Ethical Implications of

The Quest for Black Power

by Lorenzo Grant

Today, among many black Seventh-day Adventist ministers and laymen, there is a growing interest in further refining the church organization to pay greater attention to the peculiar needs and interests of the black mission. At least one level of black leaders, the conference presidents, are solidly recommending that this come in the form of black or "regional" unions. The issues, however, are not at all clear and create ambivalent feelings on the part of both black and white members of the church as well as its leaders.

The purpose of this study is to examine the church's commitment to the unity of the worshipping community and to deal with the rightness or wrongness of the current demand for greater self-determination by blacks in the Adventist Church. In doing so, it will contain the most recent official actions and statements by the church on the question of black unions and will recommend a creative, alternative approach to dealing with the problems discussed. This alternative is a middle ground approach not as yet proposed by either side of the current dialogue and will necessitate some new organizational structures. This paper's approach is as follows:

1) Blacks have endured a significant degree

of racism within the Adventist Church, largely because of a confidence in the uniqueness of the church's calling which rests upon the imprimatur of the "Spirit of Prophecy." Therefore, a careful examination of the teachings of the Spirit of Prophecy on the matters of race and church organization should determine the compatability of those teachings with the New Testament.

2) The impervious pockets of racism in the church claim the same imprimatur which, in effect, equates racism with good religion. This problem the author credits to a failure on the part of the clergy. It should be ascertained why and at what stage of training or orientation such failure occurs.

3) If, as we suspect, this religious sanction reinforces the racism already prominent in American society at large and covers it over with an apparent piety and dedication to things holy, one might inquire what is being done to educate the church in Christian principles of human relations. In fact, significant efforts have been made both in administrative councils and in institutions of learning. However, these have only been small ripples in a vast sea of complacency and confusion. Dr. C. C. Crider, chairman of the behavior science department, Andrews University, has developed a very sophisticated series of Human Relations Workshops and long-range approaches to community building. But the Human Relations Workshops have only been tested in a few northern cities and

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await the invitation of pastors and officials throughout the rest of the country. Positive statements on human relations have been published in the *Church Manual* and the church paper but have largely gone unheeded, or been accepted as platitudinous concessions to blacks and "pushy liberals." Therefore, it will be generations before any program of reeducation would have observable effect upon the day-to-day operation of the churches and their institutions. Besides, very little is being attempted in the south where attitudes are still quite rigid.

4) Therefore, since no such program of reeducation is as yet underway on a large scale, and since the demands of the black work are increasing in numerous ways, there is a growing need for black-white relationships to be dealt with promptly and on the highest levels.

Segregation on the congregational level is generally accepted as "natural" and even necessary. H. R. Niebuhr makes some significant observations which apply to the

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Seventh-day Adventist Church as well as to other older denominations which faced the racial problem much earlier:

> Complete fellowship without any racial discriminations has been very rare in the history of American Christianity. It has existed only where the number of Negroes belonging to the Church was exceptionally small in proportion to the total membership, where the cultural status of the racial groups in the church was essentially similar, or where, as among some Quakers, racial consciousness was consciously overcome.

Niebuhr further observes that an important indicant to genuine integration is "equal privileges of participation in the government of the particular unit [of the church organization]."[1]

Since, in 1944, Adventists were not disposed either to "consciously overcome" racial consciousness or provide "equal privileges of participation in government," it was clearly necessary to opt for organized segregation, which in that year came about in the form of black (regional) conferences. Niebuhr makes a poignant observation in this regard: "The segregation of the races into distinct churches was not, therefore, wholly a retrogressive step, involving the decline of a previous fellowship. Sometimes it was a forward step from an association without equality, through independence, toward the ultimately desirable fellowship of equals."[2]

Whether the idea of black unions came originally from black leadership or the white leaders is not clear, but Elder H. D. Singleton (formerly secretary of the General Conference Regional Department) reports that it was discussed as a viable option in the highest councils of the church as early as the 1950s. The incoming General Conference president, Elder W. H. Branson, felt it was a good idea and suggested its implementation. However, it was rejected by black leaders for fear it would not only successfully thwart all effort toward integration, but would also deny even that representation on union conference boards and committees which blacks were then allowed.

In 1969, the mood in the black community had changed from one desiring integration to one accepting the church's seemingly insurmountable segregationist patterns. Black awareness and black identity were the themes that could be heard from the bar to the pulpit. Thus, early in that year, Elder J. R. Wagner wrote Secretary Singleton expressing a concern among "the young ministers" about vertical mobility for black workers. Wagner urged that a meeting of black leaders from across the country be convened to discuss this and other issues important to the growing black constituency.

The occasion for just such a meeting came with the *Message* magazine rally held on the campus of Oakwood College. At that meeting, Elder Singleton was severely grilled

about the effectiveness and responsiveness of his office to the needs of the black work. It was suggested that stronger administrative clout needed to be given to black leaders. The idea of black unions was presented to the large gathering of black ministers and a straw vote was taken to determine their support. Without any thorough explanation of what it would involve and in the heat of the discussion, 89 percent present voted for black unions. Jacob Justiss reports in his outstanding history, *Angels in Ebony:* "On April 27, 1969, at a meeting of representatives of all eight regional conferences at Oakwood College, 130 voted in favor, 11 against, and eight abstaining in a vote on black unions."[3]

The matter was subsequently placed on the agenda for the next North American Regional Advisory. This official advisory committee was comprised of all black conference officials and General Conference personnel, as well as other black leaders and laymen of influence. This meeting resulted in a recommendation that the General Conference give serious study to black unions. The General Conference complied by establishing a special "blue ribbon" commission of blacks and whites to study the question. After some preliminary work, the commission convened in April 1970, in the General Conference chapel.

Time after time when the case for black unions had been clearly and forcefully stated, someone would call for the vote. Skillfully — some thought manipulatively — the chairman refused to entertain the motion. Speeches were long, loud and impassioned, but finally the noon hour came. The vote was postponed until after lunch. Many saw this as a stalling tactic by the chairman, Elder N. C. Wilson, usually considered the closest top-level friend of the black work.

The atmosphere became such that it appeared a calamitous schism was about to occur. It was love for the church and respect for his brethren that caused E. E. Cleveland, the dean of black preachers, to walk to the front. Though he had been decidedly in favor of black unions and anxious for the vote, Cleveland pleaded through bitter tears for unity.

The vote was finally taken and the motion for black unions was defeated. To say the least, it was a sharply divided group. Nevertheless, as a compromise, it was voted to implement a Sixteen-Point Program of adjustment and correction of racial inequities in the church. This alternative was to be given a two-year trial and then evaluated. This action at least kept alive the hope of those who were convinced of the hopelessness of the white man's capacity for just and altruistic relationships with blacks. In two years, they would be back, their ranks larger, stronger, their argument more refined.

The church acted with all deliberate speed to implement the Sixteen-Point Program. Prior to 1969, not a single union conference in North America had a black officer on its staff. Only two unions had black departmental leaders — the Southern Union had an associate publishing man and the Atlantic Union had a secretary for public relations. After the 1970 Spring Council voted the "Sixteen Points," the first black union officer and the first black departmental director were elected in North America. From 1970-1976, seven black leaders have been elected as union conference officers and 14 as union departmental directors.

In 1972, sufficient progress had been made that brethren of good faith looked forward to allow the "Sixteen Points" a longer time to work out some of the deeper problems still persisting in the church. The issue of black unions, however, remained alive and well, occasionally fed by embarrassing racial incidents. It was taken up by a major committee in August 1976, when PREXAD (the General Conference President's Executive Council on Administration) invited a number of black leaders to present papers on the subject. Several were prepared for the occasion, but all the black leaders present who supported black unions agreed that the paper by C. B. Rock on "Cultural Pluralism" had adequately and eloquently summarized their views. (For a version of this paper, see pp. 4-12.) For the purposes of this paper, then, Elder Rock's statement will represent the proposal for black unions.

The black demand for organizational adjustment, whatever form it may ultimately

take, must meet two important criteria if it is to be taken seriously:

1) It must be articulated from a context of pragmatic intelligence. That is, it must reflect some awareness of the history and structure of the church, especially relating to the black work.

2) It must acknowledge a serious commitment to the spiritual goals of a worldwide church.

A strictly sociological approach lacks an adequate context from which one might draw ethical conclusions about an ecclesiological situation. Rock, for instance, would employ sociological strucures to arrive at ecclesiological conclusions. The two spheres are functionally not analogous. However, since *polity* is what the question of black unions is all about, political models and axioms are more readily transferable than are sociological ones. The sociological model of Rock and the political model which I prefer agree concerning the depth, effect and tenacity of racism in the church. They disagree, however, concerning the possibilities, approaches and, therefore, solutions to the problems caused by this racism.

B lack leaders almost unanimously agree that the present organizational structure with its *de facto* white supremacy is not accomplishing the mission of black Adventism. In interviews and conversations, black conference administrators and scores of black pastors cite a number of areas as needing change:

1) representation on the committee of union conference presidents;

2) a structure providing for discussion of problems, exchange of ideas and personnel between black conferences (present policy prohibits this except under the supervision of the next higher echelon, the union);

3) readjustment of financial policy so that black conferences can set their own priorities and not in effect subsidize programs and projects which are not relevant to the black mission;

4) the image and dignity that comes with being one's own "boss." It appears demeaning for blacks always to have to go to

whites for permission, counsel or funding for their work.

These needs have been born out of a long history of institutional racism in and out of the church. White leaders now in authority may or may not have had anything to do with the discrimination and disenfranchisement that has created this imbalance of power, but the imbalance must surely be obvious to them at this point. To the extent that they fail to address themselves to it in creative terms, they betray a gross insensitivity or an ignorance steeped in the stereotypes of black incompetency. This passive racism is just as lethal as the active type. Until very recently, the church had done virtually nothing about

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this kind of racism and now, unfortunately, it may be too little too late. Benevolent neglect seems as entrenched and potently virulent as out-and-out racism. This is what has created the radical approach by many black leaders today.

Alistair Kee observes the following while comparing black theology with the developing nations of the Third World:

But as in the development debate, ironically, dependence was finally broken when it was demonstrated by the rich countries that the gap between the two groups was not going to be eliminated or even threatened, so the greatest advance among Blacks was made when the white community in America made it very clear that Blacks would not be fully accepted.

To pursue the parallel with the development debate, in which the closing of the door to development led to a reappraisal of such goals in any case, the denial of equality and integration led to a questioning of these objectives. And more importantly, the experience of the closed door led to a raising of consciousness in the Third World about their real situation.[4]

Kee asserts that the one constant, between

blacks and the Third World "emerged as *dependence* — economic, cultural and even to some extent, spiritual." For blacks in North America as with many of the nations of the Third World, the answer was "power," Black Power.

Most white leaders do not immediately perceive themselves as power figures. The term causes some embarrassment, as though it were a dirty word. It is usually employed in a pejorative sense toward those of unholy ambition. They would rather consider themselves the legitimate stewards of the household of faith, with the sanction of God and the "committee." Therefore, any effort to dislodge or counterbalance them is perceived as "disloyalty," "rebellion" or "divisiveness":

> The moral attitudes of dominant and privileged groups are characterized by universal self-deception and hypocrisy. . . . The most common form of hypocrisy among the privileged classes is to assume that their privileges are the just payments with which society rewards specially useful or meritorious functions.[5]

Black leaders are usually viewed as self-seeking when they talk about black unions or mobility or "positions" for blacks. This is the typical attitude of the power party. Whites find it impossible to perceive themselves or their structures with which they identify as oppressive; however, this is exactly the way many blacks see it. The church may yet escape the indictment of J. P. McPherson, however: "The enormity of your guilt, the immensity of the wrong does not appear in contemplating what you have made us, but in the consideration of what you have prevented us from being."[6]

James J. Cone explains the basis of Black Power: "Simply stated, freedom is not doing what I will but becoming what I should. A man is free when he sees clearly the fulfillment of his being and is thus capable of making the envisioned self a reality. This is Black Power!"[7] A more euphemistic way of putting it might be "self-determination," but it is the same animal — freedom! This, of course, is wholly compatible with the gospel. In fact, as Cone sees it, it is charitable: "Christ in liberating the wretched of the earth also liberated those responsible for the wretchedness. The oppressor is also freed of his peculiar demons."[8] It is important for the white man for his own soul's sake to begin to relate to the black man as a "thou" and not an "it."

If all this sounds racist, it is no wonder. Dr. Rosemary Reuther acknowledges the tendency:

> Is black theology just a new form of racial propaganda making Christ in the image of black exclusivism, just as whites made Christ in the image of their exclusivism? I believe that black theology walks a razor's edge between a racist message and a message that is validly prophetic, and the character of this razor's edge must be analyzed with the greatest care to prevent the second from drifting toward the first.[9]

Let me warn here that this solemn responsibility is not the domain of the white hierarchy. The black theologian must in his inmost soul be true and honest with God.

One of the strongest demands of black leaders is an appeal for equality — equitable representation, equal treatment from institutions such as schools and hospitals, equal opportunity for employment and service. Normally, these appeals are regarded as, in the words of one pastor, "little more than impotent whimpers." The disproportion of power sustained, if it did not breed, blatant inequality of privilege within the church. This, as Reinhold Niebuhr points out, "became the basis of class division and class solidarity."[10] The brick and mortar of race and class have constituted formidable walls isolating the typical white middle-class aspiring church member.

The sense of powerlessness on the part of blacks in the Seventh-day Adventist Church centers largely on economic factors. A major concern of black administrators is to be able to "slice their own pie."

> Whatever may be the degree of the self-consciousness of classes, the social and ethical outlook of members of given classes is invariably colored, if not determined, by the unique economic circum-

stances which each class has as common possession.[11]

So blacks have felt exploited because of having to come hat-in-hand asking for their own money for their priorities. This is why nearly every appeal for black unions or further integration is accompanied with a financial statement showing the monetary involvement of blacks in the world program of the church.

The intensity of the appeal of blacks for greater self-determination has been caused by the intensity of an unjust resistance. This resistance does not necessarily mean that those who either in the past or presently oppose black unions are vicious racists seeking to keep blacks in their "place." It does suggest that the church in times past characteristically has been insensitive and unresponsive to legitimate appeal. This has resulted in the unification of black leadership in a posture which threatens the unity (or supposed unity) of the church. But there is a danger that blacks must beware of. Niebuhr suggests that this "simple animal egoism" called "self-respect" can be corrupted into pride and the will-to-power.

Surveys and interviews with white leaders and pastors demonstrate that their overriding concern is for the image of the church: "How will it make us look to the world?" When it is brought to their attention that there are presently, with no embarrassment to the denomination, churches where blacks cannot attend, there is often an expression of disgust but no inclination to deal with the situation. As for representation on important boards and committees, the most frequent response is that "these things are a matter of working one's way up—faithfulness and perseverance would surely pay off." Any radical adjustment is perceived as "discrimination in reverse."

Nevertheless, man's most loathsome deeds are often informed by grace. It has been this very concern for the church's image that has caused its leaders to respond to the "threat" of black unions with creative alternatives such as the Sixteen Points. While this program of integration may not have been born of the most altruistic motives, it has in fact benefitted the black work. To cite only one example, in the last seven years, Oakwood College alone has doubled in enrollment while maintaining the lowest tuition of any of its sister colleges. At the same time, it has undertaken an unprecedented program of capital improvements due to heavy subsidies from the General Conference. Other benefits have accrued to the black work and to the cause of integration because of the Sixteen Points. However, two factors should be borne in mind: 1) these actions were literally wrung out of the power structure by constant cajoling and finally the threats of black leadership; and 2) the Sixteen Points still leave serious inequitites in the distribution of power and responsibility.

Yet, the idea of black unions, besides the negative effects on the church's image for both blacks and whites, would not solve all the problems cited by black leaders without exorbitant cost. Alternative proposals are often received by leaders and laymen with surprise if not enthusiasm. It is obvious to this writer that more viable alternatives need to be explored by both black and white leadership.

The ethical dilemma must lie at the door of those who have the oversight of the total church. Denominational leaders must aggressively seek at least a rough justice for all the church's diverse constituencies, including blacks, Latins, females and youth. Otherwise, these groups must either go neglected — and thus their mission suffer — or they must beat the drum for attention as blacks have done. Church leaders must also accept and appreciate the tension between the legitimate demands of bona fide black leaders and the ideal of a household of faith without walls of partition.

This presents two inescapable issues — one particularly the concern of General Conference leadership, the other the special purview of black leadership. The first issue is the church's willingness to bring sanctions against churches, institutions and individuals unresponsive to official policies encouraging integration. Only through the threat of sanctions can the church clearly purge itself of a racist image and state clearly to the world its

convictions about brotherhood and the gospel. But this of itself would still not guarantee

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total community. Cultural barriers would still persist, and largely along racial lines.

The second issue is whether the black clergy will fight for integration or flee. Unfortunately, black leaders have already given their answer. The black union demand is a withdrawal. The words of Paul may be appropriate for black leaders to ponder here:

> Put on all of God's armor so that you will be able to stand safe against all strategies and tricks of Satan.
> For we are not fighting against people made of flesh and blood, but against persons without bodies — the evil rulers of the unseen world,
> Those mighty satanic beings and great evil princes of darkness who rule this world;
> And against huge numbers of wicked spirits in the spirit world.
> So use every piece of God's armor to resist the enemy whenever he attacks,
> And when it is all over, you will still be standing up.
>
> (Eph. 6:11-13, *Living Bible*)

The prayer of our Lord in John 17:21 makes unity the *sine qua non* of the witnessing community. Thus, anything that would destroy or inhibit that unity tarnishes Christian witness. One can appreciate the black leadership's concern for their peculiar witness to the black community. But let them remember that men only plant and water, God gives the increase. Therefore, it is of *primary* importance to remain in His will.

If the present structures are dysfunctional, let the leaders of the church alter those structures or replace them with the view of facilitating the most effective witness by all its members. Concerns about the church's image need not be placed over against black

demands. Those demands can be dealt with specifically without reference to preconceived structures (i.e., black unions) or public relations. The first responsibility of the church's leaders is to be responsive to the Lord. As Hans Küng states:

> The Church cannot face these problems and use these opportunities if it is a prisoner of its own theories and prejudices, its own forms and laws, rather than being a prisoner of its Lord. . . .
> All too easily the church can become a prisoner of the image it has made for itself at one particular period in history.[12]

The church indeed must be functional, but its first function is to be a church — a house belonging to the Lord. Neither structures, hierarchy or black leadership must be allowed to usurp the Lord's work and prerogatives. Adventist brethren, black and white, must prayerfully come together and inquire of the Lord what He would have them do. If this is done and legitimate demands are addressed without bias or emotion, new forms may begin to emerge out of the corporate creative spirit. The following is one possible model that could result from such an approach.

In its report to the General Conference, a subcommittee (Committee No. 3) commissioned to study the case for black unions, March 8, 1977, listed among others the following ten needs which it suggests might be met by the establishing of regional unions. In each case following the need as expressed by Committee #3, I suggest an alternative approach.

Need 1 (I. b. c. d.): to facilitate use of public evangelists on a more extended basis; to share programs of evangelism on interconference level; to supervise, plan and finance evangelism at union level. *Alternative:* since black unions would not abrogate conference sovereignty nor usurp the local conference committee's rights and responsibilities to evangelize its own field and allocate its own budgets, and since there is very little evangelism coordinated from the union level presently — even among white conferences — it is not apparent how black unions would overcome local conference autonomy in this area. The best arrangement would be an In-

terconference Evangelism Council which would meet periodically to explore and develop plans, discuss personnel and budget problems, and make year-by-year recommendations to be referred back to the local conference executive committee. This council could be comprised of local ministerial secretaries and such pastor-evangelists and administrators as might be assigned or invited. Such a council could be established under the present union setup under the coordination of the General Conference Office of Regional Affairs (ORA).

Need 2 (III): to provide a natural black presence at Union Presidents' Councils. *Alternative:* the Union Presidents' Council is powerful and important in its influence. But it is essentially an advisory body. Therefore, it would involve no great disruption or compromise to change its shape. In fact, there is nothing in the working policy or actions of the official body or council of the church establishing this group. It is in fact a nonconstituted entity subject to the call of the president of the North American Division, but responsible only to the individual consitituencies represented. It effect is two directional: it allows the voice of the respective unions to be heard in the highest councils of the church, and it also allows those constituences represented direct access to the resources, goods and interests of the world church leadership. The key dimension in this arrangement is representation. With this understanding, there are those segments of black leadership who presently might serve on this council quite naturally:

1) Officers of the Office of Regional Affairs;

2) Union secretaries who in most cases are black;

3) Black conference presidents who, in most cases, represent the black constituencies encompassed within the Union.

In terms of "rank," the black president would be the least likely to fill this role. But the function of the Union Presidents' Council has nothing to do with rank; neither do the interests expressed by black leadership. The key concern is representation. Black presi-

dents are the only group mentioned above who have a constituency to represent. For union secretaries to assume this function would compromise their positions as secretary to all members of the union. The officers of the Office of Regional Affairs should be represented, since they bring a breadth of perspective that even the presidents do not have. But, again, the important concept is that of representation. This is most effective when it is most direct. It is a matter of advise and consent on issues that will affect local conferences most directly. There should be the *constitutional** inclusion of four regional presidents on this council as fully bona fide voting members on a rotating basis (represented conferences would change every two years). A geographical range should be sought. This would include Pacific and

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North Pacific Union Regional Departments as well.

Needs 3 and 4 (IV, II. b.): to provide a natural outlet for developing administrative leadership; to aid in the accommodation of the explosive evangelistic growth; to organize new regional conferences within existing union territories. *Alternative:* most blacks will admit now that they have equalled if not surpassed their white brothers in quality of church and conference administration. Where they seem to lack in expertise is in the area of institutional administration, since they have so few institutions. But I doubt that anyone would advocate multiplying black institutions just to provide training groups for administrators. Although the organizing of new black conferences is good and ought to be done under the present form of organization, blacks still face the challenges of infiltrating existing Adventist in-

*I strongly urge that this group become a constitutional body to serve as an advisory to the president of the North American Division. It is frightening that so powerful a group is so nebulously constituted.

stitutions which in most cases they have helped to build and support, which serve them and their children, and which should employ and involve them to a far greater degree than they do at present. Greater employment could be implemented with firm direct action by the General Conference.

Need 5 (V): to provide machinery for inter-conference exchange of workers. *Alternative:* presently, this exchange is accomplished in a limited and awkward way by phone and casual encounter or semiofficial communications between presidents who work out more-or-less gentlemen's agreements concerning the exchange of workers. This method is frequently followed by white conference leaders also, although they do have a convenient forum, usually once a quarter when they come together for union committee meetings. Black presidents meet together only twice a year. However, the Regional Advisory brings black leaders from all over the country, allowing a wider selection of contacts. Black unions may or may not increase the frequency of these get-togethers which are presently coordinated by the Regional Department.

E xchange of administrative personnel is more difficult. This has caused some embarrassing, if not abominable, situations. A definite need for some coordinating administrative umbrella exists. The most natural vehicle would again be the Regional Department. In these days of modern travel and communication, there is no need for geographic proximity if the central elements remain in touch and responsive to the field. Black unions would have no more administrative authority to "place" an ousted administrator, or call a desired one to the local conference than the Regional Department does now. What might be needed is more administrative authority for the Regional Department to convene black presidents' councils and present accumulated agenda items. In turn, the Regional Department must be upgraded in the General Conference hierarchy to give it greater efficacy and credibility.

Need 6 (VI): to provide white workers the opportunity of working under black leader-

ship. *Alternative:* this need can be accomplished most meaningfully under the present structure. What inhibits integration most are social, economic and cultural factors. To be a real learning experience, whites should begin to work with blacks at the local level under black leadership.

Need 7 (VII): to increase meaningful black participation on decision-making committees (including finances). *Alternative:* it is not clear how black unions would meet this need better or to any greater extent than is possible under our present arrangement.

Need 8 (VIII): to provide black leadership with a deeper sense of belonging. *Alternative:* again, black unions would not necessarily accomplish this faster or more effectively than would pressing for fuller participation in the present structure. If the present black participation in "white" unions continues to be as salutory as it has been, it is not far fetched to expect that there may soon be a black union president, and if one, why not two, or four? No one would want to give up the democratic principle entirely. Through the outstanding evangelism of black pastors, the charismatic presence of black leaders, and a little political orientation of our members, it is not unrealistic to suppose that a black minister could be elected president of a union.

Need 9 (IX): to provide greater union departmental services to the black work. *Alternative:* meeting this need depends to a large extent on the local departmental man. It is doubtful that the departmental man of a black union, being spread over so vast a territory, would be any more available than would the present union man who in many instances is black or has a black associate. In those cases where the white departmental man lacks the sensitivity or expertise to be of any real service to the local field, he is usually bypassed for some other union or General Conference person who can conduct the workshop or speak to the rally as the case may be. More detailed projects are rarely handled by union persons now and would probably not change appreciably under black unions.

Need 10 (XII): to reevaluate the financing of the regional work to meet the inadequacy

of the black income base (the ratio is 49¢ to the dollar). *Alternative:* this need, of course, does not address black unions *per se* but it does raise a very valid point. Reevaluation is indeed in order. New fiscal formulae should be worked out through the proper channels to the mutual satisfaction of all — if this is ever possible.

The primary question the church faces in the black union debate is, "Where (or which way) are we going?" In regard to the church's very nature and charismatic character, it must be asked, "Is she tending toward her own highest ideals or away from them in impotent acquiescence to the molding influences of the society she would judge?" The case for black unions falls on this crucial question. It would unquestionably facilitate the natural tendency toward group exclusivism to an extent inconsistent with the gospel.

W̶hat this paper suggests, is, first, that an alternative approach might be more faithful to the *ideals* set forth by C. M. Kinney: 1) the action should be pleasing to God (moral); 2) should not compromise the church (presumably in the eyes of authorities); 3) should be for the best good of the cause (not hinder evangelism); 4) should be acceptable to black people; and 5) should be accompanied by ongoing dialogue and education in areas of human relations.

Second, what has been presented here is essentially a conciliar model. This is compatible with the findings of a special General Conference committee commissioned in 1972 to study reorganization of present unions. The substance of this committee's findings indicated that there was presently a good bit of duplication of effort and material which could best be eliminated by what the committee called "consolidation of departments and coordination of departmental programs."

Black leaders have proposed two unions. The 20 percent of tithe which would go to those unions might more advantageously go to the Regional Department which could then begin to function with the same degree of financial autonomy as the Temperance or Publishing Departments presently do. This would necessitate another person to act as treasurer. A second might also be added to assist in coordinating departmental councils and projects. Other sources of financing the peculiar functions of this office might be: an annual Regional Evangelism Offering to be taken in all regional churches; and an increased Regional Capital Reversion Fund. Furthermore, the present unions having black conferences should remit an appropriate percentage of their evangelistic fund to the Regional Department or lower their assessment of the regional conferences based on a recognition of the disparity between the economic base of the black and white conferences.

The main effect of the increased coordination and consolidation suggested here would be a more effective proclamation of the gospel, which we, as Adventists, believe will hasten the eschaton. We prayerfully recommend these observations to improve our denominational witness to the consideration of all Adventists in North America, black and white.

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