

## Identity Without Insularity: Lewis Sheafe, Matthew Strachan, and the Threeness of African American Adventists

By Douglas Morgan

A guest preacher occupied the pulpit of the Abyssinian Baptist Church in Harlem, New York for its Sunday evening service on March 30, 1930. Led by the Rev. A. Clayton Powell, Sr., Abyssinian Baptist had become a pillar of Harlem's burgeoning black community, and it was worship at this church, just months later, that would exert a profound impact on a young visiting theologian from Germany, Dietrich Bonhoeffer.<sup>1</sup> The guest preacher on that early Spring Sunday evening, however, would not be around to meet Bonhoeffer. After six years of ministry in the city, Matthew C. Strachan had accepted a new position in Nashville, Tennessee and Powell requested that he preach his final sermon in New York at Abyssinian Baptist. Strachan indeed had already preached his farewell sermon to his own congregation, Harlem No. 2 Seventh-day Adventist church, the day before. However, the homiletic finale at Abyssinian Baptist, with two hundred of his members accompanying him, was fitting for a pastorate that "covered a wide variety of community service," according to a front-page report in the *New York Age*.<sup>2</sup>

Twenty-five years earlier, at the second meeting of its 1904-1905 season, the Bethel Literary and Historical Society in Washington, D.C. heard a lecture on "The Rise and Fall of Nations in the Light of Scripture." The Society, which met in the Metropolitan A.M.E. church, known as the "national cathedral of African Methodism," was "the center of black intellectual life in the capital" from the 1880s to the 1920s.<sup>3</sup> The speaker, Lewis C. Sheafe, pastor of the People's Seventh-day Adventist Church, had become well-known in the city through evangelistic meetings begun in the summer of 1902 that attracted crowds in the thousands, far in excess of the tent's seating capacity.

For Sheafe, it was a return engagement at the Bethel Literary. W.E.B. DuBois and Booker T. Washington had both been among the speakers since Sheafe's earlier appearance, when his topic had been the Christian Sabbath. This time, he "endeavored to trace the prophecies concerning the leading nations of the world," including America and the prophecy showing "how it pretended to stand for liberty and equality, but at the same time pampered oppression." One of the three respondents dismissed his presentation as "obsolete, sixteenth-century theology." Yet if Sheafe did not persuade everyone, he did provoke discussion that "waxed warm and was full of excitement." And his vocal solo, "Asleep in the Deep," rendered with "magnificent basso voice," met with general and enthusiastic approval.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> J. Deotis Roberts, *Bonhoeffer and King: Speaking Truth to Power* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2005), 46-47.

<sup>2</sup> "Elder M.C. Strachan, 2<sup>nd</sup> Seventh Day Adventist Church, Promoted to General Office, Goes to Tennessee," *New York Age* (29 March 1930): 1, 7.

<sup>3</sup> Jacqueline M. Moore, *Leading the Race: The Transformation of the Black Elite in the Nation's Capitol, 1880-1920* (Charlottesville and London: University Press of Virginia, 1999), 66-69.

<sup>4</sup> "Bethel Literary," *Washington Bee* (15 Oct. 1904): 4

In these vignettes we see two Adventist preachers who got the attention of black America's foremost centers of cultural influence – Sheafe in the Washington, D.C. of the early twentieth century and Strachan in New York during the Harlem Renaissance. Might, therefore, the stories of these preachers, virtually unknown today, even among those well-versed in Adventist history, have something to say about Adventism's potential as a healing influence in society?

“One ever feels his twoness, -- an American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder.”<sup>5</sup> For African Americans who embraced Adventism, the matter became more complex than even DuBois imagined. To nation and race they added “remnant” – a radical spiritual identity that added to the dissonance with the American identity already present on account of race. Thus, they added a third unreconciled striving, for even in committing to a faith that demanded an all-encompassing and uncompromising allegiance, they did not deny or disown the American or African sources of their identity.<sup>6</sup>

The struggle with the “unreconciled strivings” of nation and race often had destructive consequences, DuBois wrote, wreaking “sad havoc with the courage and faith and deeds of ten thousand thousand people.” The experience of Sheafe, who ultimately became alienated from the Adventist organization though not from its principle teachings, bears out that danger, with the “Adventist” element deepening the poignancy. Yet Du Bois also held hope (at that point, anyway), that the conflict could ultimately be productive of a higher good, that “that some day on American soil two world-races may give each to each those characteristics both so sadly lack.”<sup>7</sup> The work of Sheafe and Strachan also bears witness to the possibility of directing the multiple tensions of “threeness” toward a redemptive social impact. Despite their obscurity today, both preachers were key figures in establishing the foundations of African American Adventism. They built up urban congregations that combined a powerful sense of distinct Adventist identity and mission with social action on behalf of the marginalized and oppressed. Rather than allowing their religious identity as a “set apart” community insulate them from societal need, they found ways of integrating racial consciousness with the overarching Adventist identity, and thereby turning its influence toward a healing impact on the American society in which they were situated.

After graduating from Wayland Seminary in Washington, D.C. in 1888, Lewis C. Sheafe pastored Baptist congregations in Minnesota and Ohio, garnering acclaim for exceptional eloquence as a pulpit orator.<sup>8</sup> In frequent demand as a speaker for civic occasions, he seems to have surprised his Springfield, Ohio, audience at an Emancipation Day celebration in 1895 with an incendiary rhetorical blast at the nation's

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<sup>5</sup> W.E.B. Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk* (New York: Bantam Books, first published, 1903, Bantam Classic Edition, 1989), 3.

<sup>6</sup> While I am obviously unable to draw on the insights of personal experience, this “threeness” nonetheless seems to me a useful starting point for exploring the historical experience of African American Adventists.

<sup>7</sup> Du Bois, 4, 8.

<sup>8</sup> While some specific references are provided in this essay, those seeking fuller documentation may wish more to my biographical study *Lewis C. Sheafe: Apostle to Black America*, forthcoming from the Review and Herald Publishing Association in 2010.

political order. Despite the critical contributions of 200,000 black soldiers to the cause of saving the Union, he cried,

who of all the dwellers of the land is so abused, scorned, hoodwinked and murdered as the Negro? And he finds no redress from State or Central Government.

Ida B. Wells may knock at the door of the Senate Chamber of these United States, seeking to present her plea for the protection of her people. No one hears or notices her or her pleas.

Pointing to the large American flag draped behind him, the preacher boldly declared that in view of such stark betrayal, Negroes could no longer look to that flag as representing a government that protected *them*.<sup>9</sup>

This radical disillusionment with America for the post-Emancipation betrayal of its black citizens may help explain the rather startling discovery of the “eminent Baptist divine” and fiery civil rights orator, less than a year after his Springfield speech, in the pulpit of Battle Creek Tabernacle, making his debut as a Seventh-day Adventist preacher. In Adventism, Sheafe found not just convincing doctrines but a promising alternative to politics-as-usual for racial advancement.<sup>10</sup>

When he became convinced by “present truth,” Sheafe wrote to Ellen White, “My heart leaped for joy as I thought of the possible help to come to my people through the third angel’s message.”<sup>11</sup> At the General Conference of 1899, Sheafe rose to “heartily indorse” a motion to establish a medical missionary training school in the South. He appealed to the church to live up to its principles, and move forward with a program ideally suited for confronting the poverty, ignorance and disease so prevalent among the ninety percent of “his people” who dwelt in the South with the transforming power of its holistic gospel.

I believe that Seventh-day Adventists have a truth which, if they will let it get a hold of them, can do more in this field to demonstrate the principles of the gospel of Jesus Christ than can any other people. The one thing needful, is that the truth shall get hold of the individuals who profess to know it.<sup>12</sup>

Thus, in Adventism, Lewis Sheafe found both a better hope and more practical help for his people during the very decade – the 1890s – when it became unmistakably clear that America was not going to fulfill its promises to them.<sup>13</sup> Even as it subsumed

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<sup>9</sup> “Rev. Sheafe, Asks a ‘Fair Show and a Free Fight’ For His People,” *Urbana Times-Citizen* (10 Oct. 1895): 5; “Bushnell on Lincoln, The General Replies to an Attack on the Martyr’s Memory,” *Cincinnati Commercial Gazette* (24 Sept. 1895): 1.

<sup>10</sup> “Editorial Notes,” *Review* (21 July 1896): 16. In his study of the Civil War in American memory, historian David W. Blight observes that as lynching and lawlessness directed against blacks increased during the 1890s, “discussions of progress had to share space with outrage over violence” in the presentations of black orators and writers. Ida B. Wells’ hard-hitting exposés of lynching pressed Americans “to swallow hard their sense of innocence.” See *Race and Reunion: The Civil War in American Memory* (Cambridge and London: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2001), 334-37.

<sup>11</sup> Lewis C. Sheafe to Ellen G. White, 25 May 1899, Ellen G. White Estate, Silver Spring, MD.

<sup>12</sup> GCB (16 Feb. 1899): 5.

<sup>13</sup> In the two decades or so following the Civil War, constitutional promises and progressive initiatives had stirred hope of progress toward racial justice, but in the 1890s it all gave way in the “national

racial identity, Adventism seemed to offer a path to its true fulfillment, rather than a demand to abandon or deny it.

Nor did Sheafe simply deride or try to discard American identity. In Washington, D.C., the nation's capital city and center both of black America's elite and its largest urban mass population, Sheafe was at the same time an emphatically Adventist evangelist, preaching the "full message" to large audiences, and a respected figure in the public arena.

On the one hand, his evangelistic success not surprisingly drew opposition from ministers of other denominations. The *Washington Bee*, one of the city's two African American newspapers, observed that "Negro ministers abuse him especially the Baptist but they do not dare to answer his argument, many of them have attempted but failed."<sup>14</sup> One who tried was Francis J. Grimké, for decades pastor of the prestigious Fifteenth Street Presbyterian Church and, according to biographer Mark Perry, "the most influential minister in the city."<sup>15</sup> The Sunday sermon Grimké preached on September 21 1902 refuting the Adventist position on the Sabbath must have brought some reassurance to listeners for, by parishioner demand, he repeated the very same sermon less than two months later.<sup>16</sup>

Yet, just weeks after that, a committee, chaired by Grimké, that also included other leading black ministers, chose Sheafe as, in effect, the clergy representative to speak at a special city-wide fortieth anniversary celebration of the Emancipation Proclamation on January 1, 1903. The *Washington Post*, in giving a rundown of the dignitaries on the program, described Sheafe as "the well-known evangelist," testament in brief to his impact after only six months in the city.<sup>17</sup> The evangelist also spoke for meetings of several social service and civil rights organizations, including a meeting of the D.C. Suffrage League in September, 1903, , which drew critical coverage from the *Post*, which characterized the orations as inflammatory.<sup>18</sup>

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capitulation to racism" described by C. Vann Woodward in *The Strange Career of Jim Crow* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1974).

<sup>14</sup> "A Small Thing," *Washington Bee* (29 Nov. 1902): 1.

<sup>15</sup> *Lift Up Thy Voice: The Grimké Family's Journey from Slaveholders to Civil Rights Leaders* (New York: Viking, 2001).

<sup>16</sup> Then manuscript of Grimké's sermon, "Exodus 20:8," with notations referring to its repetition, is in the Francis J. Grimké Papers; Manuscript Division, Moorland-Spingarn Research Center, Howard University.

<sup>17</sup> "Celebration of Lincoln's Proclamation," *Washington Post* (1 Jan. 1903): 3; "Date of Emancipation," *Washington Evening Star* (2 Jan. 1903): 6. Sheafe was thus included in an impressive line-up of speakers "selected by reason of their familiarity with the history of the epoch" to discuss the "several phases of race progress since the birth of freedom:" P.B.S. Pinchback, the former governor of Louisiana and prominent among the black politicians who attained high office soon after the Civil War ("Fruits of Reconstruction"); Mary Church Terrell, the leading figure among the women activists in Washington's black elite ("Woman's Contribution"); George H. White of North Carolina, the last of the Reconstruction-era black congressmen ("Present Political Perils"); Major Charles R. Douglass, son of Frederick Douglass and veteran of the famed 54<sup>th</sup> Massachusetts regiment ("Emancipation as a Military Necessity"); Armond W. Scott, the successful young attorney ("The Youth and the Hope of the Race"); and Kelly Miller, the prominent Howard University sociologist who combined the roles of academic and activist, addressing the role of education in advancing the race.

<sup>18</sup> "Negro's Status Here, District Suffrage League Appeals to President," *Washington Post* (26 Sept. 1903): 4; "Why Don't the Negroes Stop It?," *Washington Post* (27 Sept. 1903): E6. The Suffrage League was a short-lived organization but significant as part of a stream of events leading to formation of the Niagara Movement and, in turn, formation of the NAACP in 1909; see David Levering Lewis, *W.E.B. Du Bois: Biography of a Race, 1868-1919* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1993), 298-99; Paul D. Nelson, *Frederick*

Meanwhile, his evangelistic preaching, with an appeal transcending race, led to scores of new members, a significant minority of them white people, at the “mixed race” First Church.<sup>19</sup> Sheafe then went on to establish Adventism’s first predominantly black urban church – the People’s Seventh-day Adventist Church – in December, 1903.<sup>20</sup>

All too soon, however, Adventism’s accommodation with racism began wreaking intolerable havoc with Sheafe’s aspirations for it as a vehicle of racial redemption. With large sums of money devoted to building segregated institutions for education and health care in Takoma Park, and nothing more substantive in evidence than imprecise and repeatedly-deferred assurances about eventual parallel institutions for blacks in Washington, Sheafe and the People’s Church declared independence from conference control in 1907 while maintaining their claim on Seventh-day Adventist identity.

At this point that the careers of Sheafe and Matthew Strachan intersected. Educated at both Fisk University and Battle Creek College, Strachan stood at the forefront of an emerging corps of young black preachers in the Southern Union Conference when he accepted the unenviable assignment of raising up a “loyal” black congregation in Washington to counter Sheafe’s independence movement. Cautious and circumspect where Sheafe was confrontational and daring, a “manuscript preacher” who was no match for Sheafe when it came to pulpit charisma, Strachan nonetheless possessed keen political sensibilities and pursued his strategies with methodical persistence.

Strachan differed with Sheafe on how to handle the tensions that arose between the racial and religious sources of identity, following in a general sense the lines recently charted by America’s most influential black leader, Booker T. Washington, with regard to the nation. Strachan made loyalty to the denomination’s teachings and organizational authority a bedrock commitment that would not be shaken by the church’s shortcomings or setbacks in implementing its ideals of racial equality. He accepted segregation as a necessary, if temporary expedient for the church’s work in the South, and took a gradual approach to closing the gap between practice and principle. Yet this in no way diminished the dogged strength with which he pursued that goal, using loyalty as a lever for achieving essentially the same changes as Sheafe demanded.

In Washington, then, Strachan denounced Sheafe for preaching that the problem of the color line had superseded the Sabbath question as “foremost test” of authentic Christianity. By demanding immediate reform of segregationist practices in Adventist institutions as a condition of loyalty, Sheafe, said Strachan, was placing racial interests ahead of the demands of faith, a reversal of the appropriate priority.<sup>21</sup> At the same time, though, Strachan drafted an appeal to denominational leadership that, in unflinching terms, called for an end to the “painful contrast” between resources devoted to

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L. McGhee: *A Life On the Color Line, 1861-1912* (St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 2002), 109-11; Hal Scripps Chase, “‘Honey for Friends, Stings for Enemies,’ William Calvin Chase and *The Washington Bee*, 1882-1921” (Ph.D. diss., University of Pennsylvania, 1973), 251-54.

<sup>19</sup> Douglas Morgan, “‘They Preach a Political Gospel’”: The Prophetic Witness of Washington, D.C.’s Earliest Seventh-day Adventists,” *Spectrum* (Summer 2009), 31-36, includes a brief treatment of the early history of the First Seventh-day Adventist Church in Washington, D.C.

<sup>20</sup> Sheafe’s own narrative of his ministry in Washington, 1902-1905, can be found in “People’s Seventh-day Adventist Church of Washington, D.C.,” *Review and Herald* (24 Aug. 1905): 15-16.

<sup>21</sup> M.C. Strachan to A.G. Daniells, 2 Dec. 1907, Archives of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists (GCA), Silver Spring, MD.

educational and health institutions for relatively-privileged whites, and that devoted to blacks whose needs in these areas was so desperate. This, he declared, would be the price if the denomination wanted to see loyal black membership grow and not feed the appeal of Sheafe's dissident movement.<sup>22</sup>

After a year and a half of labor in Washington, Strachan left a congregation of thirty-two members, which along with Sheafe's larger congregation, was one source of what became the Ephesus Church in Washington, which moved to DuPont Park in the 1960s. And, his appeal to church leadership contributed to the momentum leading to formation of the North American Negro Department at the General Conference session of 1909.<sup>23</sup>

Strachan's call to New York in 1924 came under happier circumstances than the call to Washington in 1907. Adventism thrived along with Harlem as black migration into the city proliferated. The church pastored by J.K. Humphrey grew so large, that a second one – Harlem No. 2 – became desirable. Beginning with eighty, the congregation grew to more than 250 active members during Strachan's six-year tenure, and not long after his departure took the name "Ephesus."<sup>24</sup> In New York, Strachan combined uncompromising presentation of Adventism's distinctive teachings, including rigorous apocalyptic critique of American culture, with broad-ranging social ministry.<sup>25</sup> Unsparring in decrying the deep ills of society, he led his congregation and cooperated with those of other faiths in direct action to heal them.

As a social worker in the courts and chaplain for the black inmates in the Women's Prison on Welfare Island, Strachan brought practical help to those entangled in the consequences of crime, vice and poverty. He served on a New York Urban League committee that developed a multifaceted program for reduction of crime and delinquency among black youth. He was prominent in the leadership of the Clio Welfare and Community Centre, serving as chair of the finance committee.<sup>26</sup> The Girls and Boys Rescue League, which he founded in 1929, was the Harlem No. 2 Church's own initiative in welfare ministry, albeit conducted in conjunction with other churches and public agencies. The league adopted the two-pronged strategy of working with the

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<sup>22</sup> M.C. Strachan to General Conference Brethren, 26 Feb. 1907, General Conference Archives..

<sup>23</sup> Strachan was one of twelve black ministers who, prior to the conference, affixed their signatures to "An Appeal in Behalf of the Work among the Colored People." The appeal called attention to an urgent need for change "that will make for the more systematic and diligent spread of the third angel's Message among the ten million Negroes in this country." The document, dated May 1909, is in the General Conference Archives.

<sup>24</sup> Among the church members was a young graduate of Pacific Union College, Arna Bontemps, teacher and later principal of the Adventist school that thrived during the 1920, Harlem Academy. It would be most interesting to know what Strachan thought of Bontemps' prominence as a literary figure in the Harlem Renaissance, and what Bontemps' thought of Strachan's hard-hitting sermons on the evils of contemporary culture, such as dancing and the newly-popular talking movies. His characterization of the latter as "nurseries of vice," "seminaries of crime," and "vestibules of hell" provided good headline copy for the front page of the *New York Age* (19 February 1927): 1.

<sup>25</sup> Summaries of Strachan's sermons regularly appeared in the *New York Age* and *New York Amsterdam News*, including a series of evangelistic sermons which presented Adventist understandings of apocalyptic prophecy in a straightforward manner. See for example the summary of his exposition of Revelation 12 and 13, in "Harlem 2<sup>nd</sup> S.D.A.," *New York Amsterdam News* (18 Mar. 1925): 10.

<sup>26</sup> "Elder M.C. Strachan, 2<sup>nd</sup> Seventh Day Adventist Church;" "Select Court Worker for Women and Girls," *New York Amsterdam News* (11 Sept 1929): 11; "Clio Centre Notes," *New York Amsterdam News* (19 Feb. 1930): 6.

juvenile courts to “save girls and boys from sentences in the reformatory and workhouse” and to provide an alternative residence with a program better suited for their uplift. Strachan left for his new post in the Southern Union before the home could be established, but he built a strong organizational foundation and made a substantial start in raising funds.<sup>27</sup>

Additionally, Strachan was not only an active participant in but a leader of interdenominational ministerial organizations in Harlem. During the summer of 1929, the Interdenominational Ministers’ Meeting and Harlem League of the Greater New York Federation of Churches called upon Strachan to serve as acting chair of its executive committee. This responsibility thrust Strachan into the thick of the struggle for black equality in political representation. Robert S. Conklin, the Republican party leader for the Twenty-First Assembly district, by then 85% black, had proposed a “dual leadership” plan which would divide the district so that the “Negro element” would have a representative on the County Republican Committee, along with the district’s white representative. Some local black leaders endorsed the plan, but with Strachan in the chair, the executive committee of the Interdenominational Ministers’ Meeting adopted a resolution rejecting the measure as one that “would be most surely misunderstood by the enemies of our race and place us all the more securely under their power.” In view of the black population’s strong majority, the ministers urged that they “take the regular leadership of the district without any division of power.” The direct approach paid off two months later when Lamar Perkins won the Republican nomination for Assembly by a large majority over William Whyman, Conklin’s white designee.<sup>28</sup>

Strachan’s duties as acting chairman that summer also included paying tribute, on behalf of the ministers, to Congressman and mayoral candidate Fiorello H. LaGuardia at a meeting of the Bethel Young People’s Lyceum on July 25, attended by an audience of 600. After LaGuardia “hit right and left at discrimination and racial hatred,” Strachan joined representatives of other civic and professional groups in honoring him as “a champion of the rights of all the people.”<sup>29</sup>

M.C. Strachan was at the zenith of his work in Harlem when he left for Nashville in 1930, leaving to speculation how his social initiatives might have further developed had he stayed longer. However, he had by no means abandoned the public arena. For one thing, he remained prominent in the leadership of the National Interdenominational Ministerial Alliance, serving for several years in the 1930s as one of three national secretaries of the organization which declared as its goal “to aid our Race in its economic, civic, social, and industrial aspirations.”<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> “Churches of Harlem Form Organization to Aid Delinquent Youth,” *New York Age* (10 Aug. 1929): 2. St. James’ Presbyterian Church was one venue for Strachan’s fund-raising efforts for the Rescue League. As with Powell of Abyssinian Baptist, Strachan had a close working relationship with St. James’ distinguished minister, Dr. William Lloyd Imes; see “News of the Churches – St. James’ Church,” *New York Amsterdam News* (24 July 1929): 14.

<sup>28</sup> “Interdenominational Ministers in Strong Resolutions Condemn the Dual Leadership Proposition,” *New York Age* (6 July 1929): 1; “Harlem Voters Swamp Alien Republican Leadership...,” *New York Age* (21 Sept. 1929): 1.

<sup>29</sup> “LaGuardia Talks to Bethel Lyceum,” *New York Amsterdam News* (31 July 1929): 2.

<sup>30</sup> “Fourth Interdenominational Ministers Alliance Ends Meet,” *Chicago Defender* (3 May 1930): 4; “Pastors Report Progress in Good Will Promotion,” *Washington Tribune* (22 March 1929): 4; “Objections Raised to Bishop Ransom’s Church Union,” *Chicago Defender* (18 Aug. 1934): 5.

After moving to Tampa in 1937 for the final assignment of his pastoral career, Strachan became president of the Tampa Negro Voter's League and, from 1940 to 1947, president of the Tampa branch of the NAACP. In his recently-published book *Seventh-day Adventists and the Civil Rights Movement*, Samuel G. London, Jr. describes how the Tampa NAACP, with Strachan at the helm, pursued numerous legal cases to redress racial injustice, including an ultimately unsuccessful attempt to save from the electric chair a young black man beaten by police into confessing the rape of a white woman.<sup>31</sup>

Crowning evidence of the recognition Strachan achieved as a skillful organizer in the struggle for racial justice came in 1943 when, the nation's foremost civil rights leader at that time, A. Philip Randolph, named the 68-year-old preacher to the ten-member national executive committee of the March on Washington movement.<sup>32</sup> Randolph warned President Roosevelt of the descent of 100,000 representatives of the "black masses" on the nation's capital to demand desegregation of the armed forces and equal employment opportunity for blacks in defense industries. When the threat of the march induced FDR to grant the latter demand with Executive Order No. 8022, Randolph agreed to call off the event. It was, said journalist-historian Lerone Bennett, Jr. in 1958, "one of the most brilliant power plays ever executed by a Negro leader, if not the most brilliant."<sup>33</sup>

Adventism's call to take on a new identity as remnant – a prophetic minority by definition radically distinct from the prevailing national identity, did not, as conventional wisdom might lead us to expect, render these two ministers passive about the social ills and injustices of the present age, nor impel them to withdraw into self-absorbed irrelevance. It did not cause them to disassociate from the rich dignity of their racial heritage nor from the race's deep and desperate struggle in the American context. Indeed we see evidence that Adventist ideals about transformation of the whole person inspired them to transformative public action in a new mode. In their best moments, at least, threeness generated healing energy.

It would be dangerously self-delusional to close our eyes to Adventism's own capitulation to racism and other historic patterns that have tended toward a debilitating insularity. It would be sadly self-defeating to close our eyes to the stories of people such as Lewis C. Sheafe and Matthew C. Strachan that point toward a public witness that, *because* it is Adventist – authentic and uncompromising – anticipates and thereby makes more believable the promise of a healing that will one day make the whole world new.

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<sup>31</sup> Samuel G. London, Jr., *Seventh-day Adventists and the Civil Rights Movement* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2009), 102-104.

<sup>32</sup> "March-On-Washington Committee Named," *Chicago Defender* (1 May 1943): 6.

<sup>33</sup> Paula F. Pfeffer, *A Philip Randolph: Pioneer of the Civil Rights Movement* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1990), 47-50. A march on Washington remained a potent tactic for the civil rights movement, both as a threat and then, in 1963, a reality with Randolph still the lead organizer.