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Seventh-Day Adventists and 'Race' Relations in the U.S.: The Case of Black-White Structural Segregation

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SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTISTS AND 'RACE' RELATIONS IN THE U.S.: THE CASE OF
BLACK-WHITE STRUCTURAL SEGREGATION

by

Cleran Hollancid

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SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTISTS AND 'RACE' RELATIONS IN THE U.S.: THE CASE OF BLACK-WHITE STRUCTURAL SEGREGATION

Cleran Hollancid, Ph.D.

Western Michigan University, 2016

A worldwide Christian denomination of some eighteen million in global membership, and with a presence in over 200 countries and territories (i.e., in just about every country on the globe), the Seventh Day Adventist (SDA) Church is one with a distinctive arrangement in the U.S., insofar as it concerns its racial segregation practice. The SDA Church professes and preaches unity in the pulpit, as in all members being equal and one in the faith, yet the actual practice says otherwise. Such is the case since it is officially segregated along black-white lines.

The segregation arrangement, essentially a black-white schism, falls within the overall denominational structure, at the two bottom levels of the general church structure (i.e., from the local church to the local conference). This is unlike other denominations such as Baptists and Methodists, for instance, which have experienced total racial divisions in their general membership, and have totally separate black and white church organizational structures. Thus, gaining deeper insight into this racialized structure and unique SDA arrangement lies at the heart of the metanarrative driving this social research.

This is a qualitative study with a focus on the Detroit area which, in itself, offers a picture of the broader SDA segregated pattern in America. In pursuing this study the socio-historical backdrop was considered, in order to better examine the societal dynamics and the meanings involved in SDA (black-white) racial segregation. To accomplish this, 36 semi-structured in-depth interviews were carried out, seeking members and pastors' perspectives on the racially segregated arrangement, from separate black and white SDA churches.

Theoretical insight formed an integral part of this study, particularly cultural toolkit theory and the homophily principle. The findings show that these theoretical lenses, along with other social dynamics and a history of racial prejudice, discrimination, and tensions in the SDA Church, help explain the persistent segregation in the denomination, accentuated by its attendant inequality. This study and its findings should: (a) prove useful to American SDA leaders, and (b) be of at least informative value to church members, besides its contribution to the overall academic work on 'race,' religion, and society.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Statement of the Problem

Operating in many languages, with a presence on all continents, in just about every country in the world, the SDA Church stands out as being one of the most widespread religious denominations in the world. With some eighteen million adherents (and growing) worldwide, the SDA Church also oversees a variety of denominational operations around the world, including: Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA) – an internationally recognized emergency and disaster response organization, hospitals, clinics, seminaries, colleges, universities, medical and health schools, community service outlets (to serve the surrounding community with needed material items, for example), publishing houses, and book and resource centers. And the SDA Church, in general, is considered second only to the Catholic Church in terms of the global extent of church-run (parochial) schools and organizations. Thus, it is not at all farfetched to think of the SDA Church as a truly global church, literally spread far and wide, engaging a broad variety of cultural perspectives and services. It serves an immense array and broad diversity of communities globally, yet with a central form of ecclesiastical governance for the world church.

In the American context, however, which is the primary focus of this research, there exists an official SDA racial (black-white) structural division, which permeates most of the American SDA Church.¹ And such division, in and of itself, has an impact on interpersonal relationships within the structure, insofar as they have to do with interaction comfort levels

¹ See a list of 'black' (or Regional) SDA conferences by region, which overlap 'white' (or state) conferences, in the U.S., in chapter two.

within Adventist institutions, between groups – black, white, other; that is the degree to which members feel comfortable around each other, particularly in the worship environment. And Seventh-day Adventism (specifically in the U.S. context) has its own history of racial tension, anti-black prejudice, and discrimination, which eventually gave rise to the internal racial (black-white) division in the form of segregated local conferences.² Thus the official separation only impacts the lower two levels (out of five general levels) of the SDA Church structure; i.e., local conference and the local churches governed by those local conferences. What this means is that unlike other denominations, such as Baptists and Methodists, which broke up and spawned new denominations over the ‘race’ issue, Seventh-day Adventism contains a racially segregated (black/white) structure which operates within the ambit of the broader denomination (Neufeld, 1966).

In light of this, the greater interest and main question driving this research study is, what are the perspectives of black and white SDAs with respect to the official racial segregation at the local conference level, and at the local church level, in the denominational structure? In order to adequately address this question, however, both the trajectory of ‘race’ relations as well as contemporary views on the segregation in the SDA Church will prove valuable. Thus, while the racialized history of the SDA Church is brought to bear, the purpose of the field interviews undertaken for this study is to contribute to a deeper understanding of perspectives on the racial segregation arrangement in the SDA Church, mainly from the members’ perspective.

Significance of the Study

By taking a closer look at religious black-white racial segregation among SDAs in the U.S., a measure of understanding of the phenomenon of racial segregation among American

² Also see chapter two for a more detailed breakdown of the SDA Church’s organizational structure.

churchgoers, in general, will be gained. As such, this study is of significant import as it seeks to piece together an understanding of the phenomenon of religious racial segregation in America. This relates to both the general social significance involved, as well as the implications for religious interaction, in particular, insofar as it can inform us of the character of church life in America.

Thus, a study of this nature also includes implications for the wider U.S. social landscape, since the church, in general, is not merely a private enterprise (in the sense that it is only concerned about church-related matters and does not engage the social world around it), but remains an enduring social institution. Its durability is evinced in its very endurance for millennia, engaging communities in various capacities – from spiritual life, to a sponsor of educational life, to sponsoring health screenings and charitable undertakings, to its utilization as a base for social activism and more. From that standpoint, indubitably, churchgoers are an integral part of the wider U.S. society, and understanding the significance and meaning of ‘race’ in the formal organizational SDA Church structure and informal social relations within it, helps to inform our understanding of the communities and society of which the church is a part.

Further, while much work and research on many aspects of Seventh-day Adventism has been done, particularly its doctrines and institutions, including some on race relations and development of the black work (Peterson, 1960; Branson, 1970; Graybill, 1971; Shaw, 1971; Grant, 1978; Reeves, 1978; Reynolds, 1984; Baker, 1996; Graham, 1996; Rock, 1996; Lawson, 1999; Fisher, 2003; Jones, 2003; 2006; O’Reggio, 2006; London, 2009; Morgan, 2010; Hollancid, 2012; McGrath, 2015), there remains a dearth of research specifically expressive of the racial segregation arrangement in the denomination from the members’ perspective. The

present study is particularly geared towards filling that gap. With that in mind, we now turn to a general introduction to Seventh-day Adventism, including discussion on its origins.

The Origins of Seventh-day Adventism

In embarking on this study it is first of great import to understand something of the origins of Seventh-day Adventism, in order to better appreciate the research at hand. This takes us back to early nineteenth-century America. SDAs, like some other smaller denominations (for example, the Advent Christian Church, also known as the Advent Christian General Conference), trace their roots back to what is known as the Millerite Movement, which placed urgent emphasis on the looming second advent of Christ (Land, 2005:2-3, 5). And the SDA organization, officially established in the 1860s, itself has also subsequently branched out into other movements. Nonetheless, the Millerite Movement is named for the Baptist preacher, William Miller of the New England area, who, based on much scriptural study of prophecy, from around 1818, became convinced that Christ was going to return in his time – i.e., more precisely around 1843-1844 (Land, 2005; Bull and Lockhart, 2007). Thousands believed in the Millerite Movement and the Adventist teachings of Miller, and even sold their possessions in great anticipation of the big event. Hence the ‘Great Disappointment’ experienced by followers of the movement, once Miller’s predictions proved incorrect.

The Millerite movement, itself, is placed within the larger context of the ‘Second Great Awakening’ with its mix of revivalism and post-millennialism,³ which picked up great steam in New England, the eastern U.S. seaboard, and parts of the mid-west, from around the end of the

³ The post-millennial view (as opposed to other millennial views such as pre-millennialism) was the predominant and widely accepted view, with respect to the second coming of Christ, at around the time William Miller started proclaiming the Second Advent, around the mid-nineteenth century. Post-millennialism refers to a thousand-year period featuring a type of reformed age, in a less decadent world, which would essentially usher in the second coming of Christ. This placed Miller at invariable odds with the established churches, since Miller’s was a pre-millennial approach – i.e., the return of Christ before the thousand years of Revelation 20:1-5.

eighteenth century to the mid-nineteenth century. This ‘Second Awakening’ stressed not only morals, revivalism, and getting right with God (as in experiencing a personal conversion), but also ‘restorationism’ (as in a return to primitive New Testament Christianity), seen by some as constituting true religion (Land, 2005:2). Further, this ‘Awakening’ also took within its grasp the cause of certain social issues of the time, such as temperance and abolitionism – particularly in tandem with the heated and much more hardline ‘Abolition Movement’ of the mid-nineteenth century (Franklin and Moss, 2000).

Miller believed in the layman’s in-depth studying of scripture rather than depending on clergy and scholarly interpretations of the Bible, particular in terms of biblical prophecy and the end of time (Ibid., 2005). No doubt, however, the big focus was on the second advent of Christ, although with varying emphases and differences between the various viewpoints as to when Christ would return, and the conditions surrounding the time. Key of these are what is referred to in theological and eschatological literature as pre-millennialism, a-millennialism, and post-millennialism.⁴ The ‘pre’ and the ‘post’ refer to Christ’s appearance, i.e., before or after a one-thousand-year-period (of the reign of God’s children) respectively. And ‘a-millennialism’ essentially means no millennium, since not all subscribe to the view of a literal one-thousand-year-period surrounding the return of Christ. The general eschatological current in Miller’s time placed a heavy stress on post-millennialism, and thus William Miller was going against the grain to espouse and preach the view that Christ would come very shortly, ahead a millennial reign of peace and the kingdom of God.

⁴ ‘Millennialism,’ from the word millennial, in religious doctrine, refers to belief in a thousand-year period, particularly in light of prophetic understanding. Premillennialism refers to the return of Christ before a 1000-year period, while Postmillennialism refers to his return at the end of that period. And in his time William Miller was a premillennialist, just as SDAs are today.

And thus, with pointed zeal, Miller studied biblical prophecies fervently, cross-referencing one scriptural passage with another, especially in light of a particularly passage in the Old Testament, that of Daniel 8:14, which declares, “Unto two thousand three hundred days then shall the sanctuary be cleansed.” This happens to be very important in understanding the pre and post-‘Great Disappointment’ phenomenon and the development of Seventh-day Adventism (Bull and Lockhart, 2007:3-10; *cf.* Reynolds, 1984:17-22). It is from this passage in Daniel, and based on historical-chronological calculation, Miller surmised that Christ would come sometime between 1843 and 1844. The ‘cleansing of the sanctuary’ in that passage, Miller took to mean the earth; but later, after the disappointment, some held to the claim that the cleansing of the sanctuary referred to the ‘sanctuary in heaven’ rather than the earth (Land, 2005; Olsen, 1972:111, 176-181).

The SDA Church, which was officially established in 1863 as a union of existing Adventist sects (Jordan, 1988:13), was but one of the groups which solidified after the 1844-Great Disappointment and breakup of the Millerites. Thus, what began as one of the fledgling groups of Adventists in the aftermath of the disappointment, blossomed into the current international SDA Church (with a stress also on the second coming), now standing at some 18 million adherents worldwide. At first, what became the SDA Church tenaciously shunned formal organization, especially since (a) the founders had bitter experiences from their former organized churches which had also ultimately rejected the Millerite Adventist message, and (b) in the immediate years following 1844, the founders still held on to the soon appearing of Christ, and the notion that probation had closed for non-believers (Knight, 2006:28-30). Nonetheless, as the years advanced, the SDA leadership advocated more vociferously for organization realizing that the only way forward, insofar as it benefitted the spread of their

mission, support of their ministers, doctrinal coherence, along with the need to own property, particularly in a post-disappointment climate, was to organize.

Three years prior to the official organization of the SDA Church, i.e. in 1860, the name ‘Seventh-day Adventist’ was specifically chosen for the movement, in order to reflect its core beliefs. Thus, primarily indicative of the denomination’s character, it particularly reflects the group’s proclamation of the second advent of Christ, and the adherence to the Sabbath message (Jordan, 1988:13, 59; *cf.* Dederen, 2000 chapter 1). The Sabbath message itself (also referred to as the ‘Sabbath light’) was the result of a conviction of the (SDA) founders immediately following the Great Disappointment, and was actually due to the influence of the Seventh-day Baptists (Olsen, 1972).

But who were the SDA founders? SDA founders, directly influenced by Millerite Adventism, are understood to be the couple, James and Ellen G. White, along with a former sea captain, Joseph Bates (Land, 2005). However, Ellen White is the one considered to have the distinguishing mark of the gift of prophecy, especially due to her visions and messages (Olsen, 1972:166-175; Jordan, 1988). But Ellen White is largely understood by SDAs as affirming and clarifying biblical doctrine rather than adding new doctrines (Land, 2005). In other words, she is seen as the lesser light pointing to the greater light (the Bible). Due also to her prolific writings in a variety of areas (such as race relations, the home, the youth, coming to Christ, Acts of the Apostles, and the Great Controversy, the ultimate showdown between Christ and Satan), and emphasis on the health message (healthy diet, healthy living, etc.), SDAs, in general, regard her highly and frequently quote from her. And in tandem with all that, SDAs are well known for their Revelation Seminars and Health Seminars. Though not exactly the same in personality,

content, or literary style, in a sense, Mrs. White is sort of like the Thomas Aquinas of the Catholic Church, in terms of denominational prominence and recognition.⁵

Some Background: A Look at the Intersection of Race Relations, SDA Theology and Beliefs

From its very inception, the SDA Church has always identified itself as a distinctive denominational body, called to spread the last message of warning that the hour of God's judgment is here. In that regard, Revelation 14:6-12 is taken to heart and lies at the nerve center of Adventist beliefs. Thus, as it stands today, the SDA Church is essentially a prophetic church with extensive global operations and missions outreach, seeing the entire world as its field of operation, or as ground awaiting seed to be sown. It is from that standpoint that members find common ground, in spite of racial segregation in the church's structure, and unite in the overarching sense, based on unique theological perspectives that are particularly rooted in remnant theology (Grant, 1978; Hörschele, 2007; *cf.* Andrews, 1872). In relation to that, other emphases such as that on health and temperance, gift of prophecy, and Christian education are deeply embedded in the SDA overall outlook (Bull and Lockhart, 2007; Knight, 2004a; Olsen, 1972). In sum, both unique and non-distinct features that characterize the SDA organization are: (a) a remnant theology, (b) a focus on the gift of prophecy, particularly as manifested in Ellen White, (c) a focus on biblical prophecy particularly out of Daniel and Revelation, (d) the health message, and (e) an emphasis on Christian education.

In this study on Adventists⁶ and black-white race relations in the U.S., it is important to consider early proselytization or the evangelization of blacks and attitudes of blacks themselves in remaining with the main SDA Church body, in spite of the racial challenges they faced. And

⁵ This comparison is based on a reading and understanding of the place of both Ellen G. White's works and life, and that of Thomas Aquinas, and also an understanding their prime religious significance in their respective spheres of influence – in the SDA and Catholic Churches respectively.

⁶ The term 'Adventists' is used here interchangeably with the abbreviation SDAs.

that also ties right into the SDA Church's overall theological outlook as we shall see. As far as SDA theology is concerned, it is of utmost importance to follow the Lord's command and go into all the world to preach the gospel, for a witness unto all nations before the end comes (Matthew 24:24). This same message was again echoed by Jesus after his resurrection, whereby Christians (including SDAs) draw admonition from the words of Christ to teach and baptize all nations (every tongue and people), while they also draw comfort in the assurance that he will be with them always (Matthew 28:17-20).

With that gospel commission, Adventists also see themselves as aligned with a remnant message, as previously cited, particularly rooted in the three angels' messages of Revelation 14. But in speaking to the intersection of race and theology in a more direct sense, one source notes that there are specific characteristics of the SDA Church that perpetuated discrimination and race prejudice, even while it was being challenged in the wider society – in the 1960s, for example (Bull and Lockhart, 2007). And such characteristics are Adventists aloofness from social problems, including racial injustice, which possibly caused the church to be rather insensitive to the expectations of its black constituency (Ibid., 284). Such reasoning is also tied to emphasis on the transcendent (such as a focus on Christ's second coming) versus a drive to addressing moral issues in contemporary times. And the Adventist Church's stance on separation of church and state has also influenced a reserved attitude on the part of Adventists from all walks of life, keeping them from speaking out on racial injustice (Ibid., 284-85).

Along this same point of race and Adventist theology, one observer notes the influence of inherent racism in Adventist theology (Shaw, 1971). Accordingly, Shaw posits that clichés that show 'negroes' to be happier with their own people or to prefer their own churches, are but "rationalizations designed to justify segregation and soothe moral compunction" (Ibid., 35). In a

further insight he avers that “racism persists within the Adventist church for the same reasons that it thrives in the Bible Belt and in fundamentalists groups in this country: emphasis on individual salvation and a radical eschatology” (Ibid., 36). This is understood also in light of the sentiment that even when hearts are transformed by mass revivalism, they remain unchanged in racial affections (*in* Shaw, 1971).⁷ A similar emphasis on individual salvation, the impact of racial stereotypes against blacks, and the maintenance of racial segregation in church is also revealed elsewhere (Emerson and Smith, 2000). And the mass revivalism referred to, tends to place emphasis on a vertical relation to a God who will take care of all social problems and prejudices both here and ‘over there.’ From that standpoint, horizontal relationships and interests with respect to moral striving, particularly in terms of the social implications of the gospel, become less and less significant as ‘otherworldly’ concerns take precedence. And with that, sin is also counted as an individual affair; i.e., it’s up to each person to make it right before God, while discounting the corporate dynamics of the whole matter, leading also to a type of exclusiveness (Shaw, 1971).

Granted, such attitudes of spiritual individualism and exclusivity are not necessarily in and of themselves racist, but at the same time are aspects of doctrine that can be congenial to racists (*cf.* Ibid.), and prompt prejudicial attitudes. Such considerations enable a better understanding of the chasm between whites and blacks in church, white evangelical withdrawal from black neighborhoods (Blanchard, 2007), and the problem of white prejudicial attitudes towards blacks in the SDA Church (Keith and Lockhart, 2007), in particular, including the problem of white flight from SDA churches and institutions when uncomfortable with a black presence. Speaking to the racial bigotry in the Adventist Church and the insincerity of some,

⁷ *cf.* Emerson & Smith, 2000, chapter two.

Shaw asserts that the “racial bigots within Adventism” have a more serious problem in their souls, “and will not be converted by hypothetical imperatives” with respect to the justification of segregation for the sake of mission (1971:37). In relation to that, he avers that in the Adventist Church “regional [black] conferences, and ... the cry for black union conferences, represent the black man’s thrust toward equality and freedom within the ecclesiastical structure – which, he thinks, contains truths vital to his destiny” (Ibid.). But without mincing words, he also urges the reader to remember “that the need for regional conferences in the church is clear evidence of the victory of social forces over the church, for the dogma that makes regional conferences necessary is anthropological, not theological” (Ibid.).

In sum, Shaw considers that “Too often racism infects theology, organizational structure, leadership, financial appropriations, and institutional programs.” And he draws a link between such organizational phenomena and the Adventist Church, stating that “Thus far, the Adventist Church has been controlled by social forces.” Then as part of his concluding remarks, he stresses that “As long as the marks of a racist society continue to appear in the Adventist Church, the church’s victories will be feeble compared with her calling and potential” (Ibid.)

In conjunction with the foregoing discussion, alongside the gospel mission, black SDAs, as well as SDAs in general, believe that Christ is currently in the heavenly sanctuary interceding on behalf of earth’s masses (in a judgment type atmosphere – as understood by passages like Hebrews 8:1-3, and Hebrews 9. This sanctuary doctrine in Seventh-day Adventism forms part of the core of Adventist theology (Olsen, 1972:176-81; Gordon, 2000; Smith, 1877; 1898). It points to what is known as the investigative judgment, meaning that Christ is currently serving as mediator in heaven, while the investigation of the lives of people of earth is taking place, to see who has taken the gospel message seriously (i.e., the message of salvation) – essentially who is

loyal to God or to the light afforded them (Dederen, 2000:397-401). This in turn is linked to SDA remnant theology, a focus on biblical prophecy (fulfillment of biblical markers) and gift of prophecy, spoken of in the next subheading below. This type of distinction in Seventh-day Adventism (the SDA message) is what draws and keeps blacks (as well as white, Korean, Chinese, other) in the church (Shaw, 1971), as a mark of global identity, in spite of racial tensions or other differences (such as varied opinions on ordination of female pastors).

Remnant Theology and Gift of Prophecy

Taken together, the focus on tenets of the second coming and the seventh-day Sabbath, with a view of spreading the Advent message to all peoples of the earth, along with the sanctuary doctrine and a remnant theology, with an emphasis on the fulfillment of biblical prophecies (particularly in Daniel and Revelation), have been enduring characteristics of SDA theology (Olsen, 1972). In light of that, important features of Adventist theology speak of the signs of the times – wars, rumors of wars, famines, the falling of the stars, earthquakes in diverse places, etc. (found in passages like Mark 13, Matthew 24 and elsewhere); and the end of time – found in passages like Revelation 20 (the dragon-Satan cast in chains, etc.), and 1Thessalonians 4:16-18 (the trump of God sounding and the dead in Christ rising first to meet the Lord). But specific examples of remnant passages and those central to Seventh-day Adventism are those such as Rev. 12:12-17 (with particular emphasis and mention of the ‘remnant,’ and a commandment-keeping people who have the ‘testimony of Jesus Christ’ in verse 17); Rev 14:6-12 (the ‘three angels’ messages’ and the patience of the saints, with particular emphasis on verse 12); and Rev. 19:10 (speaking of the ‘testimony of Jesus’ which is the ‘spirit of prophecy’).

Essentially, these last three biblical passages (among others) are crucial and play a pivotal role in SDA theology. They stress (as SDAs see it) the importance of a commandment-keeping

people (including the seventh-day Sabbath of the 4th commandment), and the ‘spirit or gift of prophecy’ as an identifying characteristic of God’s final day people (Olsen, 1972; Dederen, 2000). The notion of the ‘gift of prophecy’ refers to the idea of identifying one as marked with the gift of a prophet/prophetess, in the sense of offering counsel and leading others back to the bible and their spiritual calling. In that respect the gift of prophecy is believed to be exercised through the work, many writings, and ministry of Ellen White (*Ministerial Association* – GC of SDAs, 1988:220-26; and Dederen 2000:627-50).

To be sure, though, SDAs don’t teach that you must do good works or keep the commandments to be saved. On the contrary, one is seen as not wanting to go astray from the commandments because of the saving grace of God and faith in Jesus. Nonetheless, such is the tenor of the final day distinct message, to call others out of ‘her,’ i.e., Babylon (corruption, spiritual backsliding, promulgation of false doctrines, etc., as cited in Rev. 14:8 and Rev. 18:4, for instance), that carries a particular ring and appeal to it. This SDA appeal is so strong that SDAs (blacks, whites, Mexicans, Ukrainians, Russians, South Koreans, Chinese, Romanians, Indians, etc.), generally speaking, all rally around it, regardless of whatever issues may be present within the organization. In other words, the SDA theological appeal is a gripping invitation to many, including blacks (Shaw, 1971), and forms the nexus around which all SDAs find common ground. That, in a sense, acts as a glue that keeps all SDAs together regardless of racial tensions or ecclesiastical issues.

A Note on Racial Tension, Adventism, and Evangelicalism

Racial tensions are not unique to the SDA Church, but the SDA Church in the U.S. is one with a structural (administrative) black-white split within the general hierarchical framework of the denomination (Neufeld, 1966; Reynolds, 1984:292-99). And both the SDA Church and other

Christian (evangelical) denominations have and do experience racial issues, especially with respect to racial segregation and racial inequality. This ties back to the religious individualism mentioned earlier as well as tense racial relations between religious blacks and whites. For instance, some white evangelical Christians place more emphasis on culture rather than structure in sharing how they feel about many blacks' lack of progress in society. For example, shifting the burden away from government intervention, some evangelical whites feel that blacks need to pay more attention to their own habits and attitudes, in the way they perceive blacks as not trying hard enough to pull themselves up by their own bootstraps, among other negative stereotypes of blacks (*see* Emerson and Smith, 2000; and Emerson, Smith and Sikkink, 1999). Such perceptions, moreover, have also encouraged prejudicial attitudes and discriminatory behaviors towards blacks, particularly with respect to the effects of religious/non-religious segregation and socioeconomic marginalization on black mobility (Wilmore, 1972; Massey and Denton, 1993; Findlay, 1993; Franklin, 1993; Chappell, 1998; Newman, 2001; Christerson et al., 2005; Feldman, 2005; and Edgell and Tranby, 2007).

In that vein, many white evangelicals, for instance, shun integration in both the church and neighborhood, opting instead for homogeneous enclaves (Blanchard, 2007; Bull and Lockhart, 2007; Christerson et al., 2005; McPherson et al., 2001; Emerson and Smith, 2000). And by the same token, blacks for their part have maintained church racial segregation due to a number of reasons such as, discriminatory behavior in the face of a white power structure both within and outside the church, and also for purposes of cultural and political solidarity (Cone, 1969; Cone, 2004; Wilmore, 1972; Pattillo-McCoy, 1998). But Seventh-day Adventism (in North America) is distinctive from the standpoint of the internal (structural) racial split, yet with

everyone (black and non-black alike) sticking to the exact same SDA message (due to its uniqueness), as emphasized in this research.

Important to point out in this discussion is that the SDA Church is considered an evangelical denomination (Dederen, 2000:1), in the sense that it carries a focus on the teaching and authority of scriptures (vs. institutional church authority), while at the same time emphasizing salvation (i.e., personal conversion) through the atonement of Christ. I stress this point because Seventh-day Adventism has been criticized from the outside for being non-evangelical, due, for example, to the SDA Church's stress on the gift of prophecy characterizing the end-time church. And in speaking of atonement, the SDA Church recognizes it as "a process of healing the breach between God and humankind opened by sin and is associated with the life and death of Jesus Christ" (Ibid., xvii). In other words, there is that emphasis in Seventh-day Adventism to have all humans turn back to God, and that includes being at peace with and reconciling with each other. Yet, around the mid-twentieth century, the American SDA church eventually went down the path of a denominationally-sanctioned racial divide. But just to be clear, while considered evangelical, and in spite of the official racial divide in the denomination, the SDA Church does also recognize itself as God's remnant church of biblical prophecy.⁸

Black SDAs and Remnant Theology

In terms of SDAs evangelizing and working with or among African Americans, that takes us back to around the second half of the nineteenth century, particularly with the notable first (known) black minister to be ordained in the SDA Church, Charles Kinney, in 1889 (Reynolds, 1984:173-75, 296).⁹ It was from around that time that SDA work among blacks picked up in

⁸ See for example, "The Remnant and the Three Angel's Messages" in Dederen, 857-892.

⁹ Refer also to *Charles M. Kinney – A Brief Biography*; as well as section on Kinney in chapter two of this dissertation.

some modest form, i.e., around a quarter century after the church was officially established. Prior to that, however, right around mid-nineteenth century, there were already some black (and mulatto) Adventists.¹⁰ The case of one notable early black Adventist family is instructive and will serve as a prime example (as follows).

According to Adventist history, William J. Hardy (1823-1888), along with his wife Eliza and children, was the first black Seventh-day Adventist family (at least in Michigan). They lived in the greater Grand Rapids area, Michigan (Onsager and Nix, 2011; McGrath, 2015). That dates back to 1857, with Eliza being a baptized member shortly before her husband (Ibid.). It's important to note that this occurred some six years prior to the official establishment of the SDA Church in 1863, and even predates the very naming of the SDA organization in 1860. Significant to point out, as well, is the fact that William J. Hardy, after becoming involved in politics, also became the first African American elected to a public office in Michigan, in 1872 (Onsager and Nix, 2011; McGrath, 2015). He was the 13th township supervisor of Gaines Township in Michigan (McGrath, 2015); and William's eldest son, Eugene (who had five other siblings), was the first African American student in Michigan to graduate from high school – another remarkable first (Onsager and Nix, 2011; McGrath, 2015).

And even while I am penning this very sentence (October 1, 2015), plans are under way for a ceremony honoring William Hardy as a historical figure in Gaines Township's history. Gaines Charter Township, Michigan was planning to dedicate the Hardy Pond in honor of its 13th township supervisor, William J. Hardy (McGrath, 2015).¹¹ The ceremony actually took place on

¹⁰ To place that in perspective, right around the time of Kinney's birth, in 1855, and even a little before that, there were some early black Adventists.

¹¹ I had the pleasure of attending this historic ceremony (some 2 hours, 28 minutes commute one-way); and whilst there I got the chance to speak with township personnel who are actually doing historical research (like producing information on the Hardy family tree and so forth) in their attempt to be accurate with the area history. At that

October 10, 2015 (beginning at 11:00am), at Prairie Wolf Park, 8555 Kalamazoo Ave. SE, on the Gaines Charter Township municipal grounds, and slated as part of the township's annual Fall Heritage Festival, chaired by Ms. Laurie Lemke – the township's treasurer.¹²

With respect to some points of historical interest, Ellen White and other SDA pioneers visited or spent some time at the Hardy's home in Michigan. This included John Byington (the first president of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists) who stayed a night there on October 5, 1857, the day that Eliza Hardy was baptized (Onsager & Nix, 2011). William Hardy, himself, was born in antebellum New York (on January 9, 1823), and moved with his parents to Michigan at the age of four, in 1827 (Ibid.), the very same year that Ellen White was born. At around age fourteen (a few years after his father died), William's mother bound him out to a farmer near Ann Arbor, who actually released William before the seven-year contract ended, recognizing young Willie's exceptional talents. Afterwards, in his very early twenties (in 1844), William married Eliza Watts (Ibid.). You will notice that William's marriage took place not only in the eventful era of the 1840s, but in the very same year of the *Great Disappointment* (as highlighted earlier in this chapter) – the very same 'Disappointment' which forms the direct historical link to the eventual rise of the worldwide Seventh-day Adventist denomination.

Further, two years after his marriage, William prospered, purchasing some ninety-five acres (two tracts of land) in Gaines Township (Kent County) Michigan, and cleared some farmland where the family resided for several years. The couple also had their first child (a

ceremony I had the pleasure of speaking with extant family members of Hardy as well (i.e., 3rd and 4th succeeding generation relatives on Hardy's family tree). Afterwards, I also had the opportunity to visit the burial grounds (around 6 minutes away from the township hall) and took a look at the tombstones where William Hardy and family members rest in peace.

¹² According to Laurie Lemke (whom I had the pleasure of speaking with on 10/1/15), who's also helping with the ceremony planning, a granite monument (with inscription) dedicated to Hardy will also be installed (McGrath, 2015) at the pond, which happens to be located in the rear of the township hall building.

daughter named Alice) around that same year (1846), and ultimately had six children in all – four boys and two girls (Ibid.). In a phenomenal outcome of events, in spite of his earlier background and circumstances, William was not only a successful businessman and a leading, respected, and appreciated public figure in his community (which, based on research, appears to have been predominantly white), but also a beloved leader in the SDA Church he attended in the Gaines area; so much so that it pleased all (whether white or black church members) when William was unanimously elected elder (leader) of the church in 1876 (Ibid.), having gained the confidence of the people.

All told, William Hardy served in various capacities, such as church clerk, possibly treasurer, and then elder, in the Adventist church he attended. At age sixty-two, in 1885, without William's leadership, the Gaines church disbanded (Ibid.). This speaks directly to the influence and leadership skills of Mr. Hardy – the head of a family considered a stalwart pioneer Seventh-day Adventist family. There is also a Hardy Exhibit in honor of the family's legacy, which one can tour in the Historic Adventist Village in Battle Creek, Michigan. Incidentally, William Hardy passed in 1888 – a watershed year in Seventh-day Adventist theological and developmental history (*see for example* Knight, 1989; *cf.* Smith, 1898);¹³ and Hardy's wife outlived him for only around two years after that.

Notwithstanding such early black Adventist prominence, generally speaking, lower priority was given to black evangelism in the nineteenth century than to SDA overseas missionary endeavors, and non-English speaking Europeans in the United States (Bull and Lockhart, 2007:280). Around the 1890s, for instance, whereas SDA membership in overseas

¹³ The '1888 Message' arose out of the 1888 SDA General Conference session in Minneapolis, Minnesota, revealing deeply entrenched attitudes and the heightened Adventist struggle and tension over 'Righteousness by Faith' – with Adventist leaders, including Ellen White, and others at the epicenter of the theological controversy.

missions numbered several thousand and saw similar growth among Scandinavians and Germans in the U.S. in that period, by 1894 there were only fifty African American members out of a black population of some eight million; and by 1906 the number of black SDAs climbed to 562 (Ibid.). From that standpoint, both geography and language barrier were given attention and afforded precedence over color, in early SDA work (Ibid.).

But once blacks got a hold of the remnant message of Adventism (including the seventh-day Sabbath message), for some reason they become enamored with it, and their numbers (in the SDA Church) rose, particularly around the mid-twentieth century onwards. So whereas by around 1918 black SDAs numbered around 3,500, in a 38-year period from around 1944-1982, some 120,000 black Americans entered the Adventist Church through profession of faith or baptism (Reynolds, 1984:296; Bull and Lockhart, 2007). And black Adventists, themselves, apart from spreading the Advent message throughout North America and engaging in creditable undertakings such as building schools to educate blacks, even went on to be overseas missionaries beginning as early as 1892 (Reynolds, 1984:115, 182-189, 323-346). All told, black Adventists went to the ends of the earth in places like India, Africa, Southeast Asian region, Australia, the Caribbean, and Europe serving as gospel, educational, and medical missionaries with extraordinary zeal and an exceedingly great sense of purpose (Ibid., 323-46). In all this, black SDAs, up to the current time, have placed a heavy stress on spreading the message in all its forms (medical, educational, evangelistic, etc.), and have been fervently active and at the forefront in working for the development of humans particularly in the area of evangelism.

In conjunction with this heightened sense of duty by SDA blacks, though I've already made mention of crucial SDA theological (biblical) passages, I quote here a key passage, so that

one can continue to get a sense of not just the tone of the Adventist position with respect to remnant theology, but to also underscore part of the driving force behind the black SDA zeal, as with other SDAs. And this is Revelation 12:17 which states “And the dragon was wroth with the woman, and went to make war with the *remnant* of her seed, which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ” (KJV *emphasis mine*). For Adventists, this is absolutely critical. The ‘woman’ in this verse is interpreted as the church; and the SDA Church particularly self-identifies as the ‘remnant’ church of biblical prophecy, as cited in this apocalyptic text. And this is seen in tandem with the ‘Three Angels’ Messages’ (out of Revelation 14: 6-11, along with verse 12), insofar as it concerns the call for the remnant to be messengers urgently calling people to come out of Babylon, as previously noted, “for the hour of his [God’s] judgment is come” (Revelation 14:7). And herein lies the direct historical and theological connection between Millerism and Seventh-day Adventism – that the hour of God’s ‘judgment’ has arrived.

Since Jesus did not return as Miller predicted, the post-Millerite group that eventually became SDAs explained away the ‘Great Disappointment’ by surmising that instead of Jesus returning to the earth, he actually moved from the ‘holy place’ to the ‘most holy place’ in the ‘sanctuary’ above. In brief, as this is not primarily a theological dissertation, whereas Miller interpreted the ‘cleansing of the sanctuary’ in Daniel 8:14 as the return of Christ to earth, Seventh-day Adventists came to interpret this same ‘cleansing’ as pointing to Christ’s ministerial work in heaven rather than a physical appearing to earth. And that work (by Christ) is one of ‘judgment’ as specifically depicted in the ‘first angel’s message’ of Revelation 14:6-7, beginning with the judgment of “God’s people” (Dederen, 2000:405). This is formulated in a unique doctrine by the Seventh-day Adventist Church, that has come to be known as the ‘Investigative

Judgment,’¹⁴ or the ‘Sanctuary Doctrine’ (Smith and White, 1878:63-70; Dederen, 2000:394-406; *see also* Andrews, 1872; 1997; Knight, 1993; Smith, 1877).

Interestingly enough, two particular passages mentioned above – Revelation 12:17 and Revelation 14:12 – are cited by a key black SDA clergyman (Bradford, 1996:11), in writing about black SDAs and church loyalty. In other words, he is an example of a high-profile SDA leader making the direct connection between blacks and SDA remnant theology. Bradford is notable for his past evangelistic and administrative work among black SDAs, as well as being elected to serve as president of the North American Division of Seventh-day Adventist for a time (c. 1979-1990). Such a post positioned him as a past Vice President of the General Conference of the SDA world church since, for a time, he was overseeing the work for the entire North American continent (Reynolds, 1984:257).

So the very call to stand apart from what’s considered false teachings (Babylon) of other denominations and faiths (such as those keeping Sunday as the Sabbath instead of Saturday) , and be not partakers of her sins, has been at the center of the SDA appeal to people from all walks of life, including African Americans, Africans, and West Indians. It is quite remarkable how people particularly find the SDA message such an appealing one, and may even be willing to tolerate or work with church problems such as that pertaining to race matters, for the sake of the message itself (*cf.* Reynolds, 1984:297) and for the sake of keeping the SDA title as part of their heritage. This is notably the case within the entire black SDA community (African American and other blacks) in North America (Grant, 1978:13). In fact, it is in West Indian or Caribbean SDA churches, Caribbean-American SDA churches, as well as African American

¹⁴ The doctrine of the ‘investigative judgment’ basically refers to the idea that Christ has entered his last phase of work in the heavenly sanctuary above, looking into the cases of (judging) the people of earth, and soon to return after that work is complete.

SDA churches where you may actually see a heavier emphasis, than even in some white SDA churches, on SDA conservatism and sticking to the core doctrines of the church. So what keeps blacks in the SDA Church in spite of racial discrimination, tensions and issues? The very distinct and high appeal of the message (particularly remnant theology), as emphasized, acts as the defining key in helping to understand why all SDAs remain in the denomination. It is because of this message that, generally speaking, blacks refuse to exit the main church body and be called by a different denominational name (Shaw, 1971).

Thus, the SDA theological appeal to blacks has been exceedingly strong indeed, despite issues that beset the church, such as racial segregation and outright anti-black discrimination in its history. As such, blacks, among others, found (and do find) a very strong appeal in the SDA message itself – due to the nature and content of Adventist theology and teaching, from around the mid-nineteenth century up to this day. But then given the nature and force of racial prejudice and discrimination in a white dominant church body, in 1944 SDA blacks eventually adopted the racial division lurking in the background (*in* Neufeld, 1966; Reynolds, 1984). This refers to the time when local conferences were organized along a black-white divide.

Although racial segregation was not the first choice of black ministers and laity in the mid-1940s, black SDAs went along with it seeing that it was offered to them by the white SDA leadership (Graham, 1996:136). In other words, whereas the request of the black constituency had more to do with equal treatment, respect for their black ministers, fair representation in church administration, a full accounting of the money they were contributing to the church, and eradication of discrimination at all Adventist institutions, the white SDA leadership, particularly the white General Conference president at the time, J.L. McElhany, gave them black conferences instead (*Ibid.*). This response by the white leadership was “not exactly what Black ministers and

laypeople expected.” Thus, crucial to underscore is that “the formation of Black conferences was proposed by the White leadership as a response to Black SDAs’ request for integration” (Ibid.).

This move to have racially segregated units of organization, within Adventism, has been taken by observers to mean segregation with power and self-determination for blacks, rather than de facto segregation without power (Pipim, n.d.: Parts I & II; Graham, 1996). However, in spite of official racial separation at the local level, blacks are still not willing to part from the SDA main church body due to the distinctiveness of the SDA message itself, and due to the fact that they now have some control of church administrative work. Ironically, it is this delegation of power to blacks at the local level (local church and local conference) that really opened the door to black positions of power at higher levels of SDA church organization (Reynolds, 1984).

Summary

Altogether, then, black Adventists, from the very beginning, have always seen themselves as part of a remnant people, and believe it their duty to spread that remnant message themselves, in spite of temporal social problems. By way of recapitulation, the delineated items (shown in the last paragraph of this summary) lie at the core of the SDA message, which apply not only to North America, but to the SDA world church, thus making the SDA Church’s message unique in its theological approach. And people, regardless of racial/ethnic background and internal racial tensions, rally around the SDA message as a type of reference point and global denominational solidarity.

This is what links the millions of SDAs together and affords them a badge of recognition, so to speak, making the denomination a type of global village, together with all of its outstanding institutions (hospitals, universities, charitable organizations, etc.) spread worldwide (Olsen,

1972; Reynolds, 1984; Jordan, 1988; Knight, 2004a; Knight, 2006; Bull and Lockhart, 2007).

Furthermore, this strong sense of global oneness, particularly in theological outlook and missions, makes the Adventist a family member anywhere in the world s/he is among other Adventists, generally speaking. Such a chain of solidarity and fellowship, in itself, forms a rather strong bond of common identity among SDAs from all quarters of the globe and literally all walks of life, as they take pride in the very name ‘Seventh-day Adventist.’

Those points of denominational pride (particularly in terms of theological understanding), along with a robust emphasis on education and a health message, are: (a) the seventh-day Sabbath – taken to mean the seventh day of the week according to the scriptures; (b) the second advent: the second coming of Christ in glory which is premillennial in nature – meaning that He would return before the one thousand-year period stressed (and mentioned 6 times) in Revelation 20:1-7; (c) Sanctuary Doctrine – including investigative judgment; (d) emphasis on biblical prophecy and its fulfillment; (e) emphasis on the gift of prophecy as an identifying mark of the remnant church; and (f) remnant theology – particularly understood in light of those regarding all the commandments of God, with emphasis on Revelation 14 (*see* Seventh-day Adventists Believe, 1988). Thus, taken together, SDA tenets create an appeal that takes on a life of its own in the way it tends to transcend crises, separations, and tensions, generally speaking. A collective identity from that standpoint, while salient at all levels (micro, meso, and macro) for all SDAs (blacks, whites, Hispanics, Chinese, Africans, Indians, Russians, Romanians, etc.), is, nonetheless, in some sense limited, insofar as it concerns entrance and participation in the SDA Church, particularly in light of the church’s official racial segregation position. In gaining deeper insight, however, into the racial discourse, contentions, and dynamics coursing through

the life of Seventh-day Adventism, it is imperative to take a closer look at the character, depth, and scope of the matter – the focus of the next chapter.

CHAPTER TWO

OVERVIEW OF RACE RELATIONS IN SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTISM

Broadly speaking, with respect to race relations in the SDA Church in America, there are varying sentiments and attitudes displayed which predates the official organization of the denomination (i.e., prior to 1863). As such, it is highly relevant to address race relations in American Seventh-day Adventism, from the pre-1863 era down to our present day. We begin with the milieu surrounding 1831, when William Miller began to spread the Advent message, and proceed in chronological order, in attempting to piece together the gripping dynamics of Seventh-day Adventism and race relations. To facilitate this general and rather expansive narrative, this chapter is broken up into three broader sections: (a) the first addresses organizational structure; (b) the second addresses a historical trajectory of race relations in the SDA Church; and (c) the third addresses Ellen White's position(s) on the matter. It is important to emphasize, however, that due to the extensive nature of race issues in the denomination, it is not possible to treat every aspect of the topic here, but nonetheless to bring to bear certain highlights, in socio-historical perspective, insofar as they inform the broader discussion. As we proceed, it is essential and necessary to first take a look at the structure of Seventh-day Adventism, in order to gain a better picture of the way the segregation is carved out.

Section A

Church Organization and Structure

To explain briefly how this partial racially segregated structure looks, we must first note that there are five general levels in SDA ecclesiastical polity. And in spite of the racial

segregation, the church espouses a unity doctrine – in that all brethren are one.¹⁵ In helping to visualize this segregation formation, nonetheless, the following description offers a picture of the general organizational structure, in facilitating a better understanding of where and how the segregated arrangement fits into the denomination as a whole.

As a worldwide organization, looking at it from the top down, the SDA Church has its central headquarters in Maryland, USA referred to as the General Conference (GC) of Seventh-day Adventists (Land, 2005). Under that, there are a number of world divisions (13 of them covering the entire globe), and two attached fields (i.e., regions not large enough to be classified as a world division), all governed directly by the GC. Next, there are Union Conferences that come under the immediate jurisdiction of a world division. Under that, there are Local Conferences under the immediate jurisdiction of a Union Conference. And lastly, a number of churches are banded together (e.g., within a U.S. state or across states) and fall under the immediate jurisdiction of a Local Conference. These are the five general levels of SDA ecclesiastical governance from the GC to the local church. Here's an itemized summary:

- (a) General Conference of SDAs which oversees the entire world church
- (b) World Divisions – there are thirteen world divisions and two attached fields
- (c) Union Conferences – these are regional
- (d) Local Conferences – these cover a state each or a wider localized area
- (e) The local church(es) – these are the regular physical sites where members congregate for various activities, including church worship, seminars, committee meetings, choir rehearsal, kids' clubs, fellowship dinners, social fun-and-games, concerts, and more. It is in that sense that the church is marked as a central visible point of contact.

One of those (13) divisions mentioned above is the North American Division (NAD), with a membership of approximately 1.19 million SDA members.¹⁶ NAD comprises the USA,

¹⁵ Refer to the statements on 'unity' on the official website of the Seventh-day Adventist Church – www.adventist.org.

¹⁶ See page on 'North American Division' on the official website of the Seventh-day Adventist Church – www.adventist.org.

Canada, Bermuda, St. Pierre and Miquelon (in the Atlantic Ocean), and other islands in the Pacific. The North American Division of SDAs, then, is one of the thirteen world divisions overseeing the SDA world church (Ibid.). It is within this same North American Division that we find the church organization structurally segregated along a black-white divide (Neufeld, 1966 on “Regional Department and Conferences”), in the east, mid-west and south, but not on the American west coast. While the west coast is not part of the full-blown segregated structure, the local conferences in that region, nonetheless, still have black administrative representatives, figure heads or assistants (to white conference presidents) responsible for the work among the black constituents. To reiterate, structural segregation refers only to that which occurs at the local SDA Church (congregation) level through to the local conference (administrative) level in the United States (i.e., the two bottom levels of the entire denominational structure).

To illustrate, in Michigan, whether in Detroit, Battle Creek, or some other Michigan locale, a ‘white’ SDA Church falls under the administration of a ‘white’ or what is referred to as a state conference (called the Michigan Conference of SDAs, in this case); and a ‘black’ (African American or other black) SDA Church, generally speaking (but not necessarily always the case), falls under the administration of a ‘black,’ or what is called a ‘regional,’ conference. White conferences tend to follow a state’s or a couple of states’ boundaries, whereas (the black) regional conferences tend to cover a few contiguous states (to make up sufficient numbers for a conference). Keeping Michigan as a reference point, then, there is overlap in the territory that both the white (state) conference and the black (regional) conference cover. As such, the Michigan (predominantly white) Conference oversees only Michigan, whereas the regional

conference, in this case known as Lake Region Conference, essentially covers four states – Wisconsin, Illinois, Indiana, and Michigan.¹⁷

That is not to say, however, that blacks will not attend a white SDA Church and vice versa (whether or not they're in the minority). But there are predominantly white and predominantly black churches within this institutional framework – one that Adventists are still struggling with to this day (Pipim, n.d.: Part I; Shaw, 1971; Grant, 1978; Reynolds, 1984; and Lawson, 1999). It should also be reiterated, however, that this internal racial structural division, does not permeate the SDA world church. But such racial division is certainly pervasive in the American SDA context, although there have been other structural racial cleavages elsewhere in the SDA world church, such as in Zimbabwe and South Africa, besides the many ethno-religious SDA enclaves (i.e., ethnic SDA Churches such as Korean, Ghanaian, Hispanic, Romanian, etc.) in the American context.

Thus while this study is largely about religious racial segregation, religious segregation within Seventh-day Adventism also cuts squarely across ethnic lines. For example, Korean Adventists, Filipino Adventists, Romanian Adventists, African Adventists, Indian Adventists, and Hispanic Adventists, etc., all operate local churches, or worship in some segregated fashion throughout the U.S. But such ethnic segregation remains only at the local church level. A similar phenomenon of separate ethno-religious identity can also be found among other religious confessions, such as Korean Pentecostals, Hispanic evangelicals and Pentecostals, or Hispanic Catholics. A major difference here, however, is that ethno-religious segregation often includes a linguistic-difference rationale, so that a language barrier is mainly cited as the chief cause for such division.

¹⁷ Along with the four states mentioned, Lake Region Conference also oversees a very small part of Minnesota. See Lake Region Conference of Seventh-day Adventists website: <http://www.lakeregionsda.org/>

Part of the reason for the SDA racial division in the American context is that black-white separation in the church setting and leadership up to the local conference level, mirrors the milieu of early to mid-nineteenth-century American society in which Seventh-day Adventism was born (Birch, 2012). Issues of anti-black prejudice, oppression, discrimination, and segregation in the wider American society and among evangelicals of the nineteenth century influenced the SDA Church as well (Ibid.), leading to the formation of separate black ('Regional') conferences around the mid-twentieth century. It is from that backdrop that the SDA organization in the U.S. progressed along a path of racial disunity, prejudice, and tension, establishing a 'Negro Department' around 1910 (under the auspices of the General Conference), which later worked its way, by 1944, to full blown black-white segregation (up to the local conference level). As such, the pressures of racial tension and separation in the wider racialized society overshadowed the church (Bull and Lockhart, 2007; Reynolds, 1984; White, 1948b; *cf.* Allport, 1979; Neufeld, 1966; Graybill, 1970; Shaw, 1971).

What follows is a list of only SDA Regional (black) Conferences in the U.S. (by region), along with their headquarters location (based on the church's leadership decision to officially segregate in 1944). These Regional Conferences, nine total, overlap the other state (i.e., white) SDA conferences:

- Northeastern Conference – Jamaica, New York
- Allegheny East Conference – Boyertown, Pennsylvania
- Allegheny West Conference - Columbus, Ohio
- Lake Region Conference – Chicago, Illinois
- Central States Conference – Kansas City, Kansas
- South Atlantic Conference – Atlanta, Georgia
- South Central Conference – Nashville, Tennessee
- Southeastern Conference – Mount Dora, Florida
- Southwest Region Conference – Dallas, Texas.

Important to bear in mind (with reference to the above list) is that, while one can find a (black) director for regional (or black) affairs, black representatives, or black assistants to the (white) conference presidents in the western region of the United States (Reynolds, 1984:292-322), ‘black’ SDA conferences do not operate on the entire west coast (USA); and that also applies to Alaska, Arizona, Hawaii, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, and Utah.¹⁸

Section B

Race Relations Trajectory, in Socio-historical Context, in the SDA Church – Overture

For hundreds of years now, black-white racial segregation has been a hallmark of American religion. Such practice is rooted in racial oppression, anti-black discriminatory practices, prejudicial attitudes and persistent tension between blacks and whites that seem to have cemented in a sinister twist in the aftermath of the murder of Martin L. King Jr. (Blauner, 1972; 2001). This has all been particularly exacerbated by Jim Crow segregation laws (of the recent past) and mentality (of the present), along with its inherent socio-economic inequality that has been forcefully etched at the very core of American society. And the ongoing divisive nature of the politics of race in America only fans the flames of racial hostility and discord all the more (Omi and Winant, 1994; Massey and Denton, 1993; Woodward, 2002; Feldman, 2005). It is precisely in the midst of this unremitting and heated social dynamic, that the Seventh-day Adventist Church (like other religious entities and Christian denominations) finds itself wedged in the midst of what C. Eric Lincoln calls a “burdensome dilemma” that persists “despite the fervor of our religion or the ardor with which we pursue our commitment to democracy” (1999: xxii).

¹⁸ Refer to North American Division (NAD) of SDAs website: <http://www.nadadventist.org/article/54/directory/area-headquarters>; and also Reynolds, chapter 16 “Separate Conferences – A Road to Fellowship.”

As Lincoln sees it, racial division in the church is not only embarrassing to the faith, but actually impairs the quality of relations in society (Ibid.; *cf.* Rauschenbusch, 1913). Thus, caught between the imperative of the gospel and the wayward practice of the church (Cone, 1969; McKenzie, 1997; Dittes, 2003), the SDA Church continues to harbor racial tensions and divisions within its ranks, particularly in light of a denominationally-sanctioned segregated structure. Furthermore, in spite of efforts and suggestions to bridge the racial divide (DeYoung et al., 2003; Hawkins and Sinitiere, 2014; Perkins and Rice, 2000; Putnam and Campbell, 2010; Edwards, 2008; and Newman, 2007), Christians such as SDAs find themselves evermore entrenched in the mire of race antagonism, even as they continue to find justification for the maintenance of religious racial exclusivity (Emerson and Smith, 2000; *cf.* Blauner, 1989, 2001; McPherson et al., 1992; Bull and Lockhart, 2007).

Consequently, such segregation and the inequality, mistrust and racial attitudes involved, continue to be interwoven unabated into the moral fabric of the church as it all wittingly defines the tapestry of American society (Sniderman and Hagen, 1985; Wagner, 1979; Chappell, 1998; Feldman, 2005; Bonilla-Silva, 2006; Asante, 2014; Yang and Smith, 2009). And while prior research have even treated SDA racial attitudes and discriminatory practices (Katz, 1947; Peterson, 1960; Shaw, 1971; Fordham, 1990; Fisher, 2003; Jones, 2006; London, 2009), there nonetheless remains great scarcity in the research directly addressing SDA members' perspectives on the segregation arrangement in the SDA Church. But before we get to members' perspectives, let's first frame the discourse in socio-historical perspective, in order to better apprehend the depths and nature of race relations in American Seventh-day Adventism.

Timeline and Events: Race and the SDA Church

c. 1831-1863

To place the entire race narrative in the SDA Church in proper social and historical context we go back to the early nineteenth century – during the time of the Millerites, amidst the Second Great Awakening, a period marked by progressive and hardline abolitionism.¹⁹ In the Millerite movement itself, which began around 1830, blacks were also involved in spreading the Millerite message of Christ's imminent return, as well as being part of the crowd of well-attended camp meetings in various parts of New England, attracted to the preaching of William Miller (Reynolds, 1984:17-28). Blacks, particularly 'free Negroes,' in those audiences were indeed captivated by the prophecies of better times to come. And in that regard, even Millerite preachers of African descent seem to have been accepted by white audiences. This was particularly the case with one by the name of William E. Foy of Portland, Maine, who related the visions he had of the coming time of the end, the resurrection, reward, and judgment (Ibid., 19-22; Loughborough, 1905). Ellen White, herself, attended at least one of Foy's presentations in this early period (i.e., prior to her current status as an authoritative voice in Seventh-day Adventism), even claiming that she was also the recipient of a similar vision. And there are at least two other noted Millerite preachers of African descent: Charles Bowles, who addressed large white congregations besides being instrumental in establishing several churches; and John W. Lewis, who, in addition to working as a Millerite preacher, also wrote the biography of Charles Bowles (Reynolds, 1984:19; *see also* Lewis, 1852; Loughborough, 1892:70-71; and Froom, 1954 Vol. IV).

¹⁹ The more progressive and hardline abolitionists were characterized as strong-willed and taking a more radical approach, with men like David Walker and William Lloyd Garrison leading the charge – calling for an immediate abolition to slavery rather than taking the 'gradual emancipation' approach, for example. See Franklin and Moss, 2000, chapter ten.

No doubt, however, there was certainly anti-black prejudice diffused among white Millerites, which also caused Foy, for instance, to be reluctant in relating his visions (Reynolds, 1984:21). Notwithstanding the prejudice, ‘Negroes’ were accepting of Miller and the fervent advent preaching. Thus, it is nothing strange that with the formal organization of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in 1863, one could find scattered among the white brethren, Americans of African descent, for example in New England congregations (Ibid., 22). Important to note, however, in this historical context, is that even Millerites themselves, or some associated with the Millerite movement such as the noted philanthropist, social reformer and politician Gerrit Smith, did take the approach of moral persuasion when it came to moral issues such as that pertaining to abolitionism (Morgan, 2008a). But the moral persuasion had more to do with individual change and a type of passive activism (also applying biblical principles) to bring about the end of slavery rather than depending on national and corrupt politics, for instance, which was deemed as highly self-serving and morally bankrupt.

Notwithstanding the racial tensions of the time, at least from around 1831 to 1844 (the time of the *Great Disappointment*), and onward to 1863, blacks had been involved with the Advent movement and later, the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Blacks undoubtedly got attracted to that type of message which spelled a more satisfying life beyond the struggle and misery of earth. Among those have also been prominent blacks, such as the Hardys mentioned in chapter one. Others include the daughter of Frederick Douglass, Rosetta Douglass Sprague, who joined the Adventists and was a member of the ‘First Church’ in Washington, D.C. And Sojourner Truth, the celebrated abolitionist and activist (formerly Isabella Van Wagener), who visited Millerite camp meetings in 1843, identified herself with Adventists from that time on

(Reynolds, 1984:23-26). At her life's end, her funeral was supposedly held in the notable SDA Dime Tabernacle of Battle Creek, Michigan (Ibid.).

Frederick Douglass, while not known to be an SDA member, himself was moved by the message of the imminent return of Jesus around the time of Millerite preaching in the 1830s. Coupled with his feeling of wretchedness, surrounded by the misery of fears and doubts and a personal need for God, Douglass thought that his witness of the falling of the stars (as foretold in scripture) on November 13, 1833 might actually be a harbinger of the coming of Christ (Ibid., 22-23; Douglass, 1855:166-67, 186). Altogether, then, the Advent movement which sought to sensitize people to the approaching end of the world appealed to many, especially blacks who saw the end-time message and heavenly portents as pointing to the deliverance and promise of rest denied them on earth.

A Note on Adventist Attitude Toward Abolitionism: mid-1850s – mid-1860s

As pointed out in chapter one (under 'Origins of Seventh-day Adventism'), Adventists at first shunned organization, but for legitimate reasons having to do with the expanding work, they finally organized in 1863 at the heart of the Civil War. This is no doubt one of the most crucial periods in American history and in race relations, marked by high anxiety and tensions due to the raging Abolition movement with solid momentum on the one hand, and the fatal clashes in the battle of wills in the Civil War on the other. This was a time of heavy casualties indeed, over states' rights, with the question of slavery being the central issue. At that time, Adventists' stance on 'race relations' was influenced to some degree by the progressive discussion on slavery and abolitionism. Stemming from the 1850s and leading into the 1860s, at the heart of the Civil War, Adventist pioneers did place their stakes down on the prevailing issue of the time, which

involved ‘race.’ Early Adventist leaders, but not all, tended to have anti-slavery sentiments (Morgan, 2008b).

Some of the early Adventist pioneers around the mid-nineteenth century, moreover, tended to be avid supporters of human rights causes, not the least of which pertained to the heated abolition movement. Given that stance, they railed against the evils of slavery. As Ellen White, for example, puts it:

The system of slavery has reduced and degraded human beings to the level of brutes... . The consciences of these masters have become seared and hardened, as was Pharaoh’s God alone can wrench the slave from the hand of his desperate, relentless oppressor. All the abuse and cruelty exercised toward the slave is justly chargeable to the upholders of the slave system, whether they be Southern or Northern men. (White, 1949:266)

And prior to the Civil War, around the late 1850s, Ellen White urged members to disobey the Fugitive Slave Act of 1850, requiring citizens to return slaves to their masters. According to her,

We have men placed over us for rulers and laws to govern the people. Were it not for these laws, the condition of the world would be worse than it is now. Some of these laws are good, others are bad. ... When the laws of men conflict with the word and law of God, we are to obey the latter, whatever the consequences may be. 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 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. (Ibid., 201-202; cf. pp. 257-58, 264)

Further, as one black SDA church historian observes, the early SDA pioneers (known then as Sabbatarian Adventists) in the period 1854-1865, not only spoke eloquently about the equality of all human beings, but also wrote numerous articles in the *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald* (the denomination’s flagship periodical, now the *Adventist Review*) denouncing slavery (O’Reggio, 2006). But in his research, O’Reggio brings to light that such an anti-slavery position was actually tied to the early SDA pioneers’ view of the role of America in prophecy, in the context of Revelation 13, which tells of a certain lamb-like beast that speaks like a dragon

(Ibid.; and Morgan, 2008b). As such, the railing against slavery, for instance, by early Adventist shapers and movers, actually ties back to the crucial role of prophecy in Adventist reckoning. In the twentieth century (which we will get to shortly), however, the SDA Church stressed more of its prophetic ideals (including religious liberty) without a concomitant push toward racial equality in the church; albeit, in the 1960s, for example, church leadership spoke of and offered up resolutions with respect to racial equality, but the actual practice and words do not match (*in* Baker, 1996).

Charles M. Kinney Sentiments and Work: c. 1889, and Race Relations in the 1890s

Charles Kinney, born a slave in the antebellum slave period (some six years prior to the Civil War), went on to become the first known Seventh-day Adventist black minister to be ordained, after hearing the preaching of John Loughborough and the Whites in the adventurous west. At Kinney's ordination service (1889), the black members (or friends) who travelled specifically for the auspicious occasion weren't even allowed to enter through the same entrance as whites, let alone sit with whites. This serves as an indicator of the nature of race sentiments and prejudice, during that time, among white SDAs. The long and short of it, Kinney felt deeply troubled and was aching in his heart as he was forced to consider separate structures and worship environments for blacks apart from whites, just for the sake of peace even at the risk of destroying the "the unity of the Third Angel's message [of Revelation 14]" as he puts it (*see* Kinney's Statement in Baker, 1996: section 2).

It was due to the pervasive and deep-seated nature of prejudice and anti-black discrimination among white Adventists that Kinney, against his better judgment, even went as far as suggesting a separate conference for the 'colored people'. He was a kind-spirited man forced to consider black-white segregation, just to reside on the side of humility and do all that

seemed pleasing to appease the prejudices of the white-dominated Adventist Church. No doubt, his was a trying, lonely, and formidable task indeed, attempting to live at peace with denominational leadership while trying to keep black Adventists in the church. Nonetheless, Kinney, who was the most prominent black Adventist figure in the 1880s, went on to live a very long life (from 1855-1951), almost up to the age of 100. He was a pioneer of the black Adventist work and a daring trailblazer, and even touted as the founder of black Adventism.

Furthermore, Adventists, generally speaking, only began to intentionally move to help or evangelize people of African descent in America, in the last decade of the nineteenth century. Not until the mid-1890s did work among blacks in the south really begin (Baker, 1996), but it proved to be a daunting, formidable, and even life-risking task, in the belly of hardcore Jim Crowism. Nevertheless, the black SDA work advanced to the extent that the black denominational membership went from around 50 in 1890, to over 1000 by 1909, necessitating the official inclusion of “Black leadership and presence at the highest levels of the church” (Baker, 1996:1/11-12). A key aspect of this move to evangelize blacks was Ellen White’s speech and writing to the Church’s leadership in 1891, entitled “Our Duty to the Colored People.” In it, she stresses that it is high time to work for and with the “colored people” in spreading the gospel, as they are brothers and sisters in Christ, just as the white brethren (White, 2004). Furthermore the recently freed slaves also need help to sustain themselves and she stressed that they had a duty to help them. This marked a major turning point in Adventist missions to black America and as it turned out, it was her own son, James Edson White, who really took up the challenge to a very great extent and set his sights toward laboring among southern blacks (Graybill, 1971).

James Edson White: 1890s to Turn of the Twentieth Century

Heeding his mother's counsel, Edson (as he was called), who was in the Chicago area at the time, and not active in Adventist work, finally came around to take up the challenge. He devoted his time and energy (along with his wife) to labor for and among blacks, and took it as his personal mission to build a boat from scratch to aid in his labors among blacks in the south. It was this riverboat, called the *Morning Star*, which Edson used to sail down the Mississippi River to work specifically among the blacks in Mississippi and surrounding southern fields (Graybill, 1971). Such an earnest endeavor began in Battle Creek, Michigan and on the bank of the Kalamazoo River, where amazingly the boat took only around five months to build, beginning in March, 1894 (Ibid.), considering that the project also depended on material donations (lumber, building space, etc.). The General Conference of SDAs, also located in Battle Creek at the time, supported Edson's endeavor. Further, Edson White, pointing to his mother's 1891 "Our Duty" testimony, asserted that, "the church had been in sin for three years ... because it had neglected to work among black people" (Graybill, 1971:25).

Edson's endeavors and that of his assistants would prove valuable to the progress of blacks and those in the south in particular, with enterprises that included educational classes, farming, and a publishing house. The output of that publishing house, established around the turn of the twentieth century to buttress the work in the south, would eventually become what is known today as *Message Magazine*, the flagship magazine of American Black Adventism, of which Louis Reynolds was editor for some time (Reynolds, 1984). Publishing, by the way, is an exceedingly strong suit of Seventh-day Adventism in general, and in fact is part of the hallmark of its strength globally. Suffice it to say that without its prolific publishing, Adventism would perhaps be nowhere close to what it is today. Also, it was in great part due to Edson's labors in the south, that an industrial school (Oakwood Industrial School), established in 1896 by the

denomination, would develop into SDAs' only HBCU – now Oakwood University in Huntsville, Alabama.

Lewis C. Sheafe: End of the Nineteenth Century and Beginning of the Twentieth Century

Right at the end of the nineteenth century comes an influential and gifted orator, one considered the apostle to black America, Lewis C. Sheafe (1859-1938). Sheafe, considered an SDA trailblazer, particularly known in the Washington D.C. area, specifically fought for black equality, through education, health, etc. in the opening decades of the twentieth century, using any means necessary to accomplish his goal, including both church and civil rights organizations. But before his entry into the SDA Church, he was already a notable preacher and staunch civil rights advocate, who also led out in activism in his role as a Baptist minister. His Baptist ministry spanned the years 1888-1896, and he received his SDA ministerial credentials in 1897 after transitioning to that denomination. Sheafe fought valiantly for the uplift of black Americans, given their disadvantaged disposition and unrelenting oppression, and at the same time was exceedingly vocal against the socially acceptable racism rife in his time. In effect, Sheafe actually became the de facto leader of black Adventist ministers, as he interacted with Ellen White, John H. Kellogg (pioneering doctor), and A. G. Daniells (General Conference president) – placing him (Sheafe) also at the center of stormy conflicts within the church (Morgan, 2010:19).

And while today, black Adventist churches can be found in every major city in America, around the time Sheafe came into the denomination and founded the People's Church (1903), there was hardly any other urban black SDA Church in the country (Ibid., 17). Sheafe, with a distaste for segregation, pastored a church with black and white members (First SDA Church), as well as an all-black SDA church (the People's Church) at the same time, in Washington D.C.

Given his orientation, it is perhaps not surprising that Sheafe was also somewhat of a troubled figure who had issues, particularly with hardcore white racism in the SDA Church, both in policies and in practices, and consequently left the denomination at least a couple of times over problems with the church.

Part of Sheafe's overarching drive, however, whether inside or outside the denomination, was a concern for the plight of blacks. Were 'Negroes' going to be treated equally and with respect, particularly in the Adventist Church? Sheafe wanted so badly to have an integrated ministry and for the church to desist from its discriminatory and prejudicial outlook. But all of that proved futile due to the stiff opposition from the white SDA leadership, and as a result, around the mid-1910s, he exited the denomination for the last time never to return. Along with John W. Manns of the southeastern region (U.S.A), Sheafe, while in California around 1916, went on to help create a breakaway movement called 'Free Seventh Day Adventist,' due to segregation in the Seventh-day Adventist Church.²⁰ As it turns out, this alive-and-well movement (functioning directly in the shadow of the main SDA organization), developed into a very active group, and has actually grown to international proportions, expanding its horizons.

To be sure, Sheafe's concern was indeed motivated by social justice, as inextricably intertwined with the gospel message. In all this, he was an influential preacher, but troubled by racial injustice just the same. Thousands heard him, both black and white, even in an era sharply marked by the color line in Adventism as in the broader society (Morgan, 2010); a color line which persists today. So important, in fact, is the role of Sheafe in the development of black Adventism, in the broader SDA denomination, and in American society itself, that he is considered by George Knight to be "the first world-class preacher/leader in the African

²⁰ See more information on the 'Free Seventh-day Adventist' webpage:
<http://www.freesda.org/history/freesdabeginnings.html>

American segment of Adventism” (*In Morgan, 2010: 11*). Sheafe, as an outspoken speaker and forceful leader, coupled with his involvement in relentless public advocacy for black Americans both in and outside the church, had nationwide significance.

Sheafe’s outlook was to stand united before the world, and so he encountered confrontations over racial injustice, particularly in the Church. It was a head-on collision he had no way of avoiding. According to one church historian, Sheafe was the type of individual that conscientiously worked to secure civil rights for the disadvantaged, with implications both inside and outside the church, stemming back to his days as a Baptist church pastor (before entry into Adventism proper) in the late nineteenth century (*Ibid.*, 33-36, 59-68, 95-96). Furthermore, while Sheafe believed in equality and elevating the plight of blacks against hardcore Jim Crow and unchecked racial oppression, he also railed against the evils of immoral practices along with racism. In 1892, for example, Sheafe was one of the leaders that came together in efforts to stem the tide of sheer evil, persecution, and the lynching to which African Americans or coloreds were subjected. In that regard, as part of the larger strategy of protest, a national day of fasting and prayer was proclaimed involving many concerned citizens and a collective of churches, of which Sheafe (as a Baptist minister) was in charge (*Ibid.*, 62-63). From all appearances, he was not afraid to call sin by its right name and clearly spoke out against the evils of his day.

Early on, in his Adventist ministry, Sheafe himself seemed to have had no problems with the spirit of prophecy writings (i.e., Ellen White’s writings), particularly on the issue of ‘racial’ unity in the church. But then afterwards, in reading more of what Mrs. White had to say on matters of prejudice and racial segregation and then thinking about it, he believed that the practice of racial separation in the church was endorsed and encouraged by Ellen White herself. All of that was in tandem with the pervasive and unremitting racial discriminatory practices in

the church, in southern as well as northern states. As Sheafe saw it, Ellen White's writings teach and endorse racial discrimination, based on his reading of the ways in which she approached the problem. To him that was as a clear shift away from Ms. White's earlier (1891, for example) position on the unity of the races. He saw in her writings passages that, to him, promoted racial separation and discrimination. For example, according to Ellen White:

Opportunities are continually presenting themselves in the Southern states, and many wise, Christian colored men will be called to the work. But for several reasons white men must be chosen as leaders. We are all members of one body and are complete only in Christ Jesus ... (White, 1948b: 202).

On this same trend of thought, Mrs. White, in referring to the work among 'coloreds' and whites, also posited that:

...cautions were sent that every movement must be guarded, that the workers were to make no political speeches, and that the mingling of whites and blacks in social equality was by no means to be encouraged. ... In regard to white and colored people worshipping in the same building, this cannot be followed as a general custom with profit to either party – especially in the South. The best thing will be to provide the colored people who accept the truth, with places of worship of their own, in which they can carry on their services by themselves. This is particularly necessary in the South in order that the work for the white people may be carried on without serious hindrance (1948b: 206).

And expounding on the point of separate houses of worship, in that very same message, Mrs. White continued:

Let the colored believers be provided with neat, tasteful houses of worship. Let them be shown that this is done not to exclude them from worshipping with white people, because they are black, but in order that the progress of the truth may be advanced. Let them understand that this plan is to be followed until the Lord shows us a better way (Ibid., 206-207).

Such testimonies by Mrs. White which circulated in Sheafe's day, went diametrically opposed to Sheafe's idea of how the gospel should be promulgated, and consequently he deemed them as clearly divisive and promoting of prejudice, discrimination, and inequality. In other

words, as far as Sheafe was concerned, the gospel imperative went counter to the idea of ‘separation of the races,’ even in the face of challenges. And thus the maintenance of racial segregation, racial inequality, and the scale of discrimination in the SDA Church in evangelistic endeavors, etc. encouraged by the white denominational leadership, was too hard a pill for Sheafe to swallow, and he resolved that the denomination could do better.

James K. Humphrey, Anti-black Discrimination, Disenfranchisement, and the SDA Church, 1901-1930

Humphrey (1877-1952) hailed from Jamaica (West Indies) and originally embarked on a career as a Baptist minister (similar to Sheafe) in his home country, around 1900. Stopping in New York, however, on a trip to Africa, Humphrey began bible studies in the home of an Adventist layman in Brooklyn around 1901 (Jones, n.d.; 2003; 2005). It was then that the conversion experience set in. Fascinated by the Adventist message, he quickly rose to become a noted leader among American SDAs, walking away from his Baptist ministry and plans, while also aborting his trip to Africa (Jones, 2003:256-57). Within his newfound faith, he soon became a leader of a small group of newer SDA believers in New York in 1903 (Jones, n.d.), and then in 1907 was ordained as an SDA minister (around ten years after Sheafe). Humphrey’s rise, SDA ministry, and tenure within Seventh-day Adventism proper, as a matter of fact, almost exactly spans a period referred to as the “National Expansion” stage of the black Adventist work from 1902-1930s (Baker, 1996:1/11). This was the time period that saw the first major growth (including growth of black SDA institutions), overriding enthusiasm, expansion, and explosion of black Adventism throughout the U.S., and in great missionary endeavors overseas (Reynolds, 1984). So stimulated and intense was this outburst and awakening among black Adventists, marked by increasing passion, burning zeal, and keenness of mind, that it actually appears to match the spirit of Pentecost, the unyielding passion, and unwavering zeal of the early church as

recorded in the book of Acts chapter 2. And this black Adventist fervor and explosion is also reminiscent of the First and Second Great Awakenings (dating back to a couple of centuries before Humphrey's time) in American religious history.

This was the precise SDA milieu in which Humphrey featured – a distinct and very crucial period in Adventist race relations – marked by the rising expansion of black Adventism, despite the stiff racial injustice and attitudes it was up against; and the Humphrey story itself epitomizes the anxiety, rising black frustration, hardened white racial attitudes and pervasive white racism that characterized Adventism. Humphrey's story, therefore, is a type of barometer by which one can gauge the tension and development (or lack thereof) of race relations in the denomination, in the opening decades of the twentieth century. Given this, it is also fair to say that Humphrey's was a troubled life, indeed, marked not only by charisma and sheer evangelistic fervor, but by controversy, dispute, and a nagging frustration over the brazen racial prejudice, marginalization of 'colored' folk, and pervasive anti-black discrimination in the denomination, at all levels and all institutions of the church (Jones, 2006). Thus, amidst great spiritual activity and in spite of Humphrey's spiritual fervor and paramount commitment to the denomination, he too was set on a head-on collision course with church leadership.

In many ways, the trajectories of Humphrey and Sheafe follow an amazingly similar pattern. Not only did they both convert from the Baptist Faith to Adventism, but were both former Baptist ministers as well. They both were excellent and naturally gifted orators, passionate, charismatic, kindhearted, and personable; and that certainly includes the use of their passions in SDA evangelistic meetings, bringing in many believers into the church. They both were respected leaders in their wider social spheres, whose influence transcended the black community. Both were also ignited with a burning passion for social justice and the uplift of the

downtrodden condition of blacks and the marginalized, as they sought to meet the needs of blacks spiritually, educationally, and otherwise both in and outside the church (Jones, 2006; Morgan, 2010). They both spoke with clarity and a striking vigor as their words pierced through the heart. In the very same broader era of the early twentieth century, both Humphrey and Sheafe were, at certain points, denominational favorites to represent the black SDA constituents in the U.S., on various committees, boards, executive meetings, etc. And both Humphrey and Sheafe ultimately felt compelled to form breakaway Adventist movements, due to recalcitrant prejudice, racial inequality, glaring and widespread racial discrimination, and segregation in the church; a segregation that has continued, and advanced, down to the current time – the subject matter of which lay at the core of this dissertation.

Nonetheless, while with the denomination, Humphrey worked with exceptional exuberance and indefatigable zeal, trying to stay in concert with the broader SDA vision. He was well-positioned, well-dressed, of ready wit, and warm gripping personality, dutifully engaging primarily the black constituents in the northeast region of the country and in New York City in particular (Jones, 2006). His church was the notable First Harlem Seventh-day Adventist Church of New York – a congregation that grew to over 600 members. In fact, so passionate was Humphrey about evangelism and ‘soul-winning’ (similar to Sheafe) that First Harlem swelled to the extent that a second congregation (Harlem Number Two) had to be established, and another pastor called up to assist, just to accommodate the overflow and demand of the burgeoning desire of people to join the church under Humphrey’s leadership (Ibid.). His was a burning zeal indeed, with a lifelong ambition for membership growth. All told, there were around five black churches under Humphrey’s supervision in early 1920s New York.

More than that, Humphrey had a great desire and worked to have his members educated, beyond just the spiritual meal, and to be elevated from lethargy, dwarfed social growth, and dejection. In other words, he instilled in those around him the value of education, vigor, self-improvement, a proactive attitude, and industriousness, evoking a great sense of pride and duty in them. Thus, those around him, whether inside or outside the church, were inspired and aroused by a getup-and-achieve attitude, particularly in light of emerging opportunity, despite the widespread marginalization of blacks in society. Such an outlook, backed by revolutionary social movements and the massive swing in black attitudes, were to prove an oasis in the midst of a desert of oppression and firmly-rooted anti-black discrimination.

To be sure, Humphrey himself, as well as his constituents, were directly impacted by such emerging phenomena as the ‘Harlem Renaissance,’ and the ‘Universal Negro Improvement Association and African Communities League’ (UNIA-ACL), originally founded in 1914 by Marcus Garvey. A fellow countryman (of same national origin as Humphrey), Garvey, a visionary of unparalleled proportions, yet a conscientious realist, was styled ‘Provisional President of Africa.’ Such a title offers an idea of the unlimited scope and unbridled ambition of Garveyism, while at the same time Garvey very well knew that he had to not just appeal but strike an urgent note deep within the consciousness of the black masses, in order to win substantial and unyielding support for his plans and activities. Coupled with the Harlem Renaissance as well as other entities for the uplift of the disenfranchised and oppressed (particularly blacks), the UNIA infected a whole new attitude in black consciousness (Helbling, 1999; Howes, 2001; Ewing, 2014). It was a new day indeed, inspiring fresh hope and revitalization in the very souls of black folk, the impact of which cannot be underestimated. Moreover, the multi-impact gesture of all the social movements combined had the compounding

effect of making ‘black power,’ ‘black self-rule,’ and total black pride all the more potent – the full antithesis of people of African ancestry (both in Africa and in the diaspora) under white oppression (Burkett, 1978a; Hill, 1983; Ewing, 2014).

Together, such phenomena instilled firm confidence in black self-awareness and skills, calling for absolute self-determination for blacks everywhere, accented by the growing momentum of the spirit of *Black Nationalism*. But the UNIA and the Harlem Renaissance, in particular, were at their peak in the ‘roaring twenties,’ and both had solid foundations in Harlem, blasting at full steam, unabashedly displaying the new outlook and unlimited talents in grand style street parades. The UNIA (which is still alive today), for example, knew no bounds and sought to influence every aspect of the lives of people of African ancestry, from politics, to pan-Africanism and Ethiopianism, to business enterprises of every conceivable kind (Burkett, 1978a;1978b; Hill, 1983; Ewing, 2014), literally impacting the world at large, even as far a field as Australia, Namibia, and India. It (UNIA) was indubitably a massive juggernaut, with membership numbering in the tens of thousands by 1920, the year of its first international convention in New York City.

And the Harlem Renaissance itself was proliferating and catching on like wild fire, with everything from influential, unique and energetic social justice preaching to black literary writers, artists, protest writers, thinkers, musicians, new forms of black expression, scholarship, fashion, ‘black pride,’ black businesses, to radical social change, and a fast-growing class of black intellectuals, placing Harlem at the epicenter of the rise of a new day in black history (Johnson, 1968; Howes, 2001; West & West, 2003; Huggins 2007). Such vivacity was so overwhelming, propelling blacks somehow to hold on dearly to the promise of upward mobility, buttressed by the dynamic discourse on ‘uplift’ well beyond the Civil Rights era (Gaines, 1996).

Harlem literally could not contain itself, bursting its suffocating boundaries and expanding its geographical reach (*cf.* Johnson, 1968; Jones, 2006). Altogether, this uncanny growth and forceful outburst of creativity and knowledge gave birth to the ‘New Negro’ and a ‘new deal’ for black America, indelibly marking Harlem as the black intellectual and cultural capital of the nation and the world. The suppressed talents of blacks broke through the thick and massive shackles by which they were attended, shinning forth as a lustrous and grand exhibit to the world. All of this was certainly not lost on Humphrey and his congregations (Jones, 2005; 2006); in fact, they were (physically) right in the midst of it. Furthermore, this coincided perfectly with Humphrey’s emphasis on black uplift.

Notwithstanding the certain force and lure of such social stimulus, Humphrey was a staunch loyalist, so that even when confronted by a friend to leave the SDA Church to embark on ministry outside of the denomination (around the middle of the first decade of the twentieth century), Humphrey flatly refused. He saw the Adventist Church as God’s church, and that it will prevail in spite of men’s ill-will, racial prejudice, and despite the unrelenting racial injustice in the organization itself. He even preached a remarkable sermon at an SDA General Conference Session in 1922, for example, in which he revealed and amply emphasized his commitment to the Church (*General Conference Bulletin*, 1922). Humphrey left absolutely no doubt in the hearer’s mind that there was no way he intended to leave ‘God’s church’ (i.e., the SDA Church). Moreover, in affirming the call to be vigilant and stand steadfast, for that sermon, he used as his text I Peter 5:10, “But the God of grace, who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered a while, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle *you*.” For all intent and purposes, Humphrey recognized that he needed to stand firm in the face of trials, just as other bible characters who had to go through difficult and excruciating circumstances,

particularly drawing reference from the sufferings and writings of Paul (in that particular sermon).

Further, based on his own personal experience, “and from the history of the Christian church,” all who have ever made up their mind to please God have to suffer (*General Conference Bulletin*, 1922:253). “This is God’s program,” Humphrey bellowed, as he preached his heart out in that sermon to administrators, leading church officials, and delegates of the SDA world church gathered in session. “Suffering is woven all through the Christian experience,” he continued, “and there is no man that has ever accepted Christ into his heart, who has not been a sufferer” (Ibid.). Humphrey emphatically expounded the point, that it makes no difference who the person is, anyone who becomes a Christian is to recognize the one call through which s/he is to receive the program God has made out for him/her – “and that program is suffering” (Ibid.). It is in that vein that Humphrey makes abundantly clear, the point that all must suffer, certainly not excluding himself as an exhibit in the cause. This gives a picture of a man with a resolute stance on his recognition of the SDA Church as God’s true church, and his unwavering commitment to it (while with the denomination). So sure was Humphrey at the time, that he looked down with great disdain upon all those who left the SDA Church, as they were considered backsliders and apostate, and he even saw some of them as being of absolutely no use to the church (Ibid., 253-54).

Furthermore, as far as Humphrey was concerned,

Men and women who love the truth and honor the cause of Christ cannot afford to lower the standard of truth and righteousness, and no man can ever dwell and live in apostasy unless he tells that which is not true. Apostasy is built up on falsehood (Ibid., 254).

As throughout the sermon, this reiterates the level of absolute commitment not only to the ‘cause of Christ,’ but to the denomination, by a man who, at the time, was sure he could brave the ugliest of storms in the established Adventist Church. For as far as Humphrey was concerned, “Time is short. The end is near.” And he also emphasized his belief that “... we are standing on the brink of eternity” (Ibid.), a mantra that is in fact the founding principle of Seventh-day Adventism, and has always been kept at the forefront of the denomination, particularly stemming from Adventism’s Millerite roots. But taking it one step further, again similar to the Millerites, Humphrey thought that Christ was actually going to return only five years after he joined the Adventist Faith. And when that did not happen, he was absolutely sure that Jesus was going to return in his generation (Ibid.). Yet, one cannot help but recognize the palpable tension in that very sermon, as Humphrey trudged through it, leaving no doubt in the hearer’s mind that his was a poignant message. The conspicuousness and overwhelmingly vivid nature of the delivery was brought to bear on the entire sermon, as it was quite inescapable that Humphrey himself was bearing a heavy load, such as unremitting racial discrimination and hardship in the Church, which he was absolutely up against.

Placing Humphrey’s case in its wider context, it is noticeable that SDA blacks, like others in the denomination, were, and still are, absolutely devoted to Seventh-day Adventism (Reynolds, 1984), understanding it as God’s remnant of biblical prophecy with a special mission to fulfill in these ‘end times.’ That is why, for many blacks, it is so difficult and painful to part with the Church, even in the face of racial oppression and marginalization. To break ranks with the Church, then, is to be considered an ‘apostate’ (just as Humphrey himself painstakingly underscored in his preaching), a label which members tend to shy away from.

But then similar to Sheafe, the in-your-face racial discrimination and inequality rife in the denomination was too deep, largely unchecked, too widespread, and alas too much for Humphrey to stomach. His tenure and association with Seventh-day Adventism was actually marked by emotional stress over the race issue (Jones, n.d.), particularly since he felt that “the local conference, and church leadership in general, ignored the concerns of its Black constituency and practiced discriminatory actions” (Baker, 1996:1/12). To this visionary leader of SDAs there were, within the denomination, deep and unsettling issues of rampant anti-black racial discrimination and prejudice, which the white administrative leadership largely ignored and was not dealing with (as far as blacks were concerned). In fact, the black SDA constituents felt firsthand the brunt of outright racist acts, the promotion of anti-black discrimination, and the ills of absolute segregation enforced by white church leaders. That’s precisely why SDA black frustration reached its ultra-boiling point by the 1940s, as revealed through these anecdotes and episodes shared in this chapter.

The cleavage between Humphrey and the SDA Church, however, began to be more fully realized when Humphrey stepped up serious planning in 1929 for a type of retreat getaway dubbed ‘Utopia Park Health Benevolent Association’ (called *Utopia Park* for short). This tension escalated because the white leadership wanted to have total control not only over all property, but any type of business affair undertaken by any of its employees; and Humphrey was not about to relinquish this particular dream of his to white SDA control. And so, as far as the white leadership of Humphrey’s local conference (i.e., the Greater New York Conference) was concerned, the pastor of First Harlem was not quite forthcoming on the enterprise which he was undertaking (Jones, 2006). But for Humphrey, the idea was to engage in this enterprise away from the gaze of the local conference and the white leadership, as the aim was to have some level

of black self-determination (Ibid.), particularly since white leadership dominated everything in the church. And so this retreat venture aimed at attracting blacks and the maligned, due to the unfair practices, unchecked hypocrisy by white leadership, tradition of neglect, and rampant inequality that they were enduring in the denomination.

Thus, issues of racial discrimination, along with the desire to maintain some black self-determination within the denomination, were shaping the form and outcome of this confrontation. Moreover, such conflicts, involving discrimination and disfranchisement, were widespread throughout the entire SDA organizational system itself and deeply embedded in all its institutions. It was complete and outright anti-black discrimination, with too many stories to tell. For example, apart from black Adventist pastors not getting paid as much as white pastors, Adventist grade schools and colleges would not admit blacks, in spite of blacks' financial support of those very same schools through their offerings. For those SDA colleges that did admit blacks, like Emmanuel Missionary College (EMC) now Andrews University, there was a strict quota of blacks enforced in the early to mid-twentieth century. Not only that, but Adventist college chapel services were segregated, with blacks having to endure the unsettling humiliation of being relegated to the rear sitting. Even within the cafeterias of Adventist colleges, there was no exemption; for instance, blacks had to again suffer the indignity, distressing embarrassment, and racial harassment of having to wait for their meals until a sufficient number of blacks were present to fill a table (Dodson, 1996), while whites went through with ease. In another instance, a black would have to wait until a white student invited him/her to sit and eat, or else stand against the cafeteria wall to eat, tray in hand (Berg, 2015), lonely, ashamed, psychologically scarred, and utterly dejected.

Meanwhile, blacks were barred from dining in the General Conference cafeteria at the Church's headquarters in Washington D.C., irrespective of credentials, black denominational administrator or otherwise; none were exempt from this absolute measure of exclusion. And the Adventist nursing program – no difference; black Adventists were not admitted. So absolute and horrifying was white racism and unchecked discrimination in the denomination, that even Adventist Hospitals were subject to the rule of bigotry and utter white supremacy. In Adventist hospitals, no black Adventists were allowed for treatment or otherwise (Dodson, 1996; Graham, 1996), whether or not it was a life-threatening issue. None of that mattered. It was Jim Crow of the severest kind, and with fatal consequences in the Church. The classic case of Lucy Byard, a light skin black woman who was refused treatment in an Adventist hospital, and was instead referred to another hospital where she died, will be discussed a little latter in this chapter. And to add insult to injury, the white Adventist leadership would use preposterous and despicable excuses such as, it is against 'public policy' to admit both blacks and whites in an Adventist hospital (Dodson, 1996).

Even people in Humphrey's own church felt the bitter racial sting as well. For example, there was the case of a man who was denied entrance into an Adventist College (Union College in Nebraska) for ministerial studies, but who nonetheless ended up serving as associate pastor in one of Humphrey's churches; and there was also the case of at least one of Humphrey's members who was denied admission to an Adventist nursing program (Jones, 2006). Needless to say, all of this added relentless fuel to the fire of Humphrey's relationship with the SDA Church. In light of such occurrences and leadership attitudes, it was not entirely unheard of for a black minister either to have his ministerial credentials revoked, or quit over the merciless and unrelenting racism and prejudice in the Adventist Church. Nevertheless, many stayed, no doubt

with the hope of effecting change from within, or, at the very least, endure the subjugation and rule of white supremacy for the sake of maintaining the status quo in the ‘remnant’ church.

In the end (i.e., late 1929 – early 1930), stemming from Humphrey not wanting church officials to have control over the *Utopia Park* project, sure enough, his ministerial credentials were revoked and both he and his congregation (save five members who sided with the conference) were expelled from the sisterhood of churches of the official Seventh-day Adventist Church (Jones, 2006; Baker, 1996:1/12). The *Utopia Park* project was Humphrey’s vision, and he preferred that it was kept that way. *Utopia Park*, imagined as a black commune, was essentially about creating a space for marginalized people, primarily blacks, where they could find various programs of uplift for those who were otherwise left behind and sidelined (Jones, 2006). Though the project never really materialized, Humphrey himself went on to establish a church called ‘United Sabbath Day Adventists,’ which started primarily with members from his church who were also ejected with him.

Negro Department Set Up – Beginning 1909

The North American Negro Department was set up at the General Conference (GC) headquarters of the SDA Church in 1909. At first, the administrators of the ‘Negro Department’ were white until 1918 when the first black, William H. Green, was appointed to head that department of the GC. Hailing from Detroit, Green was an astute attorney who had argued cases before the U.S. Supreme Court. But amazingly, due to a culture of blatant white racism embedded in the SDA organization, Green was not even allowed to work out of the denomination’s world headquarters (i.e., General Conference) in Washington D.C., in spite of the fact that his white predecessors who held that very same position were allowed to do so

(Jones, n.d.). Instead, two addresses were listed for Green in Adventist yearbooks (*see Yearbook of the SDA Denomination, 1922; and 1928, for instance*).

Green, nonetheless, held the post for around ten years, until his untimely death in 1928. It was then that more consideration and agitation picked up, particularly by black ministers (due to ongoing discrimination), with a serious quest for some form of black autonomy, e.g., to have local colored conferences to be administered specifically by black clergy. Important to note, though, is that Green's death and the ensuing agitation occurred contemporaneously, with the same general era that saw the end of Humphrey's long tenure with the SDA Church proper; and this period also dovetailed with major protests over segregation and racial issues at Oakwood College,²¹ Adventist's only HBCU (now Oakwood University).

General Conference Committee on Question of Colored (Regional) Conferences

In light of agitation by blacks for redress of the incessant racial discriminatory problems, and the unfolding of events, at the 1929 spring meeting of the SDA world church, the General Conference of SDAs set up a committee which issued recommendations regarding the work among blacks (Jones, n.d.; *cf.* Pipim, n.d.: Part I). The question of regional conferences was also hot on the agenda for that year, since the black caucus had passed a resolution calling for the creation of regional conferences (Jones, n.d.). This, black leaders felt, was needed in order to better address the needs of the black constituents, financially, spiritually and otherwise, in light of grave injustice and the inadequacy of mitigating effects; and that included the inefficiency of the Negro Department, as they saw it. In essence, black church leaders felt that having some type of semi-autonomous control at the local level, would somehow concretize the prevailing notions of 'separate but equal' in the Adventist Church. It is within that context that this specific

²¹ Refer to details of the Oakwood College (founded 1896) protests two sections below, for a more involved narrative.

committee (with a white majority) was empaneled by the General Conference to study the racial issues involved; Humphrey being one of the blacks asked to serve on the committee (Ibid.).

The result was that the committee emphatically voted down the idea of ‘regional conferences,’ with the blacks being powerless to stop or sway the decision. As far as the white committee members were concerned, not only were black conferences definitely out of the question, but furthermore, blacks should be sure to never ask for a black conference again (Ibid.). It was after this 1929 spring meeting that Humphrey more seriously pursued his plan for *Utopia Park*, to be both a destination of recreation and opportunity, for the uplift of colored people.

Oakwood College Protests, Civil Rights, and the SDA Church, 1910s – 1960s

In 1931, only one year after Humphrey’s expulsion from the Seventh-day Adventist Church, a major student strike broke out at Oakwood College (now Oakwood University), bringing the institution to a standstill. This particular campus protest was due to students’ pent-up frustration and mounting feelings of humiliation over ‘separation of the races’ and the racist policies of the school’s predominantly white leadership (Fisher, 2003; Justiss, 1975). In fact, it was due to this particular protest, that the white college president was ousted and the first black president, J.L. Moran of Harlem, was installed at Oakwood College in 1932 (Ibid.), bearing in mind that the college was established some 36 years earlier (in 1896, as previously cited). As part of that well-orchestrated protest (also made to coincide with the day of a scheduled campus meeting of the Oakwood College Board of Trustees), at the center of campus a student leader announced at the Bell Tower that there would be no chapel, no classes, and no work till further notice (Fisher, 2003:114-115). From there, students were alerted to the next series of steps in the plan. That included sealing off the campus from outside forces, such as the city police, and the placing of monitors at the entrance to each building, to ensure that all students were aware of the

strike. In addition, strike leaders staged pep rallies, made speeches, and had worship, in order to whip up and maintain campus-wide student support (Ibid., 115). A letter was also sent by the student body to the General Conference (the Church's principal governing body) stating,

We are tired of lying. In view of the fact that conditions at Oakwood Junior College are not favorable to mental, physical, and spiritual advancement, we the student body, are appealing to our interested brethren in the field for help. Too long, Oakwood has had to feel the brunt of despotic rules. Too long, we have been living under conditions entirely contrary to God's plan of operation for Christian institutions (*in* Fisher, 2003:115; *cf.* Fordham, 1990:29-30).

But even before that, there was unrest among the students, at least as early as the 1910s (Fisher, 2003:114). Then later on, in the Civil Rights era of the 1960s, Oakwood College students were not entirely exempt from the onslaught of student activism that swept through U.S. campuses, although they were warned by college and church leaders not to participate in civil rights' activities or anything of the sort. However, due to community organizing, arrangements were made for Martin Luther King Jr. to speak at Oakwood College in the 1960s, and of course the church leadership had strict rules for that engagement (Fisher, 2003). Besides, Oakwood College was used for that event since they had a facility with the largest sitting capacity in the area at the time (Ibid.). But certainly, 'non-participation' in civil rights protests and the like, has been the overriding position of the Seventh-day Adventist Denomination (Fisher, 2003; London, 2009), under the banner of religious principles; a type of hands-off approach.

Furthermore, on matters of protest and demonstration, the SDA Church has maintained a conservative position, similar to other conservative Christians, choosing instead to uphold the status quo and have change come slowly from within, if it comes at all. Samuel G. London Jr., a history professor whose dissertation specifically examines the history of SDA participation in civil rights politics, has shown the tension between SDAs and the Civil Rights movement, for instance. And although the rights of other minorities – Hispanic, Native Americans, Asians, etc.,

have been trampled upon in U.S. society, I focus here on blacks particularly since the black-white narrative has been a major source of tension within the SDA organization.

London looked at the ways in which Seventh-day Adventism, as a conservative denomination, reacted to a national, secular crisis, in race relations. In doing so, he looked at the extent to which SDA theology influenced how members generally responded in the Civil Rights movement (London, 2009), particularly of the 1950s-60s. Important to note here is that characteristic of conservative denominations, the SDA Church does not encourage political activism, social activism, or much involvement in politics, part of which has to do with the advocacy of separation of church and state, along with a strong opposition to ecumenism. Besides that, since Adventism stresses Christ's return as the solution to the problems of this world, this leads largely to a hands-off approach to sociopolitical activism or any type of social activism in general. And still, in addition to that, what's referred to as 'sectarian ecclesiology,' has caused Adventist leaders to admonish members to disassociate themselves from causes of a political nature (Ibid.). Sectarian ecclesiology, itself, has to do with the notion that Christians are not to conform to the secular world. Such viewpoints and doctrine, both ecclesiological and theological, are contributing factors to a lack of redress and adequate racial reform within Seventh-day Adventism. Thus, it is not very strange that there was a glaring lack of civil rights participation among members, generally speaking.

Nonetheless, London set out to look at why a few brave Adventists became social and political activists (particularly black SDAs), while a majority of believers eschewed the Civil Rights movement. What was noticed was that intellectual and theological justifications did in fact motivate the civil rights activism of some Adventists, as a small minority. And right along with such justifications came liberationist interpretations of the Bible (London, 2009). What is

referred to as liberation theology addresses the plight of the downtrodden, disadvantaged, and the oppressed, in light of the gospel. And particularly in the American context, this includes a history of anti-black racial oppression, stemming from days of slavery and castigation by skin color in America; and the color line in particular has been fiercely resilient against all influences to at least mitigate its damaging effects. Hence, the well-noted observation (echoing sentiments of social observers like W.E.B. DuBois) that the problem of the twenty-first century will be the problem of the color line (Franklin, 1993), was right on target.

Although the color line concept, generally speaking, does not overtly resonate within Seventh-day Adventism as a world church, there is nonetheless a level of social distinction based on differences in skin pigmentation, as between ‘white’ and ‘black’ church members that is visible up to the local conference setting within American Seventh-day Adventism. But the distinction ought to be made between history and the present – i.e., today while such local segregation is marked by skin color, that does not necessarily spell oppression, particularly since SDA blacks, largely speaking, prefer local control of church affairs (as in the current arrangement). On that same token, it should always be emphasized that the current segregated arrangement in American Seventh-day Adventism stems from, and is a direct continuation of, Jim Crow mentality, unchecked prejudicial attitudes, and rampant racial discriminatory practices and policies.

But particularly in terms of the liberation theology mentioned above, observers like James Cone have stressed the notion of ‘black liberation theology’ (BLT), and in fact is considered its (BLT) founder, with a specific stress on the less-than-dignified racialized experience of black America (Cone, 1969). Nevertheless, this particular angle (liberation theology), coupled with personal conviction, tell of the manner and mental attitude with which a

few Adventists decided to stand against the tide of racial dictatorship in the Civil Rights era. Further, besides the observations already made, it has also been shown that a community-oriented consciousness or community awareness was a main contributing factor motivating black Adventist activists (London, 2009), during the Civil Rights era. This speaks to the idea that, in a selfless manner, some SDA blacks considered the well-being of social relations, particularly in terms of the community of the racially oppressed in the surrounding environment, as paramount in also accounting for the well-being of church members.

The Lucy Byard Story – 1943

With respect to blacks and the SDA Church, there has been a struggle for integration and respect, particularly the manner in which SDA blacks have sought to contest strong anti-black sentiments and discrimination within the denominational structure. In fact, it was due to a prolonged case of outright racial discriminatory mindset, policies, and practices in SDA schools, hospital(s), churches, etc., and systemic neglect, that blacks within the denomination finally settled for the adoption of a separate local conference structure (Reynolds, 1984). And this is where the case of Lucy Byard becomes instructive. It is important to first note, however, that racial separatism was not the first choice of SDA blacks (Graham, 1996), particularly the laity. But with or without such cleavage, it is still the desire of SDA blacks, generally speaking, to remain part of the broader SDA (global) institutional framework, as it is intricately linked to unique theological perspectives, along with an international community status, referred to in chapter one.

Lucy Byard's story is a prime exhibit of SDA racial bigotry, offering an idea of the extent to which unchecked racism can reach; and the tragedy involved is perhaps the most well-known, but certainly not an isolated racial incident, cited within SDA denominational circles. Byard was

a gravely ill woman from Brooklyn who was taken for treatment to the Washington Sanitarium and Hospital (later named Washington Adventist Hospital), a white SDA hospital in Takoma Park, Maryland. Both she and her husband (who took her to the hospital) were black but of very light complexion (Justiss, 1996; Baker, 1996). Initially, they were somehow able to bypass the ‘racial detectors’ of the hospital staff, who thought that she was white; but according to her chart she was black. Upon discovering that she was black, the staff reversed course, discharged her, and recommended that she be taken to another hospital, supposedly where they treat black people (Pipim, n.d.: Part I). Further, the staff phoned around anxiously trying to find a hospital where blacks could be treated, and found one which happened to be across state lines. All of this is in context of early winter season in October 1943 (Baker 1996:2/37-38).

As the story goes, Lucy became increasingly ill en route to the hospital that agreed to accept her, which turns out to be Freedmen’s Hospital (the forerunner to Howard University Hospital, where, ironically, she was attended to by a black Adventist, Mark Cox), and died shortly thereafter, due to pneumonia (Baker, 1996:1/12, and 2/37; Pipim, n.d.: Part I). As one can imagine, that might have been a mighty cause for uproar, and an uproar indeed it was; so much so that it is actually seen as the final link in a long and thick chain of SDA systematic racial discriminatory practices, and the straw that broke the camel’s back, ‘the last straw.’ The black SDA community, particularly in the Washington D.C. area, was completely outraged, grew incensed and burned with righteous indignation. This time their patience had worn out. The denomination was simply taking its flagrant hypocrisy, deep-seated racism, and lethal racial dogma and policies too far. And similar to Humphrey and previously disaffected black ministers and members, the status quo could no longer hold.

The Formation of Regional Conferences – 1940s

To reiterate, any time the term ‘regional conference(s)’ is used in this research, it refers specifically to black SDA local conferences as opposed to ‘state’ or white SDA conferences. The precise terminology – ‘regional’ is in particular reference to the geographical extension of the conferences themselves. Thus, generally speaking, each regional conference overlaps a number of state conferences in adjoining proximity.

The formal endorsement and formation of regional conferences takes us back to the 1943 Autumn Council, special 1944 pre-Spring group meeting, and the 1944 Spring Meeting of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. This is a period of heightened tension, when the Church was forced to consider the plight of blacks within the denomination, including the ‘colored’ work and the maintaining or establishing of black institutions. This time, moreover, in light of the mountain of discriminatory acts and racial frustrations plaguing the denomination, anti-black oppression had reach the breaking point, where it became obviously impossible to ignore (*Minutes of Meetings of the General Conference Committee*, 1944; Graham, 1996).

SDA blacks were tested and pushed to the limit, and could no longer just sit still and wait on the white church leadership. With death, prejudice, corruption, and discrimination at the highest levels of the SDA Church, the Lucy Byard story became iconic – an ultimate symbol of racial injustice in the denomination. It loomed large, front and center, representative of the last straw for SDA blacks (Baker, 1996). With racial blood on their hands, and the loud cries of the saints,²² by 1944 the white SDA General Conference leadership was essentially forced to say something, do something. This time SDA blacks were not about to settle for business as usual,

²² The phrase is used to express the level of anguish, longsuffering, and bitter shame that accompanied the frustrated black voices who were tired of being ignored by a nonchalant white SDA leadership, who did not think twice to carry out racist policies that would subject blacks to a perpetual state of dejection and misery.

or worthless resolutions (Graham, 1996); the fullness of time had come and they were absolutely determined that change had to be made.

The actual decision to officially institute racial segregation was made at that 1944 Spring Meeting, and it came on the heels of the Lucy Byard episode. In fact, it was this very incident (Lucy Byard case) that also led immediately to the emergency gathering of black lay members (initially from the Ephesus Church in Washington D.C.), who promptly formed a committee on Saturday October 16, 1943 producing a critical statement entitled, “Shall the Four Freedoms Function Among Seventh-day Adventists?” (Dodson, 1996; Justiss, 1996:2/38-39). Due to the fact that several persons outside the United States were contacted, they named their committee “The National Association for the Advancement of Worldwide Work Among Colored Seventh-day Adventists” (Justiss, 1996:2/38).

It is important to emphasize, though, that black lay members, at this point, were not pushing for a separate structure. What they were strongly advocating instead was respect and equality, in light of ingrained and thorough systematic racial oppression and blatant white racism throughout the denomination (Graham, 1996; Dodson, 1996). In light of all that, this same newly-formed black committee even met with the General Conference president at the time, J. L. McElhany, on October 17, 1943 (the very day after it organized), and again two weeks later on October 31, 1943, to voice their concerns (Justiss, 1996:2/38).

At this point, however, the General Conference leadership, in coordination with some of the black leadership, voted for the adoption of ‘colored’ conferences (Baker, 1996:1/12-13). In that regard, as far as the white Adventist leadership was concerned, blacks were not and could not be their equals; and so for the white leadership, the request by the black constituents for equal treatment and equal representation at all levels of the church, was considered impossible.

As Graham puts it, “It is important to emphasize that the formation of Black conferences was proposed by the White leadership as a response to Black SDAs’ request for integration.” And he further notes that, “Black SDA leadership has made the best of the situation. They settled for ‘self-determination’ and have opted to take full advantage of the separation that was foisted upon them by White leadership” (1996:136). Thus, organization of what is considered black, or officially ‘Regional’ conferences began in 1944, a few months following the Byard incident, significantly impacting the black work, as well as the “entire Adventist Church in the United States” (Baker, 1996:1/13). And so, as one prominent African-American Adventist sees it, in the end segregation with power is better than segregation without power, in light of the racial prejudice and discrimination that is so deeply embedded within the structures of the denomination (Yeboah, 2015; *cf.* Justiss, 1996:2/47).

Here now is the crux of the content of the 1944 resolution and recommendation for the official institutionalization of black-white segregation in the American SDA Church, as sanctioned by the General Conference:

“WHEREAS, The present development of our work among the colored people in North America has resulted, under the signal blessing of God, in the establishment of some 233 churches with some 17,000 members; and,

WHEREAS, It appears that a different plan of organization for our colored membership would bring further great advance in soul-winning endeavor; therefore,

We recommend, 1. That in unions where the colored constituency is considered by the union conference committee to be sufficiently large, and where the financial income and territory warrant, colored conferences be organized.

2. That these colored conferences be administered by colored officers and committees.

3. That in the organization of these conferences the present conference boundaries within each union need not be recognized.

4. That colored conferences sustain the same relation to their respective union conferences as do the white conferences.”
(*Minutes of Meetings of the General Conference Committee*, 1944: 1315;
cf. Justiss, 1996: 2/40-41; and Baker, 1996:1/13).

In reflecting on that period (1940s) and up to around the end of the twentieth century, one black Adventist administrator remarks, “one lingering challenge that will continue to cast a shadow upon the Adventist denomination in the twenty-first century is the phenomenon of racism” (Graham, 1996:127). This, in itself, speaks volumes and is a pointed statement that essentially says that the denomination is not adequately and rigorously confronting the inherent racism and resultant tensions in the church. Thus, in the face of denominationally-sanctioned segregation, polarized attitudes, the festering of racism and prejudice, and the spirit of division continue to impact interpersonal relationships and scandalize the church.

Quest for Black SDA Union Conferences – Late 1960s to 1970s, and Beyond

From around the late 1960s to late 1970s (essentially c. 1968-1978) there was a concerted push by black SDA leaders and administrators for the creation of union conferences, that would be segregated in scope and operations (Reynolds, 1984). The union conference level, as explained in section A of this chapter, is one level above the local conference, in the general SDA administrative structure. The idea was to have a (black/white) split at the union level, since the SDA union conferences in America were white-controlled; and particularly in light of the fact that black leaders and constituents were underrepresented at that level, still feeling the brunt of SDA organizational prejudice and discriminatory practices. In other words, even though SDA blacks had some form of autonomy within the general structure (particularly since 1944), they realized that equality in the denomination was still a far cry from being realized. As such, a serious call, loaded with justifications, went forth for the creation of two black unions to oversee

the regional conferences and the black work, with the aim of making more direct decisions that would substantially include and benefit the ‘colored’ community (Cleveland, 1970b; Reeves, 1978; Rock, 1978; *see also* Appendix B in Reynolds, 1984; Branson, 1995; and Graham, 1996:136). Not all blacks necessarily agreed to the plan, but nonetheless the ‘separate union’ proposal was taken up for earnest consideration by the white leadership and ultimately rejected.

Then in the 1980s to 1990s much black scholarly work was being done (in addition to what came before), in a rigorous effort to: (a) highlight the sterling black contribution to the Adventist work both in America and abroad, (b) engage research and seek ways to bridge the racial inequality gap in the denomination, and (c) show the history and tell the story of the challenges that still encumbers race relations in Adventism. Some of the key resources in that regard are: Reynolds, 1984; Rock, 1996; Baker, 1995 and 1996; *see also* Warren, 1996; and Branson, 1995. In that era (c. 1980s to 1990s) more blacks and non-whites were also getting their PhDs and other graduate and doctoral degrees as well, some of which directly addressed varying aspects of black Adventism and Adventism in general.

At the very end of the twentieth century, i.e., in the late 1990s (1998 and 1999), under the auspices of the North American Division (NAD) of Seventh-day Adventists, some research work was being done among SDAs, and a race summit was convened, looking at race relations issues in the SDA Church in North America (*see* Center for Creative Ministry 1998/1999). Bear in mind that the division level is the second highest level in the SDA organizational structure. The end-result of that race summit, as issued by the NAD’s Office of Human Relations, had to do with developing a better understanding of and respect for the various cultures within its domains, with the goal of improving race relations within the Seventh-day Adventist Church (*see* related sites under *North American Division* in bibliography). But just to be clear, the ultimate

considerations and conclusions reached had nothing to do with a uniting or merger of the black and white SDA conference system. Furthermore, down to the current time there has been continued talk about reconciliation, while both the white and black SDA leadership are also affirming the need for regional conferences.

An explicit example of that is reflected in the remarks of Charles E. Dudley, a former president of the South Central Conference of SDAs, a regional conference based in Nashville, Tennessee. As he saw it,

Leadership roles are not volunteered to Black folks in the SDA Church, and unfortunately, I see a surrendering, a losing, of the things we've fought for the past 30 to 40 years. Our folks are selling out, not thinking of those who come behind us, and that's bad. We're giving up our historically Black institutions In doing away with those institutions, we're doing away with leadership roles for Blacks (*in Baker, 1996: 2/36*).

In similar vein, another black administrator, Calvin Watkins, of another regional conference – South Atlantic Conference of SDAs, based in Atlanta, Georgia, had this to say about the work in black Adventism,

The Black work will and must continue. The evidence of our continued growth proves that we have found the formula. Our function is simply to make every man and woman a 'Harriet Tubman.' Like her, our burden should be to free the oppressed and rescue our people from slavery, whether it be spiritual, physical, or mental. We have to lead them to the Promised Land (*Ibid.*).

In this, one clearly sees elements of black liberation theology, especially as espoused by James Cone (Cone, 1969; 1975; 1984; 1991; 1999; 2010; Roberts, 1987; Hopkins, 1999; and Coleman, 2000). The essential key in that perspective is pinned to an astute understanding of all biblical and Christian theology as one of liberation, i.e., as seen through the lens of liberation motifs. And such sentiments reverberate throughout, and are passed on, from one generation to the next, in the black SDA community.

A more recent example of the affirmation of regional conferences can be seen in a recent (March 25th, 2015) response by the NAD, in which the NAD leadership was jointly responding to concerns mainly by a collective of student body groups from Andrews University, with respect to the racial division plaguing the denomination (Williams, 2015; Yeboah, 2015). In that joint statement released by the NAD, it affirms the role and place of the regional conferences, showing furthermore, that they (NAD along with the regional conferences) work together to accomplish certain goals, such as that pertaining to evangelistic efforts. Part of that statement reads,

The Administration of the North American Division and the Administrations of our Regional Conferences are deeply committed to continuing our mission focus and evangelistic unity as we seek to fulfill God's commission within our territory. Throughout our division we will continue to seek ways and means to further racial cooperation, understanding, and growth (*in Williams, 2015*).

When one compares this quote with the conclusions of the race summit shown a couple of paragraphs above, one cannot help but notice a consistency in the NAD's approach to race relations in the Adventist Church; one characterized by the notion of seeking to advance racial cooperation and understanding (i.e., aiming to improve race relations).

But the "evangelistic unity" that the NAD leadership speaks about remains vague and unexplained, and is furthermore misleading, given that the state and regional conferences within the division not only remain segregated but work in segregated fashion. Further, in this very same statement by the NAD, it resolves that, it is ministering in a "racially-charged society," and that the "effectiveness, challenges, and history" of the regional conferences need to be better understood. Yet, in a following clause, which seems out of sync, it reads, "We vote, to affirm that the historical establishment and current role and function of Regional Conferences are structurally essential, mission effective, and relevant in reaching the diverse populations and

urban centers within our division” (Ibid.). In other words, by affirming the ‘historical establishment’ (which is rooted in white racism), structure, role, and function of the regional conferences in reaching the ‘urban centers’ (and inner cities), it appears that the NAD leadership is subtly abdicating direct responsibility of those areas, while leaving it solely or primarily to the regional conferences to take care of. Thus, it is a clever way of endorsing segregation in the church, while also shifting the focus away from having to formerly and intently redress the racism, prejudice, racial tensions, and injustice meted out to blacks in the denomination. Yet, “evangelistic unity” is the mantra that is proclaimed, in this case by NAD leadership.

A few months later, in late June 2015, at a regional (black) camp meeting in Michigan, the (white) president of a union conference (i.e., Lake Union Conference [LUC] of SDAs, based in Berrien Springs, Michigan) read an apology letter to the constituents and administration of a regional conference (i.e., the Lake Region Conference [LRC] of SDAs). The statement of apology coincided with the 70th anniversary celebrations of the Lake Region Conference – a statement which the president of LUC found very important for that occasion, and one which he indicated was on his heart for some time. The Lake Region Conference (the first of the regional conferences to be organized) is headquartered in Chicago Illinois, but includes Michigan in its territorial administration. In fact, the campground where the official apology was read is actually the site of the black or ‘regional’ campground located in Cassopolis, Michigan.

Generally speaking, there is a campground attached to each local SDA conference in the U.S. But not even the campgrounds were spared the rule of white SDA bigotry and segregation, linking back to a history of anti-black discriminatory policies and attitudes; and that includes white SDAs barring black SDA youth from using their campgrounds, for instance. This actually led to an uproar among the black constituents and added to planning and organizational

development along racially demarcated lines (Justiss, 1996). Such development is certainly a major contributing factor (if not the main reason) why up to today in Michigan, for example, one finds a black SDA campground and a white SDA campground. Nonetheless, the video link to that (June, 2015) statement of apology can be found in the links in the footnote below.²³

Important to note, though, is that this is not a denomination-wide apology, but a particular regional apology for the wrongs done and ill-will shown to SDA blacks on the part of SDA whites, which led to the formation of the Lake Region Conference (same reasons as the formation of the other regional conferences) in the first place. But as one experienced black Adventist pastor and teacher puts it,

The system that necessitated formation of the regional conferences still exists today. I wholeheartedly believe in an inclusive ministry, however, our church is making a big mistake in not drawing upon the talents and abilities of all people. The greatest innovation would be to become one church and one conference (comments on 'black ministry,' by Hyveth Williams, *in* Baker, 1996:2/36).

This quotation speaks for itself, essentially taking aim at the roots of segregation and the racial dilemma in the Adventist Church. It further exposes the perennial lack of inclusion and widespread inequality, undergirded by a nagging prejudice in the church. Moreover, it shows that not all black SDAs embrace the philosophy of segregation as a way to confront the racial problems and prejudice in the denomination.

The earlier part of 2015 also saw petitions started and signed, insofar as they concern a breaking down of the partition walls that racially divide the Church, by Adventists concerned about unity, the church's image, and progress of the Adventist Church. While there are always voices pushing for church unity, these voices, so far, have not been loud or powerful enough, or they simply quiet down, bearing insufficient influence to effect any intended change in racial

²³ For video footage of that apology go to: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=G_DJqSodyLA; or alternatively, it's available on the Lake Union Conference's website: http://www.lakeunion.org/news_entries/1153.

unity in the denomination. Such moves, like that involving signed petitions, however, have also been met with responses from the black SDA community, including black SDA leaders, essentially addressing the unity talk from their perspective.

Part of any such talks, as far as many blacks are concerned, has to seriously address the deep wounds and wrongs done to SDA blacks, which the white leadership has not fully confronted, along with other troubling concerns such as SDA white-flight that continues to plague Adventist churches and institutions, particularly in the inner city (Rock, 1970; *cf.* Birch, 2012). The SDA white-flight phenomenon, itself, leaves more undesirable problems in its trail, such as the inequality ills of hyper-segregation, issues of property ownership and management, unnecessary duplication of SDA institutions (along black-white lines), and financial shortfalls. This, undoubtedly, speaks volumes with respect to attitudes and behaviors, the depths of white racism in the church, how entrenched the racialization of the church really is, and how much Adventism in America still needs to overcome in getting to the unity bridge that all sides talk about.

Section C

Ellen G. White's Take

Amidst all this, we must pause to cull from Ellen White on the issue of race prejudice, particularly since she is considered to have (1) exercised the gift of prophecy, (2) recognized as the *Spirit of Prophecy* (i.e., her counsels), and thus (3) is regarded with a measure of authority by Adventists worldwide. Indeed, Mrs. White did write and speak on the 'race' issue in various testimonies, messages, and volumes. So what does she have to say about it, bearing in mind her views on the spirit of unity?

Particularly beginning around 1891, Ellen White wrote messages speaking directly to white attitudes and anti-black discrimination in Adventism. Thinking specifically of ministry to blacks, she realized that the racial issue was persistently largely ignored by the denomination's leaders and could no longer be avoided. As previously cited in this chapter, it was in the revealing piece entitled "Our Duty to the Colored People," for example, that Mrs. White reviled SDA leaders and workers for their dereliction of duty in evangelizing blacks, especially in the south (published as opening article in *The Southern Work*, 2004). This message ('Our Duty'), previously in the form of a leaflet, was read to the leaders in General Conference Session in Battle Creek, on March 21st, 1891.

In this message, Mrs. White sent an unwavering and sterling rebuke to members, based on the gospel imperative, even going as far as showing that Christ "the Majesty of heaven," left glory above and had not where to lay his head below on earth, depending upon the generosity of his followers (*The Southern Work*, 2004:9). She urged, moreover, that Christians do not "by their practice sanction any phase of oppression or injustice to the least child of humanity" (Ibid., 17). In that same trend of thought, she noted that "the color of the skin does not determine character in the heavenly courts." She further posited that "All are one in Christ. Birth, station, nationality, or color cannot elevate or degrade men." And still, she affirmed that "those who slight a brother because of his color are slighting Christ [himself]" (Ibid., 2004:11, 12 & 13 *respectively*; see also White, 2006:342). It is in that very same frame of mind that Mrs. White uttered,

If a red man, a Chinaman, or an African gives his heart to God, in obedience and faith, Jesus loves him none the less for his color. He calls him his well-beloved brother. The day is coming when the kings and the lordly men of the earth would be glad to exchange places with the humblest African who has laid hold on the hope of the gospel. ...In the announcement which the Savior made in the synagogue at Nazareth, he put a stern rebuke upon those who attach so much

importance to color and caste, and refuse to be satisfied with such a type of Christianity as Christ accepts (2004:13).

If those statements weren't strong enough, as though preaching with unbridled passion, Ellen White did not fail to mention that,

I call upon every church in our land to look well to your own souls. 'Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves...' ...Whatever may be your prejudices, your wonderful prudence, do not lose sight of this fact, that unless you put on Christ, and His Spirit dwells in you, you are slaves of sin and of Satan. Many who claim to be children of God are children of the wicked one, and have all his passions, his prejudices, his evil spirit, his unlovely traits of character (Ibid., 13).

And at the very end of the ('Our Duty...') document, Mrs. White emphatically declared, "Let none of those who name the name of Christ be cowards in His cause. For Christ's sake stand as if looking within the open portals of the city of God" (Ibid., 18).

In looking at the integrity involved, Ellen White herself was aware and affirmed that she knew that what she was penning and speaking from this document was going to bring her "into conflict," with the white denominational leadership and others. Writing of that particular conflict which she so keenly sensed that her message of racial unity was going to engender, she pointedly acknowledged,

This I do not covet, for the conflict has seemed to be continuous of late years; *but I do not mean to live a coward or die a coward, leaving my work undone*. I must follow in my Master's footsteps. It has become fashionable to look down upon the poor, and upon the colored race in particular. But Jesus, the master, was poor, and he sympathizes with the poor, the discarded, the oppressed, and declares that every insult shown to them is as if shown to Himself. I am more and more surprised as I see those who claim to be children of God possessing so little of the sympathy, tenderness, and love which actuated Christ. Would that every church, North and South, were imbued with the spirit of our Lord's teaching (Ibid., 10-11 *emphasis mine*).

The entire compilation, *The Southern Work*, is in fact a special collection of writings, first published by Edson White in the summer of 1898, bringing together the basic materials that his

mother had written concerning the work in the south. The printing of this work was actually done in his little print shop aboard the *Morning Star*, his mission boat for the south (Ibid., 5-6). This was to assist him financially as well in his endeavors in the south. And three years later, in 1901, Edson drew some more writings together as a sort of supplement to *The Southern Work*, particularly since his mother continued to write counsels relating to special problems, with respect to the developing work in the southern field.

Altogether, then, as far as Mrs. White was concerned, all brethren should be treated equally, with everyone participating in the unity of faith – black, white, other – regarded as one in Christ. According to her, “Sorrow filled heaven as it was revealed that man [black, white, brown, yellow, etc.] was lost and that world which God had created was to be filled with mortals doomed to misery, sickness, and death, and there was no way of escape for the offender. The whole family of Adam must die” (White, 1947:42). Continuing along the trend of salvific thought she postured, “He [Jesus] then made known to the angelic host that a way of escape had been made for lost man. He told them that he had been pleading with his Father, and had offered to give His life a ransom, to take the sentence of death upon Himself, that through Him man might find pardon...” (Ibid.). Here again, Mrs. White essentially shows how all humans are at the very same level, on the very same playing field in God’s plan of salvation, according to the bible; and it is because of Christ’s life all are made whole and can overcome shortcomings – prejudice or otherwise. Elsewhere, Mrs. White spoke of the redeemed being welcomed to their heavenly home that Jesus is preparing for them, and of joy and songs of holy triumph! In her own words, “...by and by the gates of heaven will be thrown open to admit God’s children, and from the lips of the King of glory the benediction [of glorious invitation] will fall on their ears like richest music ...” (White, 1892:125-26).

But what about the period between Christ's sacrifice and the redeemed in heaven in Mrs. White's view, insofar as it pertains to race relations? In other words, was Mrs. White always consistent with her view of the manner in which relations between blacks and whites should proceed? For emphasis, Mrs. White's life spanned the years 1827-1915, a time when white racism, blatant anti-black racial discrimination and prejudice in the church were quite overt (very much in your face), and replete throughout all the denomination's institutions, as in the wider U.S. society. At times, however, her counsel did grind against the sentiments of the white denominational leadership. After all, it was these very leaders that helped to put racially biased policies in place and also helped to perpetuate the cycle of oppression, as cited previously in this chapter. As such, it should be noted that denominational leaders and Ellen White were not always on the same page. Furthermore, denominational leaders' focus and practice did not always match what they said, with respect to the amelioration of racial discriminatory practices, deep-seated prejudice and injustice (Baker, 1996).

As already affirmed, Mrs. White herself (based on her writings) upheld the dignity of all humans and admonished racial equality and unity, since Christ's blood covers all in the same manner. And in addition to *The Southern Work* and other references shown above, there are many other counsels of Ellen White addressing race relations directly. We now examine a few more references for the purposes of comparison. As she saw it, God has made all nations of one blood to dwell upon the earth – all endowed with the same ability to seek the Lord, and all equal in God's eyes – Acts 17:24-27 (*in White, 1900:385*). Mrs. White also drew reference from Revelation 7:9 which speaks of a “great multitude” from among all peoples, languages and nations, standing before the throne of God, “clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands,” signifying victory of people of earth regardless of ‘race,’ color, nationality or caste (*Ibid.*). In

other words, Mrs. White was consciously casting a bridge between Christ's earthly sacrifice and the rejoicing of the redeemed at the second coming, showing that in the interim all humans are indeed (created) equal and we should recognize and honor that. So then, not only are people all over the world of one blood, in terms of the equality principle, but people of all shades and colors, from all walks of life, and all corners of the earth will be rejoicing together at the second advent of Christ.

More poignantly, as she saw it, in addressing the question of 'who is my neighbor?', Mrs. White posited that, "...wherever Christ abides in human hearts, He will be revealed in the same way. Wherever it acts, the religion of Christ will bless. Wherever it works, there is brightness" (Ibid., 386). She is essentially referencing the point of not only being one in Christ, but more so, that Christ works through people to act compassionately, and in a loving manner toward all men, regardless of religious creed, 'race' or station in life. As such, she stressed the beauty of acting in a benevolent manner to all people. As she puts it, "Loving ministry will break down prejudice, and win souls to God" (Ibid.). She even makes reference to the neutrality of ethnicity, as found in Paul's counsel, showing that "In Christ there is neither Jew nor Greek, bond nor free" – Galatians 3:28 (Ibid.). In other words, love and equality as neutral factors in interpersonal relationships are seen as guiding principles. And in openly solidifying her position on brotherly love, including racial unity, she perorated, "No distinction on account of nationality, race, or caste, is recognized by God. He is the Maker of all mankind. All men are of one family by creation, and all are one through redemption. Christ came to demolish every wall of partition..." (Ibid.). This 'wall of partition' that divides people is a major theme in Mrs. White's writing, and is expounded on by her in various ways.

However, Mrs. White also countered her own position on unity, when racial tensions were so bitter so as to threaten physical harm, or serious injury of whites and blacks involved in interracial religious practice, for instance. If a white was to preach to a black gathering or teach blacks in the south (as her son, Edson did), around the turn of the twentieth century, for example, then that was actual cause for the surrounding (white) community to rally together and run the preacher or teacher out of town. But even more severe measures may have been taken, such as physically harming the blacks or whites involved in interracial gatherings, or perhaps even destroying or burning their property (Graybill, 1971).

Such actions were undertaken by southern white communities, perhaps without even the slightest hint of notice or some form of discipline on the part of local authorities. With that backdrop, Mrs. White adjusted her position on the racial unity issue, as seen in passages like the one below. And based on her own arguments, such a shift was necessitated as a practical matter, due to the expediency of the times. Thus, in the early twentieth century (around 1909), for example, Mrs. White noted:

I am burdened, heavily burdened, for the work among the colored people. The gospel is to be presented to the downtrodden Negro race. But great caution will have to be shown in the efforts put forth for the uplifting of this people. Among the white people in many places there exists a strong prejudice against the Negro race. We may desire to ignore this prejudice, but we cannot do it. If we were to act as if this prejudice did not exist we could not get the light before the white people. We must meet the situation as it is and deal with it wisely and intelligently (White, 1948b:204).

And this was written around the very same time that the harassing racial situations were also occurring (in the south) as described in the foregoing paragraphs. Note here, though, that getting “the light before the white people” was of crucial, if not prime, significance to Ellen White. In other words, Mrs. White was very well aware of white racism and anti-black prejudice in the denomination and in denominational endeavors; but as far as she was concerned, one had

to be mindful of the racial prejudice and not to do anything that would upset the whites, so as to not deter the evangelistic work among white people.

From that standpoint, a type of balancing act seems to surface, so that on the one hand, Mrs. White showed concern for the black work and the related prejudice, but on the other hand she expressed concern for the white work (i.e., evangelistic efforts among white people). It is basically two positions at odds with each other, revealing tight racial tensions and prejudice in the mix. It's a type of duality that when examined, the idea is that 'race mingling' was a volatile situation in which whites (both inside and outside the denomination) were dead set against the notion of any form of work or ministry that involved blacks and whites together. It is from this very backdrop that Mrs. White also issued direct statements on the justification for racial segregation and exclusivity, which actually reverberates today (i.e., Adventists still continue to employ such justifications). In this regard, I cite the following quote (part of which is also shown under the Lewis Sheafe section earlier in this chapter), as a case in point:

...cautions were sent that every movement must be guarded, that the workers were to make no political speeches, and that the mingling of whites and blacks in social equality was by no means to be encouraged. ... Let as little as possible be said about the color line, and let the colored people work chiefly for those of their own race. In regard to white and colored people worshipping in the same building, this cannot be followed as a general custom with profit to either party – especially in the South. The best thing will be to provide the colored people who accept the truth, with places of worship of their own, in which they can carry on their services by themselves. This is particularly necessary in the South in order that the work for the white people may be carried on without serious hindrance (White, 1948b: 206).

As expounded upon, here the message of separation is clearly spelled out: that little should be said about black and white racial issues, every move guarded, the mingling of blacks and whites in social equality to be discouraged by all means, and that blacks minister to and worship with blacks, and whites minister to and worship with whites, generally speaking, so as to not 'agitate'

the color line, and in order that the work for white people be performed “without serious hindrance.” As far as Mrs. White was concerned, such a pattern was to be followed until the Lord showed a better way.

It is positions like these, as in the last couple of quotations, which appear inconsistent with previous counsels, and that have also opened the door to criticism of Ellen White’s work. In this regard, by around the end of the nineteenth century, Mrs. White argued for integration of the races in church, and she also argued for the integration of all Euro-American ethnic groups, against the separation view held by SDA whites. And in *The Southern Work*, particularly with respect to the prevailing prejudice against blacks and the ‘unity-of-all-believers’ principle which she espoused, she made the strong case that “the Lord has given us light concerning all such matters. There are principles laid down in His Word that should guide us in dealing with these perplexing questions” (2004:9). Yet, elsewhere she wrote, “the relation of the two races has been a matter hard to deal with, and I fear that it will ever remain a most perplexing problem” (1948b: 214).

The statements from these two sources (just cited), taken at face value, are contradictory in nature and may even appear to cancel out each other. But as elucidated before, the counsels from these two sources were written at different historical points in time – the former was written toward the end of the nineteenth century, and the latter, around the end of the first decade of the twentieth century. Thus, with respect to the spirit of the letter of the latter source, in light of ongoing racial tensions, Mrs. White also wrote “we cannot lay down a definite line to be followed in dealing with this subject [of the color line]” (Ibid., 213). That is why she reversed course, and urged for segregation of blacks and whites even in terms of having separate places of worship and carrying on in divided fashion, till the Lord showed a better way (Ibid., 206-207).

Such changing positions have been questioned, however, by some observers such as Malcolm Bull and Keith Lockhart. They show that whereas in the 1890s, Mrs. White argued for integration in the Adventist Church against the prejudice of the white members, by 1908 she bowed to the racism she had earlier tried to resist (Bull and Lockhart, 2007). In that vein, they argue that Mrs. White justified her stance for separate black and white churches out of concern that the (evangelistic) work for the white people may be carried forward without serious hindrance (Ibid., 280).

But a closer look at Mrs. White's earlier (1891) work, right within the midst all the counsel stressing unity of the brethren, reveals that even her earlier counsels contain what may appear to be a tinge of biased language. Here is an idea of such pattern. By way of chastisement and in repudiating certain resolutions with respect to the separatist mentality and prejudices of the white brethren in her day, Mrs. White clearly asserted, "Let not men take the place of God, but stand aside in awe, and let God work upon hearts, both white and black, in His own way. He will adjust all these perplexing questions [of race issues]." And in emphatic language she added, "We need not prescribe a definite plan of working. Leave an opportunity for God to do something. ... 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" (2004:15).

But then one paragraph later, Mrs. White also stated:

Let us do what we can to send to this class [i.e., colored people] laborers who will work in Christ's name, who will not fail nor be discouraged. We should educate colored men to be missionaries among their own people. ... There are able colored ministers who have embraced the truth. Some of these feel unwilling to devote themselves to work for their own race; they wish to preach to the white people. These men are making a great mistake. They should seek most earnest to save their own race, and they will not by any means be excluded from the gatherings of the white people. White men and white women [however] should be qualifying themselves to work among the colored people (Ibid., 15-16).

Essentially, in this case in point, mixed in with her earlier counsels on unity and equality, Mrs. White also postulated that both whites and blacks should be qualified to work among blacks, using their bestowed talents and gifts to bless others, but that blacks should not even entertain the idea of working among whites. In placing this in perspective, Mrs. White believed that Christian workers should not be working from the “world’s standpoint,” but from the biblical standpoint, with an influence that should bear testimony against the “customs and practices” of the world (Ibid., 16). Furthermore, according to her, “by a well-ordered life and godly conversation they [Christians] will condemn the folly, the impenitence, the idolatry, the iniquitous practices of the world” (Ibid., 17). Yet, she disavowed the idea of educated or able blacks reaching or teaching whites.

Besides such observation of racial issues in the SDA Church, important to note also is that while SDA leaders deplored slavery in the nineteenth century, they nonetheless failed to uphold principles of equality and integration between blacks and whites in practice (Fisher, 2003); principles which lay at the core of the Adventist message. Furthermore, the pattern of separate institutional development became evident and increasingly entrenched, as more blacks came into the church (Reynolds, 1984; Bull and Lockhart, 2007). And with that pattern of separation also came persistent racial prejudice, racial policies, and the inevitable burgeoning of anti-black discrimination throughout the entire SDA system in the United States. The racism was systematic and thorough, even with respect to admission to Adventist schools, hospitals, etc., as already highlighted in this chapter, leading up to the official internal segregation, authorized by the GC in the spring of 1944. It is against this background that ministry to blacks and by blacks has become so heavily institutionalized as a segregated affair, with many black

SDAs becoming settled in this crystalized niche, seeing no point in trusting the white political establishment of the SDA Church.

And in spite of all the discrimination, surmounting challenges to blacks, and the persistent racial tensions, once black SDA numbers began to grow, particularly after the turn of the twentieth century, many blacks soon developed an insatiable zeal for the work and before long became able and charismatic leaders in the black work, leading great evangelistic efforts (Reynolds, 1984). These efforts on the part of SDA blacks included activities such as travelling as medical doctors, professionals, and evangelists on mission trips throughout the world, including India and Africa (Ibid.). Such was the zealous outburst and vivacity of the black SDA spirit. And this (black) passion for the Advent work has still held true to the current time, even as operations are nurtured in segregated fashion, as for the most part, black and white SDA ministers and ministries separately serve black and white constituents respectively. This pattern is actually systemic, part of a larger SDA culture and ideology, particularly in the U.S., nurtured by the mentality and practice of each ‘ministering to his/her own people’. Thus, apart from the entrenched black-white segregation, it is this broader SDA support and spirit of separation that has created the fertile ground for the proliferation of separate ethnic SDA enclaves. Whether it’s Romanian, Hispanic, Korean, Indian, Ghanaian or otherwise, one can find all these various separate SDA enclaves throughout the U.S., though such division is confined to the local church level.

Ellen White on Interracial Marriage

Mrs. White also issued statements regarding ‘race mixing’ insofar as they pertain to interracial marriage. In 1896, in a manuscript entitled ‘Counsel Regarding Inter-marriage,’ she began by affirming that, “We are one brotherhood.” And she continued, positing, “Let us as

Christians who accept the principle that all men, white and black, are free and equal, adhere to this principle, and not be cowards in the face of the world, and in the face of the heavenly intelligences” (White, 2006:343). Mrs. White also noted, “The Lord looks upon the creatures He has made with compassion, no matter to what race they may belong. God ‘hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth’” [quoted from Acts 17:26]. Then “Speaking to His disciples,” she continued, “the Saviour said, ‘All ye are brethren.’ God is our common Father, and each one of us is our brother’s keeper” (*originally from the Review and Herald* magazine, January 21, 1896; *reproduced in* White, 2006:344). Again, she brought to bear not only the unity, along with the brother’s keeper, principle, but the unequivocal and enduring principles of freedom and equality, not being cowards before heaven and the world. Yet, in spite of all the beautiful language, firm spiritual stance, and unswerving exhortation to brotherhood, the overriding objection is pinned to that very message. In Mrs. White’s own words:

But there is an objection to the marriage of the white race with the black. All should consider that they have no right to entail upon their offspring that which will place them at a disadvantage; they have no right to give them as a birthright a condition which would subject them to a life of humiliation. The children of these mixed marriages have a feeling of bitterness toward the parents who have given them this lifelong inheritance. For this reason, if there were no other, there should be no intermarriage between the white and the colored race (2006:343-44).

The objection at the beginning of this quote is unmistakably clear. What is not so clear, however, is precisely what is the ‘disadvantage’ of the offspring (of interracial marriages) that she is referring to, although it may or may not point to the “birthright” of a “condition which would subject them to a life of humiliation” as she subsequently mentioned. But then again, a clarification of the terms “disadvantage,” “condition,” and “humiliation” is not offered, leaving much to conjecture. Nor does Ms. White expound on exactly what causes the bitterness of

mixed marriage children toward their parents “who have given them this lifelong inheritance.”

In other words, is there some type of curse that falls upon the children of “mixed marriages” for life? Were people somehow abusing the children because of their ‘mixed’ heritage?

A good apprehension of the meaning of this ‘bitterness’ and ‘lifelong inheritance’ is absolutely crucial to understanding Mrs. White; yet, a more involved explanation is frustratingly lacking, particularly in light of the fact that “if there were no other,” this ‘disadvantage’ and ‘humiliation’ of ‘mixed marriage’ kids stands as the only reason why “there should be no intermarriage between the white and colored race,” according to Mrs. White.²⁴ Granted, this type of thinking, of the ‘disadvantage’ of ‘mixed’ kids, and the stigma of being ‘mixed race’ was prevalent in Ellen White’s time growing up in the nineteenth century, but remains a diehard way of thinking that persists to this day, both in and outside Adventism (Tunc, 2002; Kellogg, 1881). And John Harvey Kellogg, a noted international figure also known for his major contribution to the health wing of Seventh-day Adventism, was not only like a son to James and Ellen White in the 1800s (Schwarz, 2006), but shared the same thoughts with Mrs. White as well with respect to the disadvantages of ‘race mixing,’ as he placed particular emphasis on keeping the ‘white’ race unmixed and ‘pure’.²⁵ So close, in fact, was John H. Kellogg to the Whites before ties were severed between him and the denomination, that it was James and Ellen White who not only encouraged Kellogg to continue down the path of a medical career, but also sponsored Kellogg’s

²⁴ Note that comments made concerning lack of clarity or lack of involved explanation on the part of Mrs. White, have more to do with the pattern of her writing itself, her choice of words, and a comparative study of her writings.

²⁵ Dr. John Harvey Kellogg, inventor and health pioneer, for whom (along with his brother) the cereal brand ‘Kellogg’s Cornflakes’ is named, was the director of the famed (former) Battle Creek Sanitarium – an institution of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. But what Dr. Kellogg seems to be less well-known for, is his racial theories, strong promotion of eugenic thought and practices, and his position as being one of the founders of the ‘Race Betterment Foundation’ – a eugenics organization, founded around 1906 and was centered in Battle Creek, Michigan (see Tunc, 2002; and Kellogg, 1881: 102-113 – particularly his discussion on ‘Heredity’ beginning on p. 102, with emphasis on pp. 106 & 112 as well). And note that the term ‘eugenics’ literally meaning ‘good birth,’ basically has to do with the possibilities of improving the qualities of the human species or of a targeted human population.

medical education (Schwarz, 2006). But notwithstanding that lack of clarity on the part of Mrs. White herself, with respect to the disadvantage of the ‘mixed kid,’ one can compare or contrast such thought with Mrs. White’s own admission of the unity paradigm as well as the principle that all men, whether white or black, are free and equal, and that one should adhere to such, rather than be “cowards in the face of the world, and in the face of the heavenly intelligences” (White, 2006:343-44; and 2004:9-13).

Then in 1912 (some three years before her death), in replying “to inquiries regarding the advisability of intermarriage between Christian young people of the white and black races,” Mrs. White showed that she was confronted with such inquiry in her earlier experience and that “the light given” her of the Lord was that “this step should not be taken; for it is sure to create controversy and confusion” (2006:344). “I have always had the same counsel to give,” she continued, stating that, “no encouragement to marriages of this character [white and black] should be given among our people” (Ibid.). Furthermore, she postulated, “Let the colored brother enter into marriage with a colored sister who is worthy, one who loves God, and keeps His commandments. Let the white sister who contemplates uniting in marriage with the colored brother refuse to take this step, for the Lord is not leading in this direction” (Ibid.).

Now as to how exactly the union of black and white in holy matrimony guarantees the creation of ‘controversy’ and ‘confusion,’ remains shadowed in obscurity, an explanation of which Mrs. White, herself, totally evades, simply asserting instead that this was “the light given” her of the Lord, without offering any clear reason. It is as if one ought to just imbibe what Mrs. White says as ‘authoritative,’ and as the ‘spirit of prophecy’ without questioning it; a type of blind allegiance. She also fails to address specifically why “no encouragement” should be given to interracial marriages, remaining absolutely mum and nebulous at best on that position (in this

particular message). And certainly there was a dismal failure on her part in explaining why a white sister should “refuse” to enter into wedlock with a ‘colored’ brother since this is seen as not sanctioned by the Lord. In other words, as to what the precise reasons are why “the Lord is not leading in this direction” of black-white interracial marriage, no direct elucidation or justification is proffered by Mrs. White.

Then, as if repetition will somehow shed more light on her response to the inquiries concerning interracial marriage between Christian young people, Mrs. White added a few more thoughts: “Time is too precious to be lost in controversy that will arise over this matter. Let not questions of this kind be permitted to call our ministers from their work. The taking of such a step will create confusion and hindrance. It will not be for the advancement of the work or for the glory of God” (Ibid.). This is the entirety of that 1912 (response) message by Ellen White – a mere two paragraphs long. But in this particular message, Mrs. White made her point hard and fast, but certainly not clear. Here again, the notions of “controversy” and “confusion” popped up, with the term “hindrance” added, in the context of “time” being “too precious to be lost.” And again these are all left dangling vague and without direct elucidation.

In the first half of the very last sentence of that last quotation, however, in stating that “It will not be for the advancement of the work...,” Mrs. White, based on motifs in her writings on race relations, does seem to suggest that black-white marriages will impede the progress of the gospel and Advent message among whites in the south. But such extrapolation is left for one to assume. Then again, on closer examination of that quotation, one realizes that Mrs. White, after all, could be referring to not bothering ministers about interracial marriage or such issues, when she made that statement (“It will not be for the advancement of the work...”). The reason why this particular quotation is doubly vague, is because of the added context of not disturbing

“ministers from their work.” In other words, the specific wording “It” in her choice of prose (in the last sentence of the quote), after factoring in ministers’ duties, casts even further ambiguity on her message; i.e., what exactly is “It” referring to? Then, in the very final part of that last sentence of the quotation, Mrs. White posited yet another unexplained and obscure clause – i.e., either interracial marriages will not be “...for the glory of God,” or alternatively, it is not pleasing to God to bother ministers with the ‘issue’ of interracial marriage or the like. Either way that final clause is interpreted, the underlying implications are that ultimately, interracial marriages will not bring glory to God – an observation that is as mysterious as it is confounding.

To be sure, however, Mrs. White’s counsels on interracial marriages have been consistent, basically reiterating that whites and blacks should not mingle in marriage. For a deeper sense of her position on that topic over time, we return to her “Our Duty...” statement, for example, written back in the early 1890s. This will enhance our understanding of the trajectory of her thought, comparing former counsel with latter counsel on ‘intermarriage’. And paying attention to the spirit and letter of Mrs. White’s words, the sociological phenomenon of ‘social distance’²⁶ is also seen interspersed in her writings, a clear example of which is shown in the quote below. In speaking to the unity principle and the prejudice of the white members, letting Mrs. White’s words speak for themselves, back in 1891 she avowed that:

They [colored people] should hold membership in the church with the white brethren. Every effort should be made to wipe out the terrible wrong which has been done them. At the same time we must not carry things to extremes and run into fanaticism on this question. Some would think it right to throw down every partition wall and intermarry with the colored people, but this is not the right thing to teach or to practice (2004:15).

²⁶ ‘Social distance’ essentially refers to the extent to which individuals or groups are removed from or feel less comfortable participating in the lives of others – see Bogardus, 1933.

The second half of this quote (i.e., the last two sentences) is out of sync with the rest of the entire “Our Duty...” document. In that particular document, this is the only clause referring to intermarriage, and it sticks out amidst all her stern counsel on unity, duty, and equality made abundantly clear in the rest of the document. It would appear as though Mrs. White had that particular thought on her opposition to intermarriage in the back of her mind to share, and while penning this document on unity and equality, the thought came to the fore and so she made note of it.

That’s where the social distance motif is clearly evident in her writing, insofar as it pertains to interpersonal relationships and intermarriage in particular. Thus, it is salient to point out that whereas Mrs. White may have railed against slavery (earlier in the nineteenth century), and avowed of whites and blacks worshiping together in the same church (at least in the early 1890s), she nonetheless was against blacks marrying whites. On that count, she considered intermarriage as carrying things to “extremes,” and made it categorically clear that such a step was tantamount to “fanaticism,” again not providing an explanation that would illuminate her message. What can be taken, however, from the context of this specific counsel (particularly when compared with her other, though vacillating, statements on race relations more broadly) is that: (a) every effort must be made to right the horrors of slavery and whites’ inhumane treatment of blacks, (b) whites and blacks should act like united brethren, based on the gospel imperative, attend and hold membership in the same church; perhaps even sit in the same pew, but (c) white-black intermarriage is simply delusional or “fanatical” – it is strictly forbidden. Don’t even think about it; it is going one step too far.

Such meaning (in a, b and c above) is warranted when considering that Mrs. White herself unmistakably claimed that certain ‘walls of partition,’ like that pertaining to

‘intermarriage,’ should be kept up and recognized. It is wrong to tear those walls down, and furthermore, as underscored, it is not right to teach or practice otherwise, as far as she was concerned. Once again, the want of an adequate explanation over Mrs. White’s comments on intermarriage meets with a deafening silence. Actually, in this case (in the ‘Our Duty’ quote), no explication is given at all. The message is a straightforward and rigid one – do not get fanatical, blacks and whites are to abstain from marrying each other, and likewise refrain from encouraging others to pursue intermarriage. Thus the message is both extremely loud (it is not right to intermarry) and astoundingly silent (absolutely no explanation offered) at the same time.

What precisely is not right about teaching or practicing ‘interracial’ marriage is left to the conjecture, and even imagination, of everyone. Yet these were Mrs. White’s expressed sentiments, in spite of the solemn spirit and stance on unity, equality, courageousness, the converted heart, lack of cowardice, and biblical integrity with which the (‘Our Duty’) document was written. Besides, these sentiments also directly contradict many other explicit counsels given by Mrs. White; for example, where she showed that, “No distinction on account of nationality, race, or caste, is recognized by God. He is the Maker of all mankind. All men are of one family by creation, and all are one through redemption. Christ came to demolish every wall of partition...” (1900:386). Take note of the “wall” (i.e., ‘wall of partition’) language or motif, here again, since, as you recall, Mrs. White also used the same “wall” motif in the quotation shown (three paragraphs) above, in writing against interracial marriage. In other words, while according to her, “Christ came to demolish” all walls of partition, she somehow found it her duty to raise those walls up again. Notwithstanding her objection to interracial marriage, in contrast with the ‘demolishing of walls’ motif we just saw, she also referenced that well-known and commonly used biblical passage: “In Christ there is neither Jew nor Greek, bond

nor free” (Gal. 3:28; *cited in* 1900:386). And elsewhere she posited that, “The religion of the Bible recognizes no caste or color” (1948b:223).

Moreover, Mrs. White did also offer up the following. According to her, “All who believe in Christ will understand the personal relation that exists between them and their brethren. ... Many of those who have had every advantage, who have regarded themselves as superior to the colored people because their skin was white, will find that many of the colored race will go into heaven before them” (extracted from *Review and Herald*, January 21, 1896; reproduced in *The Southern Work*, p. 55). Further, she exclaimed, “We have no time to build up walls of distinction between the white and the black race. ... The walls of sectarianism and caste and race will fall down when the true missionary spirit enters the hearts of men. Prejudice is melted away by the love of God” (Ibid.). Here is that “wall” motif once again. “We have no time to build up walls of distinction” between whites and blacks, Mrs. White purposefully emphasized; whereas, in previous counsel she encouraged the preservation of walls between whites and blacks specifically with regards to the intermarriage issue. Thus, this time, in speaking of the falling down of walls, Mrs. White’s own language appears to reverse previous counsel, albeit generally speaking, concerning relations “between the white and the black race.” But that’s so far as it goes – i.e., the reversal in language is only apparent, or certainly partial, since it does not speak specifically to interracial marriage.

So whereas on page 15 of *The Southern Work* (*see* quotation five paragraphs above) there is specific counsel to not throw down every wall of partition, with respect to interracial marriage, in this last quotation (in the preceding paragraph), for instance, Mrs. White was not specific in citing the ‘throwing down of walls’ with respect to interracial marriage. Consequently, there is a distinction, or at least counsel, on throwing down of walls between the races, more generally,

but not with respect to interracial marriage more specifically. On such counts, nonetheless, and as pointed out in ‘Section C’ of this chapter, the objective observer cannot help but notice the startling incongruity emblazoned in Mrs. White’s writings.

And finally, in reflecting on Mrs. White for purposes of this discourse, she did also note that, “Walls of separation have been built up between the whites and the blacks. These walls of prejudice will tumble down of themselves as did the walls of Jericho, when Christians obey the Word of God, which enjoins on them supreme love to their Maker and impartial love to their neighbors” (published in the *Review and Herald*, December 17, 1895; reproduced in *The Southern Work*, p. 43). Here in particular, Mrs. White admitted that “walls” of separation have been built up between whites and blacks (using the passive voice). And here again, Mrs. White spoke of a falling down of those racial “walls” of division, in reference to prejudice and separation between blacks and whites, and as it concerns a surrendered heart, more generally, but without being specific with regards to walls built up over the interracial marriage issue. Notwithstanding such lack of specificity, and despite the back and forth in Mrs. White’s plethora of counsels, along with their varying contexts, taken altogether, the SDA Church has certainly been influenced by, and felt the impact of her views on ‘race’ relations.

Summary

We have dug into the extensive character of race relations and segregation in Seventh-day Adventism. In so doing, this chapter took us from the roots of Seventh-day Adventism up to the contemporary scene, in thinking of the dynamics, practices, and attitudes involved in race relations in the denomination. In facilitating that journey, this chapter took a multifaceted approach, permeating three broader segments – organizational structure, socio-historical

trajectory of race relations in the SDA Church, and Ellen White's position(s) on the matter, as together they expounded on the nature and extent of the racialization of the SDA Church.

But how does all of that fit into its immediate and broader social milieu, insofar as a measure of sociological significance is concerned, and allowing for time-space considerations? To answer that most incisive and critical question, chapter three treats of a more general discussion on the interaction between race, religion, prejudice, and segregation, also from a (religious) parallel vantage point in American society. This helps to place the Adventist story in its wider and specific social contexts. And with that, the discourse on theoretical lens (along with research methods) is scrutinized more closely in chapter four; while the final chapters (five and six) directly address contemporary views and perspectives among both blacks and whites, on the current segregation practice in Seventh-day Adventism. Altogether, the chapters reveal the character of the racial strain embedded in the very foundation of the denomination.

CHAPTER THREE

LITERATURE REVIEW: SOCIAL CONSIDERATIONS OF RACE AND RELIGION IN AMERICA

Racial segregation as a pervasive social phenomenon is manifested not just in areas of American life such as housing markets and the job market, but is entrenched in American religious life as well. And while in the last sixty years some racial integration has advanced in many areas of American society, racial segregation in religion has perhaps persisted more than in any other institution. That does not mean, however, that all traces of racial antagonism and indifference are completely wiped out in American society. Rather, in spite of racial and ethnic tensions that have pervaded the U.S. sociopolitical and economic landscape, particularly the religious arena, the twentieth century has seen some changes in the racial climate with respect to racial justice and racial integration in America. Much of that pertains to high profile racial court cases and civil rights legislature in the 1950s and 1960s, for instance.

It is precisely a little over sixty years ago, as a matter of fact, that we witnessed a key transformational court case in that regard, when the momentous 1954 Supreme Court decision in *Brown vs. the Board of Education* occurred. It altered the face of the American public education system, as the court ruled to integrate schools, essentially overturning the prior segregated precedent in *Plessy vs. Ferguson* (1896),²⁷ which endorsed racial segregation via the notion of ‘separate but equal’ in public facilities. Another crucial court decision was rendered in 1967 in the case of *Loving v. Virginia*, which nullified state laws outlawing interracial marriage (Hawkins & Sinitiere, 2014). Other key legislation involve the Civil Rights Act of 1964, and the Voting Rights Act of 1965 – all with the aim of reversing racial injustice in areas like housing,

²⁷ Note for comparison – it was in that same year (1896) that Oakwood College (Now Oakwood University), Adventists’ only HBCU, was originally founded in Alabama by the white Adventist leadership at the time, which also dovetailed Edson White’s labors in the south.

labor markets, and voting. Together, these have no doubt played a crucial role in advancing racial integration in many areas of American life.

But religious racial segregation specifically has been a diehard phenomenon in American religion. In the categorization of Protestantism in America, for instance, three broad categories are referenced – ‘Evangelical, Mainline Protestants, and Black Protestants’ (*see* Woodberry et al., 1998; and Putnam & Campbell, 2010:12), showing that racial segregation remains embedded even in the way in which broader labels of church life are thought of. It was Martin Luther King, Jr. himself who characterized the 11:00am worship hour on Sunday as the most segregated hour in America, a depiction which still lingers on the religious landscape.

There are studies that also point out the relationship among evangelicals or white conservative Protestants (i.e., with reference to institutional affiliation/loyalty), black-white racial segregation, and the strengthening of in-group social ties and solidarity (Emerson and Smith, 2000; Emerson, Smith & Sikkink, 1999). And in relation to that, there are specific references in the literature to racial attitudes of religious whites (particularly evangelicals or white conservative Protestants – WCPs). It has been shown, for example, that many white religious people in the U.S. perceive cultural background and style-difference between blacks and whites to be a reason for not wanting to worship together or participate in the same services (Emerson & Smith, 2000:135). This is actually part of the reason for the observation that America has essentially moved from separate pews back around the late seventeenth century, to separate churches (Emerson and Smith, 2000:21-49; *cf.* Loescher, 1948; George, 1973; Lincoln, 1973; Scherer, 1975; Wagner, 1979; Wood, 1991; and Lincoln and Mamiya, 2003).

And with the seventeenth century in mind, it was from around mid-seventeenth century the master-servant (slave) relationship pervasive in American society, particularly in the south

(besides elsewhere), had a severe impact on religion, meaning that as in the broader society, likewise in the church; blacks had to know their (subjugated) place and stay in it (*cf.* Franklin and Moss, 2000; Scherer, 1975). Today, however, while this earlier milieu of master-servant relations no longer holds true in U.S. society, it is not strange that it is in this early American context that we first see the development of racial segregation pervading the religious sphere. At first, blacks were not allowed to sit together with whites in the same church building; i.e., they were placed in separate pews and designated areas, but segregated in the same building nonetheless (Franklin 1967; Scherer, 1975; Loescher, 1948).

Denominational examples of this situation, whereby blacks and whites were separated in the same church building, include Presbyterians and Episcopalians, who admitted “negroes” to worship, “usually in segregated sections of their churches” (Franklin, 1967:228). Further, blacks were also supervised and scrutinized if and whenever they met alone for social/religious purposes. The reasons for this are threefold. First, blacks (mostly slaves) were not trusted because of their rebellious tendencies (as in holding meetings to plot escapes); secondly, white ‘masters’ from the beginning have treated Africans as heathens, with inferior or no culture; and thirdly, blacks, with particular reference to the period of slavery and treatment of slaves, have always been treated in a paternalistic manner by whites, as though in need of saving and being taught by those from a superior culture; (Ibid., 198-201, 214; Emerson and Smith, 2000).

As time went on, however, blacks (particularly free blacks) went on to form their own separate religious and other civic institutions, due to pervasive racist attitudes and anti-black discriminatory practices. In that respect, while the African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Church, for example, made considerable headway among blacks in the south in the early nineteenth century, the south actually went as far as proscribing black religious life, from around the early

to mid-nineteenth century; i.e., “between 1820 and 1860” (Franklin, 1967:227), by condemning black religious activities altogether. It is due to such stringent means that religious racial segregation actually moved slowly over time from the pews to the churches (*see chapter two for example* Emerson & Smith, 2000, “From Separate Pews to Separate Churches”; and *cf.* Wilmore, 1972), beginning around the end of the eighteenth century. This very development of church racial segregation over time due to oppression in the white churches, and the resultant rise in black-led socio-religious institutions, all directly highlight some of the background to the persistent black-white racial segregation in the Christian Church in America.

Moreover, it has been shown that ninety percent of white American Christians worship in all-white churches, and ninety percent of African American Christians worship in all-black churches (Perkins and Rice, 2000). The same refrain is echoed elsewhere; for example, in the 1998 National Congregations Study, around “90 percent of American congregations are made up of at least 90 percent of people of the same race” (*in* Emerson & Smith, 2000:135-6). And research on integration levels among congregations confirm that figure (Jenkins, 2003), positing that an integration rate of some 8-10% is exhibited among all congregations.

But recognizing the social construction of race insofar as society attaches importance to it (Emerson & Smith 2000:145; and Hawkins & Sinitiere 2014: xi), Emerson and Smith have noted that since religion contributes to the separation of social life along racial lines, “it reduces opportunities for intergroup relations and social ties” (2000:155). And in relation to that, research study also shows that there are low levels of contact with blacks, for example, due to WCPs choosing to live in all white neighborhoods and maintaining social distance from blacks, as well as not inviting blacks to their homes for dinner or for social interaction (Emerson & Smith, 2000; Blanchard, 2007; *cf.* Reimers, 1965). These instances, in essence, speak to the way

in which many white churchgoers tend to remain segregated in church, neighborhood and social life, which tends to lessen any interaction with blacks or others, thus perpetuating a culture of separation. A similar mindset toward religious segregation, more or less, can be said for blacks as well as various other ethnic groups (also discussed below under the subheading ‘The Parallel’). Nonetheless, it is prudent to take into account the socio-historical precedent that has also given rise to blacks remaining segregated in church, as elaborated on in the ‘Socio-historical Background’ section below.

Socio-historical Background

In light of the foregoing discussion, the socio-historical trajectory must be taken into account, since any attempt to account for the persistence of racial segregation in religion ought to consider the social sources. This takes us back to at least mid-seventeenth century America when the notion of race began to make inroads into American consciousness. Of particular note here is reference to the enterprise of slavery on American shores, which was actually part of a much broader global scenario (Franklin and Moss, 2000). But it is important to point out that blacks from Africa and poor (lower class) European whites shared a common history in terms of American class and labor structure, in the early seventeenth century since both groups were under a type of indentured servitude, from which they gained their freedom after a few years of service.

Nonetheless, through the course of the seventeenth century the labor situation changed, particularly in the southern U.S., when the notion of black ‘slaves’ who would receive no pay became the cheap labor of choice (Ibid.). And thus, American chattel slavery on an extensive scale was born, and formed the backbone of U.S. industry for at least the next two hundred years, based on a number of inclinations and injustices, not excluding an economic incentive and the

notion of ‘racial superiority’. But exactly how does racial segregation and religion fit in here? With a means of obtaining cheap labor in place, and the ever-growing distinction between master and servant, notions of ‘race’ (black, white, other) became evermore an ingrained fixture at the very core of all aspects of American social life. From notions of intellectual superiority to economic advantage, all seemed to flow seamlessly into the new ‘racial’ reality, as it was taken for granted that whites were endowed with superior talent and skills compared to others (Ibid.; Allen, 1997; America, 1993; Wood, 1991; Jordan, 1968; 1974; Smith, 1922; Rauschenbusch, 1913; Asante, 2014). In the process, blacks were even relegated to being three-fifths of a person for political purposes. That’s where religion (and later, religious segregation) comes in.

As part of the new social paradigm, not even African religion was spared from subjugation or was forbidden altogether (Fox-Genovese & Genovese, 1987; Franklin and Moss, 2000). Thus, the culture of African slaves was considered not merely inferior, but, in a paternalistic way, they themselves were considered heathen in need of being taught and converted to true religion. It is in that vein that religion was also understood as a tool and measure of control (Ibid.), because ‘civilizing the heathens’ involved introducing a measure of spirituality and religion. Even the very sermons to slave audiences involved messages reminding the slaves of their proper place in social order, and that it was morally wrong to disobey their masters (Fox-Genovese and Genovese, 1987).

From that standpoint, justification for the institution of slavery was needed, and many were conjured up indeed, including the rhetoric of ‘servant obey your masters,’ extrapolated from passages like Philemon 12 and Ephesians 6:5-9. Some have even gone as far as citing Exodus 20:10, 17 (from the Ten Commandments) in endorsing slavery, “showing God’s implicit

acceptance of it.”²⁸ In such a milieu of control, important to note, moreover, is that particularly in the antebellum years of the nineteenth century, free blacks, like slaves, were oppressed with as much ferocity, and fully discriminated against and disenfranchised, to the point where some were even thrown back into slavery (Franklin and Moss, 2000).

In fact, in slaveholding states like Tennessee, Texas, Louisiana, and Maryland, laws were passed to facilitate re-enslavement (Ibid., 172). So cruel and ruthless was this phenomenon that in 1859 the Arkansas legislature even “passed an act to remove free blacks and mulattoes by compelling those who remained in the state at the end of the year to choose masters ‘who must give bond not to allow such negroes to act as free’” (Ibid.). And of course, alongside that, the notion of racial and intellectual inferiority of ‘non-whites’ was aptly deployed and became widely accepted, particularly around the eighteenth century onward, utilizing such schemes as contained in evolutionary rhetoric and pseudo-science, for example, to endorse such ventures as slavery, colonialism, and white privilege (Zuberi and Bonilla-Silva, 2008; Smedley, 1998; Montagu, 1997; Jones, 2015). Even Thomas Jefferson, the main author of the Declaration of Independence, disseminated the view that blacks were not endowed with superior intellect and talent as whites were (Jefferson, 1787).

But with respect to slave-submission, use of the Bible, and other propaganda methods, one also has to be careful with the idea that slave-owners were always willing and eager to impose religion on their subjects as a means of control. In fact, just the opposite was true in many an instance or at certain times; religion was avoided as a means of control, since it would mean enlightening the slaves to their true station in life, not as prisoners but free according to the very gospel which missionaries used in collaboration with slave-owners (Emerson and Smith,

²⁸ In a mix of religion and culture, such justifications, along with other arguments telling of the benefits of slavery, ranged from evangelization and discipleship, to charitable, to social, to political rationalizations; *cited in* Emerson and Smith, 2000: 34-36.

2000: chapter 2; *cf.* Franklin and Moss, 2000:153-54; and see introduction *in* Walker, 1995). It is from that standpoint that religion could be better understood as a strategy of domination – to use or not to use – based on expediency and the particular circumstance.

In relation to that, blacks themselves, nonetheless, realized that they could use religion to their own ends – as a means of resistance. Liberation was the key and to be obtained at any cost, albeit a very expensive cost of their own lives, as was often the case with slave rebellion and revolt (Franklin and Moss, 2000:160-66; Franklin, 1967; Quarles, 1969; Levine, 1977; Raboteau, 2004; *cf.* Wilmore, 1972; and Taylor et al., 1987). And, indubitably, it is in this very context that religion was encoded by slaves as a language of resistance, within the broader ambit of a culture of resistance. For example, slaves painfully aware of their condition, became philosophical using the religion of their ‘masters’ and quickly adapted by developing very precise meanings to specific lines of songs (Franklin and Moss, 2000) – such as “Dere’s a Great Camp Meetin’ in de Promised land,” or perhaps “swing low sweet chariot, coming for to carry me home,” or “I’ve got shoes, you’ve got shoes, everybody gat shoes,” or “I’m gonna walk all over God’s heaven.” Code words like ‘heaven’ or the ‘promised land,’ for instance, were taken to mean the ‘north,’ or even Canada eventually, where slaves would abscond to freedom, particularly via the ‘Underground Railroad’ (*cf.* Still, 1886; Siebert, 1898) – an essential, well-guarded, and elaborate supportive network, bolstered by both whites and blacks in the north and south, in the slave’s bid for freedom.

But even before use of the Underground Railroad as an effective antislavery tool, these very intriguing and subtly encoded messages (or tunes) travelled from one slave to the other, and from one plantation to the next, in the careful planning of escape from brutality and bondage. In light of that, it is not strange that slave-owners became highly suspicious of slave religious

meetings and, moreover, became overly apprehensive and very nervous whenever slaves gathered together for any kind of social or religious expression (Franklin and Moss, 2000:153, 158-162, 203-10). This led them to curtail the religious meetings of slaves, or sit-in to closely supervise slave religious gatherings, or simply prohibit slaves from joining together for religious purposes altogether.

It is out this milieu of racial oppression that a culture of liberation tactics, politics, religion, and theology became enmeshed (Wilmore, 1972; Cone, 1969; Roberts, 1987; Fauset, 2002; Lincoln, 1999; 2003; Raboteau, 2004; *cf.* Burkett, 1978b; Fountain, 2010; and Robinson, 2012). In this respect, and in conjunction with staunch abolitionists like William Lloyd Garrison, Theodore Weld and others, theology also became the prime vehicle by which determined voices calling for liberation were heard, in theological programs like that of Lane Theological Seminary and Oberlin College (Franklin, 1967:246-47; *cf.* Lesick, 1980; Quarles, 1969; and Stauffer, 2004). It is such factors, along with blacks' reaction to subjugation within a white-dominated church, that eventually developed into the current state of 'Black Protestantism,' with worship as a means of cultural solidarity and time of refreshing, based on a shared experience (Wilmore, 1972; Coleman, 2000; *cf.* Kelsey, 1965; Cone, 1975; 1984; Collins, 1998; Dittes, 2003).

Along with this tension between oppression and liberation there is a particular narrative that runs through the antebellum years, and is instructive for purposes of this discourse, as it also coincides with the rise of Adventism, Millerism, and then Seventh-day Adventism as handed down to the present. This is in reference to the periods of the 'awakenings' with their clarion call for spiritual, moral, and social reforms – particularly the 'First Great Awakening' and the 'Second Great Awakening' (Miller, 1842; Wellcome, 1874; Litch, 1838; Loughborough, 1892;

1905; Land, 1998; 2005). Together they encompass the early eighteenth century to around mid-nineteenth century.

The Second Great Awakening (SGA), in particular, spanning roughly fifty-three years (from c. 1790 to 1843), contains the earliest beginnings of Seventh-day Adventism as we understand it today (Loughborough, 1892); and that certainly includes the rise of Millerism – the forerunner to Seventh-day Adventism (Olsen, 1972:106-119, 121-22, 143-253; Land, 2005:2, 4; Gordon, 2000; Reynolds, 1984; Schwarz, 1979; Spalding, 1962; *cf.* Numbers, 1945; Numbers & Butler, 1993; and Rowe, 1985). The SGA also saw a concomitant emphasis in areas such as the abolition movement (Essig, 1982; Emerson & Smith, 2000), along with the rise of militant abolitionism. And in the mix, the SGA prominently featured revivalism, restorationism – a return to forms and behavior of the early (New Testament) church, and perhaps greatest of all, ‘millennialism,’ with a heavy stress, and prediction, on the Second Advent of Christ and the end of the world (Quarles, 1969; Stauffer, 2004; Land, 2005:1-2; Knight, 1993; *cf.* Smith, 1884a; 1884b; 1897; Jordan, 1988:145-157). Though not alone in date setting, William Miller, for example, at one point predicted that Christ would return about the year 1843, “first publically presented in 1831” (Land, 2005:2; Miller, 1842; *cf.* Litch, 1838; Knight, 1993).

Amidst all this talk of hope and a brighter day to come, at least in the soon-expected coming kingdom, it is rather critical to point out that this involved varying levels of attitudes and behaviors (overt and covert) with respect to the racialization of society, particularly its ruthless impact on the church. To put that in perspective, take revivalism and the abolition movement of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries as a case in point. Firstly, some Christians justified slavery, as in the case of the famed George Whitefield of the First Great Awakening, particularly due to the economic benefits of the system, besides the attitude that whites were doing the

heathen slaves a favor by having them become saved while in bondage (*In* Emerson and Smith, 2000:25-27; *cf.* Franklin and Moss, 2000:210, 154).²⁹ Secondly, some (Christian) abolitionists advocated strongly for the end of slavery, but by the same token would have nothing to do with integration of blacks and whites, which was considered “amalgamation” (in church), as was the attitude of Charles Finney (Emerson & Smith, 2000:30-33), the renowned preacher of the Second Great Awakening. In other words, to some like Finney, while slavery was a sin, “racial prejudice” was not; certainly not like “the very real sin of slave holding,” and furthermore, black-white integration was a distraction to the advance of the gospel (*Ibid.*, 33). And then thirdly, there is the other camp who advocated against slavery, and promoted integration, but at the same time were opposed to intermarriage between blacks and whites (in the church). Here again, similar to Ellen White’s counsel (seen in the last part of chapter two), degrees of social distance come to bear, insofar as they pertain to the attitudes of whites and the level of comfort between themselves and blacks. To add some context to this (for the purposes of historical background and analysis), note that Ellen White was a teenager around the time the Second Great Awakening was winding down (i.e., around the early 1840s).

In connection with that and exacerbating the move to a more developed religiously segregated landscape during the nineteenth century, Jim Crow mentality and laws swept over U.S. society, particularly in the south, and involved everything from religion, schools, housing, and jobs to the funeral home and cemeteries, in its all-encompassing grasp of racial exclusivity and bias (Woodward, 2002; *cf.* Edwards, 1942; Allport, 1966; Perlmutter, 1992; Boles, 1988;

²⁹ Note that there were all kinds of attitudes and justifications as to why free blacks or slaves should have remained oppressed even if baptized. In fact, clergy even went to great lengths to ensure that legislation was passed to make sure that slaves remained slaves after being freed by the message of the gospel. And certainly, such attitudes were seen among white clergy, parishioner, and non-Christian alike. But to be sure, the historical dynamics, attitudes, and interplay between religion, ‘race,’ slavery, and the bible is a sticky story, the impact of which has not fully dissipated from American society (*cf.* Kelsey, 1965; Logan, 1967; and Lincoln, 1999).

Price, 1999; Ahlstrom, 2004; Raboteau, 2004; Norman, 2012). Some of that mentality, and in some cases exclusionary practices, have filtered down to the present. But the north cannot be completely exonerated of racial prejudice (past or present) in general, and in religious affairs in particular (Jensen, 2005; Mathisen, 2006; *cf.* McGreevy, 1996; Melish, 1998). The African Methodist Episcopalian (AME) Church, for instance, was founded in Pennsylvania by Richard Allen, due to tense racial oppression and measures meant to keep blacks subjugated within the white-dominated church (McClain, 1990; George, 1973; Wilmore, 1972). Besides that, it has been noted that, “Even in the North, white Christian clergymen showed little interest in evangelizing among blacks, and were content to preach in churches that strictly segregated white and black worshippers” (*in* Walker, 1995:xvii).

In the south, however, most churches tended to adhere to state segregation laws. This also helped to enforce *de jure* racism, while tacitly or openly endorsing institutionalized segregation and racism (Feldman, 2005; Woodward, 2002; Newman, 2001; Chappell, 1998; McBeth, 1972; McLaurin, 1998). And even if these segregation laws are not legally binding today, they nonetheless have influenced to some degree the prejudice and religious segregation that is still rife in the south and in American society generally.

In all this, it is crucial to emphasize that the black church, which arose as a reaction to racial oppression and unchecked prejudice in the white-dominated church, is not merely a spiritual or resource center, but a multipurpose center, highlighting both this-worldly and otherworldly themes and activities (Hamilton, 1972; Wilmore, 1972; Harris, 1993; Cone, 1969; Lincoln, 1973; *cf.* Hopkins, 1999; Lincoln, 1999). As such, some religious observers are rightly aware that a proper understanding of the black church cannot be understood apart from its political moorings, along with other factors such as continual social activism, moral uplift, caring

for the indigent, educational advancement, and a liberation motif (Wilmore, 1972; Lincoln, 1974; 1999; Lincoln & Mamiya, 2003; West, 2002; Cone, 1975; 1984; 1991; Reimers, 1965; Taylor et al., 1987; Baer, 1988; Baer & Singer, 1992; 2002; Washington, 1973; Levine, 1977; Young, 1977; Marsden, 1990). It is the fusion of this-worldly and otherworldly narratives, or a melding of the social with the gospel imperative that informs what is referred to as a social gospel, whereby culture, social justice, personal uplift, and Bible all go hand in hand (*cf.* Cone, 1969; Gaines, 1996; Fulop and Raboteau, 1997; and Pattillo-McCoy, 1998). And it is precisely within the ambit of that social gospel that we also find black liberation theology snugly ensconced. In that regard, it is absolutely crucial to note that both the corporate and personal aspects of uplift and liberation are emphasized in the black community.

Black liberation theology (BLT), itself, was inspired by the broader liberation theology that rocked the Latin American world in light of Vatican II in the 1960s, which awakened a duty to the poor and underprivileged, and which ran contemporaneously with the American civil rights struggle. BLT highlights the persistence of factors such as racial inequality, economic inequality, anti-black discrimination, and lack of empowerment for ‘minorities’ in the political process in society. But more than that, BLT emphasizes the moral obligation of not only black churches but all churches and church people to stress the liberating aspects of the gospel as a way of unleashing the potential of the gospel, insofar as it relates to application of the gospel in the real world (Cone, 1969; 1975; 1999; 2004; 2010; *cf.* Shaw, 1971; Fisher, 2003; Jones, 2005; 2006; McKenzie, 1997; and Massingale, 2010). In other words, what good is the gospel if it does not apply or speak to human beings in their own contexts? It is an apprehension of such factors, along with other race/ethnic struggles, situations and explanations (as elucidated in this

chapter) that contributes to a fuller understanding of the persistence of racial segregation in religion.

Besides that, the very mentality of racial exclusiveness in church has become so firmly entrenched in the consciousness of some, that it has even been considered as ordained by God himself. It has been shown how divine blessings have been evoked among some Baptist leaders in the south, for example, in sanctioning racial segregation, particularly between blacks and whites (*in* Feldman, 2005). From that standpoint, racial segregation is no longer simply a matter between humans, but extends to a petitioning of divine sanction in church relations and social divisiveness (*cf.* Wagner, 1979; Dobratz, 2001; McBeth, 1972; McClain, 1990; Collins, 1998). All of this informs the current pattern and sentiments behind persistent race segregation in religion.

Given this background to the broader discourse on race, prejudice, discrimination, segregation and religion, along a similar trend of thought American Seventh-day Adventism has its own history of racial tension and anti-black prejudice, likewise, the vestiges of which are evident today in the form of segregated local conferences (Neufeld, 1966; Reynolds, 1984; Graham, 1996; *cf.* Shaw, 1971; and Branson, 1995), as elucidated in the previous chapter. But unlike other denominations, like the Baptists and Methodists, which broke up and spawned new denominations over the 'race' issue, Seventh-day Adventism encompasses a denominationally sanctioned racially segregated (black/white) structure which operates under the broader denominational umbrella (Neufeld, 1966). And this is besides the many other groups (Romanian SDAs, Hispanic SDAs, Korean SDAs, Indian SDAs, African SDAs, etc.) worshiping in segregated fashion (in the U.S.), but only at the local SDA church level.

A Concise Parallel Outlook

Germane to this discussion is reiteration of the crucial point that forms and levels of segregation have played out across major faiths and denominations (besides Seventh-day Adventism). Such racial segregation persists across religious groups as it also fissions into multiple groups within denominational circles (Hawkins & Sinitiere, 2014). For example, the current African Methodist Episcopal Church (AME), the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church (AMEZ), and the Christian Methodist Episcopal Church (CME), formerly the Colored Methodist Episcopal Church in America, were all established in the late eighteenth century to around the turn of the nineteenth century onwards (George, 1973; Newman, 2008; *cf.* McClain, 1990; Fulop, 1997; Lincoln and Mamiya, 2003; Loescher, 1948).

Part of that history goes back to figures like Richard Allen and Absalom Jones, for example, in the Methodist Episcopal tradition, and their part in founding of black independent congregations and institutions around the ending of the eighteenth century. From there, the phenomenon of religious racial segregation in American churches and church-related institutions mushroomed in an intense fashion, as it exploded nationwide across the denominational spectrum (Loescher, 1948; Lincoln, 1973; 1999; Manns, 1920; Peterson, 1960; Butler, 1979; Baker, 1996; Makapela, 1996; Dudley, 2000; Bull & Lockhart, 2007; Birch, 2012; Bernard, 2015; McBeth, 1972; Avant, 2004; George, 1973; McClain, 1990; Collins, 1998; Wilmore, 1998; Newman, 2007; Evans et al., 2002; Oldham, 1924; Allport, 1966; Wood, 1991; Perlmutter, 1992; McKenzie, 1997; Chappell, 1998; Dobratz, 2001; Baer, 2002; Dittes, 2003; Putnam & Campbell, 2010). This was all due to persistent racial oppression, and outright discriminatory behavior, even to the point of preventing blacks from kneeling and praying in church, in what was considered space preserved for whites only (Newman, 2008; *cf.* Allen, 1880; Wilmore, 1972;

Sernett, 1999; and Franklin, 1967: *chapter xiii*). And certainly in Allen's and Jones' time, blacks had to conscientiously toe the line and remain in their allotted segregated space (a rule that was rigidly enforced), for worship services within the same sanctuary.

Thus, although sharing the same building and administrative structure with whites at first, those separate black religious enclaves arose due to racially motivated cleavages, which themselves were part of other cleavages (such as north-south divisions) within denominations. Such was the case among Methodists, and among others (e.g., the Baptists), since in general the south was more pro-slavery than the north, giving rise to such major regional and ideological separation (McClain, 1990; Collins, 1998; Feldman, 2005; Wood, 1991; Woodward, 2002; *cf.* McLaurin, 1998; Smith et al., 1998; Smith, 1922; Emerson & Smith, 2000; Spalding, 1914). In this respect, northern Methodists, and northerners more generally, opposed sanctioning the owning of slaves (particularly after the American Revolution), while southern evangelicals, and the south more generally, had no qualms about their endorsement of slavery.

But it is just as important to point out that while gradual emancipation of slaves began in the north around 1789, that does not mean that all northerners were free from anti-black prejudice (Melish, 1998; Reimers, 1965; Stark, 1971; Emerson & Smith, 2000). In fact, when 'immediate abolitionism' reared its head in the major denominations around the 1830s, northern religious leaders, both moderate and conservative, "joined southerners in reaffirming that emancipation was not an essential part of the Christian gospel" (*in* Emerson & Smith, 2000:34). Down to the very eve of the Civil War, a number of northern evangelicals remained wedded to the notion that slavery would disappear as an indirect result of revivalism (*Ibid.*). In other words, while not officially endorsing slavery (which itself was the cause of religious north-south racial

segregation), many northerners nonetheless unequivocally shied away from being directly involved in abolitionism.

Consequently, with respect to segregation, there were many more slaves (and blacks generally) in the south than in the north, which made the south an easy target of the northern challenge and critique of de jure segregation. But at the same time, the north was “increasingly replete with de facto segregation,” making northerners’ criticisms ring hollow and scarred by hypocrisy (Emerson & Smith, 2000:37). Altogether, then, as in the other denominational contexts, some Methodists (mostly south) exhibited anti-black discrimination and white racism, as some clergy and parishioners also saw nothing wrong in the owning of slaves, or were averse to promoting direct change. But to be sure, anti-black prejudice was rife and social life was riddled with segregation and discrimination on both sides of the regional divide (McClain, 1990; Newman, 2008; George, 1973; Wilmore, 1972; Perlmutter, 1992; Emerson & Smith, 2000; *cf.* Reimers, 1965; Price, 1999; Rauschenbusch, 1913; Franklin, 1967; Franklin & Moss, 2000).

The Baptist faith has also had its series of racial cleavages and a history of racial prejudice (Jolley & Pierce, 2005; Avant, 2004; McBeth, 1972). Today a couple of the major branches that have arisen due to racial tensions are the National Baptist Convention USA, Inc. (NBCUSA – the largest predominantly African American denomination in the U.S., formed in 1886); and the Progressive National Baptist Convention, Inc. (PNBC), organized in 1961 in the heat of the civil rights struggles for the rights and dignity of blacks, the marginalized and oppressed (Avant, 2004). It is this same PNBC branch that has not only been noted for its historically conspicuous and current role in civil rights, but for its longstanding struggle for racial equality and other social justice issues (*Ibid.*), and is the one with which Martin Luther King Jr. was affiliated.

A similar story has unfolded in the U.S. Presbyterian Church's history. Included in that church's saga is not only a cleavage over the slavery issue in the antebellum period (somewhat similar to the Methodists), but along Union/Confederate lines during the U.S. Civil War as well (*cf.* Wilmore, 1998). But even in light of the Civil Rights movement, there have been Presbyterian cleavages due to liberal and moderate support of the movement, while conservatives were opposed.

The situation has not been much different in the Catholic Church (McGreevy, 1996; Evans et al., 2002; Massingale, 2010), notable of which was the practice of mandatory parish segregation, and the current racial (black-white) hyper-segregation that exists particularly in the south. Even when allowing for integration earlier during the twentieth century, some Catholic churches would organize segregated sitting, usually with blacks in the rear, and at times with a screen between the two races, especially in the south. And in drawing particular reference to the association between racial segregation, racial inequality, and social ills, it has also been shown that there is a need to address the issue of inconsistencies between church segregation practice and the tenure of the gospel (McGreevy, 1996).

On Integration and the Pushback

In light of the foregoing discussion, and taken more from a reconciliatory and integrative standpoint, some voices on race and religion issues have pointed more specifically to the role of the church in addressing social injustice, particularly with regards to the manner in which the churches have kept silent over the oppressive treatment of non-whites (Findlay, 1993; McGreevy, 1996; McKenzie, 1997; Cone, 1969; Perkins, 2014; Asante, 2014; Perkins & Rice, 2000; Yancey, 1996; Graham, 1996; *Adventist Today (AT) News Team*, 2015; *cf.* Grant, 1978; Wilmore, 1972; Loury, 1995; Walters, 2009; Anderson, 2010). Such voices also direct attention

to how some have seen the urgency of addressing the ills of black-white segregation, amidst stiff resistance, particularly since the latter part of the twentieth century and turn of the twenty-first (Chappell, 1998; Smith et al., 1998; Newman, 2001; Christerson et al., 2005; Emerson and Woo, 2006; Edwards, 2008). From that standpoint, the idea is that the mélange of gospel, injustice, prejudice, and racial segregation is incompatible. As C. Eric Lincoln puts it in his book, *Race, Religion and the Continuing American Dilemma*, his writing,

in a more intimate sense ... is about a perplexing American phenomenon: the strange rapprochement between church and society which continues to embarrass the Faith, vitiate the society and saddle both with a burdensome dilemma that seems to persist despite the fervor of our religion or the ardor with which we pursue our commitment to democracy (Lincoln, 1999:xxii).

In line with such thinking, others have also pointed out not only the inconsistencies between segregation and the gospel, but also incoherency in the very justifications for religious black-white segregation (Feldman, 2005; cf. Emerson & Smith, 2000; Perlmutter, 1992; McGreevy, 1996; McKenzie, 1997; Newman, 2001). It is the justifications themselves that have caused some observers to note the strong resistance to desegregation, and how appeals to segregationists have been ignored (Chappell, 2005; Harvey, 2005). It is in this very context that divine blessings have even been evoked among some Baptist leaders in the south, for example, in sanctioning black-white racial segregation (Feldman, 2005). And it is this same deep desire and segregationist sentiments that have given rise to the consideration, “that which God hath put asunder, let not man attempt to join” (Ibid., p. 11). The idea here, alluding to the norms of certain sectors of the populace, is not only that blacks and whites (as in the SDA setting) should remain separate in church, but that such behavior is actually sanctioned by God Himself (cf. Dittes, 2003). Parallel to this, there is also the observation that religion can become the focus of

prejudice, since it usually stands for more than just faith (Allport, 1979), insofar as it is inextricably tied to sociocultural milieu.

The push for integration in the religious arena, however, consciously and tenaciously remains at the forefront of the agenda of some (DeYoung et al., 2003; Perkins & Rice, 2000; Emerson & Woo, 2006; Marti, 2012; Hawkins & Sinitiere, 2014). Although drowned by the determined voices driving homogeneity and religious racial segregation, many exhibit a burning zeal and undying passion in maintaining a level of unity in the faith against all odds (DeYoung et al., 2003; and Christerson et al., 2005). And that includes the cultivation of friendships between blacks and whites and others, reaching across the aisle by attending the other's church, or forming multiracial congregations, for instance. The idea is for people to gain a better understanding of each other, including the various cultural dynamics at work in each other's communities, while also gaining insight into what drives them apart in the process. From that standpoint, reconciliation is the driving force leading many to take a resolute stand against prejudice and segregation, as they see it (Perkins and Rice, 2000; Perkins, 2014; DeYoung et al., 2003; *cf.* Perlmutter, 1992; Dittes, 2003; Sitkoff, 2008).

In that respect, interracial marriage, and the multiethnic nature of mega-churches are some of the factors contributing to the counter-effects of religious racial segregation (Putnam & Campbell, 2010). There is even a relatively newer paradigm now in research methods, which speaks to reconciliatory methods in race and ethnic relations. It contains such factors as: obtaining a better understanding of the contemporary multiracial society, admitting of wrongs done, reconciling with each other across race/ethnic lines, and working tenaciously and intently to uphold the long term commitment to reconciliation and mitigation of conflict (Stanfield, 2011).

But one decisive and prominent factor, in the way of significant implications for racial reconciliation and the multiracial church, is that which pertains to worship styles along with musical tastes and desires. As one observer puts it, “Integrated worship is fundamental to the vision of a truly multiracial church” (Marti, 2012:4). And as with the persuasion of Martin Luther King Jr., who believed that the church must remove the “yoke of segregation” from its own body, the mission of the church is to actualize the universality of God’s kingdom on earth, which includes the racial integration of churches (Ibid., 3). Along with that view of integration, church leaders today are becoming frustrated over having to continually bear the embarrassment of presiding over homogeneously racial congregations in an increasingly multiracial world (Ibid.; cf. Newman, 2007; Hawkins & Sinitiere, 2014; Asante, 2014). Thus, “the bridging of racial-ethnic divides through liturgical structures is an increasingly shared value because the Sunday at eleven o’clock racial segregation of the American church is no longer acceptable” (Marti, 2012:3). And in commenting candidly about this shared value of liturgical structures, the telling remark has been made that,

...in seminary courses, conferences, and workshops discussing race and the local church, Christian leaders increasingly talk about racial homogeneity as a form of racism such that single-race churches are viewed as ‘unbiblical’ and ‘unspiritual.’ Healthy churches are supposed to be able to cross all racial and ethnic divides (Ibid., 4).

This speaks to the level of sincerity and commitment with which some are aggressively confronting religious racial segregation.

There is also a specific focus on body count in terms of interracial couples procreating and filling the pews (*see chapter by Edward J. Blum, in Hawkins & Sinitiere, 2014*). And right alongside that, there are voices arguing loudly for the multiethnic and “the multiracial

congregation as an answer to the problem of race” (DeYoung et al., 2003;³⁰ Jenkins, 2003).

Moreover, multiracial congregations are seen as gathering spaces where whites and others should begin to see and relate to each other as human beings (DeYoung, 2003). In this respect, it has been shown that integration in religion ought to duplicate the role of the ‘uniracial congregations’ “by impacting society with an agenda for inclusion in mainstream life and a call for accountability in issues of racial injustice” (Ibid., 136). All this essentially speaks to an aim at reduction in the social distance gap between blacks, whites and others, particularly in the religious sphere.

Along similar lines, consideration has also been given to the thought that the degree of association between blacks and whites matters, with respect to a shared religious and social experience, since the gospel message shared by both hinges on a unity message (Findlay, 1993). As such, one way of looking at the black-white segregation issue is from the standpoint of the gospel message, which itself is anti-segregation in outlook; and thus, blacks and whites can find ways to associate with each other in church (Ibid.; Perkins & Rice, 2000; Asante, 2014). But how does that happen? Such a perspective allows for consideration and serious musing of the issue (such as that of racial segregation/unity among SDAs) as a heart issue, characterized by long-entrenched racial prejudices.

Moreover, in the context of racial segregation in the religious setting, the observation has also been made that socioeconomic marginalization of many blacks and economic dominance of many whites in the general social sphere, has been reflected in the church (Emerson et al., 1999; Edgell and Tranby, 2007; *cf.* Wood, 1991; Massey and Denton, 1993; Sniderman and Hagen,

³⁰ The cover title, itself, for this piece is straightforward and revealing, written not only as sort of a thesis statement to the material found therein, but as the antithesis and direct antidote to Emerson and Smith’s signature work, ‘Divided by Faith’. Then Hawkins and Sinitiere’s piece, written just over a decade after DeYoung et al., was also a follow up response to Emerson and Smith’s 2000 piece.

1985). Thus, segregation in the church is highlighted as one of socioeconomic inequality, impacting both church and the broader society. It is this same economic disadvantage that also plays right into the strident and critical message of black liberation theology, along with the urgent pleas against the ills of racism, prejudice, discrimination, and segregation (Cone, 1969; 1975; Oldham, 1924; Perlmutter, 1992; McKenzie, 1997; Lincoln, 1999; Hopkins, 1999; Dittes, 2003; Asante, 2014; Massey & Denton, 1993).

As highlighted before, however, particular customs and practices in black church culture, theology, experience, and traditions, for example, remain an essential part of church life for many (Evans, 1992; Harris, 1993; Fulop & Raboteau, 1997; Pattillo-McCoy, 1998; Hopkins, 1999; Coleman, 2000; Lincoln & Mamiya, 2003). And in the white church, likewise, racially homogeneous relationships remain salient for many (Wagner, 1979; Emerson & Smith, 2000; Dobratz, 2001; Blanchard, 2007; Edwards, 2008). Thus on the one hand, some have considered issues like desegregation as playing a rather crucial role in church as well as the neighborhood and school, seeing that the time is “now” to address such issues, as a response is demanded from church people to act immediately and decisively (Findlay, 1993; *cf.* Perkins & Rice, 2000; Anderson, 2010; Perkins, 2014; Asante, 2014). But on the other hand, others see racial segregation in church not necessarily in a negative light, but count it more as a means of edification, as well as a strengthening of friendship bonds for those with like preferences and racial similarity (Pattillo-McCoy, 1998; Emerson & Smith, 2000). And while the latter type (*i.e.*, the pro-segregation group), does harbor levels of prejudice which impact racial integration in church, there are, however, at the more extreme end, those similar to Charles Finney, who think that it’s just simply not right, and even unethical, for church growth to involve a mix of whites and blacks in the same congregation (Wagner, 1979).

Thus, in a telling manner, the research partly suggests that today, based on personal choices (along with cultural habits), many SDA blacks, as well as other groups in religious life, may be more interested in the immediate and general benefits of close-knit relationships in church, as expressed in homogeneous racial gatherings and worship, for instance (Emerson & Smith, 2000). This is spurred on by mutual feelings of commonness. While that may be the case, it is crucial to bear in mind that as in the SDA experience, and as emphasized in this research, the development of the black church stems from a culture of racism, social stratification, anti-black prejudice, and trenchant oppression, marked by varieties of protest and accommodation (Oldham, 1924; Allport, 1966; Cone, 1969; Shaw, 1971; Wilmore, 1972; George, 1973; Frazier, 1974; Burkett, 1978b; Reynolds, 1984; Baer, 1988; Boles, 1988; Baer & Singer, 1992; Perlmutter, 1992; America, 1993; Baker, 1996; Dodson, 1996; Graham, 1996; Fulop & Raboteau, 1997; Chappell, 1998; Collins, 1998; Lincoln, 1999; Dudley, 2000; Franklin & Moss, 2000; Dittes, 2003; Avant, 2004; Feldman, 2005; Jensen, 2005; Bull & Lockhart, 2007; Fountain, 2010; Birch, 2012; Berg, 2015). Contemplation of the foregoing discussion no doubt reveals an apt mix of social, religious, political, and economic considerations, along with the dynamics past and present between racial homogeneous solidarity, utter prejudice, and integration views. All of it comes to bear on the discussion on race and religion as one indubitably senses a perpetual tension, quiescent as it may be, between the segregation voice and the integration voice.

Summary

In conclusion, all SDAs build identity around, and are connected by, a common distinct remnant theological outlook, despite a partially segregated structure within the denomination. As such, in spite of racial discrimination and prejudicial attitudes that have riddled the

denomination, blacks, like others, are attracted to the Adventist message and refuse to leave the denomination, generally speaking, due to the uniqueness of the name and message. In that respect, on the one hand, the literature does show calls to address the ills of racial segregation, as they also pertain to inconsistencies between segregation and the gospel. Such a stance also connects with the sociopolitical history of oppression of blacks and other groups in America. On the other hand, however, there have also been voices in the literature positing that it is essentially a matter of choice for churchgoers to remain separated in a pluralistic religious environment, particularly as influenced by cultural affiliation, similar customs, worship, preaching and music style, and an identity rationale, for instance.

In the black-white SDA case, the focus of this study, both positions can be deemed as informative – i.e., (a) a consideration of the ills of segregation, given its history, and its inconsistency with the gospel, and (b) consideration of the choice factor(s) involved (in religious segregation). Thus, it may be helpful to ascertain whether indeed the cohesiveness of group position among SDAs today, in a partially segregated structure, influenced by a social history of racial oppression in America, can be separated from the choice to remain in homogeneous religious environments, buttressed by cultural solidarity, particularly as it pertains to worship styles, and so on. A reading and close scrutiny of the interviews (between black SDA church members and white SDA church members, and pastors) undertaken for this study, will no doubt prove valuable and insightful in that regard.³¹ Even more so, when considered altogether, the amalgam of facets – the origins of the SDA Church, the writings of Ellen White along with SDA theology, resolutions, objectives, and praxis, the socio-historical dynamics (in and outside the church), the dark experiences, integration and its attending resistance, theoretical frameworks

³¹ See Chapter Five.

(see next chapter), and the field interviews and analysis – all have implications for the racially segregated structure which continues to be part of the legacy of Seventh-day Adventism.

CHAPTER FOUR

THEORITICAL CONSIDERATIONS AND METHODOLOGY

Section A

Theoretical Considerations

While the terminology ‘race’ along with its derivatives and cognates are employed throughout this dissertation, it is important to note that within social science and academia itself, race is regarded as a social construct, with shifting boundaries, insofar as they relate to social, political, and economic contestations and meanings for various bodies and groups of individuals (Omi and Winant, 1994; Allen, 1997; Montagu, 1997; Jacobson, 1998; Emerson and Smith, 2000; Bernasconi and Lott, 2000; Isaac, 2004). And particular stress has also been placed on the fact that ‘race’ is not a fixed biological dictum, but rather of economic, legislative, and political engineering – fluid in its manipulation, yet tangible in its consequences (Jones, 2015; Montagu, 2000; Smedley, 1998; Omi and Winant, 1994; Banton, 1978; Barzun, 1965). Thus, currently, we are still left with the problems, ramifications, implications, and corollaries associated with the world of race relations, which have flooded down to our time, simply morphing in form and rhetoric as they pass through the corridors of history (Jones, 2015). And so while academia and some in the public sphere acknowledge ‘race’ as fluid and constructed, the terminology and its cognates are nonetheless used unabated with respect to research, questionnaires, applications, and the general normativity of public life (Smedley, 1998; Zuberi & Bonilla-Silva, 2008; Jones, 2015). With that in mind, the multifold nature and depths of the ‘race’ dynamic in American society is engaged, insofar as it addresses race relations and inequality in religion, and racial injustice and segregation in the SDA Church in particular.

Racial segregation is one of those diehard phenomena that persists in the broader American society; and its tenacious hold on both public and private sphere also exacerbates the socioeconomic inequality, rancor, and animosity that so often attend and characterize interpersonal relationships in the wider society (Massey and Denton, 1993; Omi & Winant, 1994; Woodward, 2002; Sugrue, 2005; 2009; Perlmutter, 1992; Wilson, 2012; Vera and Feagin, 2007; Sigelman & Welch, 1991; *cf.* Pettigrew & Martin, 1987; America, 1993; Robinson, 2001; Watson, 2015; Blauner, 2001; Bonilla-Silva, 2006). Thus, a focus on the intersection of religion and segregation research helps to shed light on the broader segregation discussion, particularly given that the ‘Sunday worship hour’ remains the most racially divisive aspect of American life (Blanchard, 2007). One theoretical position that helps explain such phenomenon is the ‘closed community’ theory, which posits that the theological and value orientation of white conservative Protestant congregations, for instance, undermines the creation of bridging interracial group ties, particular between blacks and whites (Ibid.). But it is helpful to understand this value and theological orientation in terms of the cultural values of white conservative Protestantism – among the most studied religious groups – which is largely dismissive of structural causes of racial inequality in lieu of cultural explanations, such as lack of motivation³² among blacks (Ibid., 417; *cf.* Kluegel, 1990; Emerson et al., 1999; Emerson & Smith, 2000; Edgell & Tranby, 2007).

This type of preference for, and focus on, cultural explanations of racial inequality also tends to advocate against any support from social or government services, for instance, in mitigating the effects of discrimination against blacks (Blanchard, 2007; *cf.* Wilson, 2009). Such attitudes give rise to further feelings of apathy towards blacks, from the standpoint that the

³² The notion ‘lack of motivation’ is explained in the literature as that having more to do with laziness, as in not actively job-seeking, for instance. See, for example, Emerson and Smith, 2000, Appendix A.

burden and solution to social problems involving blacks are placed upon blacks themselves (i.e., victim blaming). In that respect, moreover, communities with a strong conservative Protestant institutional base should exhibit high levels of residential segregation (Blanchard, 2007; Taeuber, 1989; *cf.* Yancey, 1999), since activities and racial attitudes among religious congregations also serve as indicators of distance between blacks and whites. Religious organizations, then, along with the racial attitudes involved, play a key role in understanding relational distance between whites and blacks.

From the relational distance standpoint, the social disconnect of white evangelicalism (a term used interchangeably with white conservative Protestantism, *see* Woodberry & Smith, 1998; and *cf.* Emerson & Smith, 2000) from the broader community, along with their theological orientation, result in strong network closure, as well as an emphasis on in-group social ties (*cf.* Verbrugge, 1977). And it is those same in-group social ties, or what is referred to as homogeneous or ‘internally similar congregations’ that aid in the maintenance of the segregated pattern in organized religion (Emerson & Smith, 2000 *chap.* 7); elsewhere explained as ‘homophily’ – love of the same (McPherson et al., 2001; *cf.* McPherson and Smith-Lovin, 1987; and McPherson et al., 1992). This orientation and disconnect from the broader community, negatively impacts community cohesion (Blanchard, 2007), such as closeness between religious whites and blacks. This is the case since a lack of bridging racial ties is particularly detrimental to cross-racial understanding and sharing, which otherwise would be a path to fostering networks of trust and reciprocity between religious whites and blacks (Ibid.).

And in helping to explain the pattern of homogeneity deeply embedded in American religion, the ‘homophily principle’ (love of the same) really stands out (Emerson and Smith, 2000; McPherson et al., 2001). Religion, in this discussion, can be looked upon as a values

source that contributes to the formation of social meaning (McPherson et al., 2001), particularly in the way in which black SDAs, for instance, tend to stick together based on similar interests and cultural patterns, including the maintenance of cultural niches. Tied to the nature of interaction between individuals, particularly in church, people's actions can thus be looked at in attaining an understanding of the construction of segregation as social reality. Such social reality, understood in terms of racial cohesiveness, offers a critical look at the manner in which groups, whether religious or not, tend to stick together, particularly from a racial and social network standpoint (Ibid.). The idea here, as in the SDA case, is that many black and white SDAs tend to stick together on a racial (more or less skin color) basis, forming a social network among themselves in the process. The point, from that angle, is to attempt to maintain a sense of racial continuity and friendship.

Further elaborating on the nature of social networks, McPherson et al. posit that people remain close-knit based on the type of significant contact they have with others like themselves, which includes racial contact (Ibid.). This has implications for church groups. As in the white or black SDA case, similarity in both race and experience tends to breed togetherness. But at the same time it also bears implications for the manner in which racial group exclusivity limits the social worlds of people, insofar as it carries powerful implications for the information or type of information received, and the interaction experienced (Ibid.). From that observational viewpoint, then, the nature of the experienced interaction and the transmitted information among members of a racial network, as in the black SDA case, or among white SDAs, impact the way in which individual members see the world.

Moreover, group exclusivity as in black-white structural cleavage among SDAs, engenders communities of sameness, in spite of whatever limited social worlds that may be

experienced by the respective groups. But perhaps even in a more telling manner, in connection with the notion of group identity, shaped by racial exclusivity, “Homophily in race and ethnicity creates the strongest divides in our personal environments” (McPherson et al., 2001:415; *cf.* Wagner, 1979). This is a revealing point, exposing that which lies at the core of interpersonal relationships, from a group-cohesion standpoint. Thus, the salience of group identity, marked by racial and ethnic exclusivity, is most potent in the context of the American social environment, and among SDA blacks and whites – insofar as it impacts interpersonal relationships in the denomination. In this respect, Emerson and Smith expound on the ‘homophily principle’ in the context of ‘racially homogenous’ congregations, positing that to the extent that people can choose (given religious pluralism or the religious marketplace), they choose to worship with people like themselves (2000; *cf.* Christerson et al., 2005). It is crucial factors like these that are important for understanding how similarity ties or group solidarity among black SDAs or white SDAs, can be much stronger than ties between them and other individuals in the same denomination, even if the unique theological message they all share and hold very dearly bind them together in an overarching sense.

In conjunction with thinking about how segregation plays out on the SDA scene, it is instructive to also consider the ‘both and’ theme or approach, as it pertains to the melding of identities (Glazer and Moynihan, 1970). Such consideration is buttressed by the notion of cultural pluralism – the idea of participating in the broader society while maintaining cultural identity and relevancy; i.e., seeing the unique in the general. So then in the American context, we speak of Irish American, German American, Chinese American, African American, etc. In this respect, black SDAs are proud to be considered both black and SDA, without having to split from the broader denomination. And with that also comes the multiethnic or multicultural

outlook, which speaks to the string of identities that follow in the Adventist tradition, as in Ghanaian SDA, Hispanic SDA, Filipino SDA, Chinese SDA, Korean SDA, Romanian SDA and so forth (all in the U.S.). In other words, different groups within Adventism develop their own local niches or congregations (sometimes involving a foreign tongue), although the administrative cleavage at the conference level is only (or simply) black-white.

In direct relation to that, other social observers like Harold Cruse (1967) and Horace Kallen (1956), have recognized the place of cultural relativity and cultural relevance in thinking about the advancement of a particular group, group position, and solidarity, surrounded by a broader melting pot cultural mindset. Though it doesn't fit the black or white SDA position in total (since all SDAs are united beyond the local conference level), the idea here nonetheless is for people to be proud not only of their heritage, but to focus on developing themselves within their own cultural spheres. From such a viewpoint, black SDAs still maintain a particular worship style and religious customs, for instance, although with a type of semi-autonomy within the ambit of the broader SDA framework.

Further, insofar as it relates to the relational distance between religious whites and blacks, cultural toolkit theory can also prove insightful in elucidating how the habits, attitudes, practices and styles of a particular religious group aid in explaining the group's behavior. As one scholar notes, one's action is influenced by cultural practice via a shaping of the repertoire or 'toolkit' of habits, skills and styles, from which people, including church/religious people, construct their strategies of action (Swidler, 1986). As such, if one is surrounded by a culture of religious (white-black) racial separation and engages in activities that affirm such separation, then that influences patterns, behavior, and life choices. That includes what is referred to as black church culture, whereby blacks find commonality among blacks, particularly with regards to such

factors as worship style, group identity, and similar social experiences (Pattillo-McCoy, 1998). And along with skin color, whites tend to find commonality with whites, due to factors such as worship and preaching styles and habits as well (Emerson and Smith, 2000; *cf.* Edwards, 2008; Christerson et al., 2005).

Given the many worship choices affiliated with the religious market place, and the market forces that serve to reinforce those choices, it is not entirely strange that there remains a very high proclivity toward religious racial segregation (Gaines, 1996; Emerson and Smith, 2000; Jenkins, 2003). This point is reinforced all the more, when religion is thought of in terms of a consumer's market. In that regard, researchers also observe that some ninety percent of all Christian church worship is racially segregated, a disproportionately high figure, essentially meaning that ninety percent of all blacks attend churches that are predominantly black and ninety percent of all whites attend churches that are predominantly white (Perkins and Rice, 2000; Emerson and Smith, 2000; Jenkins, 2003). This type of persistent segregated pattern, also found among black and white SDAs, is informed by the cultural tools or points of reference provided by the surrounding culture, marked by homogeneity and solidarity based on group/racial identity and position (*cf.* Omi and Winant, 1994; Pattillo-McCoy, 1998).

And certainly there is the flipside or counterpoint to the religious segregation effect. As found in the literature, that translates to some eight to ten percent of all churches that are racially mixed, with high consideration for multiculturalism, which includes implementation of diverse musical styles, as well as inclusion of female leadership roles, in their worship environment (Jenkins, 2003; Putnam and Campbell, 2010; Marti, 2012). In specific relation to this concern for, and focus on, bridging the religious segregation gap through an amalgam of worship musical selections, a heightened sensitivity to racial dynamics coupled with greater consideration for

musical tastes conspire to produce new challenges for local church leaders (Marti, 2012). Yet, worship style along with choice of musical instruments and equipment, not only attracts or repels visitors, but become pivotal in considerations of congregational diversity and success of the church itself (Ibid.). From that standpoint, becoming more multicultural in worship style, in order to sustain a multiracial and multiethnic church, remains a rising art to be mastered and manipulated and, therefore, a delicate key in maintaining racially diverse congregations.

This point of the critical importance of worship music in cultivating racially diverse churches, is amplified all the more as the researcher quips that he “began to suspect that music might be the single greatest determinant of a congregation’s racial composition” (Ibid., 4). Moreover, since there is no one single style of worship and musical selection that accounts for the multiracial church, then variety, intentionality, and inclusion in the design of multiracial worship have been emphasized (Marti, 2012; *cf.* Christerson et al., 2005; and Emerson & Woo, 2006). Along with the role of music in congregational diversity, other factors that contribute to the multiracial and multicultural outlook in the religious arena (though such outlook is limited in scope) are those such as interracial marriage and the phenomenon of mega churches in particular (Putman, 2010).

To be sure, however, the ‘cultural tools’ argument makes for a defensible position and is instructive for understanding the persistence of the mono-racial fellowship that characterizes the American church. And that certainly includes a proper understanding of the white church on the one hand, and the black church on the other. Firstly, black religion and the black worship experience in America stem from a heritage of racial oppression, marinated in survival techniques, and have been oriented in a theology of liberation (Marti, 2012; Coleman, 2000; Cone, 1999; 2004). In that respect, it has been made abundantly clear that what has emerged in

the black worship experience is a counter strategy to the sufferings of blacks, which entails theology and religious practice not in isolation, but in relation to politics, economics, social uplift, social gospel, education, social activism, and communal solidarity (Loescher, 1948; Kelsey, 1965; Cone 1969; 1975; 2010; Wilmore, 1972; George, 1973; Scherer, 1975; Fox-Genovese, 1987; Boles, 1988; Wood, 1991; Gaines, 1996; Collins, 1998; Emerson and Smith, 2000; Dittes, 2003; Raboteau, 2004; and Fountain, 2010). Yet for observers like Pattillo-McCoy, the current black experience in racially homogeneous worship is rooted in choice (1998), even in the face of effects of the historical liberation paradigm and cultural solidarity on religious worship.

And then secondly, on the white side of the fence, Emerson and Smith have also particularly noted that the ‘subcultural toolkit’ of white evangelicalism, involving the way they organize into homogeneous congregations, likely contributes more to perpetuate a racialized society than to reduce it (2000:170; *cf.* Wagner, 1979). Furthermore, based on their cultural tools and practice, “most white evangelicals ... fail to recognize the institutionalization of racialization – in economic, political, educational, social, and religious systems,” often thinking and acting “as if those problems [of division and inequality] do not exist.” And so the “unrecognized depths of racial division and inequality go largely unaddressed and ... thrive, divide, and destroy” (Emerson & Smith, 2000:170). This underscores the point of distance between religious whites and blacks, as well as the social consequences that are made manifest by it (*cf.* Emerson, et al., 1999; Jensen, 2005; Edwards, 2008; Perlmutter, 1992; and Massey & Denton, 1993).

But also revealing is the point made by one researcher of “the role of religion in the collective identity of the white racist movement” (Dobratz, 2001). In this particular study

Dobratz shows how white separatists, along with their religious beliefs, contribute to the strengthening of the racial identity of white racialists (Ibid.; *cf.* Feldman, 2005; Jensen, 2005; and Chappell, 1998). The emphasis here is on social and cultural difference, the significance of ‘racial’ niches, and the argument for separation between the races in religious affairs. Given its explanatory power, then, and besides the other theoretical positions shown, the cultural toolkit paradigm remains a viable model for explanations of segregation in the religious context.

Section B

Methodology (Data Collection)

I pursued this study in Adventism and racial segregation by conducting in-depth face-to-face interviews with members and pastors at separate black and white SDA churches in southeast Michigan (i.e., churches in or surrounding the Metro Detroit area). This involved four churches – two churches from the Michigan Conference of SDAs, and two churches from the Lake Region Conference of SDAs. I sent letters (i.e., site approval letters, which includes participation requests) to the appropriate church officials (with information on the research), seeking permission to interview participants at the selected local church sites. Before embarking on the interviews, I ensured that ethical or human subject issues were dealt with, including receiving final approval from the Human Subjects Institutional Review Board (HSIRB), as well as providing participants with an informed consent form (Lincoln and Tierney, 2004: 219-220) – to read and sign, and also indicate their approval to be audio-recorded, before beginning the actual interview. On that token, while participants had the option of not being audio-recorded (which would mean writing their responses by hand), they all consented to the audio-recording. In all this, the overall goal has been to comply with everything related to the protection of human subjects.

And since this is a qualitative study, involving in-depth face-to-face, semi-structured interviews, the purpose “... is to gain an in-depth understanding of purposively selected participants from their perspective” (Patten, 2002:29). A minor ethnographic element was part of that process, since I visited the churches and observed members’ interaction and the worship setting. These interviews sought the perspectives of mainly black and white SDAs from the participating churches, on the black-white segregation arrangement in the SDA Church, insofar as it pertains to the local church and the local conference. This involved obtaining opinions and perspectives from church members, church officers, and pastors from those churches, as tied to their experience. Only one semi-structured interview guide (instrument)³³ was used, which was tailored to address both members and pastors. And I carried out thirty-six in-depth face-to-face interviews (nine participants total per church), though my proposal indicated a range of thirty to thirty-six. Each interview session ran for approximately twenty-six minutes on average (some a little shorter and some longer), with one extreme outlier – i.e., one interview session ran for around one hour and forty-nine minutes. And the shortest interview session ran for around eleven minutes.

While I planned for the interviews to be conducted over one to three months (*cf.* Patten, 2002; Levy and Hollan, 2014), it took around five and a half weeks from start to finish: the first interview was held on (Thursday) August 27th and the last interview took place on (Sunday) October 4th, 2015. And that included minor obstacles, such as participants not showing up, or not showing up on the appointed day, with some being very difficult to reach to set the interview time, and some just deciding not to follow through with the interview after all. Thus, at times I had to solicit the participation of other willing members to fill in the gap.

³³ See Appendix Two.

The interviews were conducted, for the most part on Sundays, in the churches' library or a side room at the church sites, or in the pastor's office, with two exceptions: I met in two homes (one, a first elder of a white church, and the other, that of a black pastor), which were more convenient for the participants. The actual scheduling of interview time worked out one hundred percent smoothly only for one church (one of the white churches), where all nine participants (including the pastor) all showed up at their allotted time on the very same Sunday. In fact, so cooperative were the members of that particular church, that I phoned one member on the spot (from the church site), who was quite willing to switch time with one participant who showed up around one and a half to two hours early, since she forgot what time her interview was. I generally scheduled back-to-back interviews one hour apart, and on that particular Sunday I started a little after 10:00 a.m. and my last interview was scheduled to begin at 6:00 p.m. Apart from that, since there is generally a prayer meeting on Wednesday nights at SDA churches, some of the interviews (i.e., at the two black churches) were also held on a Wednesday evening (beginning before or after prayer meeting), since that was more convenient for the participants. Outside of that, as I recall, two interviews sessions were held on a Thursday (separate days), and one on a Monday.

I worked with the figure of thirty-six (for number of participants) since I was looking for in-depth dialogue with participants, rather than selection of a large number of individuals as typically found in quantitative research (Creswell, 2003:185; Patten, 2002:61-62, 105). With respect to the interview sessions, I audio-recorded them, then transcribed (*Data Recording Procedures* Creswell, 2003:188-190; Levy and Hollan, 2014:332-34) the collected data. Out of that data collection, I "... report[ed] on themes and trends using words instead of statistics" (Patten, 2002:29), as I analyzed the gathered material (as statistical figures do not play a major

role). For example, in thematic fashion, I considered comparisons/contrasts of the responses between blacks and whites, between black males and females, between white males and females, and between white and black pastors, before producing the findings. I also took a look at the similarities/differences between pastors and parishioners' responses. And in the overall analysis, I considered other factors such as age of respondents, how long they've held church membership, and whether or not they were single with no children, versus those married with children, for example. The goal is really to get a better understanding of the members' view of the segregation in the denomination, at the local conference and local church levels (as pointed out in the second paragraph of this section).

With that focus in mind, as well the theory in the background, the research question is: what are the perspectives of black and white SDAs with respect to the official racial segregation at the local conference level, and at the local church level in the denominational structure? This underscores the main interest of this study – i.e., SDA members' views about racial segregation in the local congregation where you find member to member contact, as well as their perspectives on the segregation which ends, officially and practically speaking, at the local conference level of the SDA church structure. Such an interest in religion and racial segregation essentially aims at culling from members' own religious experience as also tied to their cultural background and individual perspectives, starting from where they are in their everyday lives. This suggests the exploration of meaning-making among church members, giving them the space to speak in the way they understand their situation.

Rationale

This study seeks to gain a more in-depth understanding of the black-white arrangement in American Seventh-day Adventism, by paying close attention to SDA members' perspectives on

the segregated structure that characterizes the denomination. This interest in members' perspectives is the reason for the research design, as well as the manner in which the research question is framed. In this respect, I engaged a qualitative study, i.e., use of in-depth, face-to-face interviews, with a minor ethnographic component, particularly since I intend to get more of a thick description of the situation. This included observing members during church services, and even taking notice of their gesticulation during interviews, as well as the candidness of responses, for instance, insofar as they pertain to members' experiences (Emerson et al., 2011; cf. Creswell, 2003). The whole idea is to get to see how members act, react, and interact in their own unique ways, particularly in their worship environments, and to get a better sense of how they engage the music, preaching and church life in general. Such observation is tied to the meanings and value participants place on such interactions, as revealed in the analysis (in the next chapter).

Moreover, once I began the actual interviews (I began with whites), a few themes immediately jumped out at me as I listened. Recognizing that, it piqued my curiosity and passion to learn more of members' perspectives all the more. I then began to pay even closer attention as I tuned in to particular themes and patterns running through responses of the participants, or just waited to see what various patterns or themes emerged by themselves. For example, as I listened, I heard some black and white respondents share concern for the hardships of children of interracial couples, a point which they brought up totally on their own, and one I took note of. Another pattern that emerged, based on responses, is that some whites tended to think of the black-white segregation in the SDA Church in particularly recurring ways, for example, basing the cause for the segregation on black worship style, mixed in with (white) attitudes or feelings of social distance as well. And blacks for the most part, also displayed

particularly recurring themes in the way they responded differently from whites. For example, some black participants pointed to anti-black prejudice and discrimination (such as SDA blacks not given leadership opportunities or barred from full church participation) as contributing to the segregation. However, the analysis and findings of the field interviews offer deeper insight into similarities and differences in approaches and perspectives between blacks and whites.

In tandem, the ethnographic aspect mentioned earlier, played a secondary or auxiliary role in the research process, as I attended segregated black and white SDA churches in and around Detroit to observe behaviors and activities of individuals (Creswell, 2003:185-188), jotting down a few notes afterwards away from the site (Emerson et al., 2011). The activities or group process in church service I observed included preaching style and worship style, particularly singing and the musical instruments involved. In this respect, the analysis, for instance, reveals a sharp divide in proclivity for use of drums in the worship experience, with blacks being pro-drums and nearly all whites opposing its use in the worship service, or anywhere in the church for that matter.

Thus, both interviews and analysis of them have been informed not merely by interviewees' responses to questions, but (a) with respect to the interviewee as informant – i.e., as impacted by the general social experience, including the religious experience, and (b) with respect to interviewee as respondent – i.e., paying closer attention to the interviewee herself, the specifics mentioned, and the manner in which they are uniquely expressed, given the context of her experience (Levy and Hollan, 2014). In the end, each participant's contribution is significant as a broader narrative emerged. And altogether, this form of research orientation, i.e., interview plus some observation, is aligned with the framework of institutional ethnography, as expounded on by Dorothy Smith, for example (2005).

Taking its cue from ethnomethodology, institutional ethnography aims to spell out just how the everyday world of human experience is put together by relations that extend beyond the everyday; i.e., a sociology for people in which understanding behavior starts from where people are in their everyday lives, while exploring social relations and organization which underlie everyday activity (Smith, 2005). So while interviews are indeed sources for learning about individual experience, they are also a part of a method of inquiry, as in institutional ethnography “designed for the investigation of organizational and institutional processes” (*In* Smith, 2006:15). The idea is to use informants’ accounts not solely as windows on the informant’s inner experience, “but in order to reveal the ‘relations of ruling’ that shape local experiences” (Ibid.). This means that institutional ethnography as a lens is a way of expanding people’s own everyday experience and knowledge, to examine social relations and social organization, rather than substituting it with the researcher’s own way of thinking (Smith, 2005). This suggests that the researcher explores meaning-making in a population, as the project of inquiry remains open-ended, giving people the space to speak in the way they both express and understand their situation.

Right along with this mode of inquiry (i.e., interviews plus some observation), then, the thick description (Geertz, 1973) essentially means that I paid very close attention to individual member responses, since each response contributes to the broader pool of perceptions and thoughts. And in direct relation to that, I sought to detect the context in which those responses were given as well. This essentially reinforced the idea that the responses, themselves, become meaningful from each particular member’s own point of view, based on lived experience. In this respect, the interview guide was specifically designed to acquire the type of information that this study seeks – black and white SDA members’ thoughts and perspectives on segregation in the

church, insofar as they are derived from social relations and experience, particularly within the SDA organizational structure.

Interviewee Selection and Church Breakdown for Interviews

In selecting interviewees that reflected a diversity in opinion, I took steps such as:

(a) dialogue with church elders and pastor to get a better feel for the particular local church and its members; as well as solicit first elders' assistance in acquiring recruits for the study, (b) consider certain criteria such as gender and age of possible respondents, how long they've been an SDA Church member, and what church office they hold, if any. In conjunction with that, socioeconomic status of respondents was also taken into consideration, such as their highest level of education, employment status, occupation, and place of residence, and (c) spend time visiting local churches, getting better acquainted with them, in order to get a personal feel for each particular church environment, as well as meeting and getting acquainted with (potential) interviewees and others. Granted access by church personnel, I conducted the actual interviews in the churches' library or other designated room in the church. In that respect, three of the four churches had designated libraries available for the research interviews, while the other had a general meeting side room, which was still private for one-on-one conferences. All the churches were quite cooperative indeed, in terms of accommodating my use of the church building; and in some cases I was even responsible for also making sure that the door was locked upon my exit, since I was the last one out in certain instances.

With respect to the actual church participant breakdown, I collaborated with two white SDA Churches and two black SDA Churches, along with their pastors. This included:

- eight members of each church – four males and four females
 - some of these members from each church held offices (example: from among elders, deacons/deaconesses, Sabbath school superintendents, church clerk, and

youth leaders)

- four pastors – i.e., one pastor per church insofar as interviews are concerned. As a side note, there is usually one pastor to a church in the (white) Michigan Conference; but you may find one pastor assigned to more than one church in the (black) Lake Region Conference that operates in Michigan. However, in this study, one of the white pastors oversaw one church, while the other white pastor had two churches under his care. And one of the black pastors had at least three churches under his care, while the other black pastor had only one.

CHAPTER FIVE

FIELDWORK INSIGHT: ANALYSIS OF INTERVIEWS

The series of interviews for this dissertation on church segregation (as delineated in the Methods section in the previous chapter) were conducted at two predominantly white SDA churches (under the administration of the Michigan Conference of SDAs) and two black SDA churches (under the Lake Region Conference of SDAs), in southeast Michigan. And while the fieldwork targeted black and white SDAs, upon filling out the demographics one of the interviewees among the whites turned out to be a Hispanic male, and one interviewee among the blacks happened to be a biracial (black/white) male. With respect to church locations for the interviews, the two black churches were in the City of Detroit proper, and the two white churches were in the surrounding area, since there are no ‘white’ Adventist churches in the City of Detroit itself. To clarify, out of all the SDA churches in the City of Detroit, there is only one SDA Church that belongs to the Michigan Conference of Seventh-day Adventists; but it’s really an all-black church, with a black pastor, due to white-flight in the twentieth century. Thus, all the SDA churches in the city of Detroit are black churches, besides some Hispanic members that meet separately and belong to the Michigan Conference of SDAs.

It is also worth mentioning that surrounding the city of Detroit are both black and white SDA churches. Further, in southeast Michigan, the general area in which my field research was conducted, there are: (a) some fifteen black churches in the Wayne-Macomb-Oakland county area, belonging to the Lake Region Conference of SDAs;³⁴ and (b) some twelve churches in the Wayne-Macomb-Oakland-Washtenaw-Monroe county area, belonging to the Michigan

³⁴ See Lake Region Conference of Seventh-day Adventists’ website – www.lakeregionsda.org.

Conference of SDAs,³⁵ which includes white and some black membership. Besides that, there are Korean and Spanish SDA churches, as well as a Romanian company³⁶ that fall under the administration of the Michigan Conference of SDAs in southeast Michigan, but not reflected in the twelve churches mentioned. Further, it is crucial to point out, that as far as I'm aware, the position of SDA pastor or minister in Michigan (whether black, white, other) is really an all-male field. Thus, even if I refer to the position of pastor as "s/he" in this analysis, in the members' minds it is indubitably a male figure, at least in the churches I worked with.

The ages of respondents range from 27 to 91. In this respect, it should be noted that I use general terms in referring to the ages of respondents, and also in order to safeguard the identity of participants, which is an absolutely critical part of confidentiality in this study. Thus, the following are recurring terms and their values or representations which you will come across throughout the analysis:

- Older white/black male or female – age range 60 and above
- Middle-age white/black male or female – age range 40 to 59
- Younger black/white male or female – ages 27-39.

From the member in the pew to the pastor, when considered altogether, all insights brought to the fore feelings, attitudes, and perspectives from the participants themselves, based also on their personal experiences. I was also thanked and received feedback from participants, for opening up an otherwise hands-off (almost tabooed) topic, giving them a chance to participate, think deeply, search within and express themselves, even if it meant struggling with the issue of segregation in the SDA Church. All told, I did not have one single participant turned off by the interview process or found it repulsive and refuse to participate. On the contrary, the general feeling expressed to me was that this is a much needed discussion. For example, in

³⁵ See Michigan Conference of Seventh-day Adventists' website – www.misda.org.

³⁶ An SDA 'company' refers to a smaller gathering of members who meet weekly, just like regular churches, but does not have official church status.

response to the last question,³⁷ asking if there's anything else they would like to add or share, one respondent exuberating much interest in the discussion, expressed to me "no, if you have some more answers, I like to hear ... I'd like to get more of the history out of it, actually to know. Do you know more?" And on that note, I indicated to the interviewee that I'd be happy to share once the study is done.

Another respondent (an older white male), conveying his gratitude, told me towards the end of the interview session that he applauds me for doing this, and then emphasized the word "opportunity" in thanking me for giving him the opportunity to say what he had to say and for giving him the opportunity to be honest. And he also told me "I hope that you get some good things out of this." Then another interviewee (a younger black male), responding to the last question in the interview, said "...I think it's very interesting." And then expressed to me at the end of our dialogue that this is good, in reference to the interview session we had. To be sure, such sentiments do not negate the struggles of the participants themselves and their challenges, given the racial history, entrenched racial attitudes, and divisive practices in the Seventh-day Adventist Church. But on the contrary, participants were more appreciative for a venue by which their perspectives could be shared.

Demographic View

In terms of gender participation in the study it was 50% females and 50% males; i.e., 16 females and 16 males (not including the all-male pastor category) participated. And almost all the participants in the study were either black or white, i.e., with the exception of one older Hispanic male and one younger biracial male (as mentioned above). Thus, besides the Hispanic and

³⁷ See Appendix Two.

biracial males, 17 whites and 17 blacks altogether participated in the study (including pastors) – a total of thirty-six, as described in the methods section in the previous chapter.

Age Of white participants in the study: six males are older, two males are middle-age, and one male is younger; four females are older, three females are middle-age, and one female is younger. Of black participants in the study: two males are older, four males are middle-age, and three males are younger; one female is older, six females are middle age, and one female is younger.

Occupation This study comprised of mostly professionals. And there were no important occupational differences between the racial groups. Most of the participants have an active career or are retired from a professional career. Professions include: medical doctor, medical assistant, nurse, engineers, technical support (IT), graphic designer, aircraft mechanic, auto worker, pharmaceuticals executive, special education teaching assistant, teacher, principal, city government, marketing consultant, secretary, accountant, banker, financial analyst, and tax analyst. Out of all the participants, two people were more or less unemployed or did part-time work, and two others were going to school while in the workforce.

Educational Attainment With respect to the highest level of education attained, four out of the total number of participants have a high school education or below. And thirty-two respondents out of the total number of participants in the study have some college education, or some professional schooling or higher.

Relationship Status Of the lay members participating in the study, eighteen are married, nine single, and five chose ‘other’ as best describing their status.

Further, while not pertaining to demographics, strictly speaking, I add a note here regarding participants' perspectives on the racial make-up of their neighbors and friends. With respect to having black and white neighbors, eleven white and twelve black lay participants (non-pastoral) have both black and white neighbors, i.e., twenty-three altogether (including the Hispanic male). Five white and three black lay participants declared that they do not have both black and white neighbors (including the biracial male), and one black participant was not sure about that. All of the pastors (black and white) indicated that they have both black and white neighbors. With respect to having black and white friends, all of the sixteen white lay participants acknowledged that they have both black and white friends (including the Hispanic male); and of those, one white female declared that her best friend is black. Fourteen (out of sixteen) of the black lay participants acknowledged having both black and white friends (including the biracial male). All of the pastors, likewise, acknowledged having both black and white friends. And on a separate note, the voices of the single white male and the middle-age white male are lacking in this study.

General Observations

Various themes, as they refer to some patterns, along with an array of opinions and views are presented in this analysis, as seen in the 'thematic discussion,' the next section of this chapter. But first, some observations on general patterns and characteristics of the interviews are in order. While there are no exact duplicates in responses of the interviewees, there are, however some similarities with respect to whites' perspectives and attitudes on the one hand, and blacks' perspectives and attitudes on the other. And certainly there is some overlap or intersectional perspectives and attitudes between blacks and whites, with respect to their views on racial segregation in the SDA Church.

In this study, whites tend to respond differently from blacks with respect to the cause of the racial segregation. Some whites base the root source more on the way blacks worship differently from whites, as the reason for the segregation, or assert that blacks wanted the segregation because they worship differently. And although blacks themselves admit that their worship style is different from whites, they generally also tend to understand or explain the cause of the segregation as a result of white prejudice and discrimination. This black understanding of the cause of the segregation, may contribute to some resistance toward church integration on the part of some blacks.

In terms of segregation at the local conference and local church levels, whites sound a little more certain than blacks that SDAs should unite at these two levels. And among both blacks and whites there is also a common feeling expressed, that there's not "gonna' be" a white heaven and a black heaven, or any other type of separatist heaven, so the process of integration might as well begin down here. Some whites, however, while espousing the idea of integration at these two levels in the church's structure, also feel that if the blacks want to have their separate places of worship, then they should be allowed to do so, particularly if they want to feel free to worship and use their musical instruments in their own stylistic expressions. For blacks, though, their views seem to vary more widely than whites with respect to their perspectives on the segregated church structure. While some blacks welcome the idea of an all-integrated church structure at both levels, some struggle with the idea; others place emphasis on the black worship style as sort of legitimizing the segregation, while others speak of the segregation more in terms of neighborhood demographics, as for them since Detroit, for example, is predominantly black unlike some suburbs, then it's nothing strange and no big deal that you also find the church being

predominantly or all-black there; and yet still others are more concerned about the whites wanting too much domination in an integrated situation.

In that regard, a few perspectives among blacks stand out. One younger black male respondent, for instance, feels that the local conferences should merge, but let the local church be the local church; i.e., leave the local churches segregated as they are, essentially because some type of trickle-down effect would allow the local churches to merge on their own. In other words, from that perspective, since the local racially segregated conferences oversee racially segregated churches, then any activity such as an integration of local conferences will in turn foster some type of integrative mood in the churches that they oversee. And on almost the flip side to that, another younger black male feels that you don't need to merge the local conferences, particularly due to the segregated constituencies having different needs, with the worship style also being a factor; but then at the local church level, for this same respondent, essentially there's no rule preventing a white pastor from pastoring a black congregation and vice versa, even if such an arrangement may not last long and seems ill-suited. As far as this respondent is concerned, a black pastor, for example, working in a black or 'regional' conference could better serve the needs of the black constituents; but on that same token, there's nothing barring a white minister from serving a black congregation, even if the white minister feels somewhat like a fish out of water. In that vein, there are also blacks who feel that a white pastor may unlikely be able to adequately serve the needs of a black congregation, in a city like Detroit, for example, if s/he has not been through a similar experience as his/her members, and if s/he particularly does not live in the same community surrounding the church. From that perspective, the lack of a communal bond translates into a bad pastor-to-congregation fit.

This is where the theoretical literature comes to life, as it sheds some light on the racially segregated life in Seventh-day Adventism. In cultural toolkit theory, for instance, there is a focus on cultural tools and habits, such as that involving particular worship styles (Swidler, 1986; Patillo-McCoy, 1998; Emerson and Smith, 2000), and also the effects of such habits in impacting one's attitude in his/her community life. This comes to bear on the manner in which the black SDA worship experience, for example, is necessarily tied to everyday life experience and cultural practices and mindset of the immediate surrounding community. In speaking of church culture as a strategy of action in the black community, Patillo-McCoy shares, for instance, that black churchgoers tend to carry over some of their same mannerisms and worship or praise practices even into secular events (1998; *cf.* Baer, 1988; Baer and Singer, 1992), so that essentially there is a match between their community life and their church life. It is for this very reason that, though not all directly applicable to SDAs, many black churchgoers tend to not see a separation between church life, political activism, and community life (Cone, 1969; 1975; 1984; Wilmore, 1972; 2004; Harris, 1993; Lincoln and Mamiya, 2003; Jacobson and Wadsworth, 2012), particularly when it involves advocating for and reaching out to the marginalized and oppressed, or church outreach in general.

For Swidler, it's a little bit more nuanced, including one's church culture, seeing that whether white, black or other, one's culture is not merely symbolic in nature, but is actually part of a formation of group position, insofar as strategies for social life is concerned (1986). From that standpoint, with respect to the view of a black pastor being better suited to serve the needs of black constituents, the black or regional SDA conferences are understood as not merely serving, but benefiting a large cultural niche. And that involves strategies for helping black SDAs to

better serve their surrounding communities, particularly with respect to evangelism and outreach programs.

And similarly, the ‘homophily principle’ (basically meaning ‘love of the same’) also helps shed light on SDA segregation perspectives and practices (McPherson and Smith-Lovin, 1987; Emerson and Smith, 2000; McPherson et al., 2001). That is the case since many SDA blacks, as whites, tend to flock together in a racially separate manner, due, in part, to the sameness in worship style, as well as the bonding nature of similar cultural experiences, for instance. From that standpoint, the social networks involved, though limited in certain cases, are nonetheless used, in a sense, to benefit group organizational dynamics (McPherson et al., 1992; McPherson et al., 2001). And in this study, this was evident, not only in the manner in which some white and black SDAs tie worship style to segregated congregational gatherings, but also the way in which some black SDAs in particular, connect the dots between congregational worship, the black experience, and community experience and bond.

Notwithstanding the cultural cohesiveness and community bonding involved, a couple of other black perspectives will help give an idea of the variation among blacks with respect to blacks’ perspective on the SDA segregated arrangement. One is a middle-age black woman who issued a quicker response with respect to segregation at the local conference level, but then staggered when it came to the issue of the segregated local church. She makes it clear that she is not totally comfortable with the racially segregated conference system; but then in terms of her perspective on having or maintaining segregated churches, she generally feels that should not be the case, and does not “think it’s really necessary to have two separate churches.” On that same point of having segregated churches, however, she also shares that “... but, you know, if, in fact, you know, there just has to be because that’s what everyone wants, I don’t see why we couldn’t

have some of the churches, you know, be more unified.” Then one older black male declares that “...there is strength in unity” in speaking to the issue of segregation at the local conference level. And in terms of segregation at the local church level, his expressed sentiments are that Seventh-day Adventists claim to have the truth, but he sees “other denominations that don’t follow the bible as closely as we do, but they worship together in unity... .” Then he follows up with that by saying “...it just doesn’t make sense.”

And in all this, there are some blacks that feel that Christ would return first, before any SDA racial integration can be realized, essentially due to the way attitudes and operations are already ‘crystalized’ in the denominational structure. An example of such sentiments comes from a middle-age black woman (in this study), who although struggles with her view of church integration since she is more comfortable among her “own people,” would still like to see racial integration in the church. But as far as she is concerned, she believes that “we” have a long way to go. Then she asserts, “And Jesus is about to come... it’s sad you know ... I believe that the separation is probably still goin’ to be there when Jesus come back.”

Moreover, generally speaking, both blacks and whites tend to avoid usage of direct confrontational terms such as ‘racism’ and ‘discrimination,’ in sharing their views on the background as well as the current ongoing segregated arrangement in the SDA Church. And among blacks and whites, they both have issues with integration in the church on a more personal level. For example, some blacks and whites are not comfortable with the idea of having or approving of their children engaging in interracial dating and marriage within the denomination. But for blacks who feel that way, it is largely a matter of the history of prejudice and ill-treatment by whites. Whereas for whites who feel uncomfortable with the idea, it generally has more to do with cultural differences between blacks and whites or they are simply

not attuned to the idea of their kids marrying blacks. In one instance, a white respondent even implicates that Ellen G. White had given counsel on the issue of intermarriage between blacks and whites. And while he gives no specifics on that counsel, he nonetheless essentially indicates that he is also flexible with the idea (of interracial marriage), though he seems to struggle with it.

So to be sure, some are wrestling with the idea of their children intermarrying, which appear to pose a direct challenge in some instances, as blacks seem to struggle a little more with the idea. And based on the responses, some blacks and whites also take no issue with their children intermarrying. The general feeling in that regard is, as long as the person treats their child right, the color doesn't matter, particularly if that person is God-fearing. Thus, what was found, is that while some blacks and whites espouse and even strongly advocate integration in the SDA church structure, as opposed to segregated administration and worship, essentially claiming that there would be no segregation in heaven, they are nonetheless not as comfortable with the intermarriage of their black and white children, for instance. This seems to suggest a bit of social distance, insofar as it pertains to 'levels of integration' from the participants' point of view; i.e., different feelings of closeness to each other. In gaining deeper insight and a better understanding of the dynamics of the racial segregation situation in Seventh-day Adventism, we take now a closer look at the unique expressions and wide array of white and black views, attitudes and feelings, based on the field study.

Thematic Discussion

Note: The focus of this analysis is on the perspectives of respondents concerning the segregation in the SDA Church at local conference and local church levels, as allied with the research question. Nonetheless, in this section I also proffer broader insight as we take a look at other responses in the study, particularly since they are contextually linked to the main focus, and do

offer a wider angle with which to view the discussion, as well as enhance apprehension of the diverse views on the segregated structure in Seventh-day Adventism. Thus, what follows specifically depicts the varied nature of the experiences and the wide variety of sentiments and attitudes from the perspectives of the respondents.

Cross-racial Church Attendance

In response to the question of level of comfort in attending an all-black church, one older white male shares that he is “quite comfortable.” Another older white male’s response to that is, “Uuuuhm not very” (his total response).³⁸ And as a younger white male sees it,

Hm, that’s a good question. I think I would be comfortable with that. Uh um [sort of hesitated there a little], I have a friend at work whose black; we’ve been friends for about ten years. And he’s invited me to his Sunday church; cause they’re all black and at times I’m the only white person. I don’t have a problem. When I go I don’t have an issue with it I guess. So I think I’d be ok with it.

On that same note of attending an all-black church, an older white female explains “I, I was comfortable; but I haven’t been to many of them.” A middle-age white female’s total response to this issue is “Uhm, not very comfortable.” And a younger white female’s approach to it is: “On a scale of 1-10(?)” [Interviewer: You could say that.] “Alright probably around a 4.”

Then looking at it from the blacks’ perspective, the following are responses to the issue of level of comfort in attending an all-white church. An older black male shares that “I will feel comfortable. I have no problem.” A middle age black male sharing his perspective asserts,

Uhhh, well actually I was first ordained an elder in a Michigan Conference church. So, uh I found it very interesting if that answers your question. I mean I-I guess the honest truth answer to that – I believe the Lord carried me out there to know how to preach to everybody. So I would think if you coming with the word of God, you know, it should be received because it’s the word of God; not because of who the speaker is.

³⁸ As much as I would like to employ the views of ‘middle-age white males’ in this analysis, there are no middle-age white males in this study.

And as a younger black male sees it, “I I I-[some hesitancy] I’m comfortable. I don’t know if they’ll be comfortable with me. But I’ll be comfortable” in an “all-white church.”

Continuing on this same issue, as an older black female sees it “[a brief pause] Uuhmm, I’m comfortable. I’ve attended a white church before.” Sharing her thoughts, as a middle-age black female puts it “[thinking a little bit first] ... I doe know; I probably wouldn’t be comfortable. No, I probably wouldn’t be comfortable [attending an all-white church].” And as a younger black female sees it “Uuhm, it doesn’t bother me.” She regards attending an all-white church “as any other church.”

Neighborhood and Church Attendance

With respect to whites attending a church that is situated in a predominantly black neighborhood or district, and blacks attending church situated in a predominantly white neighborhood, there are varied responses to that. From the white perspective, an older white male states “Not a problem” (his entire response). Another older white male points out “If I live there, it would be no problem. I might have a problem driving 20 or 30 miles to get to one” (his entire response). And a younger white male shares, “Umm [then long pause], I wouldn’t have an issue I guess.”

With respect to the white females, on this same token, an older white female states “I don’t really have thoughts; it wouldn’t bother me” (entire response). Another older white female sharing her perspective and concerns on attending church in a black neighborhood asserts,

I – the only problem that I would have with that would be the safety of the neighborhood. Uum, that [stalling] I think this is added – I know you didn’t ask this but um I feel the same way about integrated neighborhoods, you know. I want to live in an integrated neighborhood, and if the white people would stop moving out it could be that way. But what happens is they don’t, and then once the crime rate goes up, then I have to be out of there.

A middle-age white female’s take on that is,

Uhm, I, I, if going by myself, I would feel uncomfortable. But with my husband, I have no problems with that; cause I work at a predominantly, you know, black area. So uh it doesn't bother me really. [It's] by myself sometimes, you know, so.

Two other middle-age white females, however, affirm that they have no problem attending church in a black neighborhood – one married, the other single. For the former “that’s fine,” she has “no problem.” And as the latter also succinctly puts it, “No problem; pretty comfortable.” And on that same issue, a younger white female plainly states “I’ll be hesitant to go without a friend.”

With respect to the black perspective on the matter, one older black female sharing how she feels about attending church in a predominantly white neighborhood, with some reservation, states “I may have some-some – some uh you know concerns; you know not having someone there that’s like my race or whatever.” This is partially similar to the expressed concern among some white females (as seen above), in terms of not being totally comfortable with the idea. For a middle-age black woman, she had problems with that, if she had to travel a little distance to get to church in the white neighborhood – a view that is shared on the white side as well (in terms of attending church in a black neighborhood). As she puts it, “the area – just as long as it didn’t – wasn’t like way away, when there’s plenty of areas that can be closer.” And thinking about it a little bit, a younger black female shares,

[took breath first] I think that, I would do it. I would go. I wou’ I wouldn’t let it stop me from going. But it does make you um just aware of your surroundings, only because you feel [a]s though they’re aware of your presence, so.

With travel distance playing a role again, for an older black male, he has no problem attending church in a predominantly white area if it’s close to him. In his words, “Depending there if I’m living in that area – I will feel comfortable there, in that-in that particular church, if it

was all-white; I have no problem with that at all.” Weighing in on the matter, a middle-age black male considers,

I’m comfortable in my skin-[slight laugh] ehh and-and I will hope, even though that’s not the case that other persons who embrace ahh Christianity, would uhh be as comfortable as I am. However, you know that’s not the case. And so auhh, for me personally I feel comfortable cause I’m uhhh-[there was a finger tap] certain of what God has said about me [and] I believe that – that I’m in His image. So what I try to do is wherever I find myself, try to reflect who God is and I think that’s what attracts people, whether whatever ethnicity you may be.

And associating a white neighborhood with an all-white church, a younger black male’s thoughts on attending church in a predominantly white neighborhood are,

Well I mean I don’t I-don’t have a problem with attending a all-white church. I think that it will probably be foreign to me. The culture will be different; probably wouldn’t like they type of songs they sing, or how they sang them. So, things like that but (his entire response).

On Cross-racial Local Church Leadership

With respect to black leaders, such as church elders and pastor officiating in a white or predominantly white church, and vice versa, there are some mixed feelings on both sides. On the one hand among whites, there is a general sense that they are okay or have no problem with a black pastor leading their local church. In that vein, while there is some concern about cultural differences if a black pastor is to lead them, there is also perhaps a little more concern for the spirituality level of the pastor, i.e., a manifestation of a godly spirit in the pastor’s life, and whether or not s/he shares the same beliefs as the congregation. As such, there is concern as to whether or not the pastor exhibits qualities of a Christian pastor, for instance. On the other hand, somewhat similar to white respondents, while some blacks have no problem with a white pastor leading their local church, particularly if he is a godly person, there is nonetheless some concern

that a white pastor may not be able to connect with the congregation and community as well as they would like.

The following are some voices on this point of having a pastor serve cross-racially. In response to the idea of having a black pastor serve at his church, one older white male shares that “I would have no objection to it. I’m not sure some others wouldn’t but I wouldn’t.” Another older white male sharing his view about having a black pastor, declares that “It’s not a problem, depending on whether or not he can adjust himself to the cultural differences between the blacks and the whites.” And, a younger white male shares that,

Um, the race I guess wouldn’t matter to me. It would be more about like who – what his spiritual inclinations would be; and if we were aligned on spiritual things. I’d be fine with it if – as long as we were eye-to-eye on those sorts of things, and his vision and how–how it lines up with what I believe.

Continuing on this same point of having a black pastor in a local white church, an older white female shares that “So long as we shared the same beliefs and um he belonged to our church, I would have no reservations.” As a middle-age white woman sees it,

[chuckle first] Uhm, well-[high pitch], I ‘doe’ know. [They] have some different viewpoints because of – I wouldn’t see anything wrong with it. But as far as maybe culturally or bringing in the different cultural views, you know, to the congregation, that would be kind of – might be kind of awkward to some, you know. But, I’m sure once we got to know the person [and] his style, uhm I would probably accept it, you know.

For another middle-age white woman, her first response to that is “Amen!” She would be “very happy” for a black pastor. For her, in spite of long-held prejudices, she believes that such situations (as having a black pastor) are fine. Affirming her personal taste she adds “I like white people too but, I just feel like um sometimes black preachers preach with such emotion and conviction that touches my heart.” She thinks that “overall sometimes white people tend to” not be “in touch with people’s feelings as much.” And thus, in her final word on that, she avers “So

I think that black people are just – ah the black pastors seem like – I don't know, they can just reach out and grab your heart; and I appreciate that.” And for a younger white female, she's not really comfortable responding to that, since she's never had a black pastor. In her own words, “I've never had a black pastor to lead my church. So I feel like I can't truly answer that question.”

Then with respect to having a white pastor lead the local church, an older black male has “no problems with it.” To this he adds “Uuh, I live in the city of Detroit, and we recently elected a white mayor. And there were other, you know, candidates - who happen to be black. But we based it on content of character.” As a middle-age black man sees it,

Well I-I don't have a uhh – I personally don't have a problem with that; and neither do I think other African Americans have a problem. And we-we discuss this – I discuss this in other settings; and we see it um over and beyond the Seventh-day Adventist Church. I think whites have a problem with blacks in leadership in churches. What causes that? I don't know. I just think that uuuh, they do have that problem. For me personally I don't-I don't have no problem with it. If they're qualified and if they're being led of God, hey I'm-I'm for it all.

And as a younger black male sees it,

I just believe that like -you know like with the elder, or with the pastor position, I think that that leader should have a perception of the area, ahh from their ah relationship to the area. And so i[f] that person doesn't have any relationship to the area, or a-understand ahh the um the ahh living experiences of the people in the area, they may not be able to relate on a sociable level. But I-I I mean I'you know; again I wouldn't have any problem with that. I think that a white pastor or a black pastor, you know who obviously knows the word and have a good arm - they're honest, transparent, -I think that any, either or can run the you know church pastorship.

For black females, on this same issue, according to an older black female “I have no problems with it,” particularly as she also shares that she's been in an “environment of that nature.” As a middle-age black female puts it,

I have no problem with that as well [besides having a white elder]. Aum now it

just depends on as far as if that person um can reach me in a certain way. And so, aum that's the difference. But I have no problem with that.

And as a younger black female sees it,

Again same thing [as with a white church leader/official]. I feel like, to me when it comes to a pastor, [it's] not about his race. It's about his connection with the savio'r, with the congregation; [his] connection with each family; and just taking the time to actually know his members. So, it really doesn't matter either way.

In terms of whites' acceptance of having blacks in leadership positions such as elder or first elder at their local SDA Church, they tend to be more accepting and more comfortable with a black officer than with the idea of having a black pastor. An important note to observe here is that, the position of first elder in an Adventist Church basically means that this particular individual is second in command, after the church pastor. The following are sample responses from white males and females, more or less representative of the whites' position with respect to having blacks in leadership positions at their church. According to an older white male "No problem at all." This is his entire response in that particular regard. According to a younger white male, it's more about who the person is, so he has no issues with that. According to an older white female "I would have no reservations; none." As a middle-age white female sees it "Uhm, I would see no problem with it. We've had a black elder here [omitted church name] before." And according to a younger white female "I have no problem with that" (her complete response).

Then on the black side, the following are some responses from black males and females with respect to having whites in leadership positions at their church. According to an older black male, as long as they are qualified according to the word of God. As a younger black male sees it, in terms of spirituality, it doesn't matter whether it is a white or black; but at the same time he's concerned that a white church official would not have an understanding of the area. As a

middle-age black female sees it, she would have no problem with it, “it would be cool,” and doesn’t think most people at her church would have a problem with it either. Then according to another middle-age black woman (in younger middle-age years), color doesn’t have an impact, and she has no problem with it at all, “as long as they are able to do what they’re called to do, in that leadership role.” Based on her response she is totally fine with it. And as a younger black female puts it “I’m fine with it. I feel like spirituality doesn’t know a color.” Here again is the “spirituality” language, referencing the idea of godly living.

As for the pastors, the white pastors, based on their responses, have no problems with having black leaders, first elder or otherwise, serve with them. As one of the white pastors puts it, “absolutely.” He is “very very comfortable” and has no issues with it. He looks for qualifications and does not look at color or culture in the process. And for the other white pastor, he sees an equal playing field when it comes to holding church office. As he puts it “I don’t have any reasons to suggest that black people cannot hold any office anyone else does.” For the black pastors, however, the perspective on that point is a little bit different. According to one of the black pastors, in his ministry experience, he’s had white folks in leadership and it has been a challenge. However, in referring to the black constituents that he currently serves, he also shares that he has no issue with that (i.e., a white in a church leadership role), and further states “I don’t think the people will either.” And as far as the other black pastor is concerned, it does not matter to him; he just doesn’t want all the elders or leading officers to be white.

Attendance at Mixed-group Social Functions

Respondents also share how comfortable they feel about attending social functions with a mixed black-white crowd. On that note, an older white male sharing how he was at birthday celebration for a black female friend the previous night (prior to the interview) states “I just came

from one [social function] last night, celebrating a birthday. My wife's best friend is African American." On that same point, a younger white male shares "Personally I don't have an issue with it because I grew up with it." In explaining that he played football growing up in a diverse group, he also declares "Uum, for me [mixing is] very easy; just because how I grew up. I grew up in – I went to high school that was very diverse, so."

With respect to white females' level of comfort in attending social functions with a mixed black-white crowd, an older white female simply says, "I'm comfortable." A middle-age white female avers "Um, I'm fine with it; I'm comfortable with it." And on that point, a younger white female confidently states "Not a problem."

Insofar as it pertains to the black perspective on that point, an older black male declares "Well I have done that ... from time-to-time, and I feel comfortable." A middle-age black male beginning his response by asserting that whites are comfortable with him at mixed gatherings, posits,

They're comfortable. Um, I uh you know as I look back on my life, you know that's the kind of setting I was in – as a kid, as in school; uuuh in music, uuuh, just, even my adult life I mean I have people who are –don't look like me – they come to my home, and they're just as comfortable as the kids there, so. I think it's the individual. Uuuuh, that I'm – I don't have a problem with it; and we've had heated discussions, and yet because of who we are as individuals, we're able to rise above that. So, I don't have a problem with it.

And a younger black male sharing his perspective says "I say I love those; those are the best functions. I like it better than all-black folks; being in a diverse function is pretty cool. I like that."

According to an older black female on that same point, "I have no problem; no concerns with that." As a middle-age black female sees it,

So we do it all the time. We have events where it's like plenty of white people uhm come to our stuff, and we go to theirs. So it's like it's, you know, it's cool. You

know, it's like some o' them get up –they speak; we sit there we listen; they 'have fun. We laugh, just like they laugh. And it's –it's really good. It's a good thing to be like that - uh to be together as one. You know, and I would like to see more of that too, cause you know we' -like I said, they Seventh-day Adventists like we are, and they should believe the same thing we believe.

And from a younger black female's point of view,

I'm o.k. with it. Growing up in church we had a mixed crowd for quite some time. 'Mean school, not just church but school and other events that you do - work you know, you are-you are in -you are put in a mixed crowd in all times. So in church I feel like that's the first place you learn about mix crowds or mix present. So if you-[or rather "you should"] start in church before you go in school. So I feel like it teaches a variety; i't expose you to a variety of people. There's no shock factor when you grow up with that variety. So for me it works. I'm o.k. with it.

Worship and Preaching Style

On Worship Style and Musical Instruments When it comes to worship style and taste or approval of musical instruments, in this study, without even having to think about it, the drums stick out so conspicuously loud, and absolutely distinct as a major contentious issue between white and black SDAs. It's literally a dividing line, with majority of blacks having no problem with an instrument like drums being played in church, versus the overwhelmingly strong aversion to it seen in the attitudes and preference of virtually all whites on the matter. The two exceptions to that are voiced by one younger white female and an older white male. This particular younger white female likes "a little more of the contemporary where there's guitars and the piano," and not always just organs and hymns but praise music. Besides that, she mentions that she's been to college where she attended a church with a drum set on site, adding also, "and I loved it." But the older white male's response is the one that clearly stands out, decidedly deviating from all other white responses on the issue of musical instruments, and on drums in church, in particular, with the exception of the younger white female just cited. As he distinctly puts it,

... I find that our [clears throat] church is very conservative, and um it's not very comfortable for me. Um, I, being – I'm an ex-musician. I say ex because I don't play a lot of music anymore. But I play drums for many-many years, in many different kinds of bands, and many different kinds of functions – especially prior to being an Adventist. Uhm and so it-I-it bothers me when I find out – when I came to this church drums were taboo. Uh, it was the devil's way of bringing a people to hell, you know; the drumming beat was [left incomplete]. And to me it was – as a drummer, it – it was very offensive. So uh I –I would look forward personally to a church that allowed music to be played of all instruments.

In conjunction with that, the following are some of the perspectives from blacks and whites, with respect to worship style and taste in music or musical instruments. As one older white male sees it, he enjoys all types of music that glorifies God and that brings people together. But on that same note, he does not fail to mention something about drums. As he puts it “my personal taste – I'm probably not into the heavy drums.” According to a younger white male, he's more of a traditional-type person, as he grew up in a Lutheran Church. And he's more comfortable with piano and organ and traditional songs, more than “contemporary worship” as he puts it. He also shares that he's “heard some things about drums” and he doesn't think it's “the best thing.” At the same time, he also feels that people have “the right to figure out what's best for them.” Then as an older white female sees it, she likes people to stand up and worship the lord with music; and she doesn't have any reservations with most instruments, “maybe just style.” As far as another white older female sees it “Uuuhm [with a short pause], I don't really care for drums, loud things; but I guess if it enhances it. Umm, I wouldn't stay away if that was in my church.” Then according to a middle-age white female,

I like hymns. Uh I do like uh music that definitely is gonna touch the heart. Uh – style? I guess I like the old –the old ah way of-of the hymns and stuff like that. Um but I also do like some of the gospel music. I do listen to a gospel radio station; so I do enjoy that as well. But I go to a number of different churches, so yeah.

On the black side, according to an older black male, “I’m kinna open when it comes to that. Uh for example I like all types of music.” Then he shares that he’s not opposed really to any type of instrument. And immediately adds “Or, I also like acapella. So it’s pretty hard, you know, to get me in a situation like that. I guess you would describe it as a free worshipper.” Another older black male shares he likes for his choice of worship style to be “somewhat animated,” so that every aspect of his being will be affected. And he names three aspects of his being that he wants affected by his worship style in the following order – the emotional, social, and mental (also citing “intellectual” as interchangeable with mental). Then a middle-age black male, who is attuned to soul music says, “...I love music,” and considered this subject of perspective on worship style and musical instruments to be another “touchy one.” He also shares that,

I’m a rap person so I generally tend more cultural, more rhythm soul music. O.k., that being said, there’s a lot of churches don’t think we should have drums in the church and things like that. I believe that uh you should be able to praise God however you wanta praise God ...

And two younger black males also reveal their liking for drums. As one of them puts it, “... I like gospel music. o-o I’m a fan of ah the drums, and the, you know, different instruments - drums, piano, organ, the ah guitar, ... you know - all the instruments.” In that response, he emphasizes his affinity to drums, naming it twice.

Then a middle-age black female who specifically names the drums, also names the piano and organ as instruments of choice, in explaining that she just likes music that praises God “instead of sitting there like you in the opera somewhere, like you dead.” She also emphasizes “...I love music. I don’t like that opera-[and laughs out freely]; I don’t like the opera-type music. I like -like when you go to church you supposed to be like praising God.” And a younger black female considers that rather than being “overdramatic and over-the-top,” having

expression and passion is more appealing to her in terms of music style. She particularly shares that,

When it comes to music style I like to be expressive of the music, and I like to show passion with music. So, I can enjoy that. I-I have been 'other churches where they're very mellow and they don't really have it of a big expression when it comes to music.

Note On Preaching Style, and Literary Analysis The same is generally true of preaching style, whereby black members prefer a more lively and responsive or reactive preaching style, as the black pastor also likes feedback from the congregation while preaching. In this respect, what was found, generally speaking, is that whites like preaching imbued with a combination of an uplifting and spiritual message, as well as a sermon that appeals to the intellect. And on the black side the same is true, but with an added dimension – that having to do with the emotive domain, i.e., that which causes an emotional reaction or allows for freedom of emotional expression. While blacks, generally speaking, enjoy preaching that is spiritually uplifting and appealing to or challenge the intellect, they also like to express their emotions in the process; a perspective that is shared by virtually no whites, for the most part.

In that regard, there is one exception among white members that remarkably stands out, in the case of a white middle-age female, who cites an appeal to the “emotions” with respect to preaching style. Although like the typical ‘white’ response to musical preference, she is averse to use of drums in worship, she nonetheless, unlike the typical ‘white’ response, feels much more attuned to a ‘black preaching style,’ as opposed to hearing a white preacher. Besides liking preaching that’s uplifts Jesus rather than tell her what’s she’s doing wrong, as she puts it, “Uhm, I like something that uh appeals to my emotions ... Uhm, I don’t mind if the preacher says ‘can I get an Amen?’ or whatever. Um, I don’t mind some enthusiasm.” With that, although she doesn’t like lines repeated over and over again in the sermon, “...but,” she continues,

I think you can be very enthusiastic; and uhm I think it's nice when the preacher tries to um get the congregation involved – you know there's some feedback; there's a little give-and-take. Um, I just think that makes a more interesting worship experience ... it opens your heart rather than just-just ... talking to you – like reading you a sermon.

And not too far off from such sentiments, on that same note, one of the white pastors even quips “Uum, if I can preach the way I hear most black preachers do, I'll do it.” And he said that with a chuckle.

The literature is insightful on that point of difference in worship style, as it also speaks of racial tensions and the efforts of blacks, whites and others in their attempt to congregate and worship together in some instances (Jenkins, 2003; Christerson et al., 2005; Emerson and Woo, 2006; Marti, 2012). Although in the mega-church situation, for instance, known for its integrative environment (Putnam and Campbell, 2010), there's less of an emphasis on differences in worship style. Nonetheless, for purposes of this present study, it has been expressly shown that, even amidst the push by some for racially integrative churches, and in spite of the actual practice of religious racial integration, though not as widespread as religious segregation, differences in worship style and musical tastes and desires remain a source of tension to work through (Marti, 2012).

Thus, while worship and music no doubt play a role in racial reconciliation, with significant implications for the multicultural church, at the same time, due to the various desires in the multiracial setting, worship styles can also cause some inadvertent tension (Ibid.). This seems to speak precisely to the sentiments shared in this study, with respect to worship style and preferences in a segregated church, as black and white Adventists seem to not be so accommodating on this point, in terms of any type of compromise in bridging the gap in worship style differences. Yet, in spite of the tension, “integrated worship” is still seen as “fundamental

to the vision of a truly multiracial church” (Ibid., 4), by many who are committed to integrated fellowship. In the present study, however, no active push or any particular perspective stands out, in terms of the respondents advocating strongly and specifically for a combination or integration of worship styles. If anything, on the point of worship style, including preaching proclivities, both blacks and whites seem, for the most part, comfortable with their personal tastes.

Further, due to the intricate connection between sociological theory and practice, as demonstrated in this research, it is crucial to highlight the contribution of the theoretical lens to this study. With respect to the connection between theoretical perspectives and the findings, the homophily principle (Emerson & Smith, 2000; McPherson et al., 2001) is important in understanding how black SDAs, for instance, find commonality and close fellowship among themselves, based on their lived experience and social preferences. This lived experience, however, is also informed by a history of anti-black prejudice and discrimination rife throughout all institutions in the denomination, as expounded upon in chapter two. In the twentieth century, for example, the SDA organization mirrored racist practices of the wider society, such as in its implementation of Jim Crow policies (Reynolds, 1984; Bull & Lockhart, 2007; *cf.* Baker, 1996; Birch, 2012; Allport, 1966; 1979; Wood, 1991; Emerson & Smith, 2000; Woodward, 2002). And that has had an impact on relations among black and white church leaders, as well as interpersonal relationships among members more generally, as revealed in this study.

But no doubt, similarities in worship expressions and styles also play into the communal bonding of blacks on the one hand and whites on the other, as demonstrated in this chapter. As also seen in this chapter, blacks and whites for the most part have their preferred tastes in worship styles, particularly when it comes to the use of musical instruments. I have personally

observed such to be the case in my church visitations during this study, whereby drums are preferred in the black church, for instance, in contrast to the white. Both of the black churches, in fact, had drum sets, while the white churches did not. And the field interviews also reveal that when it comes to preaching style, apart from an affinity to intellectual and biblically based sermons, blacks generally like more upbeat and enthusiastic preaching that engages their emotions, much more so than whites. In the worship experience, there is lively verbal exchange between the black preacher and the black worshipper.

In this responsive style, some blacks would visibly and unabashedly express their emotions by shouting loud responses to parts of the sermon that really touch them, engaging such activity as standing and waving the hand, or even pace slowly up and down the aisle expressing their emotions during the worship experience. And at times the organist, for instance, will also play short staccato notes to accompany the preacher during highpoints in the preaching. This is particularly evident in tandem with aphorisms (certain repetitions by the preacher), in a harmonic *mélange* of swell notes of preaching and praise. This heightens the emotions and expressions of the worshippers all the more. This is reminiscent of black preaching, in the black church tradition, both inside and outside of Seventh-day Adventism. Similarly, my visitations and observations in the various churches bear testimony to such differences in blacks and whites' approach to worship. I have observed the more emotional display as blacks physically and verbally express their emotions during the worship service. Whites, on the other hand, in my observation, will verbally respond mildly at times to parts of the sermon, but certainly not get up and wave their hands during the worship service, for instance. This difference in overall worship style and preaching proclivities is revealed both in the literature (Wilmore, 1972; Marti, 2012; *cf.* Lincoln, 1973) and in analysis of this study, including observations in the field. All of this

contributes to a better understanding of why church segregation is such a tenacious and enduring phenomenon, in spite of a common theological core and notwithstanding the desire among both blacks and whites for a united church structure and fellowship.

Cultural toolkit theory also sheds light on the worship experience and black and white differences in tastes, when it comes to choice of musical instruments and preaching style. This theory places emphasis on the cultural habits, upbringing and lifestyle of individuals as they are informed and impacted by the social environment. So whereas on the one hand blacks have affinity for the drums coming out of a particular cultural and historical experience, for instance, whites on the other hand tend to disavow such an instrument, perceiving it as loud, worldly and even irreverent. In conjunction with that, it is important to point out that the cultural toolkit model sheds light even on choice of church attendance. As also evident in this study, blacks and whites tend to be more comfortable attending homogenous congregations, to experience the worship service with others of like passions and experience, underscored by similar cultural expressions and tastes.

In Detroit, for example, some blacks in the study are accustomed to community life, including education and work in the area, or have even grown up in the same church since they were children, so that it is not so easy to attend worship service outside of their cultural niche. In this respect, everyday habits, upbringing, culture, social experience, traditional practices, group solidarity, and the environment all coalesce in informing the worship preferences of both blacks and whites, as well as their choice of location in church attendance. The literature also speaks to this connection between cultural affinity and religious habits, showing that people's religious practices, particularly in the black community, even carry over into their lifestyles and practices in the surrounding community of which they are a part (Pattillo-McCoy, 1998). My observations

at church sites likewise bear witness to this phenomenon of whites choosing to congregate with whites, in a location that reflects their racial background, cultural practices, and upbringing; and the same goes for blacks. And there is also research emphasizing the impact of group solidarity on church attendance. From that vantage point, cultural groups tend to cohere and find commonality, particularly as it sustains their group position or cohesiveness (Swidler, 1986), both in and outside the church. This helps shed light on the vivid sense of belonging that is key to some black and white SDAs, as they find meaning in their expressed choice of cultural affiliation in worship, based on a shared experience. Altogether, then, examination of such theoretical underpinnings, along with field observations, offers a deeper sense of the nature of religious racial segregation, as in the SDA case.

On Racial/Ethnic Experiences

Sharing about their race or ethnic experiences, an older white male speaks about the prejudice that he was surrounded by, which also impacted him. In his own words,

As far as I'm concerned, there was a lot of prejudice whilst I was growing up. Because our – as you're growing up you assume the attitudes and the feelings of the people that you are around. So once you get into a uh, in that environment where you're thinking for yourself, you have the ability to go ahead and prove or disprove what you have been taught as a child.

For a younger white male, who grew up in southeast Michigan surrounded by a “big Jewish community” had “friends who were Jewish growing up.” “And,” he adds “then when I got to high school it was a pretty big mix of – I had a very diverse high school. Um, so I think my whole em, my whole life has been pretty good diversity.” Then an older white female shares,

Uhm, I always teased my dad cause, I don't know if you remember Archie Bunker? He was on TV – a program [which] was very racist. I always thought my dad was, but he ... it wasn't black and white [for him], you know; it was Italians or mafia, Irish or [those] you know. [slight chuckle] So I kinda grew up with that, but as I got older, uhm I can't say I brought that baggage with me.

Then making the distinction between acquaintances and friends, which she counts as “close tight friends,” a middle-age white woman explains that “my best friend is African American ... we’re just like sisters. I mean if I need something, she’ll help me” and vice versa. And although she considers that she can basically count her friends on one hand, she goes on to share “And I have a lot of uh-uh African American friends. Uhhm, I have a few Caucasian friends.” However, her experience growing up as she puts it was “basically all white” explaining that her “background is more like, like um Czechoslovakian,” and “German, and stuff like that.” To that she adds, “So, I mean my parents were, uh they try to keep some of the true tradition-[unclear word] of the culture intact.” And a younger white female shares that she interacted with “predominantly Caucasian people growing up.” She further points out that later on, her diversity awareness expanded as she got to know others, but “it wasn’t till college ... or high school” when that phase really started.

With respect to the black experience in this study, some of it is of a different hue (compared to whites), given the historical trajectory of race tensions and anti-black treatment in America. One older black female, who was a child in the Martin Luther King Jr. and civil rights era, remembers vividly the racial tensions and overtly anti-black violent acts that engulfed her in the south. Recounting her experience she shares,

I’m gonna say this – from Alabama, being from Birmingham, desig-it was designated as ‘Bombingham’ when I grew up. I was raised in the sixties. My background or my-my childhood – I was not fearful because my parents protected me. I had both parents at home. Auhm, I remember the situation uh the Sunday when the four little girls were bombed. I remember that, cause that was a hot day indeed. And then Dr. King’s brother – Bibi king was the pastor of the community church in the area that I was raised-[speaking with confident assertion]. So I remember the kids – the older kids coming and – coming and trash the school and “let’s march Freedom! Freedom!” But I don’t know what the fuss was about, until I got older; ’cause I was like, you know, uh elementary age and that sort of thing. And so, you know, I really didn’t understand it. But I truly understand it now, as I’ve really studied a lot. But then again it was kinda scary. It was our parents – did

my parents teach me any prejudice – no they did not-[with confidence]. I never heard them say the ‘n’ word like – at least they use it so freely, you know, the kids used it so freely, like it’s a-a-a-a badge of honor. And it’s not!-[got a little passionate there]. I never heard my parents say anything like a ‘redneck’ or this and th[at]. They didn’t teach us that; even though – and just being personal with you – my father was an alcoholic; he was not Adventist. My mother was – but I never heard them say anything negative about anybody of the other race.

A middle-age black female relating her experience shares how although growing up among blacks, her overall racial experience has not been so bad. As she tells it,

Auhhm, well-[followed by slight laugh], mines is probably just simple and easy, cause ahm, coming up, I was – like I say I was pretty much raised around all blacks. And even my churches that I’ve gone up-grown up in – I grew up Baptist. And so, I came through a Baptist Church – 100% probably black. And so – but I’ve never had any encounters, far as uhm, um prejudice; or uhm – my experience growing up has been positive. I have – can’t say I have any negatives. And I’m probably out of the norm, um and that’s okay. But um I know it has happened. I-I know it does happen, but I have not had that experience. Even in my work environment, cause right now I’m the only black who works in my department. But I get along with everybody. And we actually are a very good team. We work very well together. And so I’ve had a positive experience, growing up in my world, I guess you would say, and then also being exposed to um other cultures, so.

And a younger black female relating her experience avers,

uuhm, Well, being black you always told about your history; or in, you know, the things of the past and what has happened to African Americans beyo’ before us. So you’re always taught to be great and be above what people see you as. Because the color of your skin already put a stigma on you -so it’s already made you as statistic. It already made you in other people’s eyes someone to be aware of, or be concerned of. So it’s important to rise beyond that only because it’s not necessarily about proving someone wrong. It’s more of proving that you’re great just like an’, and you should have the same experiences just as any other culture. I’ve been racially profiled before. I’ve been, you know, I’ I’ve experienced being in restaurants where the waitress or waiter person ... go to a different table -um where we don’t get seated first -seat’ -we don’t get put in a seat first [even though arriving first, she clarified]. ... Aaum, so I mean you experience it everywhere you go. And s’ everything that’s going on now, you would always want to make sure what you teach your children - ’be aware of it because you don’t want your child to be the next person that’s profiled. I do believe that it’s -it’s very active. I believe that it exists. I think that it would be ignorant or naïve to believe that it doesn’t

exist. So, for that I'm aware and I -I feel like I will always need to be aware. So, [clears throat] I mean you experience it everywhere. So you just have to learn to rise above it.

She also clarifies that the "it" she's referring to (as in the last word in the quote above), is "racism".

With respect to black males, an older black male relating his experience shares that,

I uuum, I experienced a – some prejudice; but I also experience uhm some people despite their race who were true and honest, just people who talked, people who treated people the way they wanted to be treated. And uuuh, just to be clear really – there are some black or African American people who-that I don't like to hear. It's not just that; it's really the character of the person.

A middle-age black male, speaking of his experience moving from the south to the northern part of the U.S., and the racial climate he experienced in the north compared to the south avers,

Well i-it vary. It was blacks, whites schools; they bused in the whites at that time. Uuuuh, and, you know, we didn't have any problems –you know, neither me or my siblings. Uuuh, it was when, you know we migrated north that uh – and I guess I was older that time – you know made up a little more definitive. Yeh – you know, this is not what we do. And so it was puzzling to me, based on what I was coming from, so.

And a younger black male relating his experience shares,

Uh well I mean, like I said I grew in uh black areas. So I didn't really get exposed uuuh to many racial situations other than being around your own people -your own, you know, your own culture. So I mean there was no –I never experience like any racist situations or anything like that as a-as a child. Uum, going off to school, you know, there were some different instances where like police stopping you and ask for anything that could be uh perceived as maybe racially motivated; when thy stop you -just ask you questions and let you go, you know. But other than that, I've never had any-any true like you know racial situation; so I'm pretty good, so.

Racial Background of Peers

In speaking to the point of racial background of his friends, an older white male shares that,

Uhm, most of my friends, uh I don't – it's mostly ... work uh related; or uhm I have a couple friends [a friend] I went to school with that lives here that I'm very good friends with. Um, I don't really have a lot of friends. Uh, the ones that I do have are mostly white. That's just because our interest[s] are about the same ...

A younger white male shares,

Uhm [short pause], currently? Yeah you know I mean like-like at work a lot of my friends are from work. Um, I would say majority – cause I'm an engineer; majority are males. But there's a mix of white people, black people, um Asian, Arabic. Yeah I have – I have friends who are white. I have a good friend who's black at work; yeah.

In sharing about her peers, an older white female states that,

Uhhm, now that I'm retired, it's mainly family. I golf, so I have a – I might have to say that uh my golfing – the girls I golf with, are white. Uhm, neighborhood, you know, we have get-togethers that is some black and white, Filipino. So uhm, not of any consequence.

A middle-age white woman, in telling about who she associates with, says that,

Uuhhm, I-I associate with a lot of African Americans that are uhh – because, I think it's because their education and uh their background and what they know. Uh they have been very helpful. I've also um – the biggest would probably be my best friend who is African American. Because of her education and what I need to do, I'm able to talk to her about those things, and she can give me a good solid um grasp on the information – what needs to be done.

On that same point, a younger white female shares that,

Um, they're predominantly Caucasian. Um, but that doesn't mean that I don't hang out with um anybody else; just depends on my current setting and location. At that time in college, I hang out with a bunch of different variety of backgrounds.

Among African Americans, sharing the way he feels about the matter, an older black male shares that his friends are,

Auaah, mainly other Africans uh Americans; but, you know, because of family and marriage and different things, there are other groups that I uh–I interact with; sometimes because of business, auhh where I was working, co-workers or whatever. And-and like I said it-it really is not an issue with me. I can-I can be

close friends with any ethnic, any race or group or whatever, as long as those people are – we can treat each other the way you want to be treated.

A middle-age black male points out that he talks to white Adventist friends, but that since he moved back to Detroit, most of his friends “are black now.” And in speaking about his friendships, a younger black male shares that “it’s pretty mix; the majority of my friends are black.” But he also shares that he definitely has a white friend close to him.

For an older black female, sharing that she currently deals more with church people, relates it this way,

I only deal with people probably in the church, you know. Uhm, and I’ve met some of their friends – people who are co-workers; which they are, you know, of another uh ethnic group. And I get along with them. I get along with everybody; I try to anyway. But it’s - sometime it’s – gonna be honest – it’s hard to get along with others-others blacks. It really is. You know, I get along with-with-[left unfinished]. My experience and working, because I was working in the south, mostly black – always a problem. The church aehhhhhh, not so much down there; I get here, it’s a whole-whole different, it’s different. And I just feel like, you know, it’s kinda hard to get along with the people of the same race.

A middle-age black female tells it this way,

Well I deal mostly with black people mo-mostly. Well like I said, and I certainly now and I deal with a lot-a racism. So, I have found that with other races to be sometimes, they are more accepting of us once we prove who we are.

And a younger black female spends a little time explaining her perspective on that point, asserting,

Uuhm, I mean I h’ like I said I have black friends, white friends, there’s mixed friends. I have some of everything. And, they see me for-for me. We don’t they don’t know what color I am. And that’s the same thing with them. Though, you know, you have friends that of course would raise a different environment, like some white friends who never been to Detroit you know -and who’ve always been in the suburbs, who, you know, never really had to experience certain things that you’ve seen or heard about, or things that you read about, or see on the news. Th’s ’they don’t really experience things in their neighborhood. But, being friends, you’re able to hang-out together, you know; have fun together; talk; do

anything just like if you were the same 'r. I mean color doesn't separate those thoughts and those experiences. I feel like our differences 'n environment 'n culture allows us to learn about different experiences - something that we wouldn't 'f had to experience; allows us to learn different cultures; allows us to learn, you know, what you went through as 'a white person, that I'll never experience; and things that yu' - that I have gone through as a black person, that they'll never experience. So, to me it doesn't bother me. You learn different things. I feel like you learn different things everyday, so. And that's just part of it.

Segregation Sentiments and Interracial Black-White Dating and Marriage

Segregation Sentiments and Effects of Racialization in the Church

Notwithstanding the discussion on worship style above, for the most part, among both blacks and whites there remains an overwhelming desire to have integrated fellowship, as some also feel that there will be no segregation in heaven. In this regard, a striking parallel is found between the literature (Marti, 2012; cf. Christerson et al., 2005) and respondents' views (both black and white), insofar as it concerns frustration and feelings of powerlessness to address the segregation arrangement in the SDA Church, which some (in the study) find disturbing or essentially out of tune with the spiritual calling of the church. In this respect, some comments by a middle-age black woman, on her race or ethnic experiences in the church and feelings about the matter, stand out exceptionally with respect to the sentiments and actual language used to describe the racial environment in the SDA Church. As she puts it,

huh huh hu ugh-[started with laugh] hoao-[then sounded like tongue sound], Well, to me, I feel that-[going slowly] the Seventh-day Adventist ahm religion jus-jus' overall, is very segregated and very racist. And uh I wouldn't say that, you know, me personally I've had ex -any experiences with the racism. But ahhm, I've heard of things that happen in the past, where the reason why there's a Michigan Conference/ a Lake Region Conference, is because when-when the churches started, you know - black well weren't able to be pastors, or elders or anything like that. So they wanted to start their own auh church, so their own conference so that they could be -they would be able to have u the same privileges that as their white counterpart. And [sniff sound] unfortunately it never ch' -has never changed. We still to this very day, have two separate conferences; we have separate churches-[laughs out]; we have separate th' uh uh camp-meetings if you would. And

everything is definitely segregated. And I d[o] feel that the bottom, the underlying reason for that is racism. And it really disturbs me because we supposed to be the example to [laughs] to the rest of the world. But we're very racist and segregated.

Notice that in the citation above the words “racism” and “racist” each appear twice. That is extremely rare. As a matter of fact, so rare is the word “racist” used anywhere at all in conversation, that not only did it grip my attention, but in the citation above these are the only two times, out of four (by the same interviewee), in the entire interview series, that I notice deployment of that specific word. Both blacks and whites SDAs literally steer away from using such direct words, and at times there was a more vivid sense that they were deliberately avoiding the use of such words. But this particular response (in the citation above) is also unique, in that, the respondent specifically mentions the fact that SDA camp-meetings are (racially) segregated as well; a rare observation in this study.

To elucidate a little on the respondent's concern about segregated camp-meetings in the SDA Church in America, generally speaking, there is one campground per conference, where youth summer and winter camps, church special conventions, family retreats, individual church retreats and the like are held. In actual practice, the regional (black) conferences and the state (white) conferences maintain their own separate campgrounds, in effect, having racially segregated campgrounds as well. That does not mean that today, unlike in the past (Baker, 1996), blacks are barred from being on the ‘white’ SDA campground, but the administrations of these campsites nonetheless operate along the black-white divide in the SDA Church.

But on the point of feelings of frustration and powerlessness with respect to addressing racial segregation in the church, the literature also shows that church leaders today are becoming frustrated over having to continually bear the embarrassment of having homogeneously racial congregations in an increasingly multiracial world (Marti, 2012:3; *cf.* Newman, 2007; Hawkins

& Sinitiere, 2014; Asante, 2014). The bridging of the racial divide through liturgical structures, from that standpoint, along with the intentional forging of the multiracial congregation, are increasingly shared values due to the persistence of racially segregated houses of worship in America (Marti, 2012; DeYoung et al., 2003). Such factors also essentially speak to ways of reducing social distance, as well as the persistent socioeconomic inequality gap between blacks, whites and others (Massey and Denton, 1993). Moreover, between this study and the literature, the similarity on this point of integrative efforts between Seventh-day Adventists and non-Seventh-day Adventist Christians, has to do more with a level of embarrassment at the lack of togetherness, when it comes to presenting a racially segregated church to the world.

The point of the socioeconomic gap between blacks and whites, however, is one that's not lost on the SDA Church, but has rather raised concern, particularly with respect to the better condition and resources of white SDA grade schools versus the black ones, and the overall inequality found in the segregated conference system. Giving his view on the resource or economic inequality between the 'white' and 'black' conferences, according to one middle-age black male (in early middle-age years), even "when it's not separate, it's separate and unequal – meaning that there are advantages that white conferences have that black conferences don't." With that he adds,

So it's not equal by any means, in terms of uh the workers, and their pay, and the uh benefits and things of that nature. So there's a small inequality there. Not in terms of base salary, but incentives and housing allowance and things of that nature.

And stressing which side has more incentives, he shares in a definite manner that "... Michigan Conference gives a lot more," versus the regional conference operating in the same territory; and continues to explain that things are not equal, "meaning, not necessarily from a financial

standpoint, but from a resource standpoint as well. Uum, black conferences seem to struggle” And in touching on the education aspect, he also mentions very briefly “our schools seem to struggle, compared to white schools.” That speaks directly to concern for the effects of racial segregation on the widening inequality gap in finances and resources of white SDAs compared to blacks.

A point of clarity is in order here. It is really at the tertiary educational level, in the SDA school system, particularly in North America, generally speaking, that one can really speak of better racial integration, compared to lower educational levels. This is the case since SDA colleges and universities, in the U.S., fall under the administration of the ‘union conference’ level or above, in the SDA organizational structure, which operates beyond the local conference level. Thus, whereas in the past, throughout the entire SDA education system, as in all other SDA institutions, particularly in America, strict segregation rules were enforced and blacks were severely discriminated against,³⁹ today one cannot speak of the situation as being exactly the same. Yet, there are still problems with segregation attitudes, as they pertain to white-flight in Adventist schools and churches, for instance, a point that barely emerged in this study. One respondent, however, a middle-age black woman, shares some concern for the issue of white-flight in Seventh-day Adventism. She explains how there was some conversation at a town-hall meeting, with something mentioned concerning if African Americans want a church from the whites, all they have to do is make sure “enough African Americans continue to go to this church” and eventually the white members will “basically leave” and give the church to the blacks “basically for free.” She also adds “and it disturbs me.”

³⁹ Refer to chapter two of this dissertation, with a more involved discussion on the history of enforced segregation in SDA institutions, including rigid anti-black discrimination in the SDA education system.

And along the same broader issue of inequality in the church, one older white male, familiar with church administration and the racially divisive atmosphere in the church, considers the difference in income levels between blacks and whites more from a tithe and offering perspective, and that the blacks have more need for help. This specific line of thought has to do with differentials in giving patterns in the church, particularly in reference to tithe as a percentage (i.e., 10%) of income. As he understands it, SDA blacks earn less than whites, meaning that whites give more (in finances) to the church, based on income. He explains that,

Uh, one of the things that I do see from the Lake Union perspective, is there's a major difference uh in income levels; ... when you look at the tithe throughout the Lake Region [Conference (i.e., a black conference)] and you look at the tithe throughout the Michigan Conference, there is uh about the same amount of membership, but about half the tithe I think through the Lake Region – which indicates to me there is more financial need there. And part of the mixing together is going to be uh bringing people to the attitude of the early church – that, you know, God is the one who is directing this ship. And it – there are going to be more resources possibly in certain areas than others; but we need to realize, you know, God has provided of course for us to do that.

The 'Lake Union' mentioned in the quote above refers to the Lake Union Conference of SDAs, which oversee a number of local conferences, including both the Michigan 'white' Conference and the Lake Region 'black' Conference which also operates in Michigan. The significance of this point on the inequality in the giving pattern of SDA black and white members, ties back directly to the previous observation made about SDA segregation and socioeconomic inequality in workers' benefits, incentives and resources, between the white and black conferences. And essentially, in this last quote above, this respondent is also sharing his perspective that more can be accomplished or gained by blacks and whites coming together, and sharing resources, as it was in the early Christian church.

On Interracial Black-White Dating and Marriage in the SDA Church

When it comes to interracial dating and marriage in the SDA Church, as previously noted, some, not all, among both blacks and whites struggle with it, or are just not comfortable with the idea. Some cite cultural differences as an issue in that regard, while some express a level of concern for children of interracial couples, believing that there's some kind of burden placed on the children. And generally speaking, based on responses, whites, more than blacks, tend to cite no specific reason for the discomfiture on this point. The following reflect perspectives and attitudes of respondents on this issue of interracial dating and marriage in the church.

One older white male's first response to the interracial dating and marriage scene is "I don't uh, I don't condone it." He doesn't like the idea "because of the cultural differences." He feels that, "marriage is difficult in the first place," along with the multifaceted nature of it like "the financing, the housing, the children, the religion, the faith," which together adds a criteria of difficulty. Thus, he considers,

So why add another [layer] of racial differences. Nowadays it's more accepted than what it was 30 years ago, 40 years ago – when I was looking to be married. My wife and I have been married for 37 years now, and if you're talking about prejudice, uh, since she was up here – she's a southern girl – since she was up here her relatives told her never to marry a yank. And now the – we have had no problems whatsoever. In fact, one of her aunts calls me her favorite nephew, even though I am a yank. So, there is prejudice, no matter if you are the same color or not, it doesn't matter, it's the attitude that you have. If you have a Christ-like attitude, then a lot of these prejudices go away.

As another older white male sees it,

You know, I don't know; I – I uhm [pause and chuckle] – it's – I always ask myself when I see an inter-r – a mixed couple, I kinda like to say to myself – couldn't that black girl find a nice black fella? Or couldn't that white girl find a nice white fella? I mean there's gotta be somebody nice out there. Sometimes I feel people do this just to buck the system; just to show that they can do it. You know I don't know how serious uh a lot of the dating is. I think it's their choice.

It wouldn't be my choice. Then again, I don't know if I – maybe if I was a single man and I found a –a very attractive and very pleasant and very receptive black girl to date, I-I probably would [kinda sound a little unsure] – I guess, you know. But it wouldn't be the first choice of mine [last two words were faint].

And, ultimately sharing that he doesn't have an issue with interracial marriage, here's what a younger white male has to share,

Uhh, I don't – I don't have an issue with it, personally. Um, cause I know like – from what I've learned I guess skin color is not about that, it's more of a thing of um melanin I guess. It's just a pigment. Some people have more, some people have less; we're all God's children. So I think like more – what the bible says, it's more an issue with um dating people of-who are outside of your religion, more than race. But um I do think it may be an issue with the kids – interracial kids. I don't know what it it – I don't know if it's an issue for them, like socially maybe; maybe it'll put a little of burden on them.

As an older white female sees it,

In the Adventist Church – it's like, cause I don't feel it's any of my business what they do. If-if that's what they want; a lot of times it's hard on the children I think more than the adults. Uhm, but if the - that-that's their business; that's not my business.

Then according to a middle-age white woman's view on interracial marriage,

[started with chuckle] – Well, I don't know. I I have mixed feelings. I don't think that I would want my daughter – and I've always said this – dating, you know, even not only black but Asian; or I know she was – my one daughter was dating a Puerto Rican, and there was still a lot of cultural differences between the two families, you know, so. I really don't agree – agree that – agree with it, you know.

And according to a younger white female's view on the issue,

[there was a pause] I think ultimately it becomes between you and God. Is the final-is the final decision I feel on that. And, I know in my personal thing, I –I choose not to – have a uh interracial relationship in that way. But that is my own personal feeling; it doesn't mean that I'm not supportive of somebody who is.

Then among blacks, an older black male makes a distinction between dating and marriage with respect to interracial couples. In his own words,

Well-[seeming pensive] on that point there it's a couple – it's the two of them. For the two of them I find no problem. But if-if they-there's – if they're gonna end up being married, what they're gonna do with the children? That's where the main rub comes in because two adults they can deal with racial desire that kind of thing like that. And even if it come down to families, I mean they like that kind of thing like that. But what about the children? That's my main concern – my main concern for them at that point in time, because of the fact that those children have nothing to do with being how they came here. They gonna live in a society, even though our society as a whole uh is-is becoming more attuned to it; but as far as the Adventist community is concerned, still I think, there still is a larger gap that has to be uh closed on that point there. But as far as their dating, I see no problem with it.

With respect to this same issue of interracial dating/marriage, a middle-age black male shares,

I'm glad you ask – I don't have a problem with it, cause you can't choose who people love; mean in the sense of the word itself. Ahhh and I think the more we try to intervene in those kinds of situations, it just draws people to each other and this to my point – God is not caught up on ethnicity, because He says in Him there's neither Greek nor Jew, bond or free, male or female. So, God looks at the thing that we oft times omit – and that's character. So we uhh – which is the only thing we'll be able to take with us. So if people – you know love is a strong word, and if two people say they love each other, who am I, especially as a believer to say, you know I don't think you should do this because that's not what society does. We're not a good example of what Christ represents. And he's totally, you know, the opposite of what the world represents. So it creates a problem. And-and a lot of it is fear, you know, so [last three words were softer].

On this same issue, as far as a younger black male is concerned, he doesn't really think black-white interracial dating and marriage is an issue in the SDA Church. Rather, he thinks that the issue is more one of having black-white racially divided churches. On the point of the interracial dating/marriage, he avers,

Um, I don't really see it as much; um like I think of the issue with – there is a issue with like a black church and a white church. But the people dating itself, I don't think that's a issue. I don't think if any of my friends were dating a white-white lady, I don't think it'll be a real issue, for sure.

And he also shares “no!, I-it’s fine; you find somebody you love -that’s awesome! – whether they’re purple, green, or blue.” Another younger black male shares his unique perspective on that. As he puts it,

Well, I mean I don’t have a view on it, in terms of-of just the Adventist Church, so to speak-[sounds like a slight laugh here]. Cause I think that your dating will go beyond the church itself. Ahm I-I haven’t seen it in our church of course. There’s only black people here-[little laugh here]; but I understand that it does exist. aah, And um, I doe know -I think that sometimes the motivation behind uhm-behind uh a mixed uh relationship is just the experience of the other race. An’ I -um don’t think that_ that’s a good thing. aaah But I mean if it’s -if it’s a marriage or something that’s in that and children, then I think it’s a beautiful thing. Ah but if it’s just for the experience of -like hey I just want to date a black woman, or hey I just wanta date a white woman, just to say you know I’m dating a -I’m dating that particular race -I think that that’s wrong, you know. I think if that’s happening now that’s you know not -not good.

As far as an older black female is concerned, she doesn’t have a problem with black-white interracial dating and marriage in the SDA Church. For her, “it’s fine; to each his own.” Likewise, a middle-age black woman shares that she doesn’t have a problem with that. However, she inserts a caveat with that. Speaking in the first person singular and plural, she shares that “I only have a problem with our people when we ... basically denounce” our own local people and feel like we’re doing better, “because we go outside of our race to marry and to date.” And she reiterates that that’s the only time she has a problem with it. Then she adds,

Uhm, other than that ’ no I don’t have a problem with-with um interracial dating, interracial marriage, you know. [she laughs in between] -Nowadays, if you could find somebody that truly respects you, and loves you-[with laugh], it doesn’t matter to me what color they are-[laughs; and draws breath].

And having her voice weigh in on the matter, according to a younger black female,

It’s here. I mean we-we see it. There’s -I mean growing up, you know, one of our members that we interacted with, on a regular basis is white, her husband -she’s white, her husband’s black. And they have I believe six or seven children. And so w’ I grew up with her children We all grew up together –camp-meeting, uuuhm, _ everything. And they’re -the children I grew up with, they’re of mixed

race, you know. They identify with both their white culture and their black. You know, they're other members that are also – that come and go through the church, that's of different races. There's members now, who have ouh husbands or wives ... of a different race. Me personally, I feel like love doesn't know a color. So I feel like if you fall in love with someone from a different race, anyone who doesn't embrace it, then that's probably not a person that's good for your life anyway, if they can be so closed-minded in that. You don't –you don't always choose who you fall in love with. So interracial dat'- dating to me, if it – I feel like if that's who you fall in love with, then that's just who you fall in love with. – 'Cause that's who you want to experience life with

Then in referring to children with interracial parents she adds,

I feel like when you have children it's important to of course, embrace both aspects of culture ... because you want your child to understand both sides. -Because now you're not just focusing on one culture, you're focusing on two. And you have family from both ends of pa' – of the mother and father, who wants that child to experience both sides. So, I feel like, that's really the only work that you have to do.

This respondent also believes that while parents of the same race also teach or raise their children in a cultural sense, an interracial couple just has a bit more information in that respect. And in her closing remarks on interracial dating and marriage she asserts “So, I say go for it. If it makes you happy, then that's what you do.”

Concern for Offspring from Black-White Interracial Marriage

In this study, specific concern for children born to a black-white interracial couple emerged as a theme in its own right. Whenever that came up, basically the idea is that it may be hard on the 'mixed' kids perhaps even more so than the parents, or it creates some kind of social issue for the kids or some type of unnecessary burden, as if the 'mixed' kids themselves are born with an undue disadvantage simply by virtue of their birth. With that, there is also the sense that if a black and white couple love each other, then the only problem would be the children, as it would be tough for them living in a cruel world and in a society like ours, since they would be the ones that are subjected to people's prejudices. There is also expressed concern that a black-

white union creates a problem for kids born into it, as the kids have so many things to deal with, including struggling with who they are.

I've read about this concern, I've personally heard about it, conversed about it prior to this study; so that from the very moment a participant presented it in the study it immediately caught my attention. As a matter of fact, while this concern is not shared by every respondent, it was however introduced by my very first participant in the study, and after that I was extra keen on listening for it. And sure enough this concern popped up through the course of the study among the participants from the four churches. To be clear, nowhere in the entire interview series did I bring up anything having to do with children of interracial couples. Rather, every participant who brought up this particular concern did so on their own. And it is rather noteworthy how both black and white SDAs share this very same concern; though a slightly higher proportion of blacks share this concern, based on the study. Also quite remarkable is that this particular concern is raised among participants from all four churches in the study.

All told, a total of 9 out of the 36 participants share this particular concern; exactly 25% of all participants. With a focus on those who share this concern, the table on the following page presents a breakdown of precisely how that concern plays out.

Participants Expressing Concern about Children of Interracial Couples

Categories	Total	Males	Females	Older	Middle-age	Younger
white females	2			2		
white males	2			1		1
married white female	1			1		
married white male	2			1		1
single white female	1			**1		
single white male						
married white *w. kids	3	2	1	2		1
From White Churches	4	2	2	3		1
black females	1				1	
black males	4			1	3	
married black female	1				1	
married black male	2			1	1	
single black female						
single black male	2				***2	
married black w. kids	3	2	1	1	2	
From Black Churches	5	4	1	1	4	

*w. = with (kids)

** = older white female, with at least one child; and for marital status checked 'other' (out of: 'married' / 'single' / 'other')

*** = one of the middle-age black males has children; and for marital status checked 'other'

Summary of Table

Based on the above table, a quarter of all participants in the study, from both white and black SDA churches, share a common concern for children of black-white interracial couples.

As it turns out, that concern is slightly higher among blacks than whites. Five blacks and four whites share this concern. Among those, in terms of number of participants, black males share the most concern in the entire study – almost half of all concerned participants on this point, while black females share the least. And in between the two (highest and least concern), white males and white females share equal concern.

Further, with respect to whites, married white females and single white females share an equal number of concerns. And while there is concern among married white males, there is none

for the single white male in the study.⁴⁰ Married white females' concern is less than that of married white males, and single white females show concern, while the single white male show none. With respect to blacks, there is concern among married black females, compared to none among single black females. Married black males share equal concern with single black males. Married black females show less concern than married black males, and single black males show concern, while the single black females show none. And interestingly enough, among married participants with children, blacks and whites share an equal number of concerns for children of interracial couples.

An expressed concern of this nature, however, among both blacks and whites does also suggest a bit of reservation with respect to intermarriage between blacks and whites; and thus a correlation between concern for 'mixed' kids and attitudes about interracial marriage, since procreation is a natural and central part of marriage. In other words, the expressed concern about the offspring of interracial couples, in this study, is also tied to one's attitude and view of interracial marriage. In speaking to this issue of religious racial segregation attitudes and practice, intermarriage, and procreation by 'mixed' couples, the literature does make the point of procreation 'in the pews,' i.e., between churchgoing interracial couples, as a way of promoting unity and helping to foster a multiracial church (Hawkins and Sinitiere, 2014; *cf.* DeYoung et al., 2003; Price, 1999; Jenkins, 2003; Putnam and Campbell, 2010). This underscores a crucial connection between views about interracial married couples and their production of offspring, in counteracting religious racial segregation. In the SDA context, this suggests that the expressed concern for kids of interracial couples may also be a contributing factor in the maintenance of

⁴⁰ Between whites and blacks (married or non-married), the category of 'single white male' has the least number of participants in the study. There is only one single white male in the study, who does not happen to share this particular concern for kids of interracial couples.

segregation in the SDA Church, if reserved attitudes are impacting whether or not blacks and whites intermarry and procreate.

Respondents' Perspectives on Intermarriage of Their Children

Focusing on blacks and whites mainly in the denominational setting, the following citations reveal respondents' attitudes and perspectives concerning their level of comfort in having their children intermarry. Making his point succinct about having his children marry a black person in the denomination, an older white male feels that it is their choice and declares "We are involved in our children's life but not to the point of micromanaging choices." He did not offer any more insights on that. As a younger white male estimates it "I think I'd be o.k. with it [my child marrying a black person in the denomination]. If I – it's more about the character I guess, than the race – because I think that's the most important to me, I would say." As an older white female sees it "I want them to marry someone they love, and that they can relate to. So it doesn't matter." For a middle-age white female, her thought on that is "Uhm, I don't think I would be very comfortable [chuckle – followed by an outright loud chuckle]." And issuing her complete response, a younger white female considers "If they are truly happy then I have to be happy for them; because they are my child and their happiness is first and foremost."

For black females' views concerning having their children marry a white person (in the denomination), an older black female asserts she has no problem with it, even if she has only one child. She affirms "Oh, it's no problem, but she's married to someone of the same race. But she has dated someone - I only have one child ... and she has dated someone that was Caucasian." Sharing, based on what she knows about her kids with respect to their marrying a white person, as far as a middle-age black woman is concerned,

[drew a breath first] -I'm 'be honest - my kids not gonna do that [then burst into laughter]; they're not-[said sort of while laughing]. They uuhm, and I'm not being funny or nothing, but they 'aint gonna do that.

And as a younger black female assesses it,

I think that realistically speaking, I think there's gonna be people who – like I have a son -I think there's gonna be people who's gonna be disappointed. Me as a mother, I look at it as if this is who you love then I love them too. If you're treating that person right and that person is treating you right, and you're happy, then that's what[']s important to me. I -I cannot be angry at who you chose to fall in love with, because at the end of the day, God has -already knows what our path in life is. Who am I to speak against that? So, I'm open to it.

For an older black man, placing stress on not being unequally yoked, and attaching his perspective to the black church compared to the white church, avers,

Oh yes, if you can, one thing in a marriage, that they don't want to be unequally yoked, as far as uhh the religious aspect – the spiritual side of it allows. But as far as if they decide to marry a white person of the same spiritual persuasion, I'd have no problem with it. ... cause I know they're being the ones having to live – see again, our family will accept them. But again as it is with the average parents, in most cases whereby the church is concerned – the black churches will accept; the white churches will reject or be slow to accept kind of thing like that.

As a middle-age man sees it,

Ii – if they choose, yeah. [laugh]-you know I – I'm gonna support them. Like we tell our children, in everything that they endeavor to do whether we agree with it or not, as long as it doesn't violate their principles. We were uhh in their corner in support of them 100%. So I don't think that would change now if they chose someone uhh and they say they love them, and that person loves them; then hey, have my blessings.

And from a younger black male's viewpoint,

[drew breath] hughm -that's a tough one. I [there was hesitation], let's see – I don't think I would want my child to marry a white person, to be perfectly honest. I wouldn't be comfortable at all with that.

In citing his particular reasons, he shares that “I-I believe that uhhm just from the studying history, and understanding the relationship between the uhm th-the two races.” Moreover, not

being a fan of “mixed relations,” as he puts it, believing that blacks should marry within their “natural cultural” experience, he further adds, “I don’t have any problem with white people, I’m just saying that that’s the -that’s my settlement on it.”

Overall Experience in the SDA Church

Sharing his overall experience in the SDA Church, an older white male affirms,

Well, I’m glad to belong in the SDA Church. I believe it’s the most biblical-oriented church; and for much of my adult life I’ve been in some kind of a leadership position. Be it a Sabbath school teacher, or elder, something.

For a younger white male,

It’s kinda overall very positive; I’ve had a good – we have a good pastor. I think tha-that’s huge, you know; good – you have good pastors, good leaders, good elders, so. And the rest kinda takes care of itself, I think; ... So yeah it’s been good. We drive kind of a distance to get here, because we just felt that the people are very friendly.

On this same point, an older white female shares that it’s been wonderful! And further states,

What I love about it is that you can go anywhere in the world; and we’ve gone on vacation and still have the same Sabbath school. It just amazes me; and that everybody has um good opinions about what they’re teaching; and i-it – that I think is way a good part of that.

For a middle-age white woman,

Well – well! I mean it’s been [chuckle] aum, you know, our kids grew up here – you know between the schools. They went to the Adventist schools, and went to the Adventist high school – academy, so You know we – it’s been emotional for me. I mean with somebody else coming in, they might think oh! – you know, why are you doing this? Or why have you stuck with this? But it’s just a way of life, you know, and I believe the Adventist church is the true church. I mean [the] true message, so.

And as a younger white woman relates it,

Overall experience – it’s been – it’s been good. The SDA church is all I know. I’ve gone to other churches to visit, you know; and my friends would say hey

come visit this church. And I'm like o.k., well I know; but I still come back here. I still feel at home here.

With respect to the black SDA experience, an older black male shares that,

My overall experience in the Adventist Church has been a good one to me. For me personally it's been good. Ah, to know the Lord; to know to not be afraid of the entire bible; to be taught how, you know, to search the bible – to look at it and then stand firm; you know, all those various instances that I've had there, i-it's been good to me.

Speaking of the way one teaches and the values received and passed on, for a middle-age black male, his experience has been marked by ups and downs. In his own words,

It's been ups and downs. There's been uuuhm the positives I just named about coming into an experience and then there've been some negatives based on how people have been taught and information passed on. Down through the years the generations take it. In other words, if you're taught wrong, then you're gonna teach wrong. Uuuh, if God was presented to you that this stern person would – never as a loving God then you-you you carry out your business the same way. And I think that's what we have in our churches. So now people who have become adults and are angry at their parents for not actually telling them the truth; for example well, “angels leave you if you go in the movie.” Well what do the angels do when they bring the same DVD at home? Do they leave the home? And so the adults pass this to their children; and they're adults now and they angry. And some of them have not been uh confronted. And that's been a negative thing; that is negative uh approach towards the whole Seventh-day Adventist Church, when really you shouldn't have. You-you-you should continue to search and seek God for yourself. And that's what you value. You have two or three generations – people who's just been coming to church; they didn't have no personal relationship with God. And so now they're adults they realize – “men I don't know God. I know a bunch of rules. I don't know God.” So that's what we have in our church. That's the negative part that I see, and that I've experienced even when they deal with people who have come short. God is about restoration and if anything reconciliation. That's His whole mission. But when we censor people who gone astray, we cast them aside; and never follow up on them. Heh-who we do like that in our families? O.k. what my brother was doing – he was still part of our family. We check on him, so. And that's that's the negative part. And hopefully it would be corrected as time go on.

And a younger black male explains that,

even at times [with] friends who were not in our denomination, they came up [to me]. One positive that was talked about is that we know our scriptures; we're a scripture-based; uh there's a lot of substance so that -an-and and that's my personal [sentiment]; that was my style; that I need a lot of substance in anything I'm doing, not just flair. So I do appreciate that.

For an older black woman, "Well-[laughing slightly], the overall [experience], I'll say it's half'n half, you know I mean good, half'n half bad." She offered no further details on that statement. A middle-age black female sharing her experience, states that,

I will say that despite-[laughs] the differences that we have, I would not want to be in any other religion. Aahm, I feel like I'm the person that I am because of my upbringing. And I-I -I'm fine overall; it's been a positive experience.

And as a younger black female tells it,

Uhm, my overall experience -I mean there's been good, there's been bad. Not in the sense of bad, meaning it's really just about people wanting to force their own thoughts 'n processes on you. Or, sometimes people don't necessarily think outside the box. And I think that would be the negative thing. The positive things -just really just the whole family aspect with people that you've known all your life; and people that share same common interest and belief.

Understandings of the Cause(s) for the Church Segregation, along with Opinions on Whether or Not Church Leadership Should Have Created a Segregation Policy

An older white male sharing his understanding of the cause for the official black-white segregation in the SDA Church states that,

Well it is my understanding that uh at the time there was a lot of prejudice that was going on, and the um, the uh – although our church leaders auhh did not endorse any type of prejudice. Um uh they were trying to uh do the politically right and politically acceptable thing.

Sharing his opinion on whether or not the SDA Church leadership should have pursued a black-white segregation policy in the American SDA Church to begin with, this same respondent considers that,

It's awful easy to – uhh uhm quarter back after the game [chuckle] has been over. Ahm, you know it's – it it was – as a different – I say today I think it would have been a completely different way of doing things. Ah, at that time, uh they were trying to – they were trying to give direction that would be acceptable to most people. I don't know whether it was uh – it was due to race prejudice because that was before my time. So I can't uh, I can't account for that. But uh definitely today I think it would have a different uh – play out differently.

A younger white male, who doesn't really know the history, shares based on his limited understanding of the cause for the segregation. He explains,

I don't-I don't know the hist – I don't know exactly why it happened that way Ummm, it-it probably has to do with the original leadership of the people that started the church. Maybe they thought that was the best thing. Cause, I understand there's a black college down in Alabama; so maybe, the people that started the denomination thought that was a good thing. But at the time maybe it was, maybe it's not.

This same respondent's, however, does not think that the leadership should have established a segregation policy to begin with, although he admits "it's an issue I haven't studied up enough." To that he also adds more of his view on the segregation policy stating "So, but just from my basic understanding of the whole thing now, I would say it would have been – I don't see a reason – I don't see a benefit to pursuing that"

An older white female not understanding the specific cause for the segregation, states plainly "I don't understand the cause, but I understand that there are two uh different conferences I guess, and churches; and I don't get it! [with a burst of chuckle]" With respect to the creation of the segregation policy itself, according to her "I am understanding – if that's what some black people want; if they want that segregation, I can understand it. If they um want to have their own church or whatever, I could understand it." She further adds "I don't know if the church should have done it. I don't have an opinion on that."

A middle-age white female sharing her understanding of the cause for the segregation

states,

I believe that it all started uhm during the time that there was segregation. And the reason why they did that back then was so that way, you know, meeting the needs of people and having them understand who Christ is or whatever – that was the best way to work at that time. And over the years things have not changed. And so they have kept it as a black conference and a white conference instead of meshing them together; for whatever reason I do not know. But I have heard um that the reason why it has not become together as a combination, is because the black conference has said that their people need special needs or whatever, and that's why they continue to have that as a black conference. So if that is truth I do not know, but uhm, you know, whatever those special needs are, don't really know. Maybe, maybe, cause, you know, when you work in the health field, it's better for women to work with women and men to work with men, just to be on the safe side. If it's the same as uh racial, could be – I'm not really for sure. But I've worked with black churches doing evangelistic meetings, and I've never had any problems going into the homes, working with people and then seeing them baptized. But then again I think it all depends on the individual person and what their perspectives are – and if they're truly truly uh thinking as people – not as in color or culture or race, but especially looking at that soul as being a part of the kingdom of God.

In issuing her opinion on whether or not the segregation policy should have been instituted, she declares ,

I have no idea [and somewhat of a slight laugh]. I guess during that time frame – I guess they were probably doing the best that they thought was right to do. And uhh sometimes you just have to do what you can with what's going on. Uhhh but I believe that we should always have change, hopefully changing in the right direction, and that we should be able to go up and beyond that; because it won't be in heaven [with audible chuckle].

Sharing her understanding of the cause for the segregation, another middle-age white female avers,

O.k. this is my understanding – it might not be correct. Um, the segregation of the conferences happened um because of black people weren't given the opportunity, be it leadership positions; um and it may also have something to do with worship style – I'm not sure. But I know that um they weren't – the black people weren't given leadership positions. I don't even know when that happened, but at some point; that would be my understanding of why it happened that way to start with.

As linked to her understanding of the cause for the segregation, her opinion on whether or not the segregation policy should have been issued is,

Well I don't think they should have. Like [with] the segregation policy, I think they should have been kind and caring enough and just uh – I mean to me it's being a good Christian to include everybody into leadership positions or whatever other issues may have caused the black people to want to have their own conferences. I don't – I mean it shouldn't be allowed to get that far, I don't think; because I think it should have been dealt with and people should have been treated kindly before that happened.

Then a younger white female issuing her understanding of the cause for the segregation says that “I actually don't know why there is segregation like that. I haven't really put thought into it either.” And sharing her opinion on whether or not church leadership should have pursued the black-white segregation policy, her thoughts on the matter is “Times were different back then. It makes sense why they had to do it.”

Then with respect to the black perspective, an older black male understands the cause for the official segregation in the church as directly linked to the Lucy Byard incident – the black (but light-skin) lady who was denied medical treatment in an Adventist hospital based on her supposed ‘race,’ and died shortly thereafter.⁴¹ In his own words,

Well my understanding of it is the fact that of uh –the lady there who was denied medical attention at one of our institutions, that is manned by white-uh the establishment of the church. They deny her that uh medical attention. As a result she died. The white brethren – I mean black brethren who were in uh USAD – I guess the unofficial leaders of our church, uh at that particular point in time get together and we get to form our own conferences now, developing our own institutions, that kind of thing and like that. So they became to be recognized accordingly, and that-as a result of that a number of the ah-the ah – Lake Region Conference - being the first one to form. In fact, the first president of the Lake Region Conference was the one who baptized me in-in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania –

⁴¹ Refer to the surrounding context and details of this dark hospital episode in chapter two of this dissertation, along with the reasons cited for this being the direct (final) link to the ultimate rise of the segregated conference system in the American SDA Church.

J Gershom Dasent; he was the one who baptized me there. But he uh – but he didn't baptized me until after he left the presidency And so uhh – so I know at that point in time, the reason for that is regards to the fact that equal – they were not going to give us equal recognition, responding to us inhumanely you might say. In-in this uahh arena we had to develop our own.

Offering his opinion on whether or not the SDA church leadership should have pursued a black-white segregation policy, this same respondent feels that,

Uhh at one point in time, because of what was happening on the outside, the uh atmosphere outside the SDA Church, it should have been – yes. Cause the only reason why the church – from an understanding of how it began – and uh Ellen White's Son went down south on the boat his boat the *Morning Star*, training black folk how to read, introducing them to the bible. And he was told – “get out of there or we gonna kill you” – cause this was happening on the outside. Ah they got out, they felt that they still-they should do that because they begin-they knew that we were all God's children. But I was made to understand how that cause lead to Oakwood College, Oakwood University now. Uh that land from which the school was developed uh and built on, was presented to the church by way of Ellen White's vision – I guess, whatever she had. And so this should be a school for training black folks how to uh be trained; to be educated, and to serve the Lord as regards then. At that time it definitely was necessary-necessary. But since then, ahh, we have to learn to get better in regards to our race relationships; that's what we all need, we all need to have that. However, because of the fact that there's still some residual effect in regards to administration those those-the powers that be – feel that uh we still want to be able to control certain things. We still will have this thing get – personally I feel that it's gonna be here with us until the Lord comes.

Sharing his understanding of the cause for the official segregation in the Adventist Church, a middle-age black male avers,

Well, from my understanding, it relates to the Lake Region Conference that was uh-hh – they started their own because of what we're discussing now. And, in my opinion, it never should have been. And then to the other point that I made earlier – for whatever reason, you know whites have be-they don't feel comfortable being led by blacks. I mean and then they won't be honest about it. But they, they feel comfortable - meaning blacks – blacks don't have a problem with whites leading them. But if blacks are in charge – ... they tend to what they call white-flight and ... so it doesn't set a good example. I think that that's something they're gonna have to deal with before it's over with. I mean we see it in our country right now. So it's-it's horrible.

With regards to his opinion as to whether or not the church leadership should have pursued a segregation policy, he avows,

[long pause first] You know I continue to stand on what I've been standing on throughout this interview – believers should be different. And I say the Civil Rights movement proved that – where they were able to call ethnic group people from all ethnic backgrounds to work for the common good of humanity; and was able to suffer whatever the consequences were. They realize the problem and I did when it's for the very cause. We're not willing to take one for the team; it's about us, about me. Well, "how am I gonna be perceived by my friends." So, ahhh Christ calls us to a higher call. And I keep using that term you know, we're disingenuous as believers in this duplicity concept; no it's it's not gonna' work. And, you know God is pushing us to that point, where we won't accept it at all. And so until the church take a rightful role, my thing is – you're gonna continue to have this problems.

And a younger black male sharing his understanding of the cause for the official segregation in the church states "Yeah I believe that around that time, was that we needed leaders in our church. And we decided to start our conferences for the leaders." He afterwards clarified that he's referring to black leadership in that statement. Insofar as it concerns his opinion on whether or not church leadership should have pursued a segregation policy, he declares,

Well I -I don't have a problem with been' it at the timing of suppose they were different times we were living in. I'm not very privy to those times wh[at] was going on. I don't think it should happen now. I think we should be merged as I said earlier.

From her perspective, an older black female sharing her understanding of the cause for the official segregation in the American SDA Church explains,

ughh-[let out sigh] Well, the little bit I know about that is that uh – I know why Sister White wanted the church to form it, because of slavery, um back in the 1860s. You know, uhhh, because of that – that's why we were established, so that we could be a part of the SDA movement. But I think it got twisted later. You know sometimes we live as though you know, I got my freedom now, so let me have my own. And I think what she meant for good, we turned it to a different way. And it should not have been. Auh, they should have understood, if they

didn't read it, that what she had established for that time, but not to continue to the twenty-first century. That wasn't her – that wasn't what she wanted.

Her opinion on whether or not the church leadership should have established a black-white segregation policy is that, it should not have been done. She asserts, “you know to me ... they should-they should sit and talk about it. It should never happen. It wasn't meant to be; no.” To that she adds, “that wasn't God's way.”

As a middle-age black woman understands it, the cause for the official segregation in the church has to do with “racial issues” and the oppression of non-whites. She considers that racial issues affected the Seventh-day Adventist Church as a whole and even “the way that we worship.” To that she adds,

If blacks were able to participate auuhm, you know, in the white churches just overall; and I could see why they would wanta go and start their own churches. And we'll-we know back during slavery time, you know, and even when uuhm slavery was ended and then we had the Jim Crow and all of that ... you know, black people and other minorities - they wanted to be able to live and worship and different things of that nature. So I mean, you know, that was almost a given that they would start their own religions.

With respect to her opinion as to whether or not SDA church leadership should have established a segregation policy, she states,

[she pauses] Well, I would say that yes at that point in time, they really didn't have a choice. Um yes am, they had to do what they had to do. Um so I say at that point in time -yes; I agree that they should [have], you know, started um their own churches. Uhm but now, not so much.

And while the younger black female in the study was not aware that official black-white segregation had been established in the denomination, she is however aware that the local SDA churches around her worship in a segregated fashion.

Comparative Look at Perspectives on the Ongoing Official Segregation at the Local Conference and Local Church Levels

White Males

In speaking to the issue of church segregation and power in Adventism at the local conference level, one older white male sees it from a power-hungry perspective. Thus in addressing SDA structural segregation at the conference level, to him it seems that there are individuals “wanting to establish themselves from a selfish power standpoint” and that “they do want to serve their personalities.” He believes that those power-seeking individuals “want to create a particular administrative setup” that would accommodate their selfish desires and their administrative influence. And to that he adds,

And so they perpetuate whatever is the situation that they find themselves in. From the standpoint of what purpose it serves, or what benefit it is? – I cannot fathom; but I can imagine if I were to speak with them there would be some portion of it would have to do with comfort levels with the membership they’re in; that they have been in for perhaps most of their lives... . That’s something that is a part of them after all this time; they’re not wanting to-to give that up right away.

And in a deeply revealing and critical statement made at the end of his remarks on that point, he avers that those power-hungry leaders in the SDA Church he’s been referring to, “want to maintain the status quo because it gives them their status quo.” Then speaking to segregation at the local church level, this same older white male doesn’t see why there should be segregation at that level. To that he adds, “and I don’t see a benefit to that.” Thus, based on his responses, he is consistent in his criticism and opposition to segregation at both local conference and local church levels.

Another older white male sharing his view on the official segregation at the conference level says that “I believe that there is an element of ego.” And similar to the previous older white male, he explains that everyone wants to have a voice, but there are people that have committed themselves to a particular position, “and they don’t want to give that up for one

person or the other.” Then his closing sentiments on that point immediately follows, as he adds “They think that God has put them in that position and they are the only one for it. So they’re gonna be having an issue in the way of carrying the responsibility.” However, the following are his thoughts on segregation at the local church level,

I think that the church level is a little bit easier pill to swallow. Due to the responsibility, it’s not as acute as what it is at the conference level. But it actually has to start from the bottom and the top simultaneously, and meet in the middle; because everybody has to be educated, especially the leadership. And I’m talking about white and black.

Thus, while this particular individual seems to have some issue with segregation at the local conference level, he however, sees the local church in a different light – an “easier pill to swallow” as he puts it.

And a younger white male sees official segregation at the local conference level as less than admirable. As he puts it,

I – you know I don’t think it’s a positive thing. When I joined the church i-it would – when I joined the church I didn’t know about it. It would not have stopped me from joining, because I join because of the truth [of] the messages. But uh I think i-it would have – if I knew about it at the time, I don’t think that I would have been as um impressed. So-so I think from the outside looking in, trying to get new members, I don’t think it looks good, to be honest.

When it comes to segregation at the local church level, this same respondent had to think a little harder about it, and there was some hesitancy in his response. Nonetheless, struggling with his thoughts, as he puts it “...again I just don’t think we should – we should divide on –on race.”

And then he adds,

I then– and then at the local level – I mean if it just so happens that in a certain community, there’s a higher percentage of African Americans or different communities have different percentages of whites, uh it just so happens that [the] population becomes like that; I just think we should have one church. And if some percentages are higher than others that’s common – that might be common based on the area um where the church is set up. But I don’t think we should officially

have just the black church, the white churches; I don't like the idea. I-its outdated or something.

Generally speaking, white males tend to oppose or find something wrong with the segregation at the local conference level, although some seem to be a little protective of the white conference, particularly in their choice of words. For example, while one older white male would like to see the conferences united, he also says that "I think the resistance is more among the blacks than the whites; that's my personal guess." However, among white males, when it comes to the local church level, some are a little more flexible and not as straightforward in their view of integration at the church level, as they are for the conference level. And among white males there is also the feeling that people should worship wherever they feel comfortable, whether it's in an all-black, all-white, or other setting.

White Females

Then an older white female speaking to the issue of segregation at the local conference level shares that,

I think there should just be one conference, if that's you know – like I said, I thought it was – they just split it because it was too big or something. I didn't know. There should only be one conference. The Lord says we're all equal.

But when it comes to segregation at the local church level, this same respondent struggles a bit in her response. In her view,

[paused first] Now that's difi – I mean I don't know why that-I mean we – our church, cause we have many different people coming here to our church. Ours isn't really a segregated church. We have – we have all you know, white, black, Mexican, uh Muslims; we have some Muslim people that come-want to come to our church. We're open to anybody who comes here to this church.

Voicing her opinion on the issue of segregated conferences, a middle-age white female says "Uh, I don't think they should [segregate]. You know, I think we could all come together as

one.” And with respect to her view on segregation at the local church level, she feels the “same thing, that you know, I think we could all – all be one” [as her voice faded sounding distant].

And then a younger white female who had to think about it first, believes that the black-white segregation, at the conference level, does not make sense. As she puts it,

In today’s society, it doesn’t quite make sense why the segregation is still there.
Uhm, if it truly is an issue I – my brain goes why can’t they have a representative?
– and let that person be the voice; but be a one united conference ...

Her view, however, is different with respect to segregation among local churches. For her, first and foremost, everyone needs to be comfortable where they go to worship; and she’s not even sure if segregation is truly an issue with the younger generations compared to the older generations. Further, as she sees it, a level of comfort is priority, so as not to give people an excuse to leave the church, even if it means keeping the racial divide for now. In her own words,

[short pause] I know some people who would be more comfortable with the segregation; ahmm, speaking primarily of some people I know in the older generations. The younger generations – I don’t know if it is truly such an issue. But I do know that, you know, everyone needs to be comfortable where they want to go worship God, first and foremost. So if segregation has to remain like that for now, then it’s, you know, that can be comfortable is my priority; keep them in the doors, don’t give them an excuse to leave.

Altogether, white females, generally speaking, are more pro-unity at the conference level than white males. Further, in general, white females appear more genuine and concerned about the segregated conference system than white males are, and also quicker to criticize and find fault with the separation at that level. But then when it comes to the local church level, somewhat similar to sentiments among white males, some white females don’t really have an issue with keeping the segregation the way it is. As in the case of the younger white female (in the last example above), for instance, she shares a similar sentiment to that found among white

males, that people should have a choice with respect to their place of worship so that they feel comfortable enough, particularly if it means keeping them in the church.

Black Males

With respect to blacks, an older black male feels that the regional (black) conferences are “still necessary” because when he looks at the “statistics in regards to those individuals coming into the church,” he sees that there are more people coming into the church by way of the regional conferences. He sees the regional conferences as being “more multicultural” and willing to accept anybody from any church. And, therefore, because of that welcoming spirit on the part of regional conferences versus the state (white) conferences, he affirms the need for the regional conferences, since you still have to have the message presented to everybody, as he sees it. And in support of his reasoning he also shares that “for a white church to accept a black member, it is kinda difficult; especially for when you go into leadership, that kind of thing like that.” This last point of blacks having difficulty being in leadership roles among whites reveals part of the racial tension in the church, and some type of resistance on the part of whites in having black leaders among them, as he sees it.

For this same respondent, though, his perspective on racial segregation among local churches bends more toward the integrative side. In taking a breath first as he thought about it, he shares that “if it’s in the same area” such as “in the confines of the city of Detroit, to me they should – it should be blend. They should be blended or whether it’s gonna be part of the Michigan Conference as we know, or the Lake Region Conference,” they should still blend together. He feels that should be the case because he believes “that in itself would then serve as a –a uh link to help the world know that” blacks and whites can work together, and that “this racial issue is not gonna divide us,” as he puts it. Essentially then, while this particular

respondent finds legitimacy in maintaining a divided conference structure, he nonetheless sees value in partial local church integration, but more from the standpoint of presenting to the “world” a united front. In the final analysis though, this respondent feels that ultimately “the Lord’s not going to save an organization – He’s gonna save a people.”

Then on this same issue of segregation at the conference level, a middle-age black male shares that,

... unless someone explains it to me the purpose of it – it is justified -then, you know, what’s the reasoning for it? You know why should-why – because some – meaning what’s the purpose of people who say they believe in God, we’re going to the same place, but yet we’re gonna keep you over here, and we’re gonna stay over here. You know the only time we come together is maybe if we invite you to our camp-meeting, you know; vice versa. That ought not to be. The people see it, and they talk in small groups; they’ll talk where it counts. And it-it it should be addressed.

And similar to sentiments shared among some blacks, this respondent also feels that there is segregation at the local church level because it trickles down from the leadership. In his exact words “Now and the reason you have the segregation, it trickles down from the leadership.” Yet, in spite of his clear preference insofar as it concerns segregation at the conference level, his thoughts on segregation at the local church level are not aligned with those expressed sentiments, and even seem a bit contradictory. He doesn’t think that segregation at the local church level is a problem, “because people are going to go where they stay,” and do that which is “conducive” for them. In explaining this position, he declares,

And if there’s a Adventist Church in a predominantly white neighborhood, and then members there are predominantly white, then there’s no problem. I don’t see that, you know. Aaaaah it’s just like most people shop where they live. It is – it don’t mean that they don’t want to shop with blacks; or they don’t want to shop with whites – they just go where it’s convenient. So then, so I don’t think that’s – I think the problem is at the top. When-when the head doesn’t deal with it, it trickles down to the body.

And on that note, he hopes that the situation will be dealt with as time goes on. This type of reasoning, that what the conference leadership does eventually trickles down to the local churches, seems to be popular among some blacks. From that standpoint, some see the conference leadership as being responsible for the maintenance of racial segregation in SDA churches and, therefore, take issue with local conference operations and leaders, shifting all the burden away from the local church.

And as a younger black male sees it, he thinks that because blacks and whites' needs are different, the segregation at the conference level is fine. In a sense, then, the needs justify the means; and thus, as far as he is concerned, there should be no "forced integration" of the black and white conferences. Furthermore, based on his perspective, there already exists racial tension between whites and blacks which can become more evident in an integrative situation. And so for him, since "racial tension" forms an integral part of the very fabric of America, there will be segregation in the church whether or not you call it "official," particularly due to the differences in social interactions and worship styles. Thus, as far as he is concerned, the official conference structure is,

... just giving it [segregation] a better settlement of -hey you have a conference to serve, you have a people to serve, and you're better in relation to their needs; so you're better for this service. Ah, the white person has ae, you know, a need base and he's better for the service of the white conference. And that's that's perfectly fine.

From that viewpoint, it is actually better to have the segregated conferences, since one has to deal with the reality of racial tensions and segregation ingrained in American society anyway, and focus instead on serving the needs of the separate constituents, in a segregated fashion. This view is somewhat similar to the perspective of the older black male, in the example before the

last, who feels that you need the regional conferences since they cater to the needs of blacks and welcome everyone, in contrast to the state conferences.

With respect to this same respondent's view on segregation at the local church level, he looks at it as more a matter of choice. For him, there are no rules preventing a white pastor from serving a black congregation, for instance, and vice versa. But on that same token, he thinks that "a white pastor may not want to be a pastor in this [black] community," and likewise a black pastor may not want to pastor an all-white church.

Further, for him two key factors play a role in determining the makeup of the local church. One is that people are more drawn to particular worship styles as there are differences there between blacks and whites. And for him, that includes the way music is played and the way a sermon is delivered. To that he adds, the "tone in your voice, ahh the settlement of comedic actions that happen from the pulpit, ahh the interaction of the people, the audience, the congregation, are all different" between blacks and whites. But he also speaks of the perception of worship styles, as he feels that "some blacks are conservative in their worship style." And the other key factor, for him, playing a role in the makeup of the church has to do with the community where the members live. Since most people in Detroit, for example, are black or African Americans, then that's reflected in the makeup of the church. In describing his local church area, he shares that probably a "10-square mile radius around the church" is "predominantly black, all black," and "there's no white people." He also believes that in some of the white areas where you have predominantly white churches "they just don't have any black people in that area." Ultimately, for this respondent, similar to his view on segregated conferences, he thinks segregation at the local church level is a "good thing," and people shouldn't be forced to engage a worship style they're not "comfortable learning from." Overall,

his biggest emphasis seems to be more on worship style differences insofar as they give legitimacy to the segregated local church.

So, generally speaking, while some black males believe in some type of trickle-down effect, with actions of the local conference influencing the local church, some others see legitimacy in maintaining segregation at the conference level. For them there is still the reality of racial tension, as well as some anti-black prejudice and discrimination among white SDAs to deal with. And with respect to segregation in the local church, some among black males see that as fine, particular based on worship style differences, and the makeup of the community where you live; although there is also the feeling that there should be some integration at the local church level, in presenting a united front to the world.

Black Females

With respect to black females and segregation at the conference level, according to an older black woman she doesn't feel good about the separation, and sees a difference in attitudes and practices of the black conference versus the white conference. Expressing it in her own way she shares that,

I don't – I don't feel good about that. Uum, we should be together. We should not be separate; and it seems like it's – uh I'm gonna say this – the black conference not trying to accept no one else; no whites. I'm just being honest. It's like we're doing more, but in my view – more of what the world is doing, o.k. ... We're going more toward the world. And the white conference from what I've seen – from outside looking in – like they're like more accepting to what Christ is trying to do.

What's particularly striking in this view is its stark contrast to that of the older black male (in the first example under the sub-title 'Black Males') above, for instance, who feels that the black conference is open to and welcomes everyone, as opposed to the exclusive attitude and prejudice on the part of the white conference. Thus, those two views (between the older black female and

the older black male) are mutually exclusive, tending in the opposite direction. In that regard, this same older black woman then makes mention of 3ABN (Three Angels Broadcasting Network) – an international Adventist television station well-known among all SDAs, generally speaking. In this rare mention of 3ABN (only once in the entire interview series as far as I’m aware), she feels that it too (i.e., its programming) is “going toward what Christ want us to do.”

And with respect to her view on segregation at the local church level, it is similar to her perspective on segregation at the local conference level. She feels that,

We should not. We should not have no black and white. This is a movement, no matter what your race is. And-and things that we say sometimes, you know is-is negative. They should not be said.

This was her entire response with respect to segregation at the local church level, as she makes her view on the matter succinct and direct.

Then sharing her view about segregation at the local conference level, according to a middle-age black woman “I don’t like it.” She also takes issue with the “money aspect” of it, feeling that between the conferences there’s much economic inequality, whereby blacks receive “the trickle-down effect of where they get the real money,” as she puts it. In that respect, she cites two specific examples of the economic inequality that she speaks of, in reinforcing her position. One has to do with the manner in which the white conference puts an event together and the way it’s executed. Speaking to that point, she says “you could just see like when you go to something that they have, it’s just like totally different put - it’s put together totally different.” The other inequality concern between the conferences that she cites has to do with campground facilities that they maintain separately, their appearance, and the scenery. She feels that,

We come to our campground, and you go to their campground, it’s -it’s totally different. It’s just -it’s just you know it-it -and it-it it’s just a difference. And you see the difference, you know what I’m sayin’?

She feels that such differences are also there because of the separation. Then she goes on to share another grievance, this time concerning an SDA church magazine, the *Lake Union Herald*,⁴² which is published at the union conference level – the level above the local conference, and the minimal attention paid to blacks. She explains that in a magazine such as this,

... they have a little section with the Lake Region Conference. Just, it's just a little corner. It's a little corner, but all their stuff is all basically theirs. But it's a little corner – a one page with just anything that happen.⁴³

Yet, in spite of all the concerns and wrongs that she finds, she still believes that the conferences should not remain segregated, “because,” as she puts it,

[if we] say that we're one body in Christ, regardless of where you come from, regardless of what color you are, we supposed to be together as one. So I believe that the separation is bad. You know, I mean I-I really believe that's it bad. I don't believe that it's-it's a benefit ... And that's not what Christ is all about.

At the same time she feels that due to the longstanding separation between whites and blacks and the way in which it is entrenched in Seventh-day Adventism, it is always going to be whites against the blacks. So while she believes that the racial division in the church is bad, and all are “supposed to be together as one,” she also shares a bit of pessimism with respect to such integration ever happening.

Then insofar as it concerns her view on racial segregation at the local church level, though she struggles with it a bit, she nonetheless says that “I don't feel good about that.” On the one hand, in her view, the local church segregation is only sort of a natural one based on the racial demographics of the surrounding community – a view shared among some black males; and she also feels comfortable fellowshipping with ‘her own people’. But on the other hand, she feels that the segregation at the local church level is not “healthy.” According to her, “I just

⁴² The ‘Lake Union Herald’ magazine is published by the Lake Union Conference of SDAs, which also oversees territory covered by the Michigan Conference and the Lake Region Conference of SDAs.

⁴³ The average number of pages for the more or less monthly publication of the ‘Lake Union Herald’ is 43 pages.

don't really believe it's just healthy ... I don't believe that ... because we still showing our kids even the separation of white and black people.” Thus, similar to her view of segregation at the local conference level, she believes that when it comes to the local church level, if all are supposed to be fellowshiping with Christ then “we all should come together as one” and “fellowship together as one unit.” So while she seems a little reserved with respect to integration at the local church level, and expresses some doubt about integration happening at the conference level, she nevertheless, similar to the previous example of the older black woman, is consistent in her overall perspective insofar as it concerns a desire to see the walls of separation come down in the church at both conference and church levels.

And while the only younger black female in the study is not aware of segregation at the local conference level, she is certainly aware of it at the local church level. Sharing her perspective on segregation at the church level, she says “I’m not oblivious to it,” and she too believes, like other blacks, that it is based on the surrounding racial demographics. But at the same time she doesn’t feel that this should prevent local church integration or stop someone from breaking the “color-barrier,” although she seems to be speaking more on an individual level. So on the one hand, she declares “I still think that it depends on the neighborhood that you’re in” or the “area that you’re in.” And on the other hand, as she expresses,

But I don't think that it should interfere with someone breaking the color-barrier, regardless of which end of the -of their situation they're at. ... if it's a predominantly white church, an' I wanna go in there with my family and praise God, don't stop me. Same thing [her comments ended like that].

Thus, for this participant, while segregation at the local church level realistically reflects the racial makeup of the neighborhood or the area, she feels that no one, regardless of color or background – not she, her family, or anyone else should be stopped from breaking the color

barrier, particularly with respect to church integration. The bottom line for her is that segregation, as it plays out, should not “interfere” with the “breaking of the color-barrier.”

Among both black males and females in the study, there tends to be somewhat of a consensus that the segregation at the local church level is due, to some degree, or largely reflects the racial makeup of the surrounding community. Generally speaking, however, not only among blacks, but between all males and all females in the study, black females seem to be the most consistent in their view on the segregated arrangement in the SDA Church. Black females generally tend to disapprove of segregation at any level of the church structure, even if some struggle with their thoughts on that; or at the very least feel that everyone has the right to integrate in church worship and that segregation should not interfere with the breaking of the color barrier, as in the case of the younger black female.

White Pastors

Among the pastors in the study, the white pastors tend to have a problem with segregation at the local conference level. One white pastor, chuckling as he contemplates his comments on that point, says,

[chuckles] yeah – [chuckles again]; I think that – I think it should be united all across the board. We should have one conference – all combination – black, white, everything together and all the way down. Um, the whole structure should all be integrated – is what I think.

This complete and exact response shown above unmistakably shows this pastor’s perspective with respect to segregation of local conferences. Insofar as it concerns his view of segregation at the local church level, his response is a little more qualified, in terms of addressing whatever holdup(s) there might be. For him the holdup or issue that needs to be addressed, has to do with worship style or how to accommodate the various worship styles if local church integration is to be realized. Again, that speaks directly to the literature and the concern shared with respect to

the tensions that exist and need to be addressed in multiracial and multicultural church worship (Marti, 2012; and Jenkins, 2003). As this white pastor puts it,

I think we should all be [uhh-uhh – clears throat] united, integrated together. Uhm, of course I do understand, from my perception, I could be wrong – I haven't visited a great number of black churches, but the few that I have, I can say, you know, when I go to this black church on Sabbath, there is a difference there in worship and things – style. Then I would have here my own church. So if we're going to unite and combine, we'd have to weigh those things out. How are we all going to worship together and still feel like we're doing what's – you know what's right according to our own conscience(?) So, auhmm – we just have to work those things out.

As the other white pastor sees it, the racial division at the local conference level is exactly that – “it's division.” And for him, it's especially not something that you want to tell non-Adventists when they come in. It worries him, and he doesn't want to have to mention or explain any such thing to people, particularly visitors. As he puts it “That is—it's embarrassing; for the name of God? – of being God's final remnant church? – to say that we have divided – racially divided conferences is just flat out wrong. It's wrong, it shouldn't be.” Further, for him, in referring to recent racial riots, the ‘Black Lives Matter’ movement, and the ongoing manner of racial tensions in the wider society, he realizes that there is a gap with respect to a lack of understanding of various sides, seeing how quickly people react and “how quickly we jump on whichever bandwagon” whether “right or wrong.” As he explains,

I've noticed something on Facebook. You know I have black friends; I have white friends; uhm, you know the issue is going on in society right now around us – in all the ‘Black Lives Matter,’ whatever things that have been going on for the last couple years in particular. It's a very powerful, very sensitive topic.

And in relation to that, he mentions the George Zimmerman trial and how he was bothered by “comments” of his black Adventist friends and their “jumping on board before all the facts were known.” And so he finally sent them an online message about “casting judgment” too quickly.

He explains that he was “appealing to all Seventh-day Adventist black brothers and sisters, you know, to be careful about jumping on board before we find out the facts, because of color; because others are complaining” To this he adds,

... and as I was being uh maybe a bit judgmental to be honest with you – I’m being kinda hardnosed in trying to help them understand and see – I realized that my guess is I probably have not walked in their shoes. And I may not understand where they’re coming from.

And then he further shares that he had a conversation with one of his dearest friends. “Anyway,” as he concisely puts it,

we had quite a good conversation, and I realized that I’ve never been black. I don’t know what it feels like to be black. I see what’s written in the news people talk about, but I don’t understand from the black perspective. And I also need to open my heart up and I need to look some more carefully and try to understand, and walk in the moccasins of my brothers and sisters [who are] a different color than me.

In the end of that response, he declares “Uhm, I think that both sides are missing something; and I think it can be talked about and” with love come “and try to understand” the other “a lot better.”

Then with respect to his view on segregation at the local church level, pausing first before he responds, he states,

I feel that – I guess it’s the same opinion. Auhm, to have someone, anyone from ei-ether color to look around at the churches and to make a choice on whether that’s part of the Michigan Conference or whether the Lake Region Conference ... it’s heartbreaking with all the rest of this.

And then in a similar manner to the other white pastor, with respect to the worship setting, he shares that he understands there’s more involved in making a choice of which church to attend. He surmises that it may be that people “like the way black preachers preach, versus white preachers.” Then he makes mention of the fact that music tastes are different for different

people, whether it be “contemporary, traditional,” or whatever else. And immediately after that, in the end of that response he avers, “But uh, to choose a black or white church based upon your own color – u-I’m just sad. I just think it’s wrong. I think we’re missing – we’re missing the heart of Jesus.” Overall, the white pastors in the study share the same sentiments on segregation in the Seventh-day Adventist Church, i.e., there should be integration at both local conference and local church levels, but voice them in their own unique way.

Black Pastors

Insofar as black pastors are concerned, their perspectives on segregation within the church structure are a little bit more nuanced than the white pastors, considering also that the black pastors’ responses are based more on their personal experiences in the denomination. In this respect what was found is that the black pastors tend to express themselves more, based on their individual experience with the SDA organizational and power structure, than the white pastors. For instance, as far as one black pastor is concerned, he sees the value in having segregated conferences. And based on his experience working with whites in the denomination, he stresses “I understand the reason for them,” in reference to the regional conferences and the institutions, such as grade schools that they maintain, even if the “black conferences” and black schools “seem to struggle, compared to white schools.”

This point of the racial segregation and inequality found among Adventist grade schools, as echoed elsewhere in the study, is a reality that, like the separate campgrounds, pervades American Adventism. Segregated SDA academies or grade schools K-8 come under the direct supervision and administration of the local conference. Although not part of this study, in conversing with or just paying attention to SDA voices outside of this study, there are concerns about the waste of financial resources in having to duplicate spending for a segregated church

system, including the schools, which are essentially integrated at the levels above the local conference level. For comparative purposes, this particular point of waste in duplication in financial resources did not emerge or was not of concern in this study. This same black pastor, however, posits “But we don’t work together enough” to demonstrate that there can be cooperation even in the divided situation.

He also shares that when things are “not separate” between the conferences,

it’s separate and unequal – meaning that there are advantages that white conferences have that black conferences don’t. So it’s not equal by any means, in terms of uh the workers, and their pay, and the uh benefits and things of that nature. So there’s a small inequality there. Not in terms of base salary, but incentives and housing allowance and things of that nature.

To him “Michigan Conference gives a lot more” than the regional conference, and things are “not equal, meaning, not necessarily from a financial standpoint, but from a resource standpoint as well.” But in the interview he also explains that he sees people talking about bringing down the segregated structure, “but they’re not doing anything to change it. The best people say – well let’s get rid of the black conferences. But that’s not the solution to the problem.” As he puts it, “You gonna get rid of one, keep another; they should teach together,” adding that “it’s a power issue too.”

With respect to this same black pastor’s view on segregation at the local church level, he feels that there are differences in worship and preaching styles that influence a divisive worship environment, similar to the view of the white pastors. But for him, he’s not too comfortable with the more quiet, non-responsive atmosphere when preaching to a predominantly white audience, for instance, since as he puts it “it feel like lectures.” Thus, similar to the view of black members in general, he avers “Black church – we like intellect and emotion.” But to that he quickly adds,

And so I think it’s again – it’s challenging; and uh we gat to allow today to accept each other differences of worship styles. But we deem one as being wrong and the

other as being right. And so I—I think as long as we have that, we'll continue to have uh the segregated divide. But I do think once a quarter, once a year, we should come together, and have a joint worship; of a variety of different musical styles, preaching styles and things of that nature.

He feels that this occasional coming together is necessary in at least just getting to know each other better, seeing that there is much diversity in culture, food, language and so forth in the Adventist Church – an “economy of different folk,” as he puts it.

But ultimately for this black pastor, he doesn't “think the walls of segregation will be drawn down until the time of trouble.”⁴⁴ I don't see – I don't see us getting together until then.”

And immediately follows his clinching revelation, in speaking about the tearing down of the “walls of segregation.” In poised fashion he asserts,

I think we have to be forced to do it, rather than voluntarily do it, and that scares me, because there's a grassroots movement-organization beyond people who want us all to be together; but they don't have the financial structure to change it. They just have the voice but not the means behind it. And America is not ready for that. Um, but we should be the leading ones to lead that, so. But I don't think it'll happen in my lifetime, I really don't-[speaking slower]. I wish it would but I don't see any traction on it.

In this quote above, he mentions something about having to be forced to desegregate and unite, rather than by voluntary means, particularly referring to the racial division between blacks and whites and in specific reference to the “time of trouble.” In that vein, he seems to suggest that Seventh-day Adventists should be the ones leading the charge in desegregation in American society – sentiments shared among some blacks in the study. But also similar to the view shared among black Adventists in (and outside of) this study, he doesn't think the walls of segregation

⁴⁴The ‘time of trouble’ is a term particularly used in Seventh-day Adventist eschatological discourse. And somewhat similar to some Protestants' view of it, SDAs see this ‘time of trouble’ as a time when God's people will be persecuted in the end-times, going through trials, but ultimately emerging with their robes washed white in the blood of the Lamb (Revelation 7:14); i.e., through Jesus, they gain the victory over bitter trials. Such teaching, particularly among Adventists, is derived from passages such as Matthew 24:9-31, Mark 13:9-27, Daniel 7, Revelation 7:9-17, Revelation 12:12-17, and Revelation 14:1-5, and is linked to Adventist remnant theology.

would come down in his lifetime. So while he also wishes that the walls of segregation will come down, he, at the same time, takes the pessimistic alternative, particularly since he doesn't see any "traction" on the desegregation side.

With respect to the other black pastor's perspective on segregation at the local conference level, taking a little while to think about it, he states "ahh, I think I'm comfortable with it." Although he does not feel that the segregation should remain at the conference level, but for him there is the "trust factor" that's keeping the two sides from truly uniting. He feels that black leaders cannot trust the whites and likewise he believes that the white leaders feel the same. As he sees it, white leaders try to show "that they have a positive way of doing things," including unity gestures, but are nonetheless "very deceitful." For him, whenever he cites the 'trust factor,' as he explained to me during the interview, he simply means that the white SDA leaders cannot be trusted. So he's not referring to people at the local church level in that regard, but rather, church leaders who see about church operations and politics, i.e., those making leadership decisions that particularly affect what's happening at the local conference and local church levels.

In further explaining the situation, he sees white leaders as being "deceitful" in the sense that whenever there's a gesture towards togetherness on their part, the real motive behind it is domination and control, including financial control from the white leadership's vantage point. They're "coming with an agenda" as he sees it. That's why he feels that black conferences or their leaders don't mind the mix and mingle with the white leaders, but at the same time the black leaders do not want to "share position" due to the 'trust factor' as he puts it. He also feels "that the reason why whites will wanna come to the black conferences" is "because of the success" that black conferences are having, in terms of membership growth, while white

conferences “are losing some of the whites [in the churches].” In spite of the level of distrust and disunity between conferences that this pastor shares, he nonetheless affirms “Not that we as black leaders we-we don’t like the whites; we love them. But see their agendas - that we cannot put up with.” On his part, then, he makes clear the distinction between loving everyone or in this case whites, versus accepting insidious agendas. And on that same token, as he sees it, if the ‘trust factor’ is no longer an issue, “then we just move on together.”

Then insofar as it concerns integration at the local church level, this same black pastor asserts,

In my opinion I think, we can find integration with the churches. There’s not’ – there’s nothing wrong with the mingle between black and whites, locally- [he emphasized locally]. It’s the problem from the political level. That’ that’s where we have problems

Here, this pastor emphasizes his perspective of integration at the local church level, making what he sees as a distinction between the political squabble or distrust between the conferences, versus the mixing of members at the local church level. And towards the end of the interview he also shares,

And once we can work beyond that trust factor, I think we’ have a better church, a better congregation. As a matter of fact, locally, they tryin’ to work it out together -locally-[he emphasized ‘locally’ again]; but not the upper level.

In this last citation above, this black pastor actually gives a succinct summary of his perspective on segregation in the SDA Church. And by “upper level” he’s referring to the local conference level. Thus, he’s been consistent in his perspective and explanation of the ‘trust factor’ that affects integration at the conference level, while he seems more optimistic about some type of integration at the local church level. Between the two black pastors, then, while both accept and see the value in segregation at the local conference level, based on their experience, the second black pastor (in the immediate analysis above) seem to favor and be more optimistic about

integration at the local church level. To be fair, though, ultimately, both black pastors have also expressed their desire for unity in the church, particularly at the two levels emphasized in the study; but at the same time, they both express the challenges as they've understood them in their own unique way.

CHAPTER SIX

CONCLUSION: FINDINGS AND FUTURE DIRECTION

Summary Remarks

Every aspect of this research, from the origins of Seventh-day Adventism, to its burgeoning institutions, to the racial prejudice, discrimination and resultant tensions, social milieus and theories, along with respondents' views on the segregation arrangement embedded in the church's organizational structure, contributes to a deeper understanding of the structural segregation that has been an integral part of the legacy of the denomination. In this respect, this study also sheds light on the broader social discourse on race, segregation, and religion in American society, with shared insights particularly from the church members' perspective. Along with a few pastors, it certainly brings to the fore black and white members' attitudes, struggles, preferences, thoughts, feelings, and perspectives on the racial segregation that characterizes the Seventh-day Adventist Church in America. And the general feedback expressed to me by participants, is that this study is needed, which hopefully members can glean from. Some are also looking forward to learning of the findings of the study. Based also on my impression of the feedback I received, it seems that the participants are just grateful for the space to air their personal views on the segregated situation in the SDA Church, regardless of their perspective. What follows is a brief recapitulation of the first four chapters of this dissertation, insofar as they shed light on the research analysis and findings.

From its inception and firm roots in the Millerite movement of the early nineteenth century, the Seventh-day Adventist organization has blossomed from a small band of believers in the immediate aftermath of the 1844 Great Disappointment to a multi-million member worldwide church. Today, with operations or a presence in just about every country in the

world, Seventh-day Adventists are known for their health emphases, clinics and hospitals, as well as prolific and engaging prophecy seminars. Besides that, Adventists place a premium on evangelistic missions and church planting outside north America, and are very keen on disaster relief and charitable undertakings in general. Another pivotal hallmark of Seventh-day Adventism is its colleges, universities, and in general, its educational emphasis and institutions around the world. All told, the SDA organization remains an influential religious player on the international scene, marked by a strong prophetic outlook and distinctive remnant theology, as elucidated in chapter one.

The significance of a distinct SDA remnant theology is its ability to capture the imagination of many around the world, as they put their heart and soul into the message. It is this same unique approach, with an emphasis on the seventh-day Sabbath and the second coming at its core, that keeps all, black, white, other, attracted to the message and intent on spreading it to others. To be sure, the SDA identity is one that exists in great international solidarity; i.e., generally speaking, all SDAs find a common bond of fellowship wherever they are in the world. Yet, despite the great emphasis and unity in the doctrinal, health, theological, and spiritual messages, along with its humanitarian endeavors, the SDA racial environment in America lacks any such coherency and is replete with tensions and contradictions, as also evident in the research findings. SDA race relations marked by prejudice, discrimination, and official structural segregation and perpetual tensions, the focus of chapter two, have plagued the American Adventist church from the nineteenth century until now, thus forming a significant part of the legacy of the denomination. And the ways in which SDA lay members in particular understand and perceive the segregation and tensions have been a focal point of this research.

Understanding race relations and its development in the Seventh-day Adventist Church, however, means also placing it in broader historical context and particular social milieus, as expounded on in chapter three. Thus, as with other religious groups or denominational bodies in America, the SDA Church has had to struggle with balancing its public image and racial practices on the one hand, and its spiritual and remnant message on the other. In that struggle, differences in worship style have played a role in shaping the outcome of religious segregation in general, and SDA segregation practices in particular. Ultimately, the SDA racialized structure, underlying tensions, and denominationally sanctioned segregation, with its attendant inequality, cannot be divorced from the American struggle and saga in race relations.

Two of the dominant theories that help place the SDA story in its rightful social context and sociological framework, and shed light on the nature of segregation in the denomination are cultural toolkit theory and the homophily principle, examined in chapter four. Both theoretical frameworks ultimately allow for better understanding of how SDAs are wedded to forms of cultural specificity, customs, values and group solidarity, as elucidated in this research. Crucial to emphasize in that regard is that habits, upbringing, and environment all inform church members' choices and practices as well, particularly as underscored in the cultural toolkit theory. Besides that, people tend to also stick together based on similarities in tastes and physical characteristics or racial features, as stressed in the homophily principle. And while some observers and theorists see choice as a dominant factor in church affiliation and attendance, informed by cultural habits and social experience, the historical connection between segregated patterns of religious practice and racial oppression cannot be denied. Besides the field interviews, observations, and analyses underscored in the previous chapter, it is in light of all these racial dynamics highlighted in the first four chapters, that the findings are discussed.

Findings

The presentation and analysis of the interviews presented in chapter five, reveal an array of variation in perspectives on segregation in the SDA Church between blacks and whites, while also uncovering a number of generalities as well. Thus, paying attention to and learning from all the participants proved useful in attempting to gain a broader picture of perspectives on segregation in the SDA Church. Every member has a voice and it is worth the while to listen to those voices. Further, all the perspectives and shared insights are valuable in thinking about the racially divisive structure in the Seventh-day Adventist Church, and the manner in which they impact participation in the denomination, generally speaking, as well as interpersonal relationships across the board.

It must be reiterated, however, that while the views of all blacks are not the same, and the same can be said of whites with respect to racial segregation in the denominational structure, there are nonetheless similarities in the perspectives of blacks on the one hand, and whites on the other, as well as similarities between blacks and whites. For example, as illustrated in chapter five, the views of blacks vary with respect to segregation at both the local conference and local church levels, yet tied to a common experience with anti-black prejudice in the church, which in itself is tied to a broader state of racialized affairs in American society. Thus, while blacks and whites all have their own personal opinions on the segregation practice, there are nonetheless some common ideas or themes that underlie and inform such opinions.

One idea that influences or is associated with blacks' endorsement of segregation at the local conference level, for instance, has to do with the view that there is a need for local black conferences since there is still prejudice among whites in accepting blacks in leadership roles. Another idea associated with the black perspective is that since segregation is deeply imbedded

in American society anyway, and blacks find cultural affinity and communal bond with blacks, it makes sense for a black pastor to minister to a black congregation. This actually reflects the homophily principle, which postulates that people tend to associate with others like themselves (Emerson & Smith, 2000; McPherson et al., 2001). This view of the pastor and racial exclusivity in church fellowship, in effect, is a type of endorsement of segregation at the local conference level, since local black ministers, in this case, are generally affiliated with the regional conference operating in Michigan, and are therefore operating directly under the administration of regional conference leadership. And among blacks, one idea associated with them having no problems with segregation at the local church level is the view that the church makeup simply reflects the surrounding demographics. In Detroit, for example, where the black members were interviewed, there is the feeling among some that since the area is predominantly black, it's nothing strange that the church makeup reflects its surrounding community. The idea here is that people will naturally attend a church that is somewhere in their local area, not too far away.

While that is the case, there is also the feeling among blacks that in spite of geographical proximity and the desire for cultural cohesiveness in church, there should still be unity in the denominational structure at both local conference and local church levels. A common theme in that regard, echoed on both sides of the racial divide, are the expressed views of some respondents that since there will be no segregation in heaven they may as well start to learn to be united down here. And another common view among both blacks and whites with respect to a united fellowship, is that church brethren should reflect the character of Christ and the spirit of heaven in church practice, particularly if the heart is truly converted. Some, particularly blacks, also feel that the SDA Church should take the lead to show a divided world that the church itself can be united, particularly since they see the SDA Church as the remnant church of biblical

prophecy. This all highlights some of the commonality with which the views on segregation play out, besides the unique expressions and broad array of perspectives, particularly as illustrated in the previous chapter.

Although touched on earlier in this chapter, it is important to reiterate that the theoretical framework played a crucial role in this research. Particularly as expounded upon in chapter four and amply demonstrated in chapter five, the homophily principle and cultural toolkit theoretical lenses help account for the persistent segregation in the American Seventh-day Adventist Church. This denominationally sanctioned segregation has also contributed to a state of financial and socioeconomic inequality in resources and benefits between regional (black) and state (white) conferences. SDA regional conferences are disadvantaged in that regard, which also impacts SDA campgrounds and grade schools, for example, as revealed in chapter five. The literature also speaks sternly of the consequences and impact of racial segregation on socioeconomic inequality (Massey and Denton, 1993). But other social dynamics such as a history of anti-black prejudice, discrimination, and bitter racial strife in the SDA Church have contributed to the entrenched segregation in the denomination, as emphasized in chapter two. Thus, along with other social dynamics in SDA institutions such as rampant racism and racial oppression, the two dominant theories repeated here help explain the longstanding official segregation in the American SDA Church.

Besides that, what was found is that among some blacks and whites there are varying shades of feelings with respect to them not having an issue with churches being segregated, particularly if such an arrangement is more comfortable or convenient for members. This means that some take no real issue with the segregation for various reasons, such as blacks feeling more comfortable worshiping in a black neighborhood with others like themselves, while they feel that

the onus is on the local black and white conferences to unite. However, black women, among all male and female participants, based on fieldwork analysis, tend to be the most consistent in expressing pro-unity sentiments, insofar as they concern their ultimate desire for a completely united Seventh-day Adventist Church. Certainly some of the black women also struggled with their views, but ultimately, they generally arrived at or expressed a desire for unity in the church's structure. But on the one hand what seems to be unique to the black perspective is that, some blacks, especially the males, tend to find legitimacy in the segregated local conference structure, because they feel that one can better cater to the needs of various constituents in that way. Whereas, on the other hand whites tend to find fault with local conference operations and leaders for maintaining a racially-divided structure, and thereby a partisan spirit in the local worship environment. But to be sure, based on the overall study, while there are some generalities to be made with respect to white and black perspectives on the segregation in the SDA Church, there are also distinct individual views, and some that stand out more than others, as demonstrated in the previous chapter.

And between white members and white pastors, in general, what was found is somewhat of a slight rift in views overall, as the white pastors are more consistent in their view of the saliency of integration in the denomination at both local conference and church levels. In this respect, moreover, and perhaps not as important to note, is that the white pastors have more interaction with church leaders, in general, and take part in more leadership summits and higher levels of decision-making meetings that impact the local church, than the lay members. The same is generally the case between the black pastors and black members. What this implies is that pastors may be more aware of the broader dynamics and implications of the segregation than regular members. Whether or not such dynamic automatically influences all pastors'

perspectives on segregation is a matter to be studied separately. Such possible influential factors, then, will be helpful to consider in future research.

With respect to the white pastors in the study, not only do they disavow segregation at both levels (local church and conference) of the church's structure, but a direct match was discovered in the basic outline of their perspectives on segregation at the two levels.

Interestingly enough, the white pastors both cite issues having to do with worship style or music as either something to be worked out, or something factoring into people's choice of church attendance. And so what's striking in their overall responses, for both local conference and church levels, is that they both proffer basically the same two major points in their responses; the same skeletal frame or outline in their responses, but at the same time adding the 'meat' to that framework in their own distinct way. For both of them, the two major points that stand out are:

- a. at both local conference and local church levels there should be unity, and
- b. while unity is desired at the local church level, worship styles, which includes musical tastes and preaching styles, have to be considered.

In that regard, perhaps worth mentioning is that one white SDA pastor who is not part of this study, shared with me that he dislikes the segregation, and that if we don't unite down here, then it will be up there (meaning in heaven). This, however, is unlike the general attitudes of the white pastors in this study, who express more of a need to address the racial segregation situation in the church temporally (before getting to heaven).

For black pastors, the picture is a little more involved. For one black pastor, while he would like to see unity at the conference level, the 'trust factor' remains a critical aspect blocking that desire. For him, that has to do with the fact that white leaders at the political or conference level cannot be trusted, since any desire for integration on the part of white leaders is driven by selfish motives. But with respect to integration at the local church level, he's more in

favor of that. For the other black pastor, he sees the value of segregation at the local conference level, with respect to the various territories covered, and understands the reason for black conferences and the black schools run by them. But he also understands the segregation at the local church level as linked to differences in worship and preaching styles, particularly since blacks like both intellect and emotion to be involved in their worship – a viewpoint that resonates among blacks. For this black pastor, moreover, while he sees it as important to accept various worship styles, it's not about deeming one (style) as wrong and the other right; because as long as that attitude persists the racial divide will persist as well. Thus, he believes that more than once a year (but at least once per year), there should be a joint worship or activity where all (blacks, whites, others) come together to share, learn from, and just get to know each other, due to the rich array of cultural tastes, practices and styles found in the SDA Church.

Overall, the black pastors both essentially accept segregation at the local conference level largely based on distrust of white leadership and the perceived value of black conferences serving a predominantly black constituency. But one seems to be more in favor of integration at the local church level than the other. Ultimately, however, both black pastors have also expressed a desire for unity in the church at these two levels; but at the same time, based on their experience, they share their perspectives in their own unique way. Overall, among black and white pastors in this study, the white pastors are quicker to propose a pro-integration stance than the black pastors, insofar as it concerns their perspectives on integration at both local conference and local church levels. This point on black and white differences in pastoral standpoints, however, should also be understood in light of the pastoral perspectives laid out in the previous chapter.

Some of the major points from this study relate to the drum issue, with blacks and whites, generally falling on one side or the other, between accepting and disapproving it. The tensions and divisive nature of various worship and preaching styles, and perspectives on the hyper segregation in communities that impact the makeup of the local congregation, also make that list of highpoints that stand out. Another one is the economic inequality issue that is raised by black interviewees, as they explain that whites are doing better in areas such as grade schools, campgrounds, and in the incentives and resources available for white conference workers. And that includes inequality as a consequence of white flight from Seventh-day Adventist churches, whenever a rise in the black presence makes white members uncomfortable.

Thinking of inequality in general, based on discussion in this study, it seems to be, what I label, a ‘cyclical point of tension’ in Seventh-day Adventism, whereby prejudice leads to segregation and maintenance of the status quo, which in turn lead to inequality; and the cycle perpetuates itself. And while there are other points that could be raised, perhaps the major highlight of this study, apart from black and white perspectives on the segregation arrangement in the SDA Church, has to do with the level of concern about the children of interracial couples, and the way in which that plays out among blacks and whites, as shown in the previous chapter. This concern includes, and is connected to, hesitancy or separatist attitudes among some blacks and whites who have a problem with their children intermarrying, due to reservations with the idea. Certainly the fact that the children of interracial couples remain a sticking point for some blacks and whites is a hallmark of this study. Ultimately, such attitudes and standpoints impact the way segregation is reinforced and perpetuated, since some SDA blacks and whites continue to have issues and reservations with at least some aspect of interracial marriages. This in itself

highlights the enduring nature of racialization in the church, and perhaps exacerbates racial isolation in the church altogether.

Another crucial point in the study involves cross-racial local church leadership. In general, black females tend to be a little more accepting, without reservations, than black males on this point of having whites serve in leadership positions such as elder at their church. And the younger the black females, the more accepting they seem to be. Overall, though, white members tend to be a little more accepting of a black local church leader, than blacks would of a white one.

On that point, the white pastors tend to be a little more accepting of having blacks serve in leadership roles such as first elder, compared to the black pastors' perspectives on having local white church leaders at their church; although this is tied to the black pastors' experience as explained in the analysis (in the previous chapter). Altogether, on that particular point, between pastors and parishioners, the sentiments of the white pastors appear to match those of their members. Among blacks, while the black pastors tend to have some reservations based on their experience, they are nonetheless accepting. Black members also, are for the most part, accepting. There is slight concern, however, on the part of at least one black member, who while accepting, also feels that a white elder would not have a good understanding of the surrounding community, for example, and therefore may not be able to connect well with a black church.

Worship style/ musical instruments Further special mention, however, ought to be made about congregation worship and segregation, due to its place as a major theme in this study. In a general sense, the discussion on worship style and choice of musical instruments in this study, based on both experience and taste, are a contributing factor in the racial divisiveness in the SDA Church. In that regard, on the one hand, as far as some whites are concerned, the sentiments

conveyed is that if the blacks want to segregate to be free to accommodate their different worship style, then they should be free to do so. Those sentiments seem less pronounced among blacks, many of whom certainly recognize the difference in worship style between themselves and whites, but for the most part place no real emphasis on the notion that their worship style and worship experience should justify the racial segregation at the local church level.

But without having to necessarily resort to the old cliché of conservatives versus liberals in the church, indeed, one of the things that this fieldwork unmistakably shows is that whites (at least in the study) generally prefer a quieter and less upbeat worship experience, with use of instruments like piano and guitar, in contrast to the blacks in general. Blacks also incorporate the same instruments as whites, such as piano, organ and guitar into their worship and music, but also maintain a clear distinction in preference for a more upbeat mode even in the way various hymns are sung and tunes are played. My observation visiting the churches in this study also bears witness to that. But apart from that, blacks generally also like other instruments like the drums and tambourine in accompaniment of their energetic and active tastes, as they contribute to a more celebrative type and lively worship experience for them.

Thus, worship and music no doubt play a role in racial reconciliation, as elucidated in this research, with significant implications for the multicultural and multiracial church. But at the same time, due to the variety in tastes and styles in the multiracial setting, worship styles themselves can also cause inadvertent tension, as also pointed out in the research. This is reflected in the sentiments shared in this study, with respect to worship style and preferences in a segregated church, as black and white Adventists seem to not be so accommodating on this point of integrated worship style(s). Yet, in spite of the tension, integrated worship is still pivotal to the vision of a truly multiracial church for many who are committed to making integrated

fellowship workable and enjoyable. In this study, however, no active push or any particular perspective stands out, insofar as it concerns respondents advocating strongly or specifically for a combination or integration of worship styles. Consequently, with respect to worship style along with preaching proclivities, both blacks and whites seem, for the most part, comfortable within their separate niches.

Future Study

As is the case with qualitative studies of this nature and with social science in general, there are always additional considerations that can be included in a study, or advised for future research. And certainly, a study such as this one can also be complemented with future research, particularly given the fact that the dynamics of situations change over time. From time to time not only do social systems experience change, but individual thoughts, attitudes, practices, and cultural outlook of religious individuals and groups can change as well. On that note, a follow-up or longitudinal study can be done with at least some of the participants a few years down the road. Besides that, a quantitative component in a mixed methods approach can also complement a study like this, insofar as it allows for greater number of participants and generalization of the research findings.

Some other aspects I find valuable to include in future research on the same broader topic presented in this study are, but not limited to:

- Research can be undertaken (perhaps in-depth interviews or focus groups) between husband and wife, or among families, to examine connections, similarities and differences between perspectives of family members more closely. This in turn may tell us something about the impact of family life on individual perspectives on racial segregation.

- A focus group study can be undertaken among younger and older participants separately, as well as with mixed groups, to explore how age may be related to views and attitudes about race and church segregation.
- As mentioned above, possible influential factors that may impact a pastor's view compared with the lay members' point of view, such as interaction with higher levels of church governance, should be explored.
- The younger voices, such as the teen voice is lacking, and is much needed in future research.
- The voice of the single white male is lacking in this study and can add further insight in future study.
- Likewise, the voice of the middle-age white male is also lacking in this study and could offer deeper insight in future study.
- And a comparative study on this topic can carry across religious denominations or groups.

Altogether, considerations such as these can help to foster even greater understanding or at least shed further light on the relationship between segregation, social environment, and society, particularly due to the ongoing interaction between religion and the broader society.

APPENDICES

Appendix One

HSIRB Final Approval

Appendix Two

Data Collection Instrument – Interview Guide for Fieldwork

WESTERN MICHIGAN UNIVERSITY



Human Subjects Institutional Review Board

Date: August 11, 2015

To: Timothy Ready, Principal Investigator
Cleran Hollancid, Student Investigator for dissertation

From: Amy Naugle, Ph.D., Chair

Re: HSIRB Project Number 15-06-08

This letter will serve as confirmation that your research project titled "Seventh-day Adventists and 'Race' Relations in the U.S.: The Case of Black-White Structural Segregation" has been **approved** under the **expedited** category of review by the Human Subjects Institutional Review Board. The conditions and duration of this approval are specified in the Policies of Western Michigan University. You may now begin to implement the research as described in the application.

Please note: This research may **only** be conducted exactly in the form it was approved. You must seek specific board approval for any changes in this project (e.g., ***you must request a post approval change to enroll subjects beyond the number stated in your application under "Number of subjects you want to complete the study."*** Failure to obtain approval for changes will result in a protocol deviation. In addition, if there are any unanticipated adverse reactions or unanticipated events associated with the conduct of this research, you should immediately suspend the project and contact the Chair of the HSIRB for consultation.

Reapproval of the project is required if it extends beyond the termination date stated below.

The Board wishes you success in the pursuit of your research goals.

Approval Termination: August 10, 2016

1903 W. Michigan Ave., Kalamazoo, MI 49008-5456
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CAMPUS SITE: 251 W. Walwood Hall

Appendix Two

Interview Guide

Interview Guide – for black and white SDAs – in the Greater Detroit-Metro Area:
Church Members/Pastor

Topic: “Seventh-day Adventists and ‘Race’ Relations (in the U.S.): The Case of Black-White Structural Segregation”

Date of Interview _____ Time of Interview: from _____ to _____

Part A

Demographics

Name: _____ Occupation: _____

Highest level of education attained: _____

Age: _____ Sex: Male Female

Status: Married ☐ Single ☐ Other ☐

County of Residence: _____ City/Town of Residence: _____

Are there both black and white neighbors with respect to your place of residence? Yes No
Explain (if necessary) _____

Is/Are your kid/s in a (racially) integrated school? Yes No

Do you have both white and black friends? Yes No
Explain _____

Consider self an:

African-American, Other Black, White, Hispanic, Other (specify, optional) _____

And approximately how long have you been a member of the SDA Church? _____ Years

Church Position (indicate here): _____

Or if just a member place a check here: ☐

Name of Your Local SDA Church: _____

Church Location

County: _____ City/Town: _____

Part B – Interview Questions

Note: in questions 1 and 2 below, the word ‘attending’ should be read as ‘pastoring’ if a pastor is the respondent; and question 4 will be skipped for pastors as respondents.

Section I

Open-Ended Questions asked by the researcher (in face-to-face dialogue)

Questions relating to the intersection of church life, feelings of closeness to the other, peers, experience, worship style choice, and environment

1. A. How comfortable are you in attending an all-black church? Answer if white
B. How comfortable are you in attending an all-white church? Answer if black
2. What are your thoughts on you attending a church that is situated in a predominantly black/ predominantly white neighborhood (or district)?
3. Can you share your thoughts about having blacks/whites holding church office, including leadership positions (such as elder) at your church?
4. What about a black/white pastor leading your local church (what are your thoughts on that)?
5. How comfortable are you in attending (church) social functions with a mixed (black-white) crowd?
6. A. (i) Can you tell me about your perspective on worship style and choice of musical Instruments?
(ii) And what about preaching style – can you share your perspective and tastes?
B. Do you think that all SDAs are or should be uniform with respect to worship style? Can you comment a little more on that?
7. (a) Can you tell me a little about your cultural background?
(b) And would you mind sharing with me what your racial/ethnic experience was like growing up – in terms of (me) gaining a general sense of it?
(c) What about now – what can you tell me about your racial/ethnic experiences, in general?
(d) In that regard, are there any particular racial/ethnic incidents or experiences that particularly stand out (either past or present) that you can share?
(e) And can you talk a little bit about your racial/ethnic experiences in the church, in general?
(f) Do any of those (church-related) experiences stand out? Can you say a little more about that?
8. Can you tell me about your peers and those with whom you associate, particularly in terms of their racial background?

9. What do you think about interracial (black-white) dating and marriage in the SDA Church?
10. [a] And (if you have children) how comfortable are you in having your children marry a black/white person (within the denominational setting)?
[b] (If single and unattached) what do you think about the idea of you marrying a black/white person?

Section II (open-ended dialogue continued)
Perspectives on the Segregated Church Structure

11. (a) Were you born into the SDA Church? Can you share more about that?
(b) Can you share any memorable experiences you've had in the SDA Church? Any positive/negative ones you mind commenting on?
(c) And can you tell me about your overall experience in the SDA Church?
(d) Can you share your views on church racial segregation/unity?
(e) Are you aware or not,⁴⁵ that the SDA Church (in America) is officially racially segregated along black-white lines (i.e., only at the local church and local conference levels)?
12. Do you mind sharing with me your understanding of the cause(s) for the official black-white segregation in the SDA Church structure in America (from the local conference to the local church)?
13. Given your understanding (insofar as it involves racial tensions, both in and outside the SDA Church, around the mid-twentieth century), can you share your opinion on whether or not the SDA church leadership should have pursued a black-white segregation policy (among American SDAs)? Can you say a little more about that?
14. And can you share your perspective about the current (ongoing) black-white official division in the SDA Church? – *(a) particularly at the conference (administrative) level;
(b) and at the local church level.
15. Is there anything else you would like to add or share in this discussion?

⁴⁵ If, for some reason, a participant has no idea (i.e., totally unaware) that the SDA Church in America contains an official racially-segregated structure, then I may skip questions 12-14 for that participant.

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