolitionist Movement and Civil Rights Movement. He looked at how certain key events and traditional norms affected or displayed the way the Church viewed race relations in the denomination and in America. In looking at the traditions and actions of the Adventist institution, the author was able to assess the consistency of the Church’s actions with its principle teachings. Also, the author observed the period between the Abolitionist Movement and the Civil Rights Movement to see how significant events can explain the Church’s inactive position with respects to the work of the Civil Rights Movement. Looking at religious leaders and their views on social reform and racial equality helped the researcher understand how the Church’s leadership may have been a factor in the Adventist Church’s noninvolvement in the Civil Rights Movement. Critically assessing these key events, traditions and people in light of social reform and racial equality allows the Church to be evaluated from a sociological perspective.

**Methodology**

This research provides a thorough analysis of the race relations in the Adventist Church with regards to social injustice. Some authors have commented on the Adventist Church’s detachment in the Civil Rights Movement. However, the research reviewed during the data collection phase did not reveal a complete historical analysis of the church’s view on race or the church’s racial involvement from a sociological approach. The data collected assessed the activism, or lack thereof, of the Adventist Church in an effort to understand the ethnic divides that lie at the core of its makeup.
The researcher used historical analysis as the research method for this study. Historical analysis is the process of learning and understanding the background and growth of a chosen field of study or profession. It offers insight into organizational culture, current trends, and future possibilities. The historical method encompasses the origin, growth, theories, of any field of study. The following steps are utilized in the historical approach to the research:

the recognition of a historical problem or the identification of a need for certain historical knowledge. The gathering of as much relevant information about the problem or topic as possible. The rigorous collection and organization of evidence, and the verification of the authenticity and veracity of information and its sources. The selection, organization, and analysis of the most pertinent collected evidence, and the drawing of conclusions; and the recording of conclusions in a meaningful narrative.  

The methodology in this research begins with an historical review of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. More specifically, the researcher examined the Adventist Church’s role in the abolitionist movement, the Pre-Civil Rights Era, and the Civil Rights Movement. After showing the church’s decrease in contributions to racial equality, the functionalist theory will be applied, to see if their actions affect society as a whole. The data collection includes the teachings, traditions, events, and major figures of the church, which affected the Church’s role in the racial struggles of blacks in America. This examination focuses on race relations between African Americans and the Millerite Movement/Seventh-day Adventist Church. The investigation indicates the principles and practices, which may or may not have

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perpetuated the lack of interest exhibited by the Adventist Church in relation to racial injustice following the Abolitionist Movement. The assessment of the SDA Church includes the Millerite Movement and the early Adventist’s stance on slavery considering the connections between enslaved Africans and this new Advent Movement.

The review of significant people throughout Adventist history shows the development of black influence in the SDA Church and its relation to the fight for racial equality. A majority of these significant figures influenced the church during the Millerite movement; however, some may have done work for the church post-1863 (the year the Millerite Movement became the Seventh-day Adventist Church). The researcher examined the ways in which Millerite/Adventist abolitionist efforts affected black leadership and coincided, or conflicted, with some of the mainstream antislavery efforts.

Though the historical observation focused on the Abolitionist Movement and the Civil Rights Movement, the researcher transitioned between the two sections by acknowledging important events that lead up to the Civil Rights Movement as well as examining events regarding the Church’s involvement in efforts for social equality and social justice. This includes the official organization of the church, the establishment of its first African-American school, and other progressive moments pertaining to race relations. These pertinent events related to race consist of the establishment of the Negro Department of the General Conference, and the separation of conferences in the 1944. The Pre-Civil Rights Period is important because it displays practices that may have resulted in the noninvolvement posture exhibited by the Adventist Church.
The Seventh-day Adventist’s role in the Abolitionist Movement and the Pre-Civil Rights Era are examined in relation to their function in the Civil Rights Movement during the 1950s and 60s. The researcher observed and explained SDA leaders and their function in the Civil Rights Movement. Later, the thesis highlighted major Seventh-day Adventists who played a part in the struggle for Civil Rights during the 1950’s and 1960’s. The goal of the research is to ascertain whether the church played a progressive role in the fight for racial justice and equality.

Further data collection pertaining to the role of the Church in race relations included, in depth narratives of four students from an Adventist College in California who participated in the March on Selma. The story of a young Adventist woman, Irene Morgan, who refused to give up her seat on the bus prior to Rosa Parks was also added to the data collection. Information on significant Adventist leaders who took on the challenge of social change initiated by Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. was used for further factual analysis.

The theological beliefs that play a part, directly or indirectly, to the notion of social change during the abolitionist movement and pre-Civil Rights period are assessed. The data collected was utilized to determine if there are theological beliefs that provide reasons why the Adventist Church did not participate in the Civil Rights Movement of the 1950s and 60s.

Finally, traditions related to race relations were used as a way of uncovering the true feelings of the Adventist Church towards social reform with regards to ethnicity.
The author looked to see if the Adventist Church was simply upholding tradition when they chose to take a stance of noninvolvement during the 1960's.

**Research Question**

What factors caused the Adventist Church to remove itself from the racial struggle in the Civil Rights Movement?

**Limitations**

One limitation that affects the research is the position that the researcher is a practicing Seventh-day Adventist, which may appear difficult for the research to display an unbiased approach to the analysis. The author brings with him, not only information and facts, but also a lifetime of knowledge and experiences related to the SDA denomination.

**Chapter Organization**

The first chapter of this thesis introduces history of social reform in the Adventist Church. It provides a summarized account of the history of social development in the Adventist Church. The chapter presents the purpose of this research and details the problem/concern being addressed, as well as the conceptual framework and the methodology employed in conducting the research. The second chapter provides a review of the literature previously read on the topic under investigation. The third chapter is a historical one, which presents a detailed description of the history of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, including the early pioneers of the Church, and important events.
The fourth chapter of this thesis presents the findings and an assessment of the Seventh-day Adventist Church during the Abolitionist period, and the Pre-Civil Rights Period. This chapter explains the theological teachings, traditions, significant events, and religious leaders that affected race relations in the Adventist Church. It gives an analysis of the findings and applies the functionalist theory to the results of the study. The fifth chapter consists of the summary and the conclusion, and offers suggestions for further research.
CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

*On the Margins of Empires*, by Ciro Sepulveda, is one of the central texts utilized in this research. It provides a detailed account of the history of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. The historical component of the manuscript offers background information on significant people that have largely affected the emergence of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. The connection between events follows the process of the Church’s development. The knowledge of American history and its influence on the Adventist Church helps one gain an holistic view of how the institution, not only functioned as a religious sector, but as a social organization. Illustrations surrounding the people and events add to the imagery presented in this text. The detail and breakdown of the events, people, and thought process of the time makes this text one of the key resources in this project. *On the Margins of Empires* is an extremely detailed portrayal of the history of the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

Sepulveda’s book provided the framework for the historical outline needed in this thesis. The chronological breakdown in this text helped the researcher accurately follow the story of the Adventist Church. It also reduced the time needed to select what was relevant to this project. The black experience and its impact on the Church were displayed throughout the book. Sepulveda, not only presented information on the black
Seventh-day Adventist Church, but also subtly assessed its problems with race relations. Historically, the author paints an accurate picture of the world Church and how it was affected by social changes.

Although, this piece is a vital resource for this manuscript, it does not come without limitations. Dr. Sepulveda provides a detailed historical breakdown of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. However, his text lacks in-depth analysis on the two significant events that this research presents. On the Margins of Empires gives a basic understanding of all facets of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Therefore, one who is interested in gaining a complete understanding of the quandaries of African-American Adventists can only use his piece as a guide. He presents notions of race relations in the Church, but Sepulveda does not provide a thorough analysis of their effects on society and the mentality of black Seventh-day Adventists. The researcher adjoins the history of black Adventism with sociological theory and their effects on the actions of black Adventists.

Alvin Makapela’s book, The Problem with Africanity in the Seventh Day Adventist Church, offers the notion of how the Seventh-day Adventist movement can cause pertinent social change, however, inside the beauty of Seventh-day Adventism is a dark tradition of separation and inferiority. Makapela goes into the history of American Adventists and their relation to Africans. He begins in 1887 with the establishment of mission stations in Kimberley and Cape Town.¹ Later, he covers the 1990 establishment

of the new commission on church unity in South Africa during the years of apartheid.\(^2\)

Makapela identifies the effects of colonialism on Africans as immoral, a denigration to African people, and a disregard for their humanity. Ironically, he claims that Seventh-day Adventists did not condemn such a system, but consented to its regulations regarding it as inevitable and necessary for Africans\(^3\). The ideas and politics of this denomination affected many people worldwide and the racist, hypocritical actions within this denomination lessened the validity of its beliefs.

Makapela analyzes the theme of segregation in his discussion of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. He does this by reiterating the sentiments of African Americans and J.W. Man's saying, "Ellen G. White, by accepting and encouraging segregation, was advocating the dehumanization and victimization of African Americans."\(^4\) He examines the history and teachings of the Adventist Church and states how inconsistent the beliefs are with the actions. The author also focuses on the Seventh-day Adventist Church and its relation to African culture and people by addressing the theme of Afrocentricity in the denomination.

The text provides information on the relationship of the Seventh-day Adventists with people of African descent. He illustrates the racist tradition of the Adventist Church by highlighting the early 20\(^{th}\) century development of the Negro Department. He states, "white Seventh-day Adventist leaders were unwilling, even at this early stage, to

\(^2\) Ibid., 368.

\(^3\) Ibid., 141-142.

\(^4\) Ibid., 224.
eradicate racism from their organization." This tradition is the same subject matter evident in this paper. It also provides historical evidence of racism that is deeply rooted in the Seventh-day Adventist tradition. Makapela examines how the racist actions displayed in Seventh-day Adventism affects people of African descent both in Africa and in America; however, this research is focusing on why there was a lack of revolutionary action by the Adventist Church during the Civil Rights Movement. The researcher expects to add to Makapela’s argument by introducing the functionalist theory, which perhaps, will explicate the reasons why the Adventist Church took a stance of noninvolvement in the Civil Rights Movement. Similar to Makapela’s text, this thesis raises the awareness and consciousness of the Adventist Church and its relation to its African-American constituents.

Though Makapela examines Africanity in the Adventist Church, the book Institutional Loyalty versus Racial Freedom written by Calvin Rock, delves into the administrative positions of Adventism and the politics that affect the less fortunate, more closely Africans and African Americans. It expounds on the notions of being loyal to an organization and fighting for the cause of freedom. Black leaders inside the Adventist Church may have a feeling of disloyalty since racial freedom and equality inside this institution is sometimes inconsistent with the Seventh-day Adventist tradition. Rock cites Kenneth Wood (former editor the Review and Herald) saying, “they, World Council Church, do no favor to the lost world by offering them the stones of political freedom,

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5 Ibid., 220.
economic prosperity, or racial equality, when they hunger for bread—the Bread of Life."

Similarly, to Calvin Rock’s book, the researcher also deals with the effects of the Adventist tradition on racial equality. Rock’s text examines the notion of racial freedom as a whole and how it affects black Adventists. This research deals with the same principle, but makes it applicable to the Adventist Church and its correlation with the Civil Rights Movement. This research utilizes similar methods, as did Rock, an historical analysis. Rock also sheds light on the constraints that shape the social thoughts of the Adventist Church. He identifies socio religious constraints like religious expression and minority identity, concluding that black religious sectarians usually adopt the socially conservative attitudes of their religious counterparts—the majority membership. The researcher places a focal point on the sociological discomforts that come from religious devotion and why African-American Adventists may or may not have placed that above their equal rights.

Seventh-day Adventism consists of many beliefs. Ideas on the nature of God, Jesus Christ, the Second Coming, and others make up this denomination and its doctrines. The Truth about Seventh Day Adventism by Walter Martin is a book that presents the beliefs of Adventism and defends the rationale of Adventists’ beliefs by offering an in depth understanding of the theological premises that make up the Seventh-day Adventist denomination. Martin’s text provides concrete explanations surrounding the Adventist faith. All of the beliefs are based on strong Christian ideals, which

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7 Ibid., 83.
theologically indicates that the faith looks to emulate the life and teachings of Jesus Christ.

There are several religious themes in Walter Martin’s book. One theme deals with the notion of Christ being the center of all spiritual thought. Another concept makes mention of an additional philosopher, Ellen G. White. White’s writings are used as a source of correction for Adventist lifestyle and behavior. The only book that is above Ellen White’s writings that can be used for moral reproof is the Bible. Outside of the extra-biblical authority, Martin’s book validates the notion that Seventh-day Adventism stands on a biblical foundation and should be viewed as a religion and refutes the idea others have posed, that Seventh-day Adventism is a cult.\footnote{Anthony Hoekema, \textit{The Four Major Cults: Christian Science, Jehovah’s Witness, Mormonism, Seventh-day Adventist} (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Publishing Company), 388-403.}

Walter Martin’s text provides information for an analysis of the spiritual foundation of Seventh-day Adventism, like a critique of Ellen White’s writings, which this research examined in analyzing whether or not the philosophies of the Church lead believers to relinquish loyalty to the communities. Martin’s research provides a framework for assessing religious beliefs and actions in an unbiased manner.

\textit{The Truth about Seventh-day Adventism} by Walter Martin discusses Seventh-day Adventism, but it does not test the actions of Adventists throughout history. The present research explains how Adventist beliefs may or may not have been contrary to the Adventist Church’s role as a social institution, and if the actions and traditions of the...
Seventh-day Adventist Church are consistent with its theological teachings and biblical basis.

Duane McBride and Jacquelyn Giem’s article, “The Christian and Society: Some functions, Dysfunctions, Conflict and Interactions” investigates the Seventh-day Adventist Church’s role in society from a sociological perspective. Their study uses the oral interview method, and the theoretical frameworks Functionalism, Conflict theory and Symbolic Interactionism. The authors highlight the major contributions and issues that have occurred because of the Church’s role in society. Some of these contributions include principles related to healthy living, public health research, health care services, and the founding of the International Religious Liberty Association which deals with issues concerning religious freedom and human rights. McBride and Giem indicate the balance the Church appears to have when dealing with evangelism and social reform.

The purpose of McBride and Giem’s research is to provide, from a sociological perspective, a broad overview of the historical and current interaction between the Christian Church and Society; with an inclusion of the specific contributions of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. They conclude that although Seventh-day Adventism has tried to minimize interactions or synthesis with general society, some cultural leveling has been seen in dress, diet and entertainment. Similar to the subject matter of this research, the authors also examine the relationship of Church and society.

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10 Ibid., 2.

11 Ibid., 20-21.
“The Christian and Society: Some functions, dysfunction, Conflict and Interactions” share the same subject matter, and theories as this research. McBride and Giem simply present facts, but their conclusions do not evoke change. The researcher investigates where the problems lie when dealing with the Adventist Church and social reform. In addition to this, the author’s research differs from McBride and Giem’s study in that this examination deals with racial conflict in society. The critique of the race factor places emphasis on the Adventists’ role in the Church and society as it relates to social injustice.

Nevertheless, Holly Fisher’s article, “Oakwood College Students Quest for Social Change,” highlights the ways in which Oakwood College students participated in protests before and during the Civil Rights Movement. Fisher initiates this piece by giving a brief overview of the Adventist Church. In this overview, she discusses the race relations between white and black Adventists. The author accurately portrays the irony of white Adventists’ racial mentality of that time with this statement, “Seventh-day Adventist leaders opposed slavery but accepted the practices of segregation and the doctrines of white racial superiority pervasive in the post-Reconstruction era.”

Holly Fisher explains the 1931 Oakwood Student protest that led to the institution of Oakwood’s first black president. She also explained how Oakwood students were involved with the Civil Rights Movement. The author detailed how the institution and

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Adventist officials constantly criticized and punished the students for participating in activism. She explains the gender boundaries that affected the lack of women’s involvement in the movement. Due to society’s view of women during this time, very few women were permitted to get involved in the racial movements of this era. In this text, Holly Fisher provides a comprehensive look at the relationship between Oakwood students, officials, and the Adventist Church as it relates to race relations in the 20th century.

Fisher’s work is significant to this research because she uses a similar methodology. She begins with utilizing an historical analysis approach. This article is relevant because it highlights traditions of the Adventist Church, such as white power in black institutions and racial separation that may have led to its lack of involvement in the Civil Rights Movement. This information is essential because it attempts to explain some of the reasons why the Church did not feel a need to assist in the fight for racial freedom and equality. It also exemplifies the mentality many black Adventists held toward ideas of racial and social revolution.

*Message Magazine* is an Adventist periodical that presents a Bible based gospel promoting positive living for this world and the world to come. The article “The Morning Star Boat” written by Charles Bradford gives a synopsis of the first Adventist attempt to educate blacks in South. The article presents the beginnings of black Adventism and documents the charge that Ellen White gave to SDA Church leaders, advising the Church to establish a mission field in the South for former slaves. The author provides a brief history of the Morning Star Boat, and the significance of its origin. Bradford writes, “Edson White encouraged the young people to enroll at the
Oakwood School. In fact, the *Morning Star* team started church schools in the Mississippi delta and throughout the South, and until this day, Oakwood College has supplied teachers for these schools."\(^{13}\) From the inception of this boat came the first SDA black college. The author has a personal connection with this story, since his mother was among the first students to enroll at Oakwood School. He highlights this in the following quote, "We cannot truly teach denominational history without giving recognition to Edson White’s boat and the rivers of blessings that ripple out from Vicksburg and Yazoo City and places unnamed. One of these ripples carried my mother, Etta Littlejohn Bradford, from Vicksburg to the Oakwood School—she was one of the first 16 students to enroll…"\(^{14}\)

"The Morning Star Boat" article emphasizes key events that exemplified Adventists' complacency to social change. The most significant point is the notion that initially, the Adventist Church wanted nothing to do with the black Adventist educational efforts in the South. It also provides the researcher with direct quotes from Ellen White who was one of the few white Adventists actively advocating for the education of former slaves. One quote states, "I see no reason why a boat should not be utilized in bringing to those in darkness the light of Him who is ‘the bright and morning Star.’"\(^{15}\) In addition to being an historical piece, it also illustrates how Charles E. Bradford (one of the key black


\(^{14}\) Ibid.

\(^{15}\) Ibid.
Adventist leaders of his time) frequently promoted understanding the history of African-American Adventism.

Though this column presents an understanding of the culmination of black Adventist education, it does not analyze the absence of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in this matter. Charles Bradford does not question why the Church leaders refused to proselytize to the former slaves until after the Morning Star mission was established. He simply provides readers with a history of black Adventism with mention of the Church’s initial lack of involvement. There is little analysis done on the reasons why the Adventist leaders refrained from contributing to the evangelical work in the South.

The document written by Andrew Mustard, “Seventh day Adventist Polity: Its Historical Development,” offers clarification of the SDA polity that anchors the Seventh-day Adventist Church. He initiates the article with a powerful comparison of the Church’s first General Conference in 1863 to the Church’s General Conference in 1990. Mustard informs the reader that the Adventist Church has grown from a thirty five hundred member organization in 1863 to a six million member world Church. Mustard illustrates that early Adventists adopted many of the beliefs of the major denominations of that time: the Methodists, Baptists, and the Christian Connection. After espousing the belief of the Millerite separatist ideology, early Adventists broke away from the movement and began to start their own Church. Mustard uses the information as a

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transition into examining the Adventist polity. He explains the development of SDA regulations starting with the contributions of Ellen and James White, critiquing the New Testament model that provides the template for the Adventist organization. The author explains the 1901 reorganization of the Church and its ramifications. He elucidates the integration of the medical work into the General Conference, which gave the president of the Conference more power over the structure of the Church. Lastly, Andrew Mustard assesses the foundational principles of the SDA Church in light of Biblical scripture. One example he highlights is the notion of the SDA Church as the remnant Church (rationalized using Rev 12:17, 14:12) which is used to justify much of their organizational development and policy decisions.17

The article “Seventh-day Adventist Polity: Its Historical development,” by Mustard is a document that helps this researcher assess the denominational polity and traditions of the Adventist Church. Mustard examines the Church up against its own standard in an effort to test its consistency with the teachings of Christ. Although Andrew Mustard did a phenomenal job in presenting and evaluating Adventist polity, he left out an extremely significant component. Mustard did not mention the Millerites’ stance on race related issues or how the reorganization of the Church affected its race relations; especially since its African-American constituents were growing every year. The author of this text failed to mention the racial reform that compelled many Adventist leaders to adopt certain policies.

17 Ibid., 16.
Louis Hansen’s book, *From So Small a Dream*, tells in narrative form, the story of the Adventist Church’s development in the South. A majority of the story takes place in Nashville, Tennessee; however, he explains how Adventist influence spread throughout major cities of the South. Some of these cities include New Orleans, Nashville, Orlando, etc. In addition to this, the author displays the social mores that shape the Advent movement in the South.

*From So Small a Dream* offers content that augment the rich history that makes up Adventism in the South. It also differs from other research materials on the SDA Church in that it concentrates on Southern development; therefore, it provides more details on its culture. Unlike other sources discussed in this chapter, Hansen does not ignore the racial environment of America that affected the Adventist mission field. He states, “Whether grievances were real or overdrawn, the people of the South felt they had every reason for bitterness against the North. But ours is a worldwide movement, and the Adventist message must go to every kindred, nation, tongue and people.”

In February 29, 2008 issue of *Spectrum Magazine*, Doug Morgan wrote the article “An Abolitionist Urges Adventist Action.” Byington, a devout abolitionist who believed in the Seventh-day Sabbath and charged the Millerite movement to take a fervent stance against black chattel slavery in America, is the focus of this article. Byington was excommunicated for his previous religious affiliation and found himself subscribing to the *Adventist Review and Herald*. He espoused the belief systems of the Millerite Movement and began to keep the seventh day Sabbath. Morgan writes that Byington was

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attracted to the Church because of its abolitionist views. However, as time progressed, the magazine’s content did not depict antislavery literature but more conformist ideals.

The author of this article references correspondence between Byington and Uriah Smith (editor of the magazine). Byington writes:

> I have taken the Review some six or seven years and have been much edified with its contents. Having been engaged for the last twenty-five years in the antislavery cause. I have regarded the Review as an auxiliary until the last two or three years, in which it has failed to aid the cause of Abolition. And as I want my money for Abolition purposes, I must discontinue the paper when the three dollars herein enclosed are expended.\(^{19}\)

This dialogue proves that Byington was one of the few Adventists that maintained a passion for abolitionism, to the point he was willing to withdraw his funds from the Church. Morgan’s article exemplifies this researcher’s argument, that Adventists were willing to take an outright stance against injustice during the abolitionist period.

The Southern Work is a manuscript written by Ellen G White, insisting that the Church commence to proselytizing in the Southern region. Inside this document, she stresses the importance of reaching people in the South, especially the black population. Mrs. White initiates her position by showing examples of how Christ reached out to the downtrodden and oppressed. She also uses other stories of the Bible to corroborate her stance on Southern ministry. Later, she observes the historical reasons behind the plight of the Africans in America. She points out that the white population is the cause of the black man’s downfall; therefore, they should do everything in their power to see that the “colored” race has all the benefits and responsibilities that are afforded every other ethnic

group in America. Lastly, Mrs. White points out the errors of Adventist ministry and ways a missionary can cultivate the spiritual atmosphere of the South.

The book, *The Southern Work* is a compilation of appeals that caused Ellen White’s son to initiate the Morning Star boat ministry, which led to the foundation of Oakwood University. Throughout the history of Adventism, people raised the notion of spreading the gospel to former slaves and sharecroppers in the South. The text exemplifies the revolutionary attitudes of Adventist fore parents and proves that social change was once a priority of Seventh-day Adventists. The text was instrumental in lending major changes to the race relations of black and white Adventists. Ellen White substantiates her positions in the *Southern Work* with Biblical principles and Christian belief systems.

"The Sociology of Religion of W.E.B Du Bois" addresses Du Bois’ religious ideologies from a sociological perspective. Phil Zuckerman uses many of Du Bois’ classic texts such as, *Philadelphia Negro, The Negro Church, Souls of Black Folk* to explicate the sociology of religion. The methodology that led to Du Bois’ conclusions came from living amongst the people that he studied. In addition to firsthand experiences, Du Bois used interviews, participant observations, and survey analyses, as his methodology. Phil Zuckerman significantly points out that Du Bois is a student of one of the leading sociologists Max Weber. Zuckerman sheds light on Du Bois’ critique of the African-American church as well as his assessment of white America’s use of religion as a conduit of oppression.

The researcher utilizes Zuckerman’s analysis as an example of how religion affects society. The sociology of religion is a recurring theory that analyzes the
Adventist Church’s response to social injustice. In addition to evaluating this theory, Zuckerman’s article analyzes classic texts that contribute to the literary review. It also exemplifies how religion affects the black community. Du Bois is one of the few scholars that view the church as a social institution.

Although Phil Zuckerman does a superb job in exploring Du Bois’ sociology of religion, this thesis takes the time to investigate a particular religion and add an historical approach. The author’s work on Du Bois has great significance for how a religious organization moves from a social institution to another American establishment. Zuckerman’s critique spans many sacred groups, which can cause a conclusion to appear generalized.

Talcott Parsons in “An Outline of the Social Systems,” outlines his premise of social systems. Parsons explicates foundational sociological principles and includes aspects of the functionalist theory. The author elucidates the bases and functions of a social system so the reader understands its purpose and design. Some of the principle functions of a social system include pattern maintenance, goal attainment, adaptation and integration.20 After defining a social system, Parsons introduces the categories inside interdependent social structures, such as role, collectivity, norm, and value. Parsons claims, “these categories roughly cover the social structure from individual to social system.”21 Concepts such as institutionalization are infused by means of stratification and maintaining social equilibrium is a significant goal for social systems. Talcott


21 Ibid.
Parsons investigates the dynamics of achieving societal balance and lastly, examines the dilemmas involved with structural transformation. "An Outline of the Social Systems" by Talcott Parsons delineates the definition, components, and functions of social systems.

The researcher looks to substantiate Parsons' argument by applying his theories to a specific religious institution, the Seventh day Adventist Church. Race relations are viewed as a module for maintaining social equilibrium that is racial equality helps lead to communal balance.

Gary Land's book *Teaching History: A Seventh day Adventist Approach* presents a Christian, and more specifically an Adventist, perspective of historical analysis. He introduces the Old Testament as a series of covenants between God and man. This relationship ends with the exile of God's people and the appearance of unfulfilled prophecy. Subsequently, the New Testament reveals the coming of the Messiah and the carrying out of God's promises. Therefore, the lynchpin of all history centers on the first Advent of Christ.

Christian interpretation of history is traced from the works of Eusebius to 20th century liberation theology and onward. It is also comprised of innate notions such as God's providence, human nature and moral judgment. More specifically, Christian interpretation is the basis for Adventist interpretation, which is exemplified in the concept of "the great controversy," which is Ellen White's notion of the war between God and Satan. Land clarifies the belief that Adventism is not distinct from American or world history.

the series of events leading to Adventism becoming a world Church. Intermittently, he switches between telling the story of the Millerites turned Seventh-day Adventists and explains the theology of the denomination. In addition to laying out its doctrinal beliefs, the author provides biblical references substantiating the Church’s position on issues such as the Sabbath and the third Angel’s message. Loughborough states, “The vindication of the fourth commandment in opposition to the Sabbath of the apostasy, and the preaching of all the commandments of God is a striking testimony that the present is the period of the saint’s patience, and of the warning of the third angel.”

 Mostly, Loughborough’s text details the Church’s history up to the early 20th century.

The Great Second Advent Movement: Its Rise and Progress appears to be one of the first comprehensive historical texts written on the Adventist Church. Though helpful in the historical analysis, Loughborough does very little to challenge Adventist practices concerning race relations. The author does not offer an assessment of the Church’s relationship with the African Americans in the South. Not only that, while mentioning the Adventist institutions, he fails to mention the only black Adventist school in the world at that time, Oakwood Industrial Training School located in Huntsville, Al.

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History of Seventh-day Adventist Church and the Abolitionist Movement

The history of the Seventh-day Adventist Church began with William Miller who, as a young man, began preaching the gospel taught to him by his family. However, as an adolescent, he questioned the beliefs of both his parents and grandfather, who were Protestant clergymen. While fighting in the War of 1812, Miller did not practice Christianity. Yet, due to the violence and suffering that surrounded him in battle, he began reading the Bible once again. This time he was more ardent in his study and began to internalize the teachings of the Bible.¹

For five years, William Miller engaged in a thorough analysis of eschatological events and Biblical interpretations of the Second Coming. He studied the Bible for himself in order to obtain a deeper meaning of the Scriptures. In 1816, he concluded that Jesus would be returning to the earth circa 1843. Miller became more confident in his conviction, based on his biblical studies, yet he was hesitant about spreading his newfound truth because he felt unworthy. Miller decided to wait until God opened a door

before he began evangelizing. After accepting an invitation to speak at a relative’s church, he became a well-known preacher in the upstate New York area. His messages on the Second coming first became famous amongst his listeners and it sparked the curiosity of his audience. Miller published his views on prophecy in 1832. Soon, Miller’s teachings on “the end of times” were included in literary journals of major cities. Some of these periodicals and cities include *The Signs of the Times* in Boston, *The Midnight Cry* in New York City, *The Trumpet of Alarm* in Philadelphia, *The Second Coming of Christ* in Cleveland, and *The Voice of Elijah* in Montreal, Canada. Through the preaching of William Miller, thousands adopted his teachings and his followers became known as Millerites. In 1840, the movement began to function on a much wider scale.\(^3\)

William Miller and the Millerites believed that the Second Advent of Jesus would happen around 1843. From 1831-1844, he preached to thousands of people across the United States. In Low Hampton, New York on January 1, 1843, William Miller stated, “This year, according to our faith, is the last year that Satan will reign in our earth.”\(^4\)

After much study, the Millerites changed the date of Jesus’ coming to March 4, 1844. After the date passed and Jesus did not come, many followers left the movement and

\(^2\) Ibid., 20-21.


returned to their lives. Some, however, continued to examine the scriptures more closely. After investigating the concept of the Sanctuary in conjunction with the books of the Bible, Daniel, and Revelation, they inferred from their study that their calculations were wrong and Jesus would return to earth on October 22, 1844. When the Second Coming did not come to pass, more Millerites rejected the teachings of William Miller and returned to their communities, or relocated to new areas. The event in Adventist history marking the expected Second Advent of Christ is known as the Great Disappointment. The believers who continued to follow William Miller, despite the setback of the Great Disappointment, called themselves Adventists and some became the itinerant preachers who founded the Seventh-day Adventist Church.⁵

One itinerant preacher who emerged was Joseph Bates. He was one of the key evangelists in the Millerite movement having joined the Millerite itinerant preachers in 1849 and began to travel west to spread the Adventist message.⁶ He was one of the first to embrace the notion of Saturday as the Sabbath day. “Sabbath Keeping” Adventists initially appeared as an offshoot of the Adventist movement at the 1845 Conference in Albany, New York. Bates later wrote a tract called Seventh-day Sabbath and used it to prove, utilizing Biblical evidence, that the Seventh day is the Sabbath. This treatise helped him spread the idea of the Sabbath day more efficiently. Bates also wrote a 40 page pamphlet entitled The Opening Heavens, which condemned the religious fanaticism

⁵ Ibid., 22-23.

⁶ Ibid., 35-39.
that many Americans practiced during this time. He believed that Jesus was still coming and that “every eye would see him.” In addition to preaching to white westerners, he also traveled to the South to enlighten black people on the Second Coming of Jesus Christ.  

William Miller and Joseph Bates were not the only people who influenced the Millerite movement, as many people imparted beliefs that helped shape the faith of the Adventists. Hiram Edson, through a vision, taught that Jesus did not come to earth on October 22, 1844 but he did move from the holy place to the Most Holy place. This belief gave birth to the Adventist doctrine of the Sanctuary. A Seventh day Baptist woman named Rachel Oakes Preston introduced the observance of the Sabbath to the Millerite Adventists. The visions and teachings of Ellen Harmon (Ellen White) became significant in the theology of early Millerites. In 1860, the Millerites finally settled on the name Seventh-day Adventists. The term “seventh-day” is in reference to the seventh-day sabbath, and “Adventist” is in reference to the anticipated coming of Jesus Christ. Ellen Harmon, her husband James White, and Joseph Bates formed a small

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10 Ellen Harmon was Ellen White’s maiden name, http://www.whiteestate.org/about/egwbio.asp#marriage.
group from Baptist, Methodist, Congregational, and Presbyterian believers in Washington, New Hampshire. On May 21, 1863, this group was formally recognized as the Seventh-day Adventist Church.\textsuperscript{11}

In 1848, Ellen White was shown in a vision that her husband James should publish a small paper, which was later called the \textit{Present Truth}. The next year, James White began working on raising money and writing for White's paper. He spent so much time raising money that it took time away from his writing. Later, his wife's vision showed that the focus should not be the financing of this paper, but rather the content that was being presented. James White, with the assistance of a nearby printer, produced an issue of his paper and collected the cost afterwards. In July of 1849, the first issue of the \textit{Present Truth} came from the press featuring an article on the Sabbath. A thousand copies were printed and the debt accrued from the publishing costs was paid in full. This event marked the beginning of Seventh-day Adventist contribution to Christian literature.

Outside of Jesus Christ, the teachings of Ellen White affected the Seventh-day Adventist Church more than any other historical figure at the time. White and her family began attending the Adventist meetings in Portland, Maine and accepted the philosophies of William Miller. As other full-fledged Millerites, they anticipated the coming of Jesus Christ in 1844. After the Great Disappointment, Ellen White had a vision in which Advent people traveled to the city of God. The Portland Adventist group accepted

\textsuperscript{11}“Seventh-day Adventist Church,” General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, \url{http://www.adventist.org/world_church/facts_and_figures/history/index.html.en} (accessed January 15, 2009).
White’s vision as a sign from God. Ellen White and her Adventist preacher husband, James White, continued the work of sharing the message throughout neighboring Portland communities and towns. Later, Ellen White and other Millerites learned of the doctrine of the Sabbath. Based on White’s later vision related to the fourth commandment, the Millerites were confirmed that the seventh day was truly the holy day. Subsequently, Mrs. White began having visions that explained the Great Controversy between Jesus Christ and the Devil, as well as the Adventist message of health reform. As her visions were later considered as prophetic revelations, White was later deemed the prophet of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Her written works are now used as guides and teachings for Seventh-day Adventist congregations.

Moreover, the early Seventh-day Adventist Church opposed slavery and played a vital role in the Abolitionist Movement. Most Seventh-day Adventists during this time were comprised of former Baptists and Methodists who split from their churches because of their position on slavery. According to Alvin Makapela, one of the ancillaries of the Millerite movement was revivalism, which was committed to reforming the American society through temperance and the abolition of slavery. They agreed with many of the

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12 The Fourth Commandment comes from the Biblical book Exodus 20:8-11 which reads, “Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days shalt thou labor, and do all thy work: But the seventh day is the Sabbath of the LORD thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work, thou nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates: For in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the LORD blessed the sabbath day, and hallowed it.”

antislavery groups during this period in history. Early Adventists did not support the institution of African-American enslavement and they spoke against slavery along with other groups, religions, and organizations. Abolitionism was popular among those denominations and movements that were affected by the Second Great Awakening. However, what differentiates Seventh day Adventist abolitionism from the antislavery spirit of other denominations is their central theology regarding slavery. This band of Adventist believers formed a post-1844 theological understanding that was supported by their premillenialist eschatology. They were convinced that the world would continue on a path of destruction until Jesus Christ initiates the Second Advent and takes his followers to heaven. Adventists believed that slavery was a central sign of evil that would eventually lead to the “end of the world.” They abhorred the act of slavery and government support. Their publication team believed in dissociating themselves from human power structures and publically announcing the sin of slavery. Not only did Adventists proclaim their disbelief in the treatment of blacks, they also worked to free enslaved African Americans and end the institution of slavery as a whole.  

Additionally, Seventh-day Adventists during slavery maintained a negative outlook on the United States. They preached that the two-horned beast in the Biblical book of Revelation was a symbol of America and its government. J.N Loughborough, an early Seventh-day Adventist minister called to preach by Ellen White, identified the two horns as the Protestant ecclesiastical power and the Republican civil power. He

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contrasted the nation's lamb-like profession with its dragon-like actions. The institution of slavery, for the Adventists, was an example of those actions. The political laws passed to perpetuate the dehumanization of African Americans, the three-fifths compromise, Fugitive slave laws, and the Dred Scott Decision, supported the Adventists' belief in American hypocrisy. Seventh-day Adventists rejected the belief that America was a God-ordained republic. In fact, they believed that no government was "godly."\textsuperscript{15}

**Adventist Publications**

Another means of spreading the antislavery spirit was through their journal, *The Adventist Review and the Sabbath Herald*. The Adventist editing company produced much antislavery literature that spread the ideology of abolitionism. Following is an excerpt of a poem written by the prominent SDA leader named Uriah Smith that appeared in the *Adventist Review* pertaining to slavery:

> For vengeance, answer; let the slave reply.  
> O land of boasted freedom! thou hast given  
> The lie to all thy loud professions, fair,  
> Of justice, liberty and equal rights

This paper marked a turning point in the content published in this Adventist magazine. Before Smith wrote these powerful words, *The Adventist Review and the Sabbath Herald* contained information that promoted the Ten Commandments, the Sabbath, and other theological beliefs practiced by the Adventist Church. It became a platform for Adventist

\textsuperscript{15} Ibid.
evangelism. However, Uriah initiated a change in this tradition and he began to protest, through the written word, the horrors of the social issue regarding slavery.\textsuperscript{16}

Early Adventists not only rebuked the government, they also rebuked religious organizations that held fast to the moral support of slavery. The \textit{Adventist Review} publically criticized the American Tract society for refusing to denounce the immoral act of slavery. Although, it was the most influential society of all the interdenominational movements, early Adventists did not feel they were exempt from moral criticism. An old article states, "A religion that dares not rebuke stealing, adultery, and blasphemy, under the general name of slavery, is . . . with the bitterest foes of Christ. If the American Tract Society . . . has been betrayed into this sin, let it repent, and bring forth works meet for repentance."\textsuperscript{17} The \textit{Adventist Review} authors were in blatant opposition to the Missouri Compromise of 1820, the Compromise of 1850, Southern domination, and any other law that perpetuated the act of human bondage. The \textit{Adventist Review} editors, through supporters of antislavery acts, scorned those individuals who used violence to fight against the injustice that subjected the American Negro.\textsuperscript{18}

Ellen White, the prophetess of the Adventist Church, vociferously, opposed all forms of slavery. In 1859, she wrote that Adventists should violate the terms of the Fugitive Slave Law and abide by the consequences that follow.\textsuperscript{19} Through her vision in


\textsuperscript{17} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{18} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{19} Ibid.
1861, she announced that God was bringing judgment against America for the “high crime of slavery.” Many Adventists believe that Ellen White, though an abolitionist, still battled with the racist mentality that was deeply embedded in American consciousness. Examples include a statement in her Selected Messages book, which states, “there should be no intermarriage between the white and the colored race.”

Also, in Testimonies Vol. 9 she states, “white men must be chosen as leaders.” Whether her writings are read in context or out of context, it is clear that many early Adventists battled with the popular notion that African Americans were second-class citizens. Though this may be true, facts show that Ellen White was still fervently against the bondage of Africans in America.

Black Adventists

Seventh-day Adventists participated in the abolitionist movement by contributing to the freedom of individual slaves via the Underground Railroad stations, which many Seventh-day Adventists conducted. These Adventist conductors protected runaway slaves from slave catchers. John Byington, later president of SDA General Conference,
and John P. Kellogg ran Underground Railroad stations from their farms in New York and Michigan.\textsuperscript{23} Anson Byington, son of John Byington, also ran an Underground Railroad station out of Williston, Vermont.\textsuperscript{24} In the 1840s, Battle Creek, Michigan became the center for the Underground Railroad.\textsuperscript{25} Later, this same city became the headquarters for the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Hence, with the Underground Railroad participation by some whites and Millerites, African Americans were eventually involved in the early Millerite and Adventist movement.

Throughout the 1840s and 1850s, African Americans played a significant role in the Millerite movement. Although blacks were not viewed as human beings, the Millerites allowed them to assist in the evangelical efforts of the Movement. Some leading black Millerites included William Still, Charles Bowles, William Foy, and John Lewis. They worked with William Miller and Joshua Hines in spreading the Advent message. Prominent black leaders, including Sojourner Truth and Frederick Douglass were acquainted with the Second Coming and other Adventist teachings.\textsuperscript{26} Sojourner Truth subscribed to the teachings of Adventism and attended the church in Battle Creek, Michigan.

\textsuperscript{23} Jacob Justiss, \textit{Angels in Ebony} (Toledo, Ohio: Jet Printing Service, 1975), 16.


\textsuperscript{25} Sepulveda, \textit{On the Margins of Empires}, 40.

\textsuperscript{26} Delbert Baker, \textit{Telling the Story} (Loma Linda, California: Loma Linda University Printing Services, 1996), \url{http://www.oakwood.edu/ougoldmine/hdoc/blacksda/roots/s2.html} (accessed October 14, 2008).
Michigan. However, William Foy, a black minister, received visions prior to Ellen White. Ellen White heard him speak in Portland, Maine and she began to talk with him after she received her first vision. Foy’s prophetic ministry lasted from 1842-1844. Although Foy was first, in Seventh-day Adventist history, to receive a vision regarding the Second Advent of Christ, he refused to spread the message. He knew he would have to fight against the prejudice of being a Millerite, and from “the prejudice among the people against those of my color.” He questioned, “Why should these things be given to me, to bear to the world?” On February 6, 1852, he was requested to deliver the message of his vision to a church in Boston. His visions were related to the Second Advent of Jesus Christ. After this, he began to preach publically for three months on the saving grace of the Messiah and his expected coming. The ministry of William Foy exemplifies the influence that blacks have had on the prophetic ministry of the Adventist Church.

Charles Bowles is considered one of the unsung heroes in early Adventist history. He answered the call of ministry late in his life and he began to preach to audiences black

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29 Ibid.

30 Ibid.
and white, on the anticipated coming of Jesus Christ. This was rare because blacks were believed to be unintelligent people. As he continued to preach, his success aided the spreading of the Adventist message as he helped in establishing several Adventist Churches.31 Research indicates that there was a time when enemies plotted to drown Bowles’ in the baptismal pool, but his fiery preaching converted their hearts.32 He died in March 1843.

Similarly, John W. Lewis was one of the leading black ministers who supported Miller’s interpretation of the Bible. Another major Adventist magazine, *Signs of the Times*, described Lewis as a highly esteemed colored preacher. The magazine raised $20 to help fund the ministry of Minister Lewis. In 1852, he wrote a persuasive historical and theological article on racial equality33 entitled, “Essay on the Character and Condition of the African Race.”34 The article, as well as Charles Bowles’ biography, signified the black man’s mark in the Millerite movement.


Moreover, as more blacks learned about the Adventist message, Ellen White felt motivated by the Holy Spirit to fight for evangelism in the Negro communities. At the end of the Civil War, Ellen White implored the leaders of the Adventist Church to dedicate time and money to preaching the Gospel to former slaves and their children. R. Clifford Jones writes, “Early Adventists lacked a coherent, strategic plan to evangelize blacks, hedged on declaring their position on the race issue shortly after their official organization at the height of the American Civil War, and only moved to intentionally minister to people of African descent in America after being reprimanded by Adventist pioneer, Ellen White, in the last decade of the nineteenth century.”

The Seventh-day Adventist Church began to grow in membership, as well as geographically. The Church originated in the eastern part of the United States, but over time, they migrated towards the Michigan area and eventually to California. By the 1870s, strong interests were developing in the Northwest. The middle part of the country was made up of foreign immigrants and early Adventists took advantage of their interest in new religious thought. During the 19th century, the Southwest became grounds for new Adventist missionaries. Every region of the country was recognized by Adventist missionaries before the South. According to Louis Hansen, “no denominational work had been done in the South before the Civil War. Only a few widely scattered believers lived in the entire section.”


With geographical expansion came the emergence of more black Seventh-day Adventists. Another event occurred with black leaders in the Adventist Church with Charles M. Kinney who was labeled the father of the black work in the Seventh-day Adventist Church. He was the first African American ordained as an Adventist minister in 1889 and the first black recorded Church worker. Kinney was born a slave in Richmond, Virginia. Events succeeding the Civil war caused him to move to Reno, Nevada where he heard the Adventist message from J.N. Loughborough and Ellen White. Charles Kinney took this message and began to spread the gospel to blacks in the South. In an 1885 issue of the Review and Herald, he announced, “I earnestly ask the prayers of all who wish to see the truth brought before many peoples. . . , that I may have strength, physical, mental, and spiritual, to do what I can for the Colored people.”

Four years later, Charles Kinney became the first ordained minister in the Adventist Church. His principal goal consisted of increasing the education, experience, and economic development of the African in America.

However, the earliest black leadership protest in Seventh-day Adventist history occurred on October 2, 1889. During a meeting at the Adventist campground in Nashville, Tennessee, Charles M. Kinney voiced the concerns of black Seventh-day Adventists. He spoke out against the Church’s discriminatory practices and the sub-

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38 Ibid.
human treatment of the Negro. The conference’s poor turnout was later attributed to white Adventists that wanted to be separate from black Adventists. The notion of segregation had developed in the minds of white Seventh-day Adventists, and some refused to worship with black Adventists. Charles Kinney fervently opposed the idea of blacks and whites worshipping in separate facilities. He stated, “a separation of the colored people from the white people is a great sacrifice upon our part; we lose the blessing of learning the truth...”

Thus, Millerites appeared to have no problem including blacks in the ministry of the Adventist gospel. Black ministers made a significant impact in the evangelism of the Second Advent message. Many of them were attracted to the notion of an immediate departure from this earth. This immediate departure was the expected coming of Jesus Christ. Initially, the anticipation of freedom attracted many Africans to this gospel, but soon they sought after a savior that was returning for his “remnant church.” The notion of the remnant church soon became a term that was synonymous with the SDA denomination and its message.

**Important Events in the History of the Adventist Church**

The first major event that occurred post Abolitionist movement was the official organization of the Millerite denomination. In a Battle Creek, Michigan conference in 1860, and after three days of delineating the Millerites settled on the name Seventh-day

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Adventists. However, it took another three years to become a certified religious institution. Historical documents date May 21, 1863 as the day that the Seventh-day Adventist Church was officially established. Battle Creek, Michigan became the home of the newly organized religion, which included 125 churches and some 3,500 members. Twenty delegates from six different conferences that made up the 125 churches convened to turn this movement into an organized religion. In this first meeting, the Adventist leaders enabled the Church to complete its mission as efficiently as possible and to maintain unity of doctrine. The coming of Christ became the foundation for their aims.

There was an attempt by the Seventh-day Adventists to initiate an institution of higher education in the 1860s, but that effort ended in failure. In 1874, Seventh-day Adventists authorities took charge and founded their first institution of higher learning in Battle Creek, Michigan. Until the founding of Battle Creek College, there was much dispute over Adventism and educational matters. Initially, instructions involving


45 Sepulveda, On the Margins of Empires, 108.
education presented to the Millerites during the 1850s were now being institutionalized. This school started with an enrollment of 12 students under the tutelage of Goodloe Harper Bell.⁴⁶ One of those 12 students was Edson White, the son of Ellen White. Ellen White supported the idea of designing a curriculum for the college around agricultural and mechanical work. It is a possibility that she mirrored Battle Creek College’s program of study after Hampton Institute, a school for African Americans and Native Americans in Hampton, Virginia. There is a record that Adventists visited Hampton Institute as they formed and reformed the structure of their own school.⁴⁷ The institution was also a reflection of the already existing schools in Michigan.⁴⁸

Furthermore, in the late 1860s, four women met to support each other and help the needy people in their community. Over time, this group grew to ten women who worked to improve the Seventh-day Adventist Church as a whole in South Lancaster, Massachusetts, especially for the less fortunate. In 1868, these ladies formally organized the Vigilant Missionary Society. One of the major contributions to their Church’s evangelism mission was the spreading of the Advent message via letters and tracts. Since there was a major need for evangelism in other countries, they took it upon themselves to learn other languages and witness to people in other countries through letters. The ladies of South Lancaster were responsible for proselytizing to people in France, Germany,


⁴⁷ Sepulveda, On the Margins of Empires, 110-111.

⁴⁸ Ibid.
Ghana, and other countries. The Vigilant Missionary Society was a major force in transforming the Adventist Church into a worldwide organization. By 1878, this small group of women blossomed into a major association and an essential agent for social reform. The organization was renamed the General Conference Tract and Missionary Society in 1874, and the members canvassed the country with religious literature, visited the sick and prayed with people. Around this time, the organization had accrued over $100,000 to fund their ministry. They had distributed around five million pages of literature, placed thousands of bound volumes in public libraries, visited 10,000 families, and sent literature all across the world.49

Likewise, at the sixth annual General Conference Session in 1868, the poverty dilemma in the United States was a major topic. Seventh-day Adventist leaders and members were distraught at the high level of low-income people living in the United States; the Church decided to fund city missions. The purpose of this ministry was to go into the major cities of America and meet the needs of the poor and destitute. City Mission Daily Programs included such activities as devotion, breakfast, worship, dinner, prayer meetings, and evening socials. The ladies of the Adventist Church would walk the city at night in search of prostitutes to bring back to the city missions.50 In Nashville, a city mission was established where Adventist community workers would use a room beneath a brothel famous for its debauchery to help the less fortunate in the Nashville

49 Ibid., 115-120.
50 Ibid., 142.
area. This location was where the ministry felt the gospel was most needed.\textsuperscript{51} Everyone from prostitutes to the poor and unemployed received a hot meal and a word from the Lord. Through the Adventist missions, many people found Christ and were converted to the Adventist Faith. In addition to the eternal needs of the city inhabitants, the Adventist Church also provided health care as well.\textsuperscript{52} By the end of the 1880s, there were 34 missions in progress all over America, England, and London. The city missions became the model for the missionary work of the entire Church. However, as membership increased and institutions took priority, funds to run smaller organizations became scarce. In 1901, the SDA General Conference decided to reorganize the Church, and in 1904 they took control of the smaller institutions headed by the Medical Missionary Benevolent Association. The city missions were integrated into this organization,\textsuperscript{53} and within a few years, the Association became a distant memory.

From 1888-1903, the Seventh-day Adventist Church underwent major organizational structure changes to the denomination. These years are commonly known as the Thirteen Years Crisis. In 1888, the Church was no longer the small movement it appeared to be in the 1850s and 1860s. By 1901, the Adventist denomination had grown to 78,188 members who were affiliated with 2000 local congregations. This expansion of membership caused the Church to entertain the notion of a conference president. In 1873

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\textsuperscript{51} Hansen, \textit{From So Small A Dream}, 90.
\textsuperscript{53} Sepulveda, \textit{On the Margins of Empires}, 141-152.
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George Butler, the Church’s chief executive, expressed the idea of one person maintaining sole leadership of the Church. He states, “There was never any great movement in this world without a leader; and in the nature of things there cannot be.”\textsuperscript{54}

James White opposed this idea on the grounds that Jesus Christ had never appointed one particular disciple to direct the affairs of the Church. Eventually, the Adventist organization moved forward with electing presidents of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists.

Another administrative concern was the sector that would divide the General conference and the state conferences. The establishment of union conferences and intermediate power triggered more organizational upheaval in the Church. The newly elected General Conference Association president summed up the affairs in this way:

No one can ever know the sad condition that things are in here . . . Even we, who pretend to be in the light, cannot agree on many things among ourselves, letting alone those who are disaffecting and sowing discord. What we need at the present time is unity in our midst. There is a prevailing feeling that every man should do as he pleases.\textsuperscript{55}

Over-centralization of the Church had turned the Adventist denomination into ecclesiastical uproar.\textsuperscript{56}

However, the idea of centralized control was not limited to administrative concerns, but it was also discussed with regards to publishing interests. The 1889 session

\textsuperscript{54} Richard M. Schwarz, \textit{Light Bearers to the Remnant} (Boise, Idaho/ Oshawa, Canada: Pacific Press), 267.

\textsuperscript{55} Ibid., 273-274.

\textsuperscript{56} Ibid., 274.
revealed a strong push towards centralized power of all denominational publishing activities. Ellen White disagreed with the idea and believed that all the publishing facilities should maintain their individual identity.57

Chaos in the Adventist Church lasted from about 1888 to 1903. The reorganization of the Adventist institution, in 1901, had diverse aspects. Departmentalizing the affairs of the Church happened at the union and lower levels of the Adventist structure. Centralized authority was generated by the hands of the Church employees. The General Conference committee relinquished control of schools, assets, and liabilities to the union conferences to ease the financial stress of the Adventist Church leaders.

In 1903, a few discrepancies that arose in the 1901 session were analyzed and rectified. One addition to the Church structure was the election of a General conference president, and treasurer, rather than entrusting a committee with the task of leadership. Transaction of businesses in absence of the Executive Committee was put into place. The president, one of the two vice presidents, and at least four other members of the committee were empowered to transact business.58

Also included in the restructuring of the Church was the position of African-American Adventism and the launching of the first African-American Adventist School. The historical message by Ellen White, “Our Duty to the Colored People,” written in

57 Ibid., 272.

58 Ibid., 280.
1891, marked the beginning of the Adventist work in the South. "Our Duty to the Colored People" sheds light on the racial problem in the Adventist Church and provides biblical principles that help the Church rectify the black/white division in Adventist congregations. Edson White, the son of Ellen White, and friend Will Palmer decided to build a steamship and hold evangelistic meetings on Centennial Lake in Vicksburg, Mississippi. The steamship was called The Morning Star and it was used in the evangelizing of the enslaved Africans in the South. There was a warning from Mrs. White regarding the social conditions of the South. She informed her husband and friend that they would be perceived as Yankees and "do gooders" for trying to teach blacks to read and write. Moreover, the black clergy would be dissatisfied with the theology of the Advent message. She proclaimed that insinuating the holy day was Saturday instead of Sunday would cause conflict with the black religious leaders. However, the researcher did not locate any record of disputes with Edson White and the black devout leaders of the South.  

However, Edson White's mission did not come without tribulations. Olvin, a black Adventist, and his wife were shot and beaten by a white mob during the ministerial attempts of the Morning Star. Olvin secured a Winchester rifle, and it took considerable prayer and Bible study from Edson White to stop him from retaliating. Later, the mob apologized possibly out of fear of legal action. The action of the mob may have been

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influenced by the *Morning Star* mission, which was held in esteem by the people in the community.\textsuperscript{60} Soon, the General Conference heard of the work initiated by Edson White, and could no longer ignore the evangelistic efforts needed in the South. Upon the advisement of Charles Kinney, the General Conference purchased land in Huntsville, Alabama in order to establish an industrial school for African-American Adventists. On November 16 1896, Oakwood Industrial Training School officially opened its services to the public.\textsuperscript{61}

Subsequently, the death of Ellen White, the publically renowned prophetess of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, at her home in Elmshaven, had a major effect on the SDA leaders and the denomination as a whole. Her later years were spent writing for church publications and books. In 1911, she finished one of her most popular works, *The Great Controversy*. Before her death, Mrs. White pointed out that people would not need her writings if they read the scriptures for themselves and prayed for understanding.\textsuperscript{62}

Thus, one of the most significant events that affected the Adventist Church at this time, was the establishment of Regional Conferences in 1944. A Regional Conference is a politically correct term for a Black Conference or a Seventh-day Adventist conference whose constituents are majority African American. Two occurrences involving racial

\textsuperscript{60} Hansen, 91.


injustice initiated the notion of dividing the Adventist conferences according to race. The first incident occurred in Takoma Park, Maryland. A fair-skinned African-American Adventist woman named Lucy Byard was brought to Washington Sanitarium and Hospital (an Adventist medical center) for patient care. After medical documents stated that she was of African descent, she was discharged from the facility without treatment. It was stated that she would have to travel across state lines to Freedman’s hospital to receive care. On the way to the other hospital, she died of pneumonia.63

The second event that caused African-American Adventists to entertain the idea of separate conferences was the revocation of James K. Humphrey’s pastoral work. Humphrey heard the Advent message from J.N. Loughborough and J.H. Carroll and soon joined the Church. He was later invited to pastor the First Harlem Seventh-day Adventist Church. Under his regime, churches also grew in Brooklyn and Manhattan. Humphrey’s membership grew to approximately 600 people and he baptized, on an average, 50 persons a year. Alongside his clerical work, he also created a benevolent association that provided health, educational and recreational facilities. Humphrey’s efforts to solicit money from the city’s public welfare office, led the Greater New York Conference leader, Elder Louis Dickson, to question his work. The Greater New York Conference leader was the overseer of all the Seventh-day Adventist Churches in the greater New York area. James Humphrey chose not to involve the Conference president. This action was considered an act of insubordination and after refusing to appear before the

63 Sepulveda, On the Margins of Empires, 350.
committee, Humphrey was removed from his pastoral position. Humphrey, frustrated with the racial problems in the Adventist Church, left the Church and took a majority of his congregation with him.  

The aforementioned two events led African Americans to organize the National Association for the Advancement of Worldwide Work Among Colored Seventh-day Adventists. This assembly was the last group that requested the General Conference to address the idea of separated conferences. During a 1944 conference in Chicago, J.L. McElhany, the General Conference President, gave the speech supporting the idea of separating conferences based on color. After a series of speeches, the historic resolution was passed stating, "When the colored constituency is considered ... to be sufficiently large, and where the financial income and territory warrant" the organization of separate conferences for the black membership." At this point, the Seventh-day Adventist Church was finally split between black and white Conferences.

These events leading up to the separation of the Adventist Conferences exhibit the history of black/white race relations in the Adventist Church. The history of the color line in the Adventist Church set in motion the relationship between black and white Church members during the Civil Rights Movement and helps to explain the stance of

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64 Ibid., 311-320.


66 SDA Encyclopedia, “Actions of the Spring Meeting of the General Conference Committee,” April 10-16, 1944, 15, 16; cf..
noninvolvement taken by the Seventh-day Adventist Church during the social upheaval of the 1950s and 1960s.
CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

Abolitionist Period: Results

The purpose of this research was to investigate social and political factors that impacted the Seventh-day Adventist Church’s position of noninvolvement in the African-American racial struggles of the Civil Rights Movement. This chapter provides the findings related to the SDA Church and its involvement with African Americans from approximately the 1830’s to 1968. The information collected from this period in the Church include: theological teachings, traditions, Church events, perceptions of race, Church’s response to race, and religious leaders. The findings related to the eras from 1830-1968 recount sociopolitical events and their impact on race, social change and social justice. The years from 1944 to 1965 focus on America’s socio-political events that have relevance for helping to understand the noninvolvement of the Church in the Civil Rights Movement.

Prior to the Civil Rights Movement, the Church had been an agent for social change and social justice through its involvement in the Abolitionist Movement. Later, it appears that while race and its ramifications was not a problem, or major concern, the Civil Rights Movement was not perceived as a necessity for the Church’s involvement.
Initially, a Church, which had approximately 100 years prior to the Civil Rights Movement, been fervently involved in racial equality, social change, and social justice, by 1955 chose noninvolvement in the continued struggle for equality and social justice for African Americans. Therefore, to address the reasons for noninvolvement, the researcher examined, utilizing a historical analysis, the importance of the church’s theological teachings, traditions, events, and religious leaders throughout its history, in order to find out if a decline took place in social awareness, social stability, and social justice.

The first half of the chapter will display the theological teachings, traditions, and events that affected the way the church dealt with the racial struggle during the Abolitionist period. The Abolitionist era began in 1830s with the Millerite Movement and continued to 1863. The findings include an examination of the Church’s administration, individual members, Church leaders and their views and actions pertaining to the Church’s involvement with race relations.

The Seventh-day Adventist Church began with the founding of the Millerite Movement. This movement began spreading the teachings of William Miller throughout the Northeast and Western parts of America. The theological teachings of the Millerites were adopted from other religious beliefs of that time. After much prayer, supplication, and study, William Miller was led to an interpretation of the Bible that laid the foundation for the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Millerite theology was based on years of fervent study via *sola scriptura*, the Bible and the Bible alone.
Theological Beliefs

One of the premier themes of the Millerite movement was the Second Advent of Jesus Christ. The Second Advent was based on premillenialist eschatology. Premillennialism is the belief that Christ would return prior to the millennial kingdom (Rev. 19:11) to inaugurate it on earth. The glorious return of Christ takes place after the history of Christianity has witnessed numerous moments of satanic activities. Thus, the Second Coming is a cataclysmic event that brings a very sharp break from the wicked reality of the world, involving the surrender of Satan (Rev. 20:2-3), the resurrection of the righteous dead (Rev. 20:4-5; 1 Thess. 4:16), and the "caught up" of the living believers in the church to meet Christ (1 Thess. 4:17).\(^1\) William Miller's preaching was centered on this notion of the second coming of Christ. This belief system was not consistent with the mainstream religious convictions of that time. His prophecies were unique to the average Christian in America. "Miller’s primary innovation was not the preaching of definite time (which he long resisted), but teaching that Christ would come before the millennium, contrary to the postmillennialism that was dominant at the time. Whereas postmillennialism had an optimistic vision of a world tending towards betterment and a bright future, Miller proclaimed that it was heading to destruction."\(^2\)

The Second Advent was so important that it was used as a part of the church’s name


when it was officially organized in 1863. This belief is essential to race relations because slavery was considered the central sign of evil that would lead to the end of the world.\(^3\) It was the event that let the world know the end was soon to come.

Millerites interpreted the end of the world from a premillenialist perspective. They also believed that the American government played a key role in the coming of Christ. The two horned beast in Revelation was a symbol of America and its government. According to the *Adventist Review*, Bill Knot writes in his article “Writing against Wrongs” states:

Millerism—and specifically their adherence to and development of a historicist interpretation of biblical prophecy that caused them to identify the United States as one of the three great persecuting powers described in the thirteenth chapter of Revelation...The contribution of the *Review* authors and editors was to identify the United States as the third beast *because* it mandated submission to papal authority, tolerated (and even embraced) a culture both "free and slave," and dominated an economic system built on these evils. Slavery... identified the United States as the predicted oppressive power that would exercise control immediately before the second coming of Jesus.\(^4\)

Early Millerites believed that the Second Coming of Christ was Biblical and according to prophecy, he would come on the year or before 1843. Because of this understanding, they concluded that Jesus Christ at his Second coming would take away all sins. This belief inevitably includes America’s central sin, which was slavery. In William Miller’s *Apology and Defense*, he presents 20 articles of faith. Article numbers 14 and 15 states, “I believe Jesus Christ will come again in his glory and person to our


earth where he will accomplish his Divine purposes in the saving of his people destroying the wicked from the earth and taking away the sin of the world. . . I believe that the second coming of Jesus Christ is near even at the door even within twenty one years on or before 1843."

Revivalism was one of the additional beliefs imposed by the Millerite movement. Its central theme was to reform the American society through temperance and abolition of slavery. However, the fundamental notion of the Millerite movement was the acknowledgement of the Second Coming of Christ. Spreading this truth and preparing as many people as possible for the Second Advent was the driving force behind any societal reform. Millerites believed the eradication of slavery could not come to pass by way of human actions. The deeds of human beings were believed to be sinful; therefore, the best approach to abolitionism was the spreading of the Advent message. According to the Millerites, if one followed the teachings of the Adventist Church then their would be no room for slavery in American society.

Adventists identified the sin of slavery as a central sign of the evil of current human structures and the near end of the world. It was the most significant example of the world’s iniquity. Spectrum Magazine quotes the following statement from Uriah Smith, “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

5 Sylvester Bliss, Memoirs of William Miller (Boston: Joshua V. Himes, 1853), 79.
means which afford any hope of success."6 He reiterated however, that Bible prophecy dictates that "this gigantic evil will still exist" and social conditions will only worsen until Christ returns." Thus in the light of prophecy, "practicable philanthropy" on behalf of the slave would be to "point him to the coming of the Messiah as his true hope." In the light of the action of the "dragon-hearted" U.S. government and "the declarations of prophecy," work for "slavery emancipation" would be "at most secondary.7 In Bound for Glory, the author states, "Miraculously, the focus on an immediate departure from this world seemed to have underscored the inclination to share the message with blacks, as well as to work for an improvement of their condition. Perhaps their aspirations were so centered in the City of God that they have began to behave as its citizens."8

The Seventh-day Adventist Church has roots that transcend Millerism beliefs. In fact, much of Millerite doctrine was adopted from pre-existing denominations. Anabaptist belief systems provided the framework for some early Adventist theology. They, like Millerites, believed in getting back to the teachings of the Bible. Sola Scriptura, which is Latin for "by scriptures alone, was the concept that Anabaptists, Reformationists, and Millerites espoused. Before William Miller began traveling the country preaching and teaching, he spent several years studying and analyzing the Bible

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and only the Bible. From those studies and revelations, he initiated the Millerite movement.9

In addition to the Anabaptists, Methodists also influenced the Millerite movement. The notion of Jesus dying for all men as opposed to a predestined elect was accepted by the Adventist Church. The acceptance of God through the Holy Spirit and the need to follow the teachings of Jesus Christ also sat well with the Millerites. The Methodist understanding made sense in a world in which people’s actions and choices seemed to make a difference, and where revivalism helped people give their heart and themselves to God. Even the prophetess of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, Ellen White, was reared in the Methodist church before accepting the Advent message. She used Wesleyan/Methodist themes such as sanctification and perfection as key ideas for the doctrines of the Adventist Church.10

Deism also permeated the teachings of the Adventist Church. It is the belief that by rational methods alone men can know all the true propositions of theology which it is possible, necessary, or desirable for men to know.11 Prior to William Miller receiving the call to spread the Advent message, he promoted deistic beliefs. This belief system took a rational approach to religion. His method of preaching, because of his deistic

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10 Ibid., 33.

background, was to aim at people's intellects rather than their hearts or emotions. After seeing the pre-existing religions that formulated the Millerite movement and eventually the Adventist Church, it is important to see how these denominations coped with the racial struggle in America during this time. Thereby, impacting the Millerite/Adventist theology, teachings, and traditions regarding slavery.

The first religious group in the U.S to raise objections to slavery was the Mennonites, a Christian group that descended from the Anabaptists. A noteworthy feature of the Anabaptists was their love of freedom from state and religious oppression. The Mennonites, an Anabaptist sect, is credited with staging America's first public protest against slavery. The Quakers, another Anabaptist faith based group, threatened any of their members who imported slaves with expulsion from the denomination. The Anabaptist tradition is deep rooted in the belief of freedom and abolitionism. Like the Adventists, their predecessors published antislavery literature and advised their believers to refrain from participating in the slavery process.

Unlike the Anabaptists, the Methodist Church was divided over the question of enslaved Africans in America. According to Roy Branson, author of Ellen G. White, Racist or Champion and Equality, "So many good and regular members of the Methodist denomination condoned slavery that the church split in 1844." He states, "John

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12 Ibid., 34.


14 Ibid.
Byington, the first president of the General Conference of Seventh day Adventists, had earlier left the Methodist Episcopal Church because it did not take a stand against slavery. The Methodists were split between the idea of slavery and the Anabaptists who were clear on their abolitionist views.

Deists, however, maintained their own view on race relations based on reason. Throughout the development of deism, science soon became a substantive argument for theological beliefs and spiritual understanding. In the Dictionary of the History of Ideas it is stated, “Science was widely held to reveal the will of God in a natural and rational way and it bolstered arguments from design with new evidence.” During the 19th century, science was being used as logical argument for the subordinate position of Africans in America. In the nineteenth-century world in which the Seventh-day Adventist Church was born, this social hierarchy was fueled by "scientific" racism.

Samuel Morton, a Philadelphia physician linked cranial capacity to intellectual and moral aptitude. He placed the Caucasian at the top of a pyramid of intelligence and capability, and the Negro at the bottom of the pyramid.

Similarly, Josiah Nott an understudy of Morton, asserted the natural inferiority of the Negro in an effort to assist the proslavery forces of the nineteenth century. He argued


16 Ibid.

that Negroes were like children, best served by American enslavement. In 1854 Nott and Gliddon, both close disciples of Morton, published *Types of Mankind*, a "scientific" book that documented variations among human species. Its findings were used to support pro-slavery arguments. *Types of Mankind* went through 10 editions by the end of the nineteenth century and became one of the century's most influential texts on anthropology.\(^\text{18}\)

Because Deism in the 1800s placed emphasis on reason and science, and mainstream scientific thought corroborated that Africans in America were inferior to whites, it is quite possible that Deists subscribed to the same beliefs. These same beliefs that William Miller, a deist, may have adopted during his years prior to the Millerite movement. *A Prophet Among You* states, "In his early twenties Miller made the acquaintance of a number of deists. He enjoyed his discussions with them, and eventually joined them in their thinking."\(^\text{19}\)

An examination of the three main religious groups that influenced the Millerite movement and ultimately the Seventh-day Adventist Church, it is evident that there were mixed feelings about race and equality connected to these denominations. Anabaptists believed in freedom from the state, religious oppression, and slavery. Methodists were torn between the idea of slavery and abolitionism. Deists, being the rational individuals


they were, most likely subscribed to the notion of slavery based on mainstream scientific reasoning of that time. With such a wide spectrum of viewpoints on slavery, it is easy to see how the stance on racial equality was confusing for early Adventists.

Traditions

Traditionally, Millerites were anti-government. They believed that no government was godly. Adventists theologically rejected the notion of “America” being a God-ordained political enterprise.” Adventists believed that no government was “godly.”20

Millerites initiated a tradition of African-American inclusion or racial integration. It was not uncommon to see blacks working alongside whites to spread the gospel and the Advent message to surrounding cities. Millerites were clearly amenable to the inclusion of blacks in the Second Advent movement.21 People of African descent became outstanding ministers of the gospel and made significant contributions to the growth of the church. Charles Bowles addressed large crowds of blacks and whites while playing a critical role in the establishment of several churches.22 John W Lewis, another black Millerite preacher, wrote Charles Bowles’ biography. William Foy has been called “The Unknown Prophet” because of the visions he received prior to Ellen White and the Great


Disappointment. His reluctance to share the vision was due to fear of ridicule. Foy believed his race and religious affiliation would add to the mockery. Yet, he joined other black preachers in spreading the Advent message to black and white audiences.23

Though the Millerites accepted African Americans and allowed them to assist in the spreading of the Advent message, Millerites/Adventists did not purposely begin evangelizing to the Africans in America until the latter part of the 19th century. The majority of Millerite evangelism took place in the North, New England area, and Old West. There were very few blacks in these areas during the Millerite years because most blacks resided in the South. Paths between freed Africans and Millerites did not cross often. Millerites tended to be agriculturalists, while most runaway slaves gravitated towards the urban areas.24

The message of Seventh-Day Adventists, for the first half of their history, went mainly to people of British stock.25 Seventh-Day Adventists did not start purposefully evangelizing to African people, especially in the South, until the 1880’s and 1890s, almost 50 years after the Millerite movement. This effort is evident in the number of black members in the Adventist Church. In 1890, before the Church administration began to take a more active role in Southern black evangelism, there were only fifty black


24 Malkapela, 26.

members in the Adventist Church. That is an average of one black convert a year. Once
the church began to heighten its efforts in spreading the gospel to former enslaved
Africans in the South, the black membership grew to three thousand five hundred in
twenty years.26

In addition to this newfound interest in black converts, in 1895, Ellen White wrote
a letter addressed My Brethren in Responsible Positions in America:

The Colored people might have been helped with much better prospects of
success years ago than now. The work is now tenfold harder than it would have
been then... After the war, if the Northern people had made the South a real
missionary field, if they had not left the Negroes to ruin through poverty and
ignorance, thousands of souls would have been brought to Christ. But it was an
unpromising field, and the Catholics have been more active in it than any other
class.27

In addition to racial integration, Millerites also maintained a reputation of
producing antislavery literature. The Advent Review and Sabbath Herald was the
Millerite paper of that time. The Review team believed the proper ethical response to
slavery was to prepare themselves and others for Christ’s return, which meant
disassociating themselves from fallen civil and ecclesiastical power structures, exercising
private conscience in legal matters, and publicly proclaiming the sin of slavery.28

The antislavery tradition of early Adventists was deeply rooted in a distinct theological

26 Calvin Rock, Perspectives Black Seventh-day Adventists Face the Twenty First Century,
(Hagerstown, Maryland: Review and Herald, 1996), 27.


28 Erin Reid, “The Army of the Lord”: Principle, Precept and Practice in Antebellum Adventist
Abolitionism, 1856-1861,” http://www.oakwood.edu/forms/history/learning/Ejab/Ereid.htm (accessed
November 01, 2008).
foundation. Many of the antislavery articles printed in the *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald* between 1856 and 1861 associate the United States with the “two-horned beast” of Revelation 13:11: “And he had two horns like a *lamb*, and he spake as a *dragon*.” The character of this beast is that his motives, intentions, and desires are all like a dragon, but his outward appearance, is like a lamb. This perception of the United States caused the Church to perpetuate an anti-government tradition, which was practiced throughout the duration of the Millerite period. John Loughborough contrasts the nation’s lamb-like profession with dragon-like action when he stated, “the institution of slavery is the specific trait that demonstrates the true nature of the entire nation. Any situation involving slavery and/or internal national contradiction is taken as evidence of dragon voice and action.

Not only did the *Adventist Review* reject government in its antislavery tradition, but it also displayed critiques of religious denominations that supported slavery. Seventh-day Adventists spoke against religious institutions that promote slavery. One such article criticizes the common Northern church practice of inviting slaveholding ministers to speak in their pulpits and sit at their communion tables. The crowning contribution is a lengthy article from Harriet Beecher Stowe, condemning the Northern churches for their complicity in slavery and the slave trade; their unwillingness to speak

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29 Ibid.

30 Ibid.

31 “So It Goes: All Right! All Honey!” (from *Golden Rule*), *Review*, December 8, 1859, 19.
out was tacit affirmation of slaveholding. They believed, "Not to condemn is to approve."  

Although The Review spoke out against the institution of slavery, many times the editors did not want to get too involved with affairs of the state and the government. The Adventist Review states, "it is remarkable how firmly most Review authors and editors avoided direct political involvement." Anson Byington, a New York relative of the man who would become the first president of the denomination when it officially organized in 1863, complained that the Review was abandoning the moral high ground by not advocating more direct action. This is a portion of that letter:

Bro. Smith: I have taken the Review some six or seven years and have been much edified with its contents. Having been engaged for the last twenty-five years in the antislavery cause, I have regarded the Review as an auxiliary until the last two or three years, in which it has failed to aid the cause of abolition. And as I want my money for abolition purposes, I must discontinue the paper when the three dollars herein enclosed are expended.  

The response to this lament explains the mentality of Adventists towards the enslaved Africans: "Slavery as a sin we have never ceased to abhor; its ravages we have never ceased to deprecate; with the victims locked in its foul embrace, we have not ceased to sympathize. But what is to be done? The tyranny of oppression secludes them from our reach."  

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34 Ibid.
35 Ibid.
In spite of the division between political and anti-political Millerites, the Review continued to maintain its stance of antislavery support based on theological principle. As the Review editors saw it, the Almighty's controversy with the nation would not end either with a blood atonement offered from the veins of its young men or with a grant of divine forgiveness. Only the second advent of Jesus, whose announced mission was "to proclaim release to the captives" and "to let the oppressed go free" (Luke 4:18) would finally erase all distinctions between "slave" and "free." Although, the Millerites were not as forthright and revolutionary as other abolitionists, their teachings were still atypical and radical in some fashion. The fact that the Review was banned in many slave states demonstrates the sometimes political nature of using one's "spiritual voice."37

Significant Events

One of the more significant events of the Millerite movement was the Great Disappointment. Millerites interpreted the biblical texts of Daniel and Revelation to mean that Jesus Christ would be returning to the earth in 1844. This conclusion led to many people leaving their houses, jobs, selling what they had and waiting for the Lord to return. When he did not, Millerites continued to preach that Jesus was coming soon and the earth would be destroyed at the Second Advent. This message began to take precedence over present issues such as politics, social reform, and slavery. Although early Adventists preached a message of equality and antislavery, it was all done under the

36 Ibid.

motivation that Christ was coming again. The Great Disappointment led some away from the movement, but others continued to preach the message and convert more people to Millerism. Proselytizing to Africans in America was the best way to contribute to abolitionism. To Millerites, teaching everyone that Jesus Christ was coming again was the most effective way to get people ready for the end of the world and the eradication of slavery.

Religious Leaders

William Miller, though an avid reader of the Bible and a fiery evangelist, could not escape the issue of slavery and the black/white relations in America. There is a brief mention of bringing liberation to the enslaved in *Sketches of the Christian Life and Public Labors of William Miller*. However, William Miller does not address the slave issue on a major level. William Miller was not one to condone the enslavement of Africans in America. This stance is known due to the overarching stance Millerites took against the institution of slavery. It would be quite difficult for William Miller to be pro slavery and all his followers, abolitionists. However, the researcher has yet to uncover solid documentation that affirms his stance on racial equality. One can only come to those conclusions via his theological beliefs, for it appears that William Miller’s position on social issues were substantiated by biblical understanding and theological interpretation.

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Joshua Himes was one of the most influential members of the Millerite movement. Although he did not initiate the spreading of the Second Advent message, he was responsible for increasing the number of people involved in Millerism. Joshua Himes, who was responsible for drawing Miller out of the small towns and villages into the large cities, lent his promotional ability to providing more openings for sermons than could be filled. Tens of thousands of persons attended the camp meetings Himes organized and managed, and more thousands were added as the movement spread beyond his personal supervision. Before Himes worked with the Millerite movement, he was an ardent worker for the Abolitionist Movement. Himes also led another social movement, which opposed the use of violence for any purpose, whether to abolish slavery, or to defend it. Joshua Himes invited William Miller to speak at his church in Boston. He believed in Miller’s teaching and began to work as his publicist. However, once Joshua Himes was introduced to the messages of William Miller, his fervor began to change. He now shifted his emphasis from the abolition of slavery to the preparation of a world for Jesus' return. Like the Millerite message, Himes began to focus more on the coming of Jesus and less on the social plight of enslaved Africans in America. Joshua Himes was one of the many Adventists influenced by William Lloyd Garrison. He maintained a good relationship with famous abolitionist William Lloyd Garrison. Himes

39 Jemison, A Prophet Among You, 192.


41 Ibid.
welcomed Garrison to his new church, the Chardon Street Chapel, which became a headquarters for abolitionist meetings. The Christian nonresistance movement that Garrison led also influenced many early Adventists. Christian nonresistance had been espoused by the Millerite Adventist reformer Joshua V. Himes, as well as William Miller himself. That commitment was also apparent in the post-1844 group that formed the nucleus of the emerging Seventh-day Adventist Church. The movement of abolitionism and Christian nonresistance was prevalent in the early Adventist Church. Attitudes of nonviolence and noncombatant behavior were in harmony with the principles of the SDA Church. However, the solution was not in the abolitionist movement, but seemed to be in the Second Advent of Christ.

If there was one Millerite that actively fought against the institution of slavery, it would be Joseph Bates. Bates is sometimes referred to as “The real founder of Seventh-day Adventism.” His dedication to the evangelical movement of the early Church has earned him recognition in the Seventh-day Adventist denomination. He decided, in the 1830’s, to make a clear decision on his stance regarding slavery in America. Bates decided he must cast his lot with the persecuted abolitionists and stated, “I then began to feel the importance of taking a decided stance on the side of the oppressed...I could not be a consistent Christian if I stood on the side of the oppressor, for God was not there neither could I stand on neutral ground. Hence, my only alternative was to plead for the

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slave, and thus I decided.” Both Himes and Bates worked closely with the manual school labor movement that founded Oberlin College in Ohio. Oberlin College became a school that sponsored not only work-study programs, but causes like abolitionism, equal rights for women and Grahamite vegetarianism. After hearing William Miller speak on the Second Coming, Joseph Bates became interested in the Millerite movement. Millerite Adventism progressively became the dominating influence in Bates’ life eventually usurping the time he spent in social reform. When questioned by his friends, he answered:

In embracing the doctrine of the second coming of the Savior, I found enough to engage my whole time in getting ready for such an event and aiding others to do the same, and that all who embraced this doctrine would and must necessarily be advocates of temperance and the abolition of slavery.44

He soon believed that the Second Coming of Christ would circumnavigate the difficulty of corrupt humanity. However, unlike many of the Millerites, Joseph Bates took the message of the Second Coming a little further than the other ministers. Bates and his comrades decided to take the message to the slaveholding state of Maryland. George Storrs, an ardent abolitionist, had been mobbed that same month in Virginia. Bates went on a Southern tour proselytizing in the South while walking and talking with the slaves. Most of the early Adventists of this time would not set foot in the South to spread the gospel to the enslaved Africans. The General Conference of May 1843 in New York sympathized with the need but decided to send only literature and not

44 George Knight, Joseph Bates: The Real Founder of Seventh-day Adventism (Hagerstown, Maryland: Review and Herald Publication Association, 2004), 59.
preachers. Although Bates, like most Adventists, felt the educating of Christ’s coming usurped the need to eradicate, actively, the institution of slavery, he took evangelism a step further and risked his life to spread the Advent message to the captive workers in the South. His bravery and courage was not widely accepted during that time and would not be until the closing years of the 19th century.

James White, the husband of the Seventh-day Adventist prophetess Ellen G White and one of the leading Millerites, as writer for the Review utilized the magazine as a soap box for speaking out against slavery. In his 1862 article of the Review, James White explains how long their publications have spoken out against slavery and the church’s stance on the issue during that time:

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. And the anti-slavery teachings of several of our publications based upon certain prophecies have been such that their circulation has been positively forbidden in the slave States. Those of our people who voted at all at the last Presidential election, to a man voted for Abraham Lincoln. We know of not one man among Seventh-day Adventists who has the least sympathy for secession. But for reasons which we will here state, our people have not taken that part in the present struggle that others have.

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The last religious leader during the Abolitionist period is by far one of the most important. Ellen G. White is considered the prophetess of the SDA church. Her writings and visions have been used to provide the moral framework for the Adventist Church. She received her first vision in December of 1844 and a second vision a week later. As time passed, more and more of the advent believers accepted Ellen White’s revelations as from God, and accepted her as the Lord’s messenger. As she was the Lord’s messenger, this author deems it important to highlight her views on race relations, slavery, and abolitionism.

In the book, *Testimonies for the Church*, Ellen White states:

The law of our land requiring us to deliver a slave to his master, we are not to obey; and we must abide the consequences of violating this law. The slave is not the property of any man. God is his rightful master, and man has no right to take God’s workmanship into his hands, and claim him as his own... Mrs. White was avidly opposed to obeying the slave laws. This attitude also lends evidence to the belief that she too may have concurred with the anti government views of the Millerites. According to Ellen White, non-cooperation in the slave process was a necessity in the actions of early Adventists. In brief, her course of action was to throw herself into building up a network of believers for whom non-cooperation with the social sin of slavery was absolutized by their covenant to “keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus.” While she lifted the eyes of the sabbatarian Adventist

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47 Ibid.

community to a higher prize than the renovation of American civic institutions, that higher loyalty led them to use their voices, influence, and, increasingly over the following decades, their votes, expertise, and resources, on behalf of justice and mercy.\footnote{Doug Morgan, "Peacemaking Heritage Series: Ellen White, Slavery and Politics-II," \textit{Spectrum Magazine}, April 27, 2008, \url{http://www.spectrummagazine.org/node/538} (accessed March 05, 2009).} Ellen White believed Millerites' look toward a higher calling should lead them to fight against the injustices of slavery.

It was never uncommon to hear Ellen G. White confirm the spirit of abolitionism and the tradition of antislavery. However, some have accused Ellen White of speaking out against slavery during a time when it was most convenient. The first quote the author used by Ellen White is a statement saying that Adventists should not abide by the Fugitive Slave Law. However, Malcolm Bull and Keith Lockhart write, "Ellen White did not speak to this issue until nine years after passage of the law and the emergence of widespread, highly-publicized opposition to it. Her statement in 1859 thus merely “brought the church into harmony with mainstream Northern opinion.”\footnote{Malcolm Bull and Keith Lockhart, \textit{Seeking A Sanctuary: Seventh-day Adventist and the American Dream} (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 2006), 21.} Morgan, a professor at Columbia Union College, assesses this claim by stating:

\begin{quote}
Indeed, the Republican president elected the following year made a pledge of full cooperation with the Fugitive Slave Law prominent in his effort to convince the South that he had no intention of interfering with slavery in the states where it presently existed. That was the position of the Republican majority party, and the northern Democrats as a whole would have only been more accommodating to the slave system. Thus, pledged opposition to the Fugitive Slave law meant being part of a distinct minority, and not taking a comfortable stance of prevailing opinion”. Thus, disproving that abiding by the Fugitive slave law was a mainstream position during this time. He later stated, “We cannot be certain that these specific developments were prominent in Ellen White’s mind as she commented on the
Fugitive Slave law in 1859, but clearly it was a current, controversial matter, not an issue that had by then become "safe."51

There are many statements one could read that confirm Ellen White’s support of abolitionism. She still believed in lifting her listeners to a “higher prize” as a priority over transforming American institutions; however, the existence of slavery did not sit well with her conscience and if she was considered a messenger from the Lord, then it should not be acceptable to the rest of the early Adventists.

Religious leaders of the early Adventist Church believed in the abolitionist spirit and the eradication of chattel slavery in America. However, it is clear that the advancement of Adventism as a social institution was not foremost on the agenda of the Millerites. The theological belief of the Second Coming of Christ caused them to fight for abolitionism via conversion and not by social or political measures. William Lloyd Garrison, one of the more famous abolitionists of the 19th century, said of the Millerites:

Multitudes, he penned who were formerly engaged in the various moral enterprises of the age, have lost all interest in works of practical righteousness, and think and talk of nothing else but the burning up of the world – Deluded people. A considerable number of worthy abolitionists have been carried away by it (Millerism), and for the time being are rendered completely useless to our cause. But the delusion has not long to run.”52


52 George Knight, Joseph Bates: The Real Founder of Seventh-day Adventism, 59.
Pre-Civil Rights Period: Results

Theological Beliefs

Many changes were taking place around the time the Seventh-day Adventist Church became an organized religion. It was the end of the Civil War and the United States had to undergo major reconstruction. The period relating to the restructuring of America post Civil War is known as the Reconstruction period. The dates corresponding with this period are 1865-1877. For this research, the Pre-Civil Rights era will correspond with Seventh-day Adventist events, leaders, beliefs, and traditions that fall between the years of 1863-1944.

In the South, Christian ideas and customs were very different from other parts of the country. Racism was a part of the spiritual order, therefore white superiority and segregation had little chance of being challenged or changed through denominational efforts. Stephen Budiansky in an excerpt from the Franklin Enterprise states:

Therefore we are banding together in a White League Army drawn up only on the defensive, exasperated by continual wrong, it is true, but acting under Christian and high principled leaders, and determined to defeat those negroes in their infamous design of depriving us of all we hold sacred and precious on the soil of our nativity or adoption, or perish in the attempt.¹

This quote is emblematic of the unreconstructed attitude of the defeated soldiers and citizens of the South. The violence was unrelenting against the African Americans, which made any attempts to better their conditions vulnerable to attack and destruction. Because of the prevailing conditions following the Civil War, the Adventist Church began to change with the time. Prior to becoming a certified religion in 1863, the Church

did not believe in declaring a specific set of values beliefs or creeds. In fact, the Church did not want doctrines and articles of faith to confine church growth. The Church websites state, “Christians, as did Seventh-day Adventists from their earliest days, actively sought freedom for all and worked toward abolition of slavery as well as roles for women in the Church, and fostered a strong opposition to formalized church creeds.”

John Loughborough, a Millerite leader, believed “The first step of apostasy is to get up a creed, telling us what we shall believe. The second is to make that creed a test of fellowship. The third is to try members by that creed. The fourth is to denounce as heretics those who do not believe that creed. And fifth, to commence persecution against such.” James White claimed:

Making a creed, is setting the stakes, and barring the way to all future advancement. . . . The Bible is our creed. We reject everything in the form of a human creed. We take the Bible and the gifts of the Spirit; embracing the faith that thus the Lord will teach us from time to time. And in this we take a position against the formation of a creed.

James White wrote the first creed for the SDA church responding to a query by an official of the Seventh-day Baptist Association. He did not intend for readers to mistake this statement as a creed. In 1853, White declares, “. . . And while standing here, with the aid of no other creed than the Word of God, and bound together by the bonds of love—love for the truth, love for each other, and love for a perishing world.”

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3 “Doings of the Battle Creek Conference, October. 5 & 6, 1861,” Advent Review and Sabbath Herald 18, October 8, 1861, 148.

believers included not only a religious organization of doctrines and religious creeds, but a proclamation of unity and love. This unity and love was promoted in hopes that it could encompass everything people looked for in a creed.

As time progressed, Seventh-day Adventists still had no interest in establishing a set of creeds. However, it was important that the world understood their position. During this time, there were many groups calling themselves Adventists but not upholding the Millerite standards. The beginning section of “A Declaration of the Fundamental Principles Taught and Practiced by the Seventh-day Adventists, 1872” states, “As Seventh-day Adventists we desire simply that our position shall be understood; and we are the more solicitous for this because there are many who call themselves Adventists who hold views with which we can have no sympathy, some of which, we think, are subversive of the plainest and most important principles set forth in the word of God.”

In the “Declaration of the Fundamental Principles…” Uriah Smith makes no deliberate statement regarding social reform and racial equality. However, in relation to the Millerite movement one can see that the church no longer prophesied a specific date for the Lord’s coming. The Declaration states, “Seventh-day Adventists differ from one class in believing in the unconscious state of the dead, and the final destruction of the unrepentant wicked . . . and in setting no times for the advent to occur.” One of the major reasons for Adventists refraining from social reform was the

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6 Ibid.
anticipation of the soon coming Savior in 1844. At this point, they still believed in the
Second Coming, but could not pinpoint the exact date (which is what the Bible says in
the first place).

Moreover, the beliefs in human actions mark another shift in ideological beliefs of Adventists. During the Millerite movement, early Adventist believed that sinful humans
could not fix sinful problems. However, in 1872 “Declaration of the Fundamental
Principles…” states:

That as the natural or carnal heart is at enmity with God and his law, this enmity
can be subdued only by a radical transformation of its affections, the exchange of
unholy for holy principles; that this transformation follows repentance and faith,
is the special work of the Holy Spirit, and constitutes regeneration or conversion.\(^7\)

One conclusion is that Adventists believed, through Christ, one could change their
evil ways and abide by holy principles. In contrast with the Millerites, 1872 Adventists
believed that one did not have to wait for Christ to come to seek change; but if one
surrendered to Christ, they could live a holy life.

In 1931, the Church proclaimed their beliefs in a statement called “Fundamental
Beliefs of Seventh-day Adventists.” This statement was a request by the General
Conference Committee because of the growing population in the Church. The
declaration displayed the theological standings of the church. Not much is said about the
denomination’s view on social reform and equality. The one belief that may indirectly
relate to social equality is the principle that Jesus’ life is an example of righteous living.\(^8\)

If Adventists believe that Jesus was an advocate for justice and equality, then the church,

\(^7\) Ibid.

\(^8\) Ibid.
according to the principle, subscribes to the same notion. Outside of this standard, there are few if any beliefs that relate to social reform and racial equality.

Although the Church does not directly provide a statement on race relations inside of its theological beliefs, some researchers have critically assessed the Adventist principles in light of racial traditions. Talbert Shaw examines the fundamental notions of Creation, The Fall, Judgment, and Redemption to see how racism can be applied to its teachings. Shaw explains the Creation, not from the viewpoint of Genesis, but from Paul's statement in Acts 17:26, which states God "hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all face of the earth." Shaw claims, "Certainly there can be no greater argument for racial parity than a common source and content." Talbert Shaw also explains that Pauline and Christian theology affirms the doctrine of unity and racial equality inside the principle of Creation. Ellen White appears to have grasped this notion. In her book, Testimonies for the Church vol. 1, she reminds whites that they should remember about blacks, "their common relationship to us by creation and by redemption and their rights to the blessings of freedom." In the concept of the Fall, Shaw explains that pride was a characteristic gained from the action of sinning against God. Pride is when people place themselves as an idol, and racial pride is tantamount to idolatry. In light of judgment, Shaw explains that all sinners, including racists, will have

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11 This phrase is a term used in Christian theology in relation to the Fall of Man. This event occurred when Adam and Eve, the original man and woman, disobeyed the law of God. http://bible.org/seriespage/fall-man-genesis-31-24.
to stand before God on the Day of Judgment. Regarding the theme of redemption, Talbert Shaw states, “The redemptive goal in race relations is an open, integrated society in which all men may enjoy freedom and equality, without which there can be no self-fulfillment.” In summary, Talbert Shaw indicates that Adventist theology can be viewed in the light of race and equality. It is evident that actions contrary to teachings of equality and justice are not consistent with Biblical principles as practiced by Adventists.

Traditions

African Americans have been a part of the Adventist Church since its official organization in 1863. Though they were few in number, the membership proved that missionary attempts by a few Millerites could yield fruit. Black families worshipped alongside the Adventists of the North; however, Southern culture made life a bit more difficult. Seventh-day Adventist pioneers did not set out to evangelize African Americans in the South until the latter part of the 19th century. According to Malcolm Bull and Keith Lockhart, African Americans found the church after attending Adventist meetings without being directly invited. Eunice Ruff states, “The color line, which developed slowly after Reconstruction, made the growth and expansion of the Church in the South even more difficult.” Originally, the Adventist denomination did not tolerate disunity and separation. In *The Church, Its Organization, Order and Discipline*, which is

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14 Oakwood University, http://www.oakwood.edu/forms/history/learning/Ejah/EastHall.htm (accessed April 25, 2009).
the earliest and one of the most complete sources on church organization, Loughborough states, "Followers of Jesus Christ will not act independently one of another. Our strength must be in God, and it must be husbanded, to be put forth in noble consecrated action. It must not be wasted in meaningless movements. In union there is strength. . . . No strife or variance should exist among the workers. The work is one, superintended by one leader."\(^{15}\) This text has a plethora of statements advocating notions of order, unity, and love. The church manual, which is an extension of Loughborough’s work, states, “Christians should make every effort to avoid tendencies that would divide them and bring dishonor to their cause. Ellen White wrote these words, “It is the purpose of God that His children shall blend in unity. Do they not expect to live together in the same heaven? . . . Those who refuse to work in harmony greatly dishonor God.”\(^{16}\) The previous statement is also found in the church manual. However, the Reconstruction and Post-Reconstruction years of America made the color line more distinct. With the establishment of Jim Crow, white superiority and disunity became a norm within American society.

Stephen Budiansky provides an accurate depiction of the mentality of Southern whites during Reconstruction with this statement:

>If it was incomprehensible to many Northerners, it made perfect sense to those same white Southerners who, on more than one occasion, blamed the “cowardly Negroes” for their unmanliness in having permitted themselves to be massacred by bands of armed white men: it only showed they argued in complete earnest, that black men lacked the Anglo-Saxon virtues indispensable to free men who


\(^{16}\) Ellen White, *Testimonies for the Church* vol. 8 (Mountain View, California: Pacific Press Publishing Association 1855-1868), 240.
would exercise the lofty privilege of self-government. Any people who allowed
their vote to be taken from them at gunpoint didn’t deserve to keep it.17

For some Americans in general, Reconstruction was a time in which whites and
blacks were involved in a power struggle. In 1875 The Westville News, a Mississippi
newspaper, issued this statement, “Vote the Negro down or knock him down we have
tried the policy long enough . . . the White man’s party is the only salvation for the State.
Either the white man or the Negro will rule this country; they cannot both do it, and it is
for the white men to say who the ruler shall be. . .”18 In the South, autonomy was not an
option for African Americans and segregation became a habitual way of life. This
custom began to make its way into the hearts of Seventh-day Adventists.

In addition to Southern culture, traditions of segregation were also prevalent
during the pre Civil Rights years of the Adventist Church. The first black SDA minister,
Charles Kinney, was the earliest Adventist to propose the separation of blacks and
whites. Clifford Jones writes, “Charles M. Kinney the first black ordained SDA minister
advised in the late 1880’s that separation be pursued as a viable strategy wherever
integration limited or negated church growth and that Christian community be fostered so
that separation may be viewed for what it is a strategic way to reach all people and not a
monument to prejudice and alienation.”19 He also states, “In 1891 Kinney stressed the
importance of spreading the gospel to the South as a separate work for blacks. More than
anything else he did not want to see the dignity and worth of his people trampled upon,

17 Budiansky, The Bloody Shirt: Terror After the Civil War, 5
18 Ibid., 202.
19 Clifford Jones, James K. Humphrey and the Sabbath Day Adventists (Jackson, Mississippi:
University Press of Mississippi, 2006), 92.
At the same time, he did not want to see Whites refuse the gospel because of the presence of blacks in their churches."20

Segregation was not the first solution set in motion by the Adventist Church. On an administrative level, the church acknowledged the needs for equality in the church. E.J. Waggoner, assistant editor of the Adventist magazine *Signs of the Times*, believed blacks who accepted the Third Angel’s message21 should be received into the Adventist Church on an equality with White members and that no distinction whatsoever be made between the two races in church relations.22 During these pre-Civil Rights years, it appears that the denominational polity did not tolerate the mistreatment of black Adventists based on color. However, the qualifier in this declaration is “blacks who accepted the Third Angel’s message.”

In addition to the profession of equality by the General Conference, other Adventists continued to support the education and welfare of African-American Adventists. Eight years after the formal organization of the church, evangelical work for blacks in the South was reported. It took repeated appeals and admonitions from Ellen G. White in the 1890s before the evangelical work for blacks moved ahead with momentum.23 More than 10 years after the end of the Civil War, a school for African

20 Ibid.

21 Revelation 4:9-12.


Americans ranging in age from six to twenty-four was operating in Missouri. Seven years after Oakwood Industrial School was established, the General Conference of 1903 demanded that the school receive better facilities, etc.\textsuperscript{24} White Adventist members and clergy did not completely disregard the needs of the black constituents. Even after the proposition of separate congregations, the black and white congregants continued to work together in hopes for a change.

Although the Seventh-day Adventist Church allowed African Americans to direct their own schools and churches, white officials still maintained jurisdiction over black institutions. The notion of white control was another tradition perpetuated by white Adventists. One example of white control over black leadership was the organization of the Negro Department. Due to the increasing number of African Americans joining the Adventist Church, the Negro Department was established in 1909. The purpose of this entity was to coordinate the work among black Seventh-day Adventists. Until 1918, the Negro department remained under the leadership of three Caucasian appointees. After much dispute regarding the expectations of the black members and their participation in the financial and educational progress of the church, W.H. Green became the first black director of the Negro Department. Although this was a step forward in the racial conflict between blacks and whites in the Adventist Church, it still posed a problem with the more militant members of the black Adventist Church. The majority white leaders of the church selected the African-American presidents of the Negro Department. The black churches and pastors did not play a key role in their own affairs. They were still

\textsuperscript{24} Clifford Jones, \textit{James K. Humphrey and the Sabbath Day Adventists} (Jackson, Mississippi: University Press of Mississippi, 2006), 94.
subjected to the authority of the white hierarchy. Over time, the Negro Department 
transpired into present-day Regional (Black) Conferences. Eventually, Black 
Conferences became a separate entity within the Seventh-day Adventist Church. 

Another example of the dilemma of white control over black Adventist 
stitutions is the story of the Oakwood Strike. Up until 1931, the institution maintained 
a few African-American faculty members; however, the administration was all white. 
Oakwood students complained that the white teachers showed no interests in black 
culture or the lives of the black students at the institution. There was no social contact 
between the white and black teachers. During church services and foot washing displays, 
blacks were separated from whites. The students acknowledged that this was a problem 
and carried out a well thought out demonstration regarding the need for a black college 
president and a black board of trustees. They validated their arguments using the Bible 
and the “Spirit of Prophecy.” The students felt that ministers from the large cities of the 
North and the East were better equipped to deal with the problems of the student-body. 
They also requested a black president to help advance the work of Oakwood in the 
mission field. The students believed that this was a time for black leadership. According 
to W.W. Fordham, one of the student protestors, “there was no ill will manifested 
towards . . . the school administration . . . there was no hatred or hostility . . instead there 
was a calmness, an air of expectancy.” Officials asked the students to bear their social 


27 Ibid., 28.
burdens silently. The students requests were granted, but five of the protestors were expelled. There were still some reservations on the idea of a black president. The union conference president stated, “No attention should be paid to demands for colored leadership because colored people are not capable of self-government.” Before the General Conference would consent to the idea of a black Oakwood president, they asked a white American administrator and a German administrator to fill the position. Both men declined their requests. Finally, Representatives of the conference asked Elder J.L. Moran to be the first black president of Oakwood College.

Separation as an answer to discrimination appears to be another tradition in the Adventist Church. Dudley Canright, an Adventist worker, described a meeting he saw in Texas as being segregated, with whites on the inside and blacks on the outside. Although there is no proof that blacks as a whole subscribed to this custom, they did accept it as a part of the Adventist life. Adventists first saw whites in the South separated from blacks. According to Bull and Lockhart, the “Adventists have never relinquished the idea that good relations between the two are best served by some kind of segregationist policy.”

John Manns, an extraordinary leader in the Adventist Church, left the SDA denomination in 1917 and established the Free Seventh-day Adventist Denomination. Manns’ reasons for seceding from the church seemed to be racial. He claimed, “because bigoted White

28 Ibid., 33.
29 Ibid., 33-34.
leaders among Seventh-day Adventists have failed to consider the necessity of such vital changes, but have fixed a permanent bar against the Negro leadership of the organization.\(^{32}\)

Furthermore, it is a fact that many black workers could not tolerate the injustices shown them because of their color. They gave up their positions in the work, with their church membership, being too humiliated to accept ‘crumbs’ any longer. Samuel Korateng-Pipim states, “We stand upon the principle advocated by our father Abraham when he saw that other methods of peaceable coexistence [with Lot] failed. For the sake of peace and unity of spirit, we saw that a separation was necessary.”\(^{33}\) Black leaders suggested a course of action, and separation, hoping to eliminate friction arising from prejudice in many areas of the United States. The impasse seemed irremovable except by a vital change, a separate Negro organization.\(^{34}\) Racial politics also caused Louis Sheafe, another Adventist leader, to persuade his Washington D.C congregation to split from the regular conference organization.\(^{35}\) Arna Bontemps, a prominent black Adventist, associated with writers of the Harlem Renaissance who expressed notions of black pride and social equality, was also reprimanded for being involved with a secular movement.

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\(^{32}\) Fordham, 70.


\(^{34}\) Ibid

Moreover, the Sabbath-day Adventist Church is another organization that broke away from the Seventh-day Adventist Church. James K. Humphrey, an early black SDA Pastor in Harlem, established it during the latter part of the 1920s. His pastorial privileges were revoked from the church on account of insubordination. Elder Humphrey pastored the First Harlem Seventh-day Adventist Church in Harlem, New York. He stayed loyal to the church and its beliefs, even refusing to lead a black schismatic movement from the church in 1922.\[36\] Overtime, he felt the need to propose the idea of separate conferences.\[37\] The influence of New York’s black community, especially Marcus Garvey, and the spread of Black Nationalism began to permeate the minds of Harlem residents. Humphrey attempted to solicit funds for health, educational and recreational facilities. He viewed the problem as an issue for the colored people and not the church. Plans were put in place to develop a black colony known as the Utopia Benevolent Association.\[38\] When asked about his outside efforts, he said it was "not a denominational effort" and was "absolutely a problem for the colored people."\[39\] Denominational directors did not agree with Humphrey’s methods and eventually removed him from his position. Humphrey, fed up with the racial problems of the church, broke away and formed his own organization, Sabbath-day Adventists. This organization became an

\[36\] Ibid.


\[38\] Schwarz, Light Bearers to the Remnant, 478.

offshoot of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. James Humphrey is one example of blacks separating from the Adventist Church based on reasons involving race.

As the church moved further into the middle of the twentieth century, there is evidence of racial schisms that led to denominational autonomy. Many SDA congregations seemed to break away from the Adventist Church on account of discrimination. The beliefs of these offset institutions follow closely with the fundamental principles of the Adventist Church. The difference lies in the social treatment experienced by people who deem it necessary to separate from the church. Two non-Adventist scholars, Malcolm Bull and Keith Lockhart, have perceptively observed 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 [between blacks and whites] becomes too fierce and the white majority proves too intransigent, blacks are likely to see separation as the best way forward. Segregation is then seen as the answer to discrimination.40

Although the Seventh-day Adventist Church seemed to have trouble with black/white relations, it comfortably held a tradition of cultural amalgamation. In origin, Seventh-day Adventism is a European American, Anglophone faith. However, by 1877, 13 percent of the church was comprised of non-English speaking immigrants. In the U.S Census of 1906, close to one in ten American Adventists attended a church where foreign languages were used for all or some of the services. A decade later, the statistics grew to

one in eight. Four years before the Negro Department, the Foreign Department of the General Conference was established in 1905 to regulate the work in other languages. Institutions were also put in place for Adventist immigrants. According to Bull and Lockhart, "These institutions were not designed to segregate their respective ethnic groups... but rather to mediate between the language groups and the wider society so that a person's integration might take place through Adventism at a pace that did not leave his compatriots behind." Unlike the Negro Department, the General Conference allowed immigrants to regulate their own ethnic groups. The Adventist Church's treatment towards blacks have been significantly different than their treatment towards immigrants. Bull and Lockhart also state, "Adventism's extraordinary openness to immigrants has not been matched by its reception of America's black population... the denomination has often displayed the same prejudice towards them as has the country at large." Before the church began the southern work of proselytizing to the blacks in the South, it had already established missions overseas with several thousand members.

Events

By 1944, the black Adventist population had increased tremendously. However, they were still practically underrepresented in the administration and institutions of the church. For years, African-American Adventists proposed the move of racially segregated conferences. However, one event in Washington D.C changed the face of the

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41 Ibid., 274-275.
42 Ibid., 278.
43 Ibid.
Seventh-day Adventist Church forever. Lucy Byard, a light-skinned black woman was admitted to the Adventist hospital in Washington D.C. Once the doctors and nurses recognized her as being Negro, they discharged her and suggested she be admitted to the black hospital. The taxi ride, exposure, and ensuing wait had been to much for her already frail body. She died from pneumonia before the doctors could do anything.\textsuperscript{44}

Similar to Emmett Till, Lucy Byard’s death initiated the grassroots effort of the black Adventist Church to organize and demand the need for black conferences.\textsuperscript{45} The Adventist Church was guilty of racist actions, from segregation in Adventist schools and churches, the misappropriation of church funds to racial quotas in the Adventist institutions. Local SDA grassroots workers assisted in this movement to separate the Seventh-day Adventist conferences based on race. They made telephone calls, stationery was printed, and letters were dispatched.\textsuperscript{46} Black leaders had been unsuccessfully pleading for their own conferences since 1929. Research shows that as early as the 1880s, black Adventists entertained the idea of a racially segregated church. However, the time for enforcing a separate Adventist Church had finally begun. Though this move was essential to black Adventists and their stance for racial equality, most black church employees were reluctant to identify openly with this ecclesiastical revolution. Some Adventists continued to focus on evangelism and conversion rather than the social revolution that was happening inside of their churches and their communities. Once

\textsuperscript{44} Benjamin Baker, Crucial Moments: Twelve Defining Events in Black Adventist History (Washington D.C: Review and Herald), 123.

\textsuperscript{45} Schwarz, Light Bearers to the Remnant, 566.

\textsuperscript{46} Ibid., 567.
again, a plan of separation seems to be the counter response to the dilemma of race relations in the church.

Moreover, the split of the church into regional conferences was a moral issue.\(^{47}\)
The president of the General Conference posited earlier that black conferences appeared to be one of the major ways blacks could receive fair treatment to prosper the work among their people.\(^{48}\) In a Chicago hotel in 1944, President McElhany officially announced the pioneering of Black Conferences. However, the blacks present were not allowed to vote on the motion. After all this time and effort, they still had no control over the establishment of their own churches.\(^{49}\) The black laymen proposed the idea, but the vote was carried out by white authorities. The following reasons were articulated as the rationale for Black Conferences:

1) Unique Needs: Black conferences were necessary because of the unique needs of black Seventh-day Adventists. These needs entailed everything from evangelistic methods to access to medical and educational institutions, which were not being met adequately under the present conference system.

2) Neutralize Racism: Racism existed in the Adventist Church. The effort on all within its influence was negative. The Black conferences were seen as a way around that racism.


\(^{48}\) Ibid.

\(^{49}\) Ibid.
3) Facilitate Integration: Black conferences would encourage and nurture something that
did not exist in the church-real integration.

4) Governance Voice: Black conferences would provide the black membership with a
natural and legitimate voice in denominational governance.

5) Effective Evangelism: African Americans needed to be evangelized systematically and
consistently in order to fulfill the gospel commission and the three angel’s messages.
This was not being done and could not be done effectively in the White conferences.  

The disagreement on the day Seventh-day Adventist Conferences became racially
separated, according to Samuel Korateng-Pipim, was based on this, “The argument that
won the day was not a biblical or theological one, but a pragmatic or political (some will
say racist) argument . . . if there was any theology at all in the arguments for Black
(Regional) Conferences, it is a theology of separation, not reconciliation and unity.”

Religious Leaders

John Harvey Kellogg, one of the leading doctors in the Adventist Church, was
forthright on his beliefs regarding race. Although he had adopted black children and
assisted in establishing the Race Betterment Foundation in 1906, he remained an
advocate for racial segregation. Unlike many of his counterparts, his support of
segregation was not rooted on theological principle. Kellogg’s understanding came from

50 Baker, 135.

scientific reasoning. He believed that immigrants and non-whites would damage the gene pool. With the influence of American ideals, it appears that the same ideologies supporting “scientific racism” influenced the thinking of Adventist physicians and medical professionals.⁵²

On the other hand, J.L. McElhany, General Conference president, was sensitive and sympathetic to the plight of black Adventists. His position on black conferences was similar to most African-American Adventists. He believed it was one of the major ways blacks could receive fair treatment to prosper the work among their people. McElhany, “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.”⁵³ He expressed confidence in black leadership. His position and the grassroots movement of black laymen contributed to the establishment of black conferences. George Peters was one of black Adventism’s premier leaders. According to a statement in 1944, he claimed, “Who am I to say that we should have colored conferences? Whatever it takes to bring classes of Negroes into this message that is the thing I am after. We must have greater evangelism.”⁵⁴ Peters’ position on a racially-divided church was based on evangelism and not social equality. The spreading of the Advent message appeared to be the answer to racism in the SDA Church.

⁵³ Baker, Crucial Moments: Twelve Defining Events In Black Adventist History, 134.
⁵⁴ Ibid., 132.
Initially Ellen White, the prophetess of the Adventist Church, endorsed unity and opposed the idea of separate worship services for blacks and whites based on ethnicity. In a message to the General Conference officers, she states in *The Southern Work*, “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.” However, when her son Edson White traveled south to establish a school for former slaves, he experienced the unspeakable horrors that existed in the southern regions of the country. He saw firsthand the deep hatred whites had for people of African descent. Edson witnessed a mob of about 25 white men loot his church, burn books and maps, and beat one of his comrades with cowhide. Then they shot at the comrade’s wife and the bullet hit her in the leg. Lastly, the mob put a notice on the church forbidding Edson to return and prohibiting the Morning Star (the boat used to educate African Americans) to land between Yazoo City and Vicksburg. After this incident, Ellen White changed her approach to the race relations of the South. She stated, “Whites who want an occasion will seize upon any pretext for taking revenge, even upon those of their own color who are presenting the truth. This is the danger. As far as possible, everything that will stir up the race prejudice of the white people should be avoided. There is danger of closing the door so that our white laborers will not be able to work in some places in the South.” However, her plan

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of unity was not dismissed. She later stated, “Let this plan be followed until the Lord shows us a better way.”

In *The Southern Work*, Ellen White summarizes major themes relating to the evangelical work of the South:

1. **Equal love:** Christ died just as much for the black people as for the white people, and the God of the White man is the same God of the black man.

2. **Equal reward:** The black man's name is written next to the white man's name in the book of life.

3. **Equal salvation:** Unless God's Spirit is in your heart, whether you are white or black, you are a slave and need to be freed.

4. **Equal destination:** We are all journeying to the same heaven.

5. **Equal relations:** God makes no distinction between the North and the South; therefore, we must learn to live together here on earth before we can get to heaven.

6. **Equal responsibility:** Let none of Christ's children be cowards in regard to the work for the black race.

7. **Equal priority:** The Seventh-day Adventist Church must give the gospel to blacks, and it should be at the top of the priority list.

Not only did Ellen White believe that the church work should be split on account of race, but she also made other statements regarding race in the Church. She states, “Let

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colored workers labor for their own people, assisted by white workers as occasion demands.”\textsuperscript{58} She also claims, “But for several reasons white men must be chosen as leaders.”\textsuperscript{59} Some claim that Ellen White’s beliefs were based on racist ideologies. However, many conclude that her statements were conceded only because it was necessary for that period. Mrs. White only meant for the division to be temporary.

The Seventh-day Adventist Church has a rich and fascinating story. In its early years, as a product of the Second Great Awakening, the Church has made a mark in the fabric of American history. Beginning as abolitionists, early Millerites assisted in the fight for an America without slavery. Through these means, they contributed religious and political literature to the American society. The denomination has also made a significant impact on education, health, and society. Their creation of institutions, schools and hospitals have assisted in the development and maintenance of American life. However, the church also has a dark history of racism. Although the written beliefs of this religious organization promote unity and justice, the actions and traditions of the church reflect a different position. Mixed feelings about black/white relationships have caused divergences amongst ministerial leaders and laypeople. Irreconcilable differences between congregations have resulted in entities separating from the church. Segregation and the struggle for power have been just as much a part of the Church’s development as doctrines and biblical principles. Tables 1.1 and 1.2 show significant events in Adventist history as it relates to the affairs of African-American and American history.

\textsuperscript{58} White, \textit{Testimonies for the Church} Vol. 9, 210.

\textsuperscript{59} Ibid., 202.
TABLE 1.1 THE ADVENTIST CHURCH AND RELATED EVENTS 1844-1896

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>1844</th>
<th>1863</th>
<th>1889</th>
<th>1891</th>
<th>1896</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Seventh-day Adventist Events</strong></td>
<td>Great Disappointment</td>
<td>Church becomes official</td>
<td>First black pastor ordained</td>
<td>Ellen White's “Our duty to the Colored People.” published in <em>The Southern Work</em></td>
<td>First black Adventist College established</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>U.S. Events</strong></td>
<td>James Polk elected President</td>
<td>Civil War ended</td>
<td>Frederick Douglass elected minister to Haiti</td>
<td>1st Negro Priest</td>
<td>Plessy v. Ferguson</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Black History Events</strong></td>
<td>Methodist Church splits over slavery issue</td>
<td>Emancipation Proclamation signed</td>
<td>94 blacks lynched</td>
<td>Year before peak of lynchings</td>
<td>90% of Blacks reside in the South</td>
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</tbody>
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TABLE 1.2 THE ADVENTIST CHURCH AND RELATED EVENTS 1909-1944

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
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<th>1915</th>
<th>1931</th>
<th>1944</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Seventh day-Adventist Events</strong></td>
<td>General Conference of Negro Department</td>
<td>Death of Ellen White</td>
<td>Oakwood Strike</td>
<td>Separation of Conferences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>U.S. Events</strong></td>
<td>U.S. invades Nicaragua</td>
<td>1st ship lost in WWI</td>
<td>U.S. National Anthem Official</td>
<td>WWII is underway</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Black History Events</strong></td>
<td>Formation of NAACP</td>
<td>2nd Ku Klux Klan forms</td>
<td>Death of Ida B. Wells</td>
<td>United Negro College Fund incorporated</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Civil Right Movements: Results (1944-1968)

Following this cultural schism in the Seventh-day Adventist Church, the modern Civil Rights Movement made its presence known in American society. Ten years after the Adventist Church segregated its institutions; African Americans initiated efforts to desegregate the American social, political, economic, and public institutions. The modern Civil Rights Movement began in 1954. During this year, the \textit{Brown v Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas} case, presented before the U.S. Supreme Court by Thurgood Marshall, declared segregation in public schools unconstitutional. The Civil Rights Movement has been historically viewed as being initiated by the 1954 Supreme Court decision related to school desegregation and the Montgomery Bus Boycott. The success of this boycott brought national attention to the Civil Rights Movement and its young and vibrant leader Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Throughout the late 1950s and 1960s, this movement revolutionized U. S. history and race relations in American society.

During the tumultuous times of the 1950s and 1960s, black Seventh-day Adventists could not escape the ramifications of the race war in America and some involved themselves in the social revolution of these two decades. Four young men from Pacific Union College (PUC a Seventh-day Adventist college in California) assumed the responsibility of participating in the racial movement of the South, and against all odds, made their way to the March in Selma. Paul Cobb (African American), Will Battles (white), Fernando Canales (Hispanic), and Milton Hare (white) ignored the requests of the school and church authorities, and actively involved themselves in the racial war of the South. After being influenced by the Free Speech movement sweeping across California campuses, Milton Hare encouraged his PUC suitemate, Paul Cobb, to
accompanying him the upcoming March on Selma. Paul solicited Will Battles and invited him to join this dangerous journey to the South. The four students from California traveled from Pacific Union College to Oakwood College in Huntsville, Alabama. There, they converged with a few friends and spent a few days engaging in conversation related to the March on Selma. Oakwood College, although a Historically Black Institution, forbade its students to attend the March. Many of the students were excited to see that there would be some Adventist representation at this historic event. While awaiting the day of their departure, they attempted to spend a Sabbath worshipping at one of the White Adventist Churches in the Huntsville area. White members who did not allow them to enter the sanctuary quickly seized them. One deacon commenced to using foul language towards the young men. Paul Cobb says, "I had never seen such vitriol on faces before, it was as if they had summoned the same venomous righteous indignation that you would use to say, 'Get thee behind me, Satan.' That confrontation with White Seventh-day Adventists was one of the most vicious I experienced in all my years of working in the South."  

Hence, on Sunday morning, March 21, the four students from California drove the 200 miles from Huntsville to Selma. While there, they participated in the marches over the next few days. The four students positioned themselves to photograph the moments exhibited by this march. The participation at the march grew to over 25,000. A few Oakwood students ignored the intimidating remarks of their institution and attended this revolutionary event; one of the Oakwood students, John Street, in 1999, became the

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second black mayor of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. The March on Selma brought national media attention to the Voting Rights Act, which was wending its way through Congress.61

When the four students returned home, they were saturated with love and support from their fellow students, yet they were criticized by their administrators. Will Battles stated, "... some thought it was even sinful to participate in such a secular, worldly type of thing." Over the years, each of the students struggled with balancing their desire for social equality and their Adventist beliefs. Paul Cobb continued to involve himself with Democratic Party campaigns and later owned and published the Oakland Post which advanced his goals of community self-help and development. Presently, he is not affiliated with a particular church, but still identifies strongly with his Adventist beliefs. Fernando Canales moved into a career in construction and has become disappointed with the Church due to their lack of involvement in social matters. Milton Hare left the denomination for 25 years because of their refusal to remove racial barriers, but returned in 1992. Will Battles transferred to Oakwood and continued to remain loyal to the Seventh-day Adventist Church.62

Before Rosa Parks, there was an Adventist woman named Irene Morgan who participated in Jim Crow resistance and refused to adhere to the segregation policies of the South. On July 16, 1944, Irene Morgan boarded a bus in Gloucester, Virginia bound for Baltimore. She proceeded to make her way to the back of the bus like many African

61 Ibid.
62 Ibid.
Americans did during this time. Later, the bus was crowded with passengers and she was asked to give up her seat for a white couple who boarded the bus. She stated in a 1995 public television documentary “You Don’t Have to Ride Jim Crow,” “I refused to move.” She also tried to prevent another young mother from moving. “I snatched her back. I said, where are you going with that baby in your arms?” Unlike Rosa Parks, eleven years later, Ms Morgan did not practice nonviolence. When the deputy sheriff attempted to arrest her, she took her foot and kicked him in a “very bad place.” She lost both the local and state cases, so she appealed the case to the U.S Supreme Court and won. A team of NAACP lawyers, including Thurgood Marshall worked on the case.63 The 1946 ruling in Morgan v. Commonwealth of Virginia banning segregated seating in interstate travel was legally composed but not commonly enforced.64 However, these same issues continued from year to year.

In addition to students and working class people, ministers also spoke out against the racial turmoil confronting African Americans. Pastor E.E. Cleveland was one of the leading Adventist ministers speaking out against racism and involving himself with the racial struggle in the South. During this time, it was unpopular for an Adventist pastor to get involved with such a revolutionary movement. In the summer of 1954, Pastor


Cleveland set up a tent meeting in Montgomery, Alabama and began preaching the word of God. By the end of that year, the small black Adventist congregation increased its membership to 500. A new building was requested to house the newly baptized members. On Christmas Eve, the new Seventh-day Adventist Church in Montgomery, Alabama opened its doors. The large impact of a tent meeting in such a small city garnered a lot of attention. One night, Cleveland remembers witnessing a couple of visiting ministers conversing with two of his assistants. Later, these two ministers would be notably recognized as Ralph Abernathy and the young Martin Luther King Jr. Many of Dr. King’s members had been attending these meetings and he was curious to see the tent effort that had attracted so many of his congregants. King and Cleveland spoke briefly that evening and a few years later, Dr. King welcomed Cleveland as a fellow-laborer for civil rights. Cleveland continued to fight for civil rights by means of preaching and teaching. According to Cleveland in an article in the *Adventist News Network*, “The Church may have been out of the mix during that time, says Cleveland, but its members were not. While some of the old saints who had been in the Church for years did not want to get involved (they were wait and se’ers) the new believers were an active bunch.65

The Civil Rights Movement did not stop with the success of the Montgomery Bus struggle or the Civil Rights legislation. King, SCLC and the Civil Rights Movement members decided to organize the Poor People’s March as a means of bringing attention to

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their needs. In preparation for the March, there was a call for supplies. Through E.E. Cleveland's membership in King's organization, the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC), along with Church leaders from other areas, was presented with much-needed supplies and organization to help make the Poor People's March a success.66 Dr. E.E. Cleveland is looked upon as the non-appointed, but undisputed, leader of the militant wing of black Seventh-day Adventist leadership.67 Cleveland's journalistic protests are directly or indirectly focused on scriptural principles of brotherhood. He successfully balanced the notions of racial equality and social justice with Adventist principles. He divulged the revolution of social attitudes through the use of the pen. Prior to 1966, E.E. Cleveland participated in Seventh-day Adventist apologetic work as well as social activism. Cleveland's efforts were to clarify the "misunderstanding and abuse" of the social principles of the Bible and the writings of Ellen White. According to Calvin Rock, he is the most "prolific writer and social commentator in the history of black Seventh day Adventism.68

The 1968 Poor People's March on Washington was largely supported by various Adventist congregations. Charles Joseph and Earl Moore raised money for the purchase of the first Seventh-day Adventist Community Service Van in their church. This van was used to minister to people during the riots in Detroit and in the Poor People's March on

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66 Ibid.

67 Rock., 111.

68 Rock., 113.
Washington. Thirty physicians offered free Medical Care to thousands of Resurrection City residents. This march was carried out after the death of Dr. Martin Luther King.69

Dr. Frank Hale was one of the more active black Adventist leaders that spoke out against racism in the Seventh-day Adventist Church during the turbulent times of the 1950s and 1960s. He is known for his dependence upon pressure groups and tactics as a means of influencing racial policy. His unprecedented organizing of laity into political activists stands out among Adventist leaders. His initial move into the protest arena came when he organized the Laymen’s Leadership Conference. In summation, the Conference was to “readjust our thinking to the reality that failure to speak in the past has done little to promote our general welfare.”70 He defended this movement under the principle of its ideals being, not anti-church, but anti-segregation and anti-discrimination. Dr. Hale implemented overt pressure tactics and went public with his debates regarding race and injustice. His actions and verbal protests at the World Conference of Seventh-day Adventists in June 1962 speaks to the vigor and zeal he displayed on the notions of social change. In the 1980s he served as a personal confidant to Jesse Jackson of Operation People United To Save Humanity and maintained a seat as a member of that board. Dr. Frank Hale advocates strategies of “emphasizing the changing of attitudes and emphasizing direct changes of social patterns and institutions through active intervention.”71


70 Rock, 117-120.

71 Ibid.
In 1956 W. S. Banfield, an African American Seventh-day Adventist pastor in Tampa, Florida, shocked his conservative members by joining the Tampa branch of the NAACP. Many of the black Adventist pastors during this time saw Banfield’s approach as a fearful move. His NAACP leadership responsibilities and his consistent vocal protests on black freedom made Banfield a forthright spokesperson for human dignity. His leadership role in the Concerned Christian Council proved that he was a pro-active fighter for interracial unity and spiritual brotherhood. His sincere faith in the path to social equity is represented in his statement on cultural interaction in which he states, “One of the church’s greatest assets resides in the diversity of the cultural and ethnic origin of its membership.”

Unlike many of his counterparts, C.E. Bradford, a black Seventh-day Adventist pastor, did not share in King’s dream of America being a land of freedom, justice, and equality. In his view, the superiority of numbers and materials possessed by the larger group poses more of a challenge to political statesmanship than it does a challenge to confrontation. Bradford viewed white authority as something not to be protested but manipulated. “Don’t get mad, get smart” he proclaims in his “An Appeal to the Leadership of the Seventh-day Adventist Church to Give Special Study to the Position of the Negro Seventh-day Adventists in American Society and in the Church.” He is one of

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72 Ibid., 99-104.
the few Adventist pastors to speak out on the reparations that are deserved by black Adventists and Africans in America. 73

Although there have been many Seventh-day Adventists and social organizations that have contributed to the Civil Rights Movement of racial equality, the Church as a whole refused to take a public stance against the racism embedded in the American social consciousness. Malcolm X, a man who, prior to his transformation, had a hatred for all white people, was raised Seventh-day Adventist, and has even been quoted as saying, “Seventh-day Adventists were the only kind white people I had ever met.” 74 His Adventist upbringing may have been influential in helping him abstain from pork as well as maintain other strict disciplines throughout his life. However, there is little research that refutes the idea that the social institution of Adventism as a whole held an indifferent stance towards civil rights for African Americans in the 1950s and 1960s. Dr. E.E. Cleveland stated that, within the Adventist Church, the official stance was one of noninvolvement, to stay out of political or revolutionary causes. 75 However, just a hundred years earlier, the Church made a concrete decision and held a forthright position to oppose the institution of slavery and support the abolitionist movement. Amidst those one hundred years, something caused the Church to shift from a movement that supported social revolution and racial equality to an institution that refrained from political and social upheaval.

73 Ibid., 104-108.
Discussion And Analysis

As a religious organization and social institution, the Seventh-day Adventist Church sought to change the lives of the people around them and to introduce them to Jesus Christ, to expand Church growth, and to transform their religious bodies into communities where everyone could experience social freedom, justice, and equality. In other words, they were actively involved in personal transformation, church reformation, and societal evaluation.76

The Seventh-day Adventist Abolitionist Approach to Slavery

During the period of the Abolitionist movement, the Second Coming of Jesus Christ was the focal point for the Millerite movement. Although they preached and believed in Biblical and moral principle, earthly ideals were irrelevant because God was coming soon to destroy all the evils in the world. Slavery was the central sign of evil, yet it confirmed the idea that Christ was on his way to the earth. Therefore, all social reform fell under the qualifier that the world was on its way to total obliteration. The Millerites' belief in Jesus being the solution to all problems is a notion adopted by most Christians; however, using this notion as a basis for institutional transformation had a long-term basis but failed to meet short-term needs. In relation to African Americans, those short-term needs were freedom from political and social oppression. Under Millerite logic one can say, man is to introduce the world to God, and God solves all of the world's dilemmas. Placing Christ's coming as the solution to earthly conundrums relieved people

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of their duty to be their brother’s keeper. This logic gave them permission to take a
stance on moral principle, because it was a reflection of their faith, yet they had no need
to play a role in refining one’s living conditions. God and the promise of His anticipated
coming seemed to be the only hope that would change lives. From a Christian
perspective, this notion is acceptable because it affirmed the conviction that believers
should place all faith in God. On the other hand, it also removed the human effort
required to meet the immediate needs of the less fortunate, which placed a constraint on
social interrelatedness. In the case of the early Millerites, too much hope for the future
contributed to the suffering of the present. Adventists seemed so engaged in preaching
what was to come that they missed the opportunity of fully embracing the responsibility
at hand, which was the complete liberation of African people from American
enslavement.

The refusal to abide by mainstream expectations demonstrates how Adventists
were able to speak out against the enslavement process. As activists in their own right,
they maintained characteristics similar to revolutionaries of that time. The prophetess of
the Church, Ellen White, even demanded that members accept legal chastisement rather
than abiding by the slave laws enacted by the U.S. Government. It is no secret that
Millerites were firm on their stance of abolitionism and the sin of slavery. They did not
straddle the fence or attempt to remain loyal to both God and their country. In fact,
loyalty to God meant insubordination and disobedience to the decrees of the republic.
Millerite actions displayed a movement that was radical and rebellious. From the beliefs
and teachings of the Church, one could consider them activists and an asset to the
abolitionist movement. Thus beginning with the Abolitionist Movement, the SDA
Church emerges as a growing force in the role of the Church and race relations. Thereafter, given the history of the SDA Church, four levels of race-related involvement activities are created.

Analysis of the Four Waves of Adventist Racial Involvement

The first wave was enslavement of Africans. The Church’s founding leaders advocated support of abolition. The second wave encompassed the era of Reconstruction in which differences related to black-white relations began to surface among Church members. Blacks themselves initiated the separation of blacks and whites within the Church. The third wave constitutes the pre-Civil Rights Era in which the Church’s involvement in race matters is reflective of the society at large and the Church does not advocate, as a unit, a racial stance. The fourth wave of racial involvement by the SDA Church appears during the Civil Rights Movement. The Church charges its members with noninvolvement as a church initiative. Instead the Church continues its racial involvement of separation of Church membership that is, black conferences and white conferences. So why does the research seem to show that in actuality, such an insurgent group appeared complacent concerning racial injustice and social reform during America’s fourth wave of racial involvement?

The Seventh-day Adventist Perception of America

In the beginning, early Adventists were known for subscribing to beliefs that were antithetical to the status quo. The belief of premillennialism was an example of the organization going “against the grain” and opposing the opinions of conventional thought. In addition to premillennialism, which was a pessimistic view of the world and its affairs, they also maintained a negative outlook on America. The enslavement of
Africans was a key event in the teachings of America as a tyrannical entity and the destruction of the world. During this time many people viewed America as the land of opportunity, so the Church’s disapproving position of the country made them appear unpatriotic. This position is another example of the beliefs of early Adventists. The negative perspective the Church had on America and the world-at-large supported the Millerite notion of believers looking to the hope of Christ. However, the researcher believes that its pessimistic angle turned inward. Because of the helpless way the Millerites viewed the world, ultimately, it became a reflection of how they viewed themselves. This negative perception of the world may explain why leaders of the movement believed nothing, outside of the Second Coming, could rectify the sin of slavery. One could deduce that early Adventists felt that the problem was easy to oppose, but too big to eradicate. Again, God was to be the solution and the job of believers was to introduce the world to Him, thereby removing humans from actively seeking to make a change.

Analysis of Religious Groups That Make Up the SDA Church

In order to understand Adventist beliefs and actions regarding race relations, the researcher examined the various religious groups that contributed to the Church’s development and attitude towards the racial struggle of the mid-19th century. The Mennonites, a religious group that strongly influenced the Millerites, took a fervent stance against the beliefs in slavery. This denomination adopted the notion of refusing to involve itself with the slave trade.\textsuperscript{77} This action is similar to the Adventist Church

refusing to abide by the Fugitive slave laws of the time. It is possible that early Adventists adopted this uncompromising attitude from their Anabaptist roots. However, the Methodist denomination that preceded and affected the early Adventist Church, had a bilateral outlook on race relations. The issue of slavery led some of their members to separate from the Methodist Church.\(^78\) One prominent Adventist split from the Methodist Church because the denomination did not take a stance against slavery.\(^79\) However, many Methodists did not see the problem with the enslavement of Africans, and even supported it. This dichotomy may have trickled down into the Adventist Church, because many of them had mixed feelings about the position of blacks in America. The universal belief of the Millerite movement was abolitionism, but opinions regarding the fair treatment of African Americans differed among the members. Deists believed that science was the rationale behind religious thought.\(^80\) With Deism influencing William Miller and science providing the foundation for Deism, it is important to examine the scientific assertions of the mid 19\(^{th}\) century. Mainstream scientific thought claimed that blacks were second-class citizens; therefore, it is safe to assume that deists subscribed to the same belief because they believed science substantiated spiritual beliefs.

With the early Adventist Church being influenced by Anabaptists, an antislavery denomination, Methodists, who split on the issue of slavery, and Deists, perhaps


influenced the reason why the Adventist Church never arrived at a concise conclusion on the equal treatment of blacks. Their influence came from a variety of religious groups whose opinions on race relations differed. Similar to the Methodists, some Adventists were more ardent with their views on slavery while others proposed to take a non-confrontational stance. If the groups that made up the denomination could not maintain a consistent stance regarding race in America, how could the existing religious order stand firm on the position? The religious organizations that had the biggest influence on the Adventist Church differed in their notions regarding slavery, and that is one way of explaining why the Adventist Church continued to have a difficult time remedying the same problem.

Early Adventist Integration

Another atypical characteristic of the Millerite movement was its consent to racial integration. It was highly unacceptable to general white religious groups to allow blacks to preach to white audiences all over the country. This act of integration displays the standard of unity presented in the theological beliefs of the Adventist Church. It shows that these activists not only refuted the act of slavery, but the notion of ethnic separation. Racial integration and acceptance by the denomination started out as a gesture of unanimity, but eventually drove a wedge in the denomination.

SDA Evangelism as it Relates to Geography and Race

Although the Millerites accepted blacks during a time when the country viewed them as second-class citizens, it is easy to see that African Americans were not a priority for early Adventists. With a majority of Millerite evangelism taking place in predominately white areas, one can conclude that blacks joined the Church if they were
lucky enough to make it to the Free states. There was no Church-wide evangelism in the South until 40-50 years after the start of the Millerite movement. There are a number of reasons why Adventists did not preach the gospel in majority African-American areas, money may have been scarce or labor may have been limited.

Prophecy over Social Reform

The event of the Great Disappointment exemplifies how detrimental it can be if prophecy takes precedence over moral priority. Up to 1844, members of the Millerite movement believed that getting people prepared for the Second Coming of Christ was the most important aspect of their ministry. The Millerites placed a lot of time and effort on foretelling the Second Advent. The 1844 coming of Jesus was an educated calculation, but the plight of enslaved Africans in America was a fact, a factual dilemma that Jesus Christ was supposed to rectify upon his return. However, when that prediction did not come to pass, and the Church admitted to not knowing when God’s Son would return, they continued to place more emphasis on what was going to happen than what was presently occurring.

Religious Leaders View on Slavery

The religious leaders of the Millerite movement had different views regarding the issue of slavery and race relations in America. William Miller, the leader of the Millerite movement, did not record much information related to his feelings on slavery and inequality. Thus, his theological beliefs provided biblical understanding and theological interpretation on social issues. Miller may have been a leader that let his actions speak for his character. Theological and moral understandings were the basis of the Millerite movement and Miller’s stance on the racial struggle.
James White, another Adventist leader, and other Millerites had views on slavery. Obviously, White, as well as the rest of the Adventist Church members had no sympathy with separation between the North and South. The Adventist Church as a whole spoke against government rule and it appears as if the Church did not care if the country separated.

When William Lloyd Garrison made the comment, “A considerable number of worthy abolitionists have been carried away by it (Millerism),”\textsuperscript{81} there is a good chance he was speaking about Joshua Himes. He was one of the best examples of a strong abolitionist turned Millerite. His ideas of freedom for enslaved Africans stayed the same, but he began to speak more about the Second Coming and less on the unjust treatment of blacks in America. This change in approach is not surprising, but rather another example that validates the overarching theme of evangelism being the means of Adventist social reform. His involvement in the Christian nonviolent movement shows that Adventists have a history of engaging in peaceful protest.

Joseph Bates was one of the few Adventist figures that used his stance against slavery and made an intrepid journey to the South to spread the Advent message to African Americans. When the Church was afraid to do it, Bates utilized his resources to advance the causes and needs for involvement in the abolition of slavery. The researcher presents the notion that if the one man can use his limited resources to reach the oppressed, why could the Church as a whole not do the same thing? There is a possibility

\textsuperscript{81} George Knight, \textit{Joseph Bates: The Real Founder of Seventh-day Adventism} (Hagerstown, Maryland: Review and Herald Publication Association, 2004), http://books.google.com/books?id=ZYAMxPZBXOYC&dq=Joseph+Bates+The+Real+Founder+of+Seventh-day+Adventism&printsec=frontcover&source=bl&ots=0sgIfq-mOl&sig=X02q9u5rB3qvn7PmN_BOb10g&hl=en&ei=19oyvSmPBZaqfg9_8mNDA&sa=X&oi=book_result&ct=result&resnum=1 (accessed March 15, 2009).
that Bates had more money and more resources than the Seventh-day Adventist Church as a whole, but that is highly unlikely. The General Conference of May 1843 in New York sympathized with the needs of African Americans in the South, but decided to send only literature and not preachers. However, there is no point in sending literature to slaves who did not know how to read and it was against the law for those that did. In looking at the year of this decision, 1843 was one year before the predicted Second Coming of Christ. According to Adventists, Jesus would be returning in approximately one year and they still felt there was no need in attempting to inform the African Americans in the South of this celestial event.

After Ellen White received her first two visions in 1844, Millerites began to view her as a messenger from the Lord. This prophetess also espoused the notion that preaching the gospel would eventually solicit freedom for African Americans. Similar to the rest of the Church, Mrs. White believed in evangelism first. She believed in unity between black and white believers. She spoke fervently against injustice and inequality based on race. Uncommon to mainstream beliefs, she believed that blacks and whites were equal under the sight of God, and should be treated in like manner. However, her ideas changed once she received word that her son experienced the violent nature of the white racists in the South. At that point, she began to promote the idea of separate worship services. It was not under the basis of evangelism, as most leaders believed, but for safety reasons. She placed the responsibility on whites due to their brutal acts, which caused such restraint on church congregations. She only meant for this action of

82 Ibid.
separation to be temporary. It was to be established, only until a better way was proposed. Even in the midst of the violence that occurred in the South, Mrs. White demanded that the church not be cowards regarding black evangelism. Because of her death in 1915, it is hard to say whether she felt the Civil Rights Movement was the platform needed to unify the Adventist organization; however, her continual petition for equality, which was not confined to Adventism, appears to be based on the moral guidelines of the Bible.

Adventist Thought

After the Abolitionist movement, the Seventh-day Adventist Church, now an official organization, began to modify its laws practices and beliefs. Unity and love remained central themes surrounding Adventist beliefs. One major change was the way the Church viewed the world. Prior to the Reconstruction period, Millerites believed that the world could not fix problems relating to sin. As time progressed, Adventists placed a little more faith in the actions of human beings. However, good only came from the Holy Spirit changing someone’s heart and mind. Once someone traded their unholy principles for holy beliefs, their actions would reflect that transformation. At this point, the Second Coming was not the sole solution to the problems of the world. This new idea allowed human beings to take responsibility for the problems plaguing the world. The issue with this new claim is it still forced social dilemmas to be solved via theological measures. In order for people to fix societal quandaries, the Holy Spirit must transform them. The Adventist Church believed that the spreading of the gospel was the way in which people would be led to Jesus Christ, change their evil ways and ultimately transform society’s
negative mores. This assertion took the emphasis off the Second Coming, yet continued to place evangelism ahead of social reform.

Black Inclusion in the Adventist Church

The Seventh-day Adventist Church has always included blacks in evangelism and church efforts; however, African-American inclusion was not a major priority in the work of the Church. Malcolm Bull and Keith Lockhart indicated that African Americans joined the Church by turning up to the meetings without a formal invitation, thus proving that, historically, the Adventist Church did not consider black life a major concern.83

This passive approach of black inclusion would, over time, turn into an active approach to segregation. This segregation would come in the form of separated conferences and a racially divided Church.

Segregation was not an uncommon resolution to Adventist racial dilemmas. Black Adventists promoted the same tradition of segregation. The first major race related issue between black and white Adventists almost resulted in a church split. The person in favor of the schism was the leading black Adventist pastor of that time, C.M Kinney.84 Although some white Church leaders did not agree, this foremost spokesperson for black Adventists was an early advocate for racially-divided conferences. However, looking at the situation a bit more closely, social reform through evangelism seemed to manifest itself again. C.M. Kinney supported the separation of conferences because it would further the gospel message. Although he objected to the maltreatment of blacks in

America, it was just as important to him if a white person refused the Advent message based on integration. It is evident that evangelism continues to be the only means of establishing social stability and justice. Although Kinney was the victim of inferiority, he still believed in protecting the message of the church, even at the expense of unity. The advancement of the Church was tantamount, if not superior, to the notion of civil rights and uniformity. According to the research, one can conclude that Adventists endorsed unity under the stipulation that it did not interrupt or reverse evangelical advancement.

The Adventist Church not only attracted blacks and whites, but other nationalities as well. After examining the evangelical effort directed to people outside the United States, it makes the researcher question how important black life has been to white Adventists. The Adventist Church began spreading the gospel across the United States throughout the 1830s, 1840s and 1850s. As time progressed, they conducted ministerial efforts on an international level. They traveled to other countries telling people of the coming savior. This global expansion was done prior to evangelizing to the former slaves in the South. In retrospect, if the Church had the resources, labor, and funds to travel to other countries in order to “save souls”, the dark oppressed souls of the former slaves, within the same country, did not appear good enough for salvation.

According to Church officials, blacks who accepted the Third Angel’s Message were considered equal to whites; however, some blacks did not accept the Advent message. Research shows that many of the Adventist advocates for equality limited

85 Clifford Jones, James K. Humphrey and the Sabbath Day Adventists (Jackson, Mississippi: University Press of Mississippi, 2006), 92.
egalitarianism to the Adventist denomination. Very little information shows Adventist leaders participating in social movements outside of the Church. The narrative of James K. Humphrey demonstrates how Adventists have been punished after being involved with “secular” social movements. Humphrey’s Utopia Benevolent Association and Arna Bontemps’ involvement with the Harlem Renaissance caused rifts between these individuals and the Adventist Church. Soon both individuals had to sever ties with the Adventist Church in order to continue supporting causes for social change, especially in relationship to blacks and the Church. It remains unclear why a Church that was so pro-unity and racial advancement, punished certain men for advocating similar Adventist themes outside of the non-Adventist approach for dealing with blacks. It can be summarized that the outside organizations did not support the theological beliefs of the Church and they did not want the world to see Adventists associated with secular institutions. Further, it can be concluded that the Church leaders wanted to continue to remain faithful to their principles of social reform through evangelism.

Analysis of White Power Structure in Black Adventist Institutions

The development of African-American Adventist establishments like schools, churches, and departments was a major move in the racial struggle of the Church; however, white-controlled black institutions caused problems in the Reconstruction era of Adventist history. Although blacks had their own organizations, they still answered to white

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86 “The Lonesome Boy Theme as Emblem for Arna Bontemps Children’s Literature,” http://www.thefrcclibrary.com/Thc%3ALonesome%3ABoy%3Atheme%3As%3Eemblem%3Efor%3AArna%3ABontemps%3As%3Echildren%3Es...-a020610469 (accessed May 10, 2009).

authorities. This action put African-American Adventists in a suppressed position. With whites controlling black schools, the curriculum would inevitably cater to white advancement and invariably prepare black students to further European ideologies. A sense of African identity was at risk if blacks did not control their own institutions.

Black Adventists were still at the mercy of their white counterparts, which in turn made blacks unequal to whites even in a church setting. Even in the proposal for separate conferences, black SDA members had to ask the white Adventist officials if they could run their own establishments because their color would not permit them to vote on it themselves. Although regional conferences are an example of black owned institutions, the overall premise of white Church leaders giving blacks their own conferences subconsciously places white officials in a ruling position.

Black Adventists on Racism

Neutralizing racism was one of the reasons why black Adventist leaders appealed separate conferences. This solution was put in place as a way around the racism in the Adventist Church. Instead of looking to eradicate the discriminatory tradition of the denomination, the black Adventists just wanted a way around it. Some argue that, for decades, African-American Adventists have tried to remain loyal to the Church throughout the vicissitudes of its history. They did everything they could to stay unified with the Church in hopes that racism would fade away over time. At this point, it appears the black Adventist Church resigned themselves to the reality that racism will always be an issue in the Church. Instead of fighting it, African-American Church leaders proposed the idea of regional conferences, to evade the dilemma as much as possible. Therefore, if
black Adventists are content with avoiding the issue and not eradicating it, then why should white Adventists feel any differently?

Factors Causing Noninvolvement

In the beginning of this research, the author posed the question, what factors caused the Adventist Church to remove itself from the racial struggle in the Civil Rights Movement. After an exhaustive examination of the racial struggle in the Seventh Day Adventist denomination, the researcher has uncovered some key recurring themes that may have resulted in the noninvolvement posture of the Adventist Church. There are no fixed answers to this question; the solution is only to display the possible incentives surrounding the Church’s approach to race relations in the mid-20th century.

Separation of Congregations

The Civil Rights Movement of the 1950s and 60s promoted ideas of social change, nonviolence, unity, and integration. The Seventh-day Adventist Church was familiar with all of these objectives. At some point throughout their history, they espoused all of these belief systems; therefore, the beliefs of the Civil Rights Movement were not in conflict with the Church. However, the notion of legislated racial separation was a newly implemented ideology for Adventists during this time. Since the days of the Millerites, the Church was all too familiar with the racial divide in American society. Traditionally speaking, Adventists understood that segregation was the way of American society. This social mos is the reason why they maintained separate schools, churches, hospitals, etc. Unlike the American system, segregation on account of race was not a formal principle. American legislatures instituted Jim Crow as a way of purposely keeping blacks separate from whites. The Adventist organization had no official law
against the union of people based on ethnicity. According to research, the institution of Regional (Black) Conferences in 1944 was the first time the Church officially constituted a division of the denomination based on race. By the mid-20th century, the Adventist Church was just settling in on the idea of official racial separation. It may have been too soon for the association to revert to a practice they just recently abandoned. Integration was something that Adventists had attempted for almost a century, and it only seemed to hinder the mission of the Church. It may have been the answer to America’s race relations, but maybe it was not the solution to the race problem in the Adventist Church.

This practice of separation is a recurring theme throughout Adventist history. It looks as if it has been an acceptable answer to conundrums inside the Adventist Church. Both blacks and whites advocated ideas of separate church services, congregations, etc. At times, black Adventists appeared more passionate about racial segregation than white Adventists. On several occasions, people have separated from the Church on account of race. The researcher has not located any documentation leading one to believe that Adventist leaders urged those groups to return for the sake of unity. Historically, separation has not been a taboo concern for the Adventist Church. If this is the case, Adventist organizational leaders refusing to get involved with the Civil Rights Movement is a valid rationale. If Adventists, especially African Americans, had been appealing separation for so long, why should the Church take the risk of getting involved with a Movement that promotes integration. Their participation would be contrary to the request of the black constituents and furthermore, cause a digression in the movement of the Seventh-day Adventist Church.
Although the Seventh-day Adventist Church and the leaders of the Civil Rights Movement may have had opposing views related to integration, this 1960s Movement was not solely about bringing two races together. It was also about equal rights and justice for people, despite their ethnic background. The Movement promoted ideas of equality and justice, both of which had been denied to people of African descent. If the Adventist Church did not agree with taking a stance against segregation, they should have no opposition to advocating equal rights (according to the theological beliefs of the Church and its prophetess). Therefore, if the Seventh day Adventist leaders did not condemn inequality and the denial of universal suffrage, then, by default, they promoted it. According to Harriett Beecher Stowe, “Not to condemn is to approve.” Early Millerites subscribed to this same notion about slavery.

Church’s Duty Towards Blacks

Ellen White said the Adventist Church should be separated until a better way presents itself. The Movement of the 1950s and 60s appeared to be the perfect time to capitalize on the notion of a unified Church. The spirit of integration permeated American society, and the idea of revolution and change was in the hearts and minds of many Americans both black and white. Nevertheless, the Seventh-day Adventist Church may have felt that this period in history was not the time Ellen White referred to in her statement.

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Importance of Black Life in Adventism

The history of race relations in the Adventist Church, raises the question of how important was black life to the Adventist denomination? The Millerites did not go South to inform enslaved African Americans of the “1844 Second Advent of Christ.” Rather, the Adventist Church went to nations all over the world spreading the gospel message before they evangelized to southern blacks within their same country. City missions were established in the 1860s to meet the needs of the poor, unemployed, and prostitutes. Yet, no major work was established to care for the needs of the former slaves in the South. White Adventist doctors refused to meet the medical needs of a black Adventist woman because of her race, which in turn led to her untimely death. The data collected indicated that black life was not a major priority for the Adventist Church. The Civil Rights Movement’s mission was to improve and advance black life in America. If the welfare of black Americans had never been a major concern for the Adventist organization, then there would have been no need for them to involve themselves in the Civil Rights Movement.

Solving Social Problems with Theological Measures

Another recurring theme of the Seventh-day Adventist Church is the method of solving social problems with theological measures. The Civil Rights Movement engaged in communal organizing to attack a social problem. The Church was the meeting place for the Civil Rights participants. Although the Movement started with church leaders, theology was not used as an answer to the racial problem in America. This social basis may have been why various people from diverse religious affiliations felt comfortable participating in the movement. Traditionally, the Adventist Church was not familiar with
this method of social change. The methods used by the Civil Rights Movement appeared to be assertive, revolutionary, and contrary to the tactics used by the Church. This opposing method may be another reason why the Adventist denomination did not get involved. Although the definition of a social problem states that social dilemmas should be resolved via collective organization of a group, historically, the Church attempted to solve its social problems through theological reasoning and evangelism. As mentioned earlier, the Adventist message was believed to obtain principles that should rectify many of society’s ills.

Social Reform through Evangelism

Although many themes may have contributed to the Church’s noninvolvement in the Civil Rights Movement, the notion of social reform through evangelism appears to be the most frequent theme associated with Adventist race relations. From the inception of the Millerite movement, evangelism was the first major act of William Miller. Early Millerites took a stance against slavery, but felt that evangelism and telling people of Jesus’ soon coming in 1844 was the only way to solve the social plight of the enslaved Africans. After the Great Disappointment, the Church continued to preach of the Lord’s Second Coming, although they were not sure when it would occur. Black Adventists began to take a major role in the leadership of the Adventist Church, but began to experience the racism exuded by the Church. They began to speak out against racial discrimination and promoted separate conferences. However, this separation was advocated to spread the gospel to blacks and whites more effectively.

As time progressed, race relations in the Adventist Church grew worse and worse and the idea of cultural separation became a widespread thought. Racially divided conferences came to pass in 1944, but only because it appeared to be the most effective way to placate the anger of black Adventists and increase their numbers in the Church. This attitude was the mentality of both black and white Adventists. Research shows that separating conferences was the first time the Adventist Church solved a racial problem, on a large scale, with political means. Upon further investigation, it is evident that religious leaders have not renounced the evangelical basis espoused by the Church. The Conference president who initiated racially segregated conferences stated that he just wanted to finish the work of spreading the gospel so they could go to their eternal home where racial conditions did not exist. Again, the notion of evangelism and spreading the gospel of Jesus Christ are the reasons why McElhany approved the idea of separate churches. It was not primarily because of the mistreatment of African-American Adventists. Even the black Adventist leaders subscribed to the same basis. As mentioned earlier, G.E. Peters noted that if colored conferences would advance the involvement of Negroes into the Church, then that was the mission of the Church.

Although the solution was political, evangelism was the overarching theme surrounding the issue of racism in the Church.

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93 Ibid, 132.
The official substantive basis for racially segregated conferences was evangelism. Evangelism always took precedence or was the basis for social reform with regards to race. For example, James Humphreys attempted to better the conditions of blacks in Harlem by establishing his own Benevolent Association, while Arna Bontemps associated with writers of the Harlem Renaissance who expressed notions of black pride and social equality. Both of these men were involved with social change outside of the Adventist Church, and both were punished for their associations. From all indications, the Civil Rights Movement would not have advanced the evangelical efforts of the Seventh day Adventist Church and that may have been a major reason for the Church’s noninvolvement in the Movement. From the time of the Millerites until the Civil Rights Movement, evangelism always took precedence over social reform.

The social efforts of the 1950s and 1960s may have had a startling effect on the Seventh-day Adventist Church’s viewpoint of the Civil Rights Movement. The dangers surrounding the assassinations of Emmitt Till, Medgar Evers, John F. Kennedy, Martin Luther King Jr., and many others may have caused Adventist officials to remain absent from the racial struggles in America. The Civil Rights Movement was based out of black churches and led by religious leaders; the movement itself was for the purpose of social change and not evangelism. This may have been counterproductive to the purpose and vision of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. For some Adventist leaders, the Civil Rights Movement was a secular action and did nothing to further the gospel of Christ. Although Civil Rights’ themes of nonviolence, equality, and love were practices promoted by the Seventh-day Adventist Church, the dangers of the Civil Rights
Movement and the opposing motives of the SDA Church perhaps led them to take a posture of noninvolvement.

Seventh-day Adventist Church and Functionalism

Data collected for this research indicated that the Seventh day Adventist Church has contributed to the stability of American society. With the establishment of schools, churches, and the spreading of the "health message," the Church has done much to provide balance for surrounding communities. In the early days of Church history, the Millerites were anti-government and appeared to exclude themselves from the world. Preparing for the 1844 coming of Jesus Christ, their foremost mission. There was no need to contribute to overall mission of society, because it was on its way to total obliteration. Then again, it was not an official religious organization at this point. After the Great Disappointment, the Church became an authorized denomination and began to function as a social institution.

In relation to race, one can say that the Adventist Church did what they could to stabilize the denomination and its constituents as it attempted to maintain a form of integration and consensus pertaining to race relations. However, the notion of integration did not result in a balanced society. The treatment of the African-American Adventists within an integrated society, as perceived by the Church leaders, would lead to more disarray than stability. Therefore, segregation seemed to be the answer to social stability within the Adventist community. Ellen White is an example of one who used separation as a means of supporting functionalism. Although she did not agree with separate churches based on race, she consented to it for the sake of stability and safety. However, it was not the ideal form of social advancement.
Race relations during the Civil Rights Movement were not a priority for the Seventh-day Adventist Church because of the establishment of racially divided conferences, which was supported by its black members. Separation based on race was not perceived as evil, unlike slavery, perhaps due to the level of involvement and acceptance of separation of black and white conferences by its black constituency. The participation at this level by some black members seems to be in direct conflict with the goals of the Civil Rights Movement. This promotion of separation exhibited by the SDA Church is not in line with the functionalist notion of a subsystem of societal community. Based on the theory of functionalism, the subsystem of a societal community is an integrative subsystem that achieves or fails to achieve various kinds and levels of internal integration. One of the most general functions of a societal community is to articulate a system of norms with a collective organization that has unity and cohesiveness.94 Societal order requires clear and definite integration in the sense, on the one hand, of normative coherence, and on the other hand, of societal “harmony” and “coordination.”95 During the era of the Civil Rights Movement, the SDA Church did not call for integration. In fact, they opposed the idea and endorsed the notion of racial segregation. The Church did not uphold the most general function of a societal community, which is the practice of unity and cohesiveness.

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95 Ibid.
Parsons' Four Functional Prerequisites of a Society

The research shows that the Adventist Church did take an organizational stance against slavery, but took a stance of noninvolvement during the Civil Rights Movement. The Church's level of involvement was impacted by religious teachings, traditions, significant events, and religious leaders. During the Civil Rights Movement, Southern blacks formed a grassroots movement that questioned white superiority. White superiority was challenged because, at this point, blacks were demanding equality, which for white Americans threatened the loss of economic power, the loss of voting power, and the loss of political power. In relation to the SDA Church, the authoritative officials in the Adventist denomination were torn between practicing its teachings/traditions and the inclusion of blacks within an integrated subsystem of societal community.

Talcott Parsons' four functional prerequisites of a society offers a more definitive analysis of the position of the SDA Church and its noninvolvement in the Civil Rights Movement. The first function is adaptation, which is concerned with systems providing additional disposable facilities independent of their relevance to any particular goal. The Millerite involvement in the abolitionist movement can be seen as a form of adaptation. Though antislavery and abolitionism was not the basis of the Millerite movement, it became a facility, related to, yet independent from their original goal, which was to prepare the world for the anticipated coming of Jesus Christ. According to

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Parsons, "within a given system, goal attainment is a more important control than is adaptation," which for the Millerites means the humane treatment of all people.

The function of goal attainment, for the social system, is defined in terms of equilibrium, and not committed to the values of the society, but motivation to contribute what is necessary for the functioning of that system. The primary purpose of the Millerite movement seems to center on evangelism and the advancement of the Advent message. Preparing the world for the second coming of Christ has been the mission and goal of the Church since the mid-19th century. As a goal attainment, church growth is a product of evangelism and is a means by which the church can continue to function.

The function of integration in a social system can pose a problem with many institutions because it calls for mutual adjustments of segmented units or subsystems from the point of view of their contributions to the effective functioning of the system as a whole. The Seventh-day Adventist Church had a hard time regulating black/white relationships inside a racially unified denomination. Therefore, segregated conferences seemed to be the most effective solution to attaining the goal of continuous evangelism and church growth. In the example of the Adventist Church, it appears that separation was what called for the functioning of the system as a whole as opposed to integration. At this point, based on the history of both the Church and American society, since emancipation and Reconstruction (see Chart I) segregation appears as a more acceptable goal. For the Church, this meant the comfortable continuation.

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97 Ibid.
98 Ibid.
The function of latency, or pattern maintenance, refers to the imperative of maintaining the stability of patterns of institutionalized culture defining the structure of the system. In order for the Adventist system to maintain itself, it felt the need to function as a racially segregated entity and involvement in the Civil Rights Movement would have threatened their pattern maintenance. Therefore, in order to maintain itself during the breakdown in black/white Adventist relationship, the Church wanted to avoid the breakdown between white/white Adventist relationships, and supported the ideals related to segregation and continued to attain its goal through evangelism.

The Civil Rights Movement caused a disturbance in society, yet the Adventist Church’s non-involvement stance did nothing to function as a contributor to racial change as advocated primarily by blacks, even if it meant changing the traditional mores of the time. Refusing to argue for equality in opportunity and social reform places the Church in contrast to traditional western liberalism, which was supported by the structural functionalist approach. The separation of conferences was used as a way to stabilize Adventist society but the Church’s removal from the social problem of the 1950s and 1960s caused it to relinquish some of its responsibilities as a social institution. The Adventist Church contributed much to the overall balance of American society and the stability of its own affairs. However, according to the functionalist theory, it did not contribute to the American social institution of religion during the Civil Rights Movement.

99 Ibid.
Subsequently, functionalism did not accept the notion of dramatic change and conflict, but an evolutionary transformation of society. The Civil Rights Movement, however, demanded the immediate freedom and equality of oppressed black people in America. The Seventh-day Adventist Church never advocated instantaneous social change, outside of the abolitionist movement.

The Seventh-day Adventist Church is a social institution. As a social institution, it has certain responsibilities to the citizens of its communities. According to the functionalist theory, it must contribute to the well being of that community. If a social institution refuses to acknowledge the basic human rights required to the people of that society, then they are held accountable for the corollaries involved. Equality and basic protection are factors that help stabilize a population. However, African Americans during this time were prohibited from functioning as human beings in their own communities. Seventh-day Adventism, as a social institution, appeared to have done nothing to administer justice or maintain social balance during the Civil Rights Movement. Although, Adventist Jim Crow did adhere to the prerequisite of recruiting and controlling members, it did nothing for the larger responsibility of moving their community towards equilibrium, but was a contributor to separation of the races. The fraudulent distribution of power in a society is contradictory to social equilibrium. These are the notions that the Seventh-day Adventist Church supported by maintaining an indifferent attitude towards Jim Crow. Table 1.3 presents a summation of the major themes introduced in this chapter.
## TABLE 1.3 SUMMARY OF THEMES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Themes</th>
<th>1830-1863</th>
<th>1864-1877</th>
<th>1878-1944</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Separation of congregations</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Charles Kinney appeals separate congregations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Ellen White proposes separation of congregations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- separate conference department for blacks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- official separation of Adventist Conference</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theological solution to race problems</td>
<td>- Christ’s Coming</td>
<td></td>
<td>- established Christian schools for blacks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pastor</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- evangelize to the blacks of the South</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concern for Black Life</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- first ordination of black Adventist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Never purposely informed blacks of Second Coming</td>
<td>- evangelized globally</td>
<td>- first time Church purposely spread the Advent message to blacks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- underground railroad</td>
<td></td>
<td>- hospital refused to treat a black woman which resulted in her death</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- problem with Adventist involvement in outside social movements</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Church’s duty to blacks</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Ellen White states that congregation should be separate until a better way comes along</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Reform</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- purpose for separation appeal in 1880’s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>through evangelism</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- purpose for separation of conferences</td>
</tr>
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<td>- faith based antislavery literature</td>
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</table>
CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION/RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

This study investigated the Seventh-day Adventist Church’s role as an agent for social change by examining its involvement in the Abolitionist Movement (1830s-1863), and its detachment from the Civil Rights movement. The researcher examined the impact of theological teachings, traditions, events, and religious leaders of the church in order to find out if a decline took place in social awareness, social stability, and social justice by the church’s leadership. The research reveals the factors that may have caused the Adventist Church to remove itself from the racial struggle in the Civil Rights movement.

This study was done in order to understand the racial barriers that lie deep inside the origins, teachings, and practices of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Although there is an insufficiency of material relative to the Seventh-day Adventist Church’s activist involvement in social equality and social justice, this study may result in a model for the consideration of race relations by the SDA church and other religious organizations.

Since the inception of the Millerite movement, Seventh-day Adventists have undergone multiple changes involving the race relations within the Church. Their participation in the Abolitionist Movement, their establishment of a black school, and the establishment of regional conferences proves that racism in the Church has not been an easy conundrum to rectify. Race relations in the Adventist Church are a reflection of the
American racial struggle at large. Although the Church was involved with the antislavery movement in the mid-19th century, the institution took a stance of non-involvement during the Civil Rights Movement.

Many factors caused the Seventh-day Adventist Church’s non-participation in the racial struggle in the Civil Rights Movement. The idea of separate congregations emerged eleven years before the Movement began. Before the 1950s and 1960s, American society legalized segregation, while the Adventist Church functioned as a racially unified institution. It appeared that integration delayed the evangelical and church growth efforts of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Ellen White proclaimed that the Church should remain racially divided, until a better solution came along.\(^1\) It appears the leaders of the SDA denomination did not feel that the Civil Rights Movement was the appropriate time for the Church to integrate black and white congregations. Since many African-American Adventists were also advocates of segregation, there was no need for the Church to get involved with the Civil Rights Movement, which called for racial integration.

The importance of black life in Adventism was another factor that may have caused the Seventh-day Adventist Church to appear absent from the Civil Rights Movement. For years, African-American Adventists succumbed to the same mistreatment that blacks outside of the Church experienced. There were some racist actions directly related to blacks such as, refusing a black Adventist woman health care

based on race, refusing to allow qualified blacks to run their own institutions, and refusing Civil Rights supporters entrance into a Seventh-day Adventist Church. Some racist actions were exhibited indirectly such as, spreading the Advent message all over the world before proselytizing to former enslaved Africans in the South, and removing prominent black leaders from Church positions based on their involvement with black social organizations. Throughout the history of the Church, it appears that the welfare of African Americans had never been a major concern for Church officials. If so, then the Church would not see significance in the participation of the Civil Rights Movement.

In addition to the small concern for black life exhibited by some SDA officials, the Church’s tradition of solving social problems through theological measures is perhaps another rationale that supports their non-involvement posture during the Civil Rights Movement. For years, the Church used theology to address social concerns. From slavery to Jim Crow, the Adventist answer to most social questions regarding race centered on the second coming of Jesus Christ and evangelism. With this in mind, the Church may have felt that the Civil Rights Movement would have done very little to advance SDA evangelism.

With evangelism and the spreading of the Advent message as the goals of the Adventist social system, according to Parsons’ functional prerequisites, it is apparent that all other issues, including racism, were adaptations. Racial harmony was related to, but independent from their original goal, which was evangelism. Perhaps, the Adventist Church believed that evangelism, which leads to church growth, was the only way the
Church could continue pattern maintenance and function as a social system. With integration causing the breakdown of race relations in the Adventist Church, maybe the integrative function may not be a prerequisite for the Adventist social system and separation was the only viable option for the survival of the Adventist Church. Therefore, this position led the Church to maintain a stance of noninvolvement during the Civil Rights Movement because the ideas promoted by the Movement would lead to the Church’s destruction.

After reviewing the literature, the researcher found no source that explicited race relations in the Adventist Church using the functionalist theory and Parsons four functional prerequisites. Similar to Alvin Makapela in his text *The Problem with Africanity in the Seventh-Day Adventist Church*, the researcher also analyzes the Adventist Church’s promotion of segregation; however, not just segregation, but their refusal to support a movement that promotes justice and equality for all races. Calvin Rock raises the question of whether or not it is possible to be loyal to a religious institution that oppresses the society’s drive for racial social change and still seek racial freedom.2 This question is answered by assessing the factors that caused the Church to maintain a stance of non-involvement during the Civil Rights Movement. The data indicates that some blacks adhered to the Church’s views on race relations, while others fought to rectify the racial problem in the Adventist Church and American society. Those Adventists who actively opposed the racist system faced being ostracized or

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demoted from certain key positions in the Church. These actions are shown in the previously mentioned examples of James K. Humphrey and Arna Bontemps. However, there are examples of men, such as E.E. Cleveland, who joined the fight initiated by the Civil Rights Movement and still maintained a positive rapport with the Adventist denomination. He continued his career as an Adventist preacher and teacher until his death in 2009. Therefore, it appears that it is possible to be loyal to the Adventist denomination and still seek racial freedom. Duane McBride and Jacquelyn Giem, in an article “The Christian and Society: Some Functions, Dysfunctions, Conflict and Interactions,” mention that in spite of the Adventist Church’s attempt to minimize interactions with the general society, some cultural leveling takes place in dress, diet, and entertainment. The cultural leveling that takes place in the Adventist Church concerning race relations between black and white Adventists is the Church’s reflection of the American culture’s views on African-Americans’ roles in society.

Suggestions for Future Research

Future research should examine the notion of black Adventism and its connection, or lack thereof, with the African-American struggle in America. This research would be framed by Rock’s question, Is it possible to be loyal to a religious institution and still seek racial freedom?

Although this research was conducted to address the Adventist Church’s non-involvement in the Civil Rights Movement, it ultimately uncovered several reasons why the Church has a perpetual issue with race. Future research can take this same
methodology and apply it to gender relations in the Church. An historical analysis can be conducted in order to understand why the Adventist Church frowns upon the ordination of women pastors. In relation to race, quantitative research can be done to look at what attracts African Americans to the Seventh day Adventist Church and if that attraction, by default, causes a person to relinquish loyalty to their culture.

The Seventh-day Adventist Church must have provided some beliefs, traditions, and ideologies in history that would allow individuals to be active in a movement that the Church itself rejects. Christianity as an ideology allowed individuals to engage in the Civil Rights Movement while some churches, in the name of Christianity, engaged in non-Christian behavior. The Civil Rights Movement adhered to the Christian foundation in order to help rectify society’s wrongs,---in this case prejudices, discrimination, and segregation. Hence, such movements as Liberation Theology emerge. Certain SDA leaders call forth the idea “up you mighty Church” based on (Garvey’s notion of “up you mighty race”) which the Civil Rights Movement and its religious foundation appealed to black Americans in their push to rise for change.
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