

A Thesis Titled
Of Vision and Power:
The Life of Bishop Edgar Amos Love

By
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Submitted as partial fulfillment of the requirements for

The Master of Liberal Studies

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College of Graduate Studies

The University of Toledo

December 2009

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The Methodist Church, founded in 1784, has historically been a paradoxical, often contradictory institution in America. Developed amid the turmoil of an ambivalent nation, the Christian religion was one constantly struggling to reconcile the principles of a theology espousing brotherly love, compassion and truth and the peculiar institutions of the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade and subsequent Jim Crow laws. The Methodist Church itself, despite John Wesley's staunch opposition to the separation of the races, would ultimately find itself segregated into a church within a church—the all-black, cross-regional Central Jurisdiction headed by black bishops and the Methodist Church at-large. Though there is a paucity of scholarly research into his life, Bishop Edgar Amos Love, whose stalwart example of ecclesiastical, civic and human rights leadership began during his undergraduate days at Howard University, would raise the clarion call to integrate what would ultimately become the United Methodist Church in 1968.

The purpose of the present study is to: Examine the social and historical construction, development of Edgar A. Love's leadership potentialities; to assess the policies and practices of the Methodist Church *vis-à-vis* the prevalent racial attitudes between 1784 and 1968; to provide a seminal analysis of historical documents pertaining to the ecclesiastical perspectives and civil and human rights work of Edgar A. Love; and, to elucidate Bishop Edgar A. Love's role in integrating the United Methodist Church and influencing the Civil Rights Movement.

Acknowledgements

The arduous journey from the ignorance and darkness of cognitive wildernesses to the enlightenment of the intellectual Promised Land is one seldom traveled alone. During my sojourn, there were many “Moseses” to whom I am eternally indebted for their guidance, solicitude and insights. With respect to the creation of this manuscript, I am indebted to Mrs. Maria Carrion and the Howard University Office of Records, Boston University School of Theology Library, the Amistad Research Center at Tulane University and the *Baltimore Afro-American* newspaper for providing me with unparalleled access to academic records, meeting notes and transcripts, and essential newspaper articles which enabled me to weave together the story of Edgar Love. I would also be remiss to not acknowledge my indispensable and indefatigable friend and mentor, Dr. Alvin T. Simpson of Alcorn State University for his stalwart and inspiring example of erudition; Dr. Freddy Hill of Dillard University, whose social scientific mind rivals those of Durkheim, Weber and DuBois; and, Drs. Lawrence Anderson-Huang, Todd Michney and Carol Nelson-Burns of the University of Toledo for serving as intermediary between myself and the world of socio-historical research. I must acknowledge and thank my grandmother, Rev. Cassandra Cook-Butler, and great-grandmother, Berneda Judge, and great-aunt Jessie Randall for their unwavering support of my rigorous and ambitious academic agendum. Finally, I must acknowledge Bishop Edgar A. Love, whose credo that “friendship is essential to life” laid the foundation for many social movements within the United States

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Introduction:

He Giveth His Beloved Sleep

Ailing and nearing the end of her own life, the tiny, fair-skinned widow of Edgar Amos Love, Virginia Louise Ross silently wept from the front pew of the massive Sharp Street Memorial United Methodist Church. Her only son, Jon Edgar, sat nearby with his wife, Bunny, and their two children, John Nathan and Virginia. The renowned Morgan State College Chorale filled the quire while the Rev. Richard L. Clifford sat pensively at the cathedra. Members of the Omega Psi Phi Fraternity surrounded the casket, holding hands and singing their fraternal hymn as an ode to their fallen founder. Seated to capacity, some twelve-hundred United Methodist Church ministers and Civil Rights leaders, friends, parishioners, well-wishers and colleagues filed slowly through the nave and crammed into the Mother Church of Black Methodism in Baltimore, Maryland, paying their final respects to the venerable minister, civil and human rights activist and reformer, Bishop Edgar Love. The granite and brick Gothic Revival church, with its sharply pitched tympanum, austere lancet windows and lavish chancel overlooking the casket draped with the American flag and surrounded by flowers provided a most apropos backdrop for the somber occasion.

The service commenced as the Rev. Howard L. Cornish gave a reading of one of Love's favorite poems, Kahlil Gibrain's *The Prophet*. Dr. Richard I. McKinney, Sire Archon of the exclusive black men's professional fraternity, Sigma Pi Phi and a neighbor of Love's in Baltimore's Morgan Park neighborhood, extolled the former United Methodist bishop's "sense of purpose...which made his impact on the world." The Rev. Daniel L. Ridout, Love's former administrative assistant, remarked that Love "was completely honest and true in all things. He was totally devoid of jealousy and littleness. He was a lover of all people." Ridout would go on to advance that he had "known him to lose many hours of sleep trying to do what he thought was best...and to grieve deeply when he couldn't do it. Some never understood; some never knew." The twelve-minute eulogy, given by Bishop John Wesley Lord, merely underscored Love's *raison d'être*, as Lord recalled that Love was "a tower of strength" who "believed in the mission of the church" and who "never sold the church short."¹

Lying in state following the *Missa pro defunctis*, mourners were afforded a final goodbye to their leader, mentor, brother and friend. Love was a man who would be noted as being completely beholden to the uplift of the mass of men. His example would inspire thousands to the furtherance of true Christian ideals of brotherly love and relief. Given last rites befitting royalty in recognition of a lifetime of solicitude, Bishop Edgar Amos Love was interred in the family plot that served as the final place of rest for his mother and father, Psalm 172:2 eternally overlooking the eternally-slumbering *episkopos*.

Interviewed on the eve of his retirement from the episcopacy of the United Methodist Church, Ella Jenkins, beaming with pride, exclaimed to reporters from the

Baltimore Afro-American newspaper that Edgar Amos Love was the small town of Harrisonburg, Virginia's "only claim to fame."² To a large degree, Jenkins was correct; Love had long overshadowed Harrisonburg's reputation as the "breadbasket of the Confederacy," particularly for blacks loathe to recall the divisive Civil War era or its primary source of white discontent, the African slave. Black Harrisonburg was looking for a savior, a shining beacon of hope amid social, political and economic upheaval and uncertainty. And for over seven decades, Edgar Love had been just that; however, many believed the Howard University-trained theologian's June 1964 retirement at seventy-two marked the denouement of a lifetime of seemingly fortuitous circumstances. The reality of the matter, however, was that Love had many more promises to keep and many more miles before he could sleep in pushing for his quest for social justice and equal rights.

Some four years prior to his retirement, speaking at the United Methodist Church's 175th Anniversary in Baltimore, Maryland, the aging bishop had admonished young 30-something ministers against over-involvement in both ecclesiastical and civic affairs, exhorting them from the pulpit of the historic Lovely Lane United Methodist Church to "major in one and minor in the other, and there is no question as to which must be the major field of operation." In a statement that would underscore Love's *magnum opus*, he completed his sermon at the mother church of American Methodism with an aphorism, telling his colleagues that they "may preach a spineless, conforming-to-things-as-they-are sort of Gospel that may not cost you anything. If you do, you may please the people and have a comfortable existence, but you will not have peace of mind." The bishop followed in his signature husky baritone, informing the aspiring ministers that "we have found ourselves so occupied by a multiplicity of varied tasks that we tried to be 'all

things to all men'...[but] the minister must take time to pray, to cultivate his own spiritual life, and prepare to lead his people...he can not lead if he does not know the way." With that solemn credo foremost in his mind, Edgar Love would spend the remainder of his life after his 1964 retirement "looking toward the group outside of our sacred body to whom we owe our assistance" that he might "go out to be [an activist] in relating to those less fortunate" than himself."³

While Edgar Love's major focus was certainly ecclesiastical, he committed himself to many causes during his lengthy tenure as minister, United Methodist bishop and civil and human rights activist. Perhaps he had envisioned a simple retirement in 1964; however, the timbre of a nation in turmoil and transition would not allow a man who had committed himself to a patrician concept of gifted leadership in the African-American community to fade into obscurity. Released from the obligation to travel as a bishop in the Methodist Church, Love's 1964 retirement would have appeared to have been a *fait accompli*—segregation in the United Methodist church, which Love had led the battle against, was but a memory; ten years prior, Thurgood Marshall had successfully argued *Oliver L. Brown et.al. v. the Board of Education of Topeka*; and, subsequently Lyndon B. Johnson had signed into law the Civil Rights Act. Edgar and Virginia Love had quickly ascended the social ladder with memberships in a number of elite social clubs to occupy their time, as well as strong alliances with many of the most prominent old guard families in the city. They also had two grandchildren by their only son, Jon Edgar, on whom to lavish grandparental love and affection. Instead of enjoying a quiet, comfortable retirement, however, Love would devote the remainder of his life to

answering the noble call within a call—ensuring equal rights and access for the poor and voiceless.

The story of Edgar Amos Love is, in effect, the resolution of a question that has perplexed religious scholars from the earliest foundations the Christian church: what is the role of a follower of Christ in a world encumbered by despondency, death, indigence and suffering? Plainly, Love believed that role to be “the ferment of social change and the application of the Christian gospel to the problems of human society.”⁴ To that end, the dual roles Love embraced as minister of the gospel and social reformer is coterminous with that of the umbrella of Christian institutions in the United States known as the “black church,” which was most often equal parts social and ecumenical. The black church, more than any other institution in the United States, served as a place of refuge, democracy, fellowship and freedom for blacks in a society that often denied the marginalized such comforts.

The concept of a black liberation theology—that is, the manner in which African slaves in the United States exegeted Christian scripture and the subsequent articulation of that scripture—traces its provenance to the arrival of African slaves to the United States and their early enculturation of the Christian religion. Black liberation theology applied the methodology and perspectives of liberation to the precepts of the Christian religion by debunking the myth that preferential treatment was given to the powerful by God.⁵ Emancipation provided new opportunities for black clergypersons to apply the principles of liberation to the struggle for the acknowledgement of humanity and full civil rights for blacks. Having been expelled from all-white congregations circa 1862 as a result of local, customary segregation laws in both Northern and Southern states (Jim Crow would not

become federalized until the 1896 *Plessy v. Ferguson* court case), blacks essentially seized what would be an unprecedented opportunity for self-governance and organization bereft of the ecclesiastical institutions which had often promoted the belief in their congenital deviance and inferiority. From the first, the pulpit of the emancipated black slave served as a platform for the perpetuation of a theology of liberation and often became the principal institution in segregated black society.⁶ In keeping with the principles of black liberation theology, black church leaders of every denomination often served the dual purpose of being civic and religious leaders, and of toeing a dangerous line between preaching a gospel acceptable to the white, religious establishment and espousing progressive ideologies that could have run the risk of raising the ire of the dominant society.

The Methodist Episcopal denomination, founded in 1784 by John Wesley, was particularly attractive to blacks due to Wesley's staunch opposition to the "great evil" which was the institution of slavery. The church's first *Book of Discipline*, written in 1785, condemned slavery and made the freeing of slaves within a two-year period *condicio sine qua non* for membership in the denomination. The edict, however, would never be enforced by Methodist bishops and would be repealed within six months after its being written. The Methodist Church would not take a strong position against slavery again until their General Conference of 1858—twelve days prior to Abraham Lincoln's historic "House Divided" speech.⁷ Prior to that time, slavery had been prevalent among practicing Methodists, particularly among those in the antebellum South. Still, Wesley was a vociferous critic of the institution, contending that "liberty is the right of every creature...and no human law can deprive him of that right"⁸ The issues of slavery and

integration would ultimately cause a schism in the Methodist Church, as southern Methodists broke ties with the original church and formed the Methodist Episcopal South church, or the “Southern Methodist” church, at the 1844 General Conference in Louisville, Kentucky. Though many blacks would remain faithful to the Methodist church as the church evolved post-bellum, their involvement in the denomination would be relegated to segregated churches and a palliative ecumenical jurisdiction presided over by black bishops with little authority within the General Conference until the 1960s.

Despite the relative prestige of ministers in black communities during the late 19th and early 20th centuries, a dichotomy developed within the black ecumenical community based upon a growing schism between the black middle and upper classes and black lower classes. Affluent blacks typically affiliated with the Episcopal, Congregational and Presbyterian churches and in small numbers of Catholic churches while the masses often retained memberships in the Pentecostal Baptist and African Methodist Episcopal churches.⁹ A stigma developed, particularly with regard to the Baptist denomination, which typified black ministers as circumlocutionist rabble-rousers with little or no ecclesiastical training more concerned with escaping menial labor than providing true spiritual or social leadership¹⁰. By contrast, black ministers in the Episcopal, Congregational, Presbyterian and Catholic churches appealed to the black bourgeoisie, who perceived them as erudite and better-equipped for ministry. A cold war rages on even in the present day between the formally trained and informally trained black minister for the minds of their congregations.

Born in the parsonage of his father, the Rev. Julius C. Love’s Harrisonburg church, Edgar Love would ultimately become a pathbreaking figure in the United

Methodist Church, a textbook example of a theory gaining widespread acceptance among the black intelligentsia during the early 1900s, that of intellectual and sociologist W.E.B. DuBois' "Talented Tenth." DuBois' *The Souls of Black Folk*, written in 1903, laid the foundation for the cultivation of the "talented few" who would "guide the Mass away from the contamination and death of the Worst."¹¹ Love would early on embrace the Talented Tenth ideal, forming a fraternal organization at Howard University a mere eight years after the publication of *The Souls of Black Folk* designed to galvanize prospective community leaders among the campus' black male students in accordance with its strictures.¹² To combat the stereotype of the country preacher, Love would become, at once charismatic in keeping with the orality of the Methodist tradition, and fecund and subdued in accordance with the strictures demanded of his social class. What was paradoxical, however, was the vast disparity between black bourgeois families like Love's and the black community at-large, a schism that has continued to proliferate over time. In Baltimore, the hub of Edgar Love's political and ecumenical activity, class distinctions were becoming increasingly conspicuous. On the one hand, the Morgan Park area of Baltimore proper was fast becoming the area of choice for Baltimore's black elite, boasting at one time or another homeowners such as Edgar and Virginia Love, W.E.B. and Nina Gomer DuBois, as well as poet Countee Cullen. Chartered in 1917 as a secluded haven for middle-class black families, particularly educators from nearby Morgan College (the sub-division is less known for its affluent black residents as it is the staunch opposition of neighboring white residents—led by the famously macabre poet Edgar Allen Poe—who contended that the neighborhood would drive down their property values), Morgan Park was a triumph of black intellectual and economic achievement.

Conversely, the rise of Morgan Park was vastly overshadowed by the abject poverty experienced by most blacks in Baltimore. The “apparent” reasons for such poverty were startling, according to a 1919 study of poverty in Baltimore conducted by the Alliance of Charitable and Social Agencies. The organization advanced that physical illness, “family troubles, including alimony, desertion, and non-support, marital infidelity, neglected, immoral or incorrigible children,” illegitimate childhood, “abnormal or criminal practices” or “something out of the way in somebody’s mental or moral make-up.”¹³ The vast socio-economic disparity that existed in black Baltimore was but a microcosm of the greater black community, and would become a lynchpin of Edgar Love’s social gospel platform.

Over the course of his lengthy career, Love would become a controversial and polarizing figure in the Methodist church and in the Civil Rights movement. Criticized for being self-aggrandizing in accepting the formation of the United Methodist church’s segregated jurisdiction and attempting to curry favor in order to secure the position of bishop, Love would also come under fire from fellow black ministers in the denomination several times over. Securing the position in 1952, Love became equally well-known for his sharp wit and capacity for tortuosity as he was for his brilliance and dedication to assuaging the deplorable conditions of blacks in the Washington, D.C., Baltimore and Virginia metropolitan area and in the United States. Edgar Love’s personal life would be marked with equal parts triumph and tragedy, characterized by the losses of many of his immediate family members and several high profile positions in the secular world. In the final analysis, Love possessed the unique characteristics of most world leaders: an unyielding internal locus, an exemplary (though not wholly infallible or inscrutable)

sense of moral character, a confidence in one's self and one's mission, a grace under fire and, perhaps most important, the awareness, acceptance and acknowledgement that the *magna opera* must, at times, take precedence over the personal.

Edgar Love's is a story lost to the winds of time, obscured by the better known examples of ecclesiastical and Civil Rights leadership of King, Randolph, Farmer, Wilkins and Young. As an historical figure, Love is best known for his role in the founding of the Omega Psi Phi Fraternity at Howard University in 1911. To marginalize Love's influence on history to the founding of a fraternal organization, however, is an error that history itself must remedy. Though Love's memory as an activist and minister of the gospel has been pushed to the margins of history, his is a story that begs continually to be told.

Chapter One:

The Heart of the Confederacy: Early Life in Virginia and Maryland (1891-1909)

Harrisonburg, Virginia in the early 1890s was a township in transition. Located in what was once the heart of the Confederacy, the citizens of Harrisonburg were alight with scuttlebutt. The neighboring all-colored town of Newtown, established circa 1865 on the site of what was formerly Stephens City when the slaves of the Shenandoah Valley were freed, was reportedly to be annexed into Harrisonburg within the year. While certainly not the hotbed of racial tensions of cities such as Stone Mountain or Jackson, the annexation of an all-colored town presented myriad conundrums for the white citizens of Rockingham County's seat, raising numerous anxieties surrounding black morality, behavior and norms. Would annexation bring integration? Would it bring miscegenation, a crime under Virginia law? Further, the population of Newtown was small, since the Shenandoah Valley had never been established as a center of slave labor or plantation life. As a result, the number of blacks living in the area was reduced significantly post-Emancipation. Very few blacks were tenant farmers or sharecroppers, thus enabling them to live in an independent social and economic world from the white socio-economic paradigm in Harrisonburg. This small, relatively affluent group of blacks was not nearly

as pliant as poor, black southern sharecroppers, presenting new challenges to white Virginians whose concepts of Anglo-Saxon economic, intellectual and social superiority were predicated upon their intimidation and repression of black advancement. Despite the relative prestige of blacks in Newtown and the comparatively relaxed black laws in the state, the 1890s were dangerous times for blacks, when the mere prattle that a black man or woman was inciting insurrection of any type among the colored population could result in penitentiary confinement or worse.¹⁴

Racial disturbances were prevalent in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Incidents of violence by poor whites against well-to-do blacks were not nearly as prevalent, but did occur in areas such as Levy County, Florida in the quiet, self-sufficient black town of Rosewood in January, 1923 when nearby white residents burned and pillaged the town following specious allegations made by a white woman of being raped by a black man; and in Greenwood, Tulsa, Oklahoma, one of the wealthiest and most successful African-American communities in the United States during the early 20th century. Affectionately called “Black Wall Street” by its citizens, Tulsa’s roughly thirty five square blocks were torched and men, women and children were slain by mobs of angry whites in June, 1921 following allegations similar to those made in Rosewood, despite their lack of tangible evidence. At the root of those riots, however, was the economic and social advancement of blacks, debunking the racial stereotypes that blacks were immoral, cognitively inferior and primitive.

Though race relations in Virginia were far more relaxed than in other southern states, the accord between blacks and whites in Harrisonburg and Newtown, as in most states post-bellum, was contingent upon the ability of black citizens to prove themselves

worthy of white recognition through a peculiar system of subservience, docility and obsequious fawning. While interest in literary societies, religion and education was allowed, such interest had to be tempered against the knowledge that blacks were, at least from the vantage point of the dominant society, second class citizens.¹⁵ The lynching of Orion Anderson in nearby Leesburg, Virginia in 1889 served as a chilling reminder for black residents of the tenuous nature of race relations in Virginia. Accusing Anderson of attempted assault on a white woman, a mob captured, beat and murdered the young schoolboy. The startling reality, however, was that Anderson had merely donned a sack on his head and frightened a white friend as they were walking to school.¹⁶ The savage and indiscriminate nature of Anderson's lynching, however, merely underscored the volatile nature of two polarized communities encumbered by racial tensions and sexual fears in post-Reconstruction Virginia.

The proximity of Harrisonburg and Newtown merely underscored the racial tensions brewing underneath the post-bellum armistice between blacks and whites. The Shenandoah Valley was best known for Stonewall Jackson's successful defeat of Union forces in 1862 during the Civil War. In Newtown between 1864 and 1865, federal troops built Camp Russell just north of the town near Bartonville. Suffering from a paucity of resources and a harsh Virginia winter, troops converged on Newtown, dismantling homes, businesses and churches in order to build shelters and provide fire for warmth. Among the destroyed edifices was the African Methodist Episcopal Church, a center of political, social and religious activity in the small, all-black municipality. Under the direction of Robert Orrick, a former slave, Methodist minister and livery stable owner, a new African Methodist Episcopal church was built and named Orrick Chapel in honor of

its benefactor. Orrick's death in 1902 created a void in ecumenical leadership in the Newtown community. By the time Edgar Love was born, his father had already emerged as *de facto* leader of Harrisonburg's black community.

Born in the parsonage of Carter's Methodist Church in Harrisonburg, Virginia on September 10 1891, Edgar Amos Love would be born into a life of considerable prestige and comfort that was virtually unknown to blacks in the United States during the post-bellum era. Born at the turn of the century, Love would benefit not only from the considerable prominence of his family, but also from the *sitz-em-leben* of being one of the first generations of blacks born following the signing of the Emancipation Proclamation in 1863. Further, Love would be born into a distinctive, though relatively invisible, social class of free blacks whose ethnic identity as mulattos afforded them considerable rights and privileges to land ownership and education.

The black middle class in the United States has long existed as a silent minority. This class is not to be confused with black entertainers and singers, who were often regarded as *nouveau riche* by many black bourgeoisie families, and whose poor lineages often excluded them from association with the black upper classes. As early as the 1860s, free blacks had been admitted in small numbers to Oberlin College in Ohio and institutions such as Harvard and Amherst since the late 1800s. In 1860, free blacks numbered roughly one million or 9 percent of the total black population, though the *gens de couleur libre*, or "free people of color" have existed in some capacity since the founding of the United States, particularly in homogeneous communities in cities such as Charleston, South Carolina and New Orleans. In terms of economic capacity, by the onset of the Civil War, free blacks accumulated roughly \$50,000,000 in real and personal

wealth. As a result of their educational and economic attainments, this class increasingly saw itself as being distinct from both whites and enslaved blacks.¹⁷ The relative and significant wealth of the black middle and upper classes was often predicated upon the patronage of the black canaille they often eschewed in order to support their business enterprises, political campaigns and various services. While many in the black bourgeoisie did not openly consort with blacks in the lower class, they often exploited the rather ridiculous concept of a universal or common black experience—one of invisibility, marginalization, trepidation and sorrow—in order to further their own partisan ends. It would not be until the early 20th century that the concept of *gifted leadership* would gain ground in the African-American community among the black bourgeoisie (and even following Du Bois and Crummel’s “Talented Tenth” theory, many in the black bourgeoisie would take up helping professions in order to address the physical, psychological, intellectual, emotional and spiritual well-being of poor blacks, but would continue to segregate themselves socially from poor blacks).

Not much is known of Edgar Love’s formative years. The Love family would have likely lived in Newtown during the city’s annexation circa 1892. Edgar’s father, Julius C. Love, an itinerant minister in the Methodist Episcopal Church, had been educated at the Centenary Biblical Institute of the Methodist Episcopal Church of Baltimore, Maryland, a school established by the Methodist Episcopal Church for the training of black men as ministers and teachers, and had graduated around 1880.¹⁸ His father, Henderson Love, had also been a minister of a Methodist Episcopal congregation in Draper’s Valley, Virginia when Julius Love was born in 1852. It was in Baltimore that Julius met the headstrong and determined Susie H. Carr of Lynchburg, Virginia while the

two were studying at Centenary Biblical Institute. Coming from a family of modest means, Carr held the distinction of being both one of the Institute's first female students in 1874, as well as the first woman to graduate from Centenary Biblical Institute in 1878. The couple wed in 1881 and moved to Leesburg, Virginia, where Julius held the prestigious position as minister at Mt. Zion United Methodist Church in Loudon County. Their eldest male son, George, would be born in 1884, followed by Julius Henderson Love, who was born in Waterbury, Maryland in 1885.¹⁹ William Albert Love was born to the couple in 1888. The final of their children, John Wesley Love was born in Lewisburg, West Virginia in 1894. Julius C. Love would be awarded a diploma from Howard University's Theological School in 1900, creating a family legacy that would significantly influence the stringent educational aspirations of his progeny, attending the institution along with he and Susie Carr's eldest daughter, Catherine.

The Love family would move several times between 1888 and the birth of Edgar in 1891. Julius C. Love was an erudite and austere man who firmly believed in discipline and routine. A doting, but diligent mother whose calendar of professional speaking engagements rivaled her husband's, Susie Love held high ambitions for her children as were coterminous with those she had for herself. The Love household was one "highly revered by the community because of the vigorous Christian leadership of the parents," which set an early example of the social gospel Edgar would later espouse.²⁰

Academically, the Love children would benefit immensely from the 1902 Virginia law making education compulsory for all children at the discretion of the General Assembly, albeit in schools segregated by race. Described as "peripatetic," the Love children would likely have been educated in a number of different schools as their father moved from

city to city to assume various ministerial positions. Educated in the public schools of both Virginia and Maryland, Edgar and Julius Henderson showed a particular intellectual fecundity, earning them prestigious and coveted positions at the Normal and Industrial Academy of Morgan College, a private, college preparatory school in suburban Baltimore that sprawled on eighty-five acres, accepted a mere two-hundred students at a tuition rate of \$1,100 per pupil, and offered extensive courses in Latin, German, Greek, chemistry, physics, algebra, logic and elocution.²¹

Edgar and Julius entered the Normal and Industrial Academy of Morgan College during a time of great national debate over the resolution of the country's "Negro problem" following emancipation. As it became clear to whites in the South that the institution of slavery was not to re-emerge both Republican and Democratic leaders, as well as educators and "race men" began to ponder the best means of dealing with the issues surrounding the country's perpetual problem. The economic climate of the United States shifted away from agrarianism and toward industrialism, rendering slave labor obsolete. Such a shift left tens of millions of freedmen without skills, academic training or a means of economic independence other than the sharecropping system. Booker Washington, widely regarded as the *de facto* leader of the colored race, increased his public profile with the 1901 publication of his autobiography *Up From Slavery*. Washington would be invited to the White House in October of that year to meet with President Theodore Roosevelt to discuss Washington's social and pedagogic ideologies, which were becoming increasingly controversial among African-Americans. In September 1895, Washington had been catapulted to national acclaim with his speech to that year's Cotton States and International Exposition in Atlanta wherein he publicly

accepted disfranchisement and segregation and advocated a system of education that assented to the congenital intellectual inferiority of blacks while simultaneously advocating for a pedagogy of industrial and trade education. A conservative ideologue, Washington would purport that “the opportunity to earn a dollar in a factory just now is worth infinitely more than to spend a dollar in an opera house.” Having risen from slavery in Virginia to earn an education at the Hampton Normal and Agricultural Institute in Virginia and, ultimately, to president of the Tuskegee Normal and Agricultural Institute in Alabama, Washington had become the select leader for the black race in the United States, enjoying a groundswell of support from the wealthy white establishment for his Hampton/Tuskegee model of education. His ascent was not without consequence, however, as a growing chorus of dissent grew out of the emerging black educated class. In June 1908 at Morgan College’s annual Commencement exercises, Morgan College president J.O. Morgan attacked the Hampton/Tuskegee Model and its progenitor, stating that “we must stand absolutely for the best possible education, and this is what Morgan College stands for. Though there are many who stand for the cheapening or lowering of intellectual training, it can be said to the credit of our trustees that they have stood for the best. I do not believe with those who declare that the race is being overeducated.”²² The Normal and Industrial Academy of Morgan College would be no exception, establishing itself, through a system of rigorous academic and social standards, as one of the foremost college preparatory schools for blacks in the nation, rivaling Washington, D.C.’s much-lauded Preparatory Academy for Colored Youth, the first public high school for blacks in the nation.

Pursuing his coursework with vigor and enthusiasm upon his entrance to Morgan Academy in 1905, Edgar's time at the Normal and Industrial Academy of Morgan College would strengthen the heavy-voiced student's distinctive outspoken and socially conscious personality. Surrounded by young members of the black elite and under the watchful eye of the Academy of Morgan College staff, Edgar would transform from a playful youth to an increasingly independent man. The discipline which would later become trademark for the future Bishop Love would be cultivated by the stringent curricula and high expectations of to the Academy of Morgan College. Though he originally aspired to a career in education, as an homage to his father and grandfather Edgar endeavored to pursue an ecclesiastical calling. Graduating from the Academy of Morgan College in 1909, Edgar won the Baldwin Gold Medal for best declamation for a sermonette titled "Christianity as a National Safeguard."²³ The concept of Christianity being a means of assuaging social imbroglios per Edgar's award-winning declamation would be a harbinger of the social gospel in which he later become enamored.

Edgar Love's choice to attend Howard University merely foreshadowed the emergent leader he would ultimately become. While attendance at nearby James Madison University would have been out of the question given Virginia's stringent Jim Crow laws, the most logical post-secondary option might have been Hampton Normal and Agricultural Institute, the bedrock of Booker Washington and Samuel Chapman Armstrong's Hampton/Tuskegee model. The institution's emphasis on industrial education was often unappealing to the nation's emerging black intelligentsia, however. Love would sojourn to the nation's capitol to attend Howard University in 1909.

Chapter Two:
Inspiring Genius: Howard University (1909-1918)

The freshman class at Howard University in 1909 was the largest in the institution's forty-two year history. Howard University was fast becoming one of the nation's premier institutions of higher learning for blacks. The university's founding in 1867 directly corresponded with the influx of freedmen into Washington, D.C. following Emancipation, and the Missionary Society of the First Congregational Church's response to the education and training of those new Northern arrivals.²⁴ Howard University stressed a stringent academic program that included Greek, Latin, English, logic, foreign language, philosophy and the mental and moral sciences in its *artium baccalaureatus* requirements.²⁵ The university's former president, Dr. John Gordon, had attempted to introduce into the university's curricula industrial education and forced manual labor, but faced the ire of both faculty and students. Following Gordon's announcement of industrial education, a protest was launched by faculty groups and student, who believed such a decision as an affront to both their social positions and cognitive abilities. The Greek and Latin requirements for the A.B. degree would ultimately be removed and manual labor introduced under the Thirkield administration. Thirkield acquiesced to this

system of training in exchange for Booker Washington's position on the Board of Trustees and his assistance in securing funds from Andrew Carnegie for the building of a new library.²⁶

Edgar Love began his coursework on with vigor in the university's fledgling theological department. Designed "for those who desired to consecrate their lives to Christian and missionary work," the theological department was relatively small and obscure, as the university began to place more institutional emphasis on the wide array of professions opening up to blacks, particularly law and medicine. Still, the university's president, Dr. Wilbur Patterson Thirkield was a staunch supporter of the theological department, envisioning an "intelligent and consecrated ministry" for blacks. A year prior to Edgar Love's enrollment at Howard University, Thirkield would write in the manual *Education and National Character* that the "largest hope for the moral and religious life of the Negro is in the pulpit" and that the "preacher is still the center of power."²⁷ Thirkield, a white man who served as president of Howard University from 1906 until he was elected to the bishopric of the Methodist church in 1912, had long been a champion of the education of blacks, having served as the first president of Gammon Theological Seminary between 1883 and 1900 and as general secretary of the Freedmen's Aid and Southern Education Society of the Methodist Episcopal Church. Educated at Ohio Wesleyan University and Boston University, and received his *Doctor of Divinity* from the latter, Thirkield particularly championed the cause of the black theologian. To Howard University, he would bring the belief that "only through a trained, high-souled and consecrated ministry endued [sic] with intelligence and power can the young people of the present generation be drawn and saved to the church."²⁸

Despite Wilbur Thirkield's interest in the theological department, Dr. Isaac Clark, who served as the dean of the School of Religion from 1901-1916, in an address at the Inauguration of the Reverend John Gordon as president of Howard University in 1904, would state that the theological department was "first in the thoughts of the [Howard University] founders," but "last in formal organization." As a result, the department suffered from a paucity of resources and lack of interest from university leaders. Further, he stated from the pulpit of the Andrew Rankin Memorial Chapel, "let it be confessed that the Department has not stood for highest scholarship and this of necessity, for, as a rule, those who have come to the Department have come without the scholarship which a college course might give them—many of them without the attainments of a preparatory course. So coming in they could not go out accomplished scholars."²⁹ With the arrival of the 1909 class, however, a paradigm shift was occurring with respect to the scholarly preparation of incoming freshman. While incoming classes prior to 1909 had often been comprised of freedmen with little intellectual training, forty four years had passed since Emancipation freed black slaves and forty two years since Howard University had been founded. Ten classes had since matriculated from the fledgling university and a class of second-generation college students (Edgar Love among them) was entering its hallowed halls. Though the theological department would remain comparatively small, the arrival of highly-skilled pupils with preparatory school backgrounds infused the Howard theological community with new and much-needed vigor.

In a sense, Edgar Love came alive at Howard University, ingratiating himself into the campus community, immersing himself in the culture and social life of Washington, D.C. and experiencing a sort of personal *Aufklärung* while a student in the nation's

capitol. Handsome, fair-toned and thin yet of a sturdy build, Love had early become romantically involved with a young sorority woman from a prominent North Carolina family, Edith Young. A consummate athlete, Love was a member of the football team and played croquet in his spare time. His proclivity for logic and public speaking had won him an election as president of the Kappa Sigma Debating Club. As a student, Love performed well in his freshman Bible, French, English, history, trigonometry and physics courses, though his intellectual acumen did not reach its fullest potential until his junior and senior years.

As a tribute to Love's immense popularity, as a freshman student he was nominated class president by fellow student Frank Coleman, sparking a lifelong camaraderie and friendship that would survive for decades. It was later written that Edgar Love and Frank Coleman had been bound by bands of "religion, culture and tradition." Coleman, like Love, came from a well-to-do black family, had graduated from the Preparatory Academy for Colored Youth in Washington, D.C., and had come to Howard University in 1909 to study physics. Edgar Love and Frank Coleman would meet Oscar James Cooper that same year. Though a bright and ambitious young man, Cooper did not descend from a highly reputable or prominent family, like most of the Howard students of the day. Educated in the public schools of Washington, D.C., the precocious young man worked away from home the summer prior to his enrollment at Howard University in order to supplement his parents' financial contributions and defray his educational costs. Cooper was made, due both to his intellectual abilities and tentative financial position, an assistant in a promising young instructor from Dartmouth University's laboratory in that same year. Through Oscar Cooper, Edgar Love and Frank Coleman

also became acquainted with Ernest Just, laying the framework for Just, as one of black America's most promising professionals to mentor them affectionately as the "three musketeers."

Dr. Ernest Everett Just joined the Howard University faculty in 1909 to assist with the school's burgeoning department of biological sciences. Just had graduated with highest honors from Dartmouth in 1907, earning a coveted Phi Beta Kappa key, as the only African-American in his graduating class. Lonely as his tenure at Dartmouth might have been, equally remarkable were Just's academic achievements. Just received honors in botany, history and sociology; special honors in zoology and was one of only five senior Rufus Choate scholars, a distinction for Dartmouth students graduating in the top fifth percentile of their class and named after the Dartmouth alumnus who was widely regarded as one of the greatest trial lawyers of his day.³⁰ Still, the specter of racism loomed hugely over Just's head, which, coupled with his young age, directly contributed to his involvement in many of Howard's extracurricular activities. By all accounts, the charming and refined Just had lived a life of relative loneliness and seclusion while at Dartmouth. At Howard, Just experienced the camaraderie of the university's confraternity of learned, well-bred blacks. While there, Just started a drama club and often spent his social hours with students playing tennis, swimming or attending field trips. When Love, Cooper and Coleman approached Ernest Just and asked him to serve as adviser for a fraternal organization they intended to found, Just quickly accepted. Having been a member of the all-male Philadelphian Club during his days at Kimball Union Academy despite being the only black at the institution, the notion of fraternal camaraderie was particularly attractive to Just, who offered his guidance and undivided assistance to Frank

Coleman, Oscar Cooper and Edgar Love not only in the founding of their fraternal order, but also during their undergraduate careers and beyond.

By the beginning of his junior year at Howard University, Edgar Love was fast becoming one of the most popular young men on the campus. Returning from their summer vacations, Love and Oscar James Cooper, standing atop the steps of the University Building, surveyed the campus' male population. Their professional plans developed and having established themselves as campus leaders, Love and Coleman sought to gain a greater sagacity as to why students attended Howard University, reasoning that while some came merely because of parental decision and others in order to find mates, the lion's share came out of a feeling of obligation to their respective communities and a need to be trained for service to those communities. Committed to social justice in much the same way, Edgar Love began to envision a fraternal organization committed to social justice. For more than a year, Love had studied the campus' already-existing fraternity, but had drawn the conclusion that the members of the organization were a "bigoted group who were status conscious." That group, the Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity which was founded in 1906 at Cornell University in Ithaca, New York, was, according to Love, reserved solely for "men who had money to spend, or who had great family backings or even color consciousness." In Love's final analysis, the organization was a divisive, rather than unifying presence on Howard University's campus and "did not represent what... a fraternity ought to represent." Instead, Love conceptualized an organization that was not "a status club, but a fraternity; a brotherhood of high minded, serious thinking, noble living men; leaders, not followers, makers and molders of opinion."³¹ Though Love possessed all of the unique traits that often

characterized members of Alpha Phi Alpha (his parents were both mulatto members of the emerging black middle class, educated beyond the secondary level and were highly prominent members of the Methodist Episcopal community), his staunch opposition to classism might be attributed to the example of social justice and community activism set forth by his parents during his youth, as well as sympathy for his budding friendship with Oscar Cooper, who hailed from a lower working class family but had proved himself to be a friend to the Love during his first two years at the university.

As thunder boomed and clapped in the distance and lightning lit the autumn sky, Edgar Love, Oscar Cooper and Frank Coleman met surreptitiously in Ernest Just's office in the Science Hall on Friday evening, November 17, 1911 to discuss the matter of founding the first black fraternity at a predominately black institution of higher learning.³² The Omega Psi Phi Fraternity, derived from the Greek letters meaning "friendship is essential to the soul," would be founded that night. Following the organization's founding, Love, Cooper and Coleman scoured the campus seeking men they believed could uphold the newly-founded organization's commitments to scholarship and social uplift. At the second meeting of the fraternity on Thursday, November 23, 1911, Edgar Love was voted the fraternity's Grand Basileus and his two brothers, Julius Henderson and William Albert Love were selected along with eight other Howard University students to comprise the first initiates and charter members into the organization. Their next step would be to submit a formal constitution to Dr. Thirkield and Deans Kelly Miller and George Cook for official faculty approval.

Howard University had been known to possess a lingering and pervasive tradition of censorship; therefore, the vociferous and instantaneous opposition to the founding of

an all-black fraternal order on the university's campus came as little shock to Edgar Love and the Omega Psi Phi fraternity's leadership. What would prove to be the true rift within the lute, however, would be Kelly Miller's objection to the formation of another fraternal organization at Howard University. Miller, who had been initiated into the Alpha Phi Alpha fraternity through the organization's Beta chapter at Howard University, had been the catalyst behind Love's attending Howard University. As dean, Miller exploited his office in order to hinder the growth of the Omega Psi Phi Fraternity and to attempt to persuade Love, Cooper and Coleman to join the Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity and perpetuating the notion that an all-black secret society in Washington, D.C. might be an incubus for impropriety. Wilbur Thirfield, too, was opposed to the formation of a fraternal organization at Howard, for fear that the organization might prove to be radical in its organization and offend the institution's largely white, exceedingly conservative Board of Trustees or that it might engage in illicit activities as a university-sanctioned organization. Despite the high scholastic and civic achievements of the members of Omega Psi Phi, the faculty feared that a secret organization on their campus was untrustworthy. Consequently, the Omega Psi Phi Fraternity's constitution was promptly and peremptorily rejected.

Undeterred, Love and the other members of the organization arose one morning and placed three-and-a-half-by-six inch placards on trees, bulletin boards and on fences announcing the existence of the organization and enumerating its founders and charter members. From the pulpit of the Rankin Memorial Chapel the next morning, Dr. Thirfield rebuked Love and the other members of the organization, declaring to the more than two thousand students and faculty members in attendance that no such organization

existed on Howard University's campus and demanded that the seventeen young men involved in the canvassing effort immediately report to his office at the close of chapel. Rebounding quickly from the embarrassing spectacle, Love called for and was granting an informal meeting with Dr. Thirkield. The recalcitrant university president yet again rebuked Love, Cooper and Coleman for their insubordination, accusing them of insolence and threatening them with suspension or expulsion for their behavior. Resolutely, Love reiterated his position that, contrary to faculty misapprehensions, members of the fraternity ranked among the campus' highest achieving students and were represented in most of the institution's auxiliary organizations. As a concession to Thirkield, Cook and Miller, Love and the fellow founders of the organization agreed that the Omega Psi Phi Fraternity would be subject to disbanding should it, at any time, exhibit immoral tendencies or become involved in illicit affairs. Several adjustments were made to the organization's constitution prior to its acceptance by the university. The organization, however, would benefit more from administrative changes than the softening of institutional department toward secret societies; Wilbur Thirkield left Howard University in June, 1912 to assume a position as bishop in the Methodist Church while Kelley Miller's role within the campus would be greatly reduced. Two years later under the administration of Dr. Stephen Morrell Newman, former pastor of First Congregational Church in Washington, D.C., Howard University withdrew its opposition to the organization's expansion into a national fraternity, and Omega Psi Phi would be granted full incorporation by the United States Congress under the laws governing the District of Columbia on October 28, 1914. Born in Falmouth Maine, Newman was an 1867 graduate of Bowdoin College and an 1871 graduate of Andover Theological Seminary. Prior to the

presidency at Howard University, Newman had held the top posts at Eastern College in Fort Royal, Virginia and Kee Mar College for Women in Hagerstown, Maryland. Aside from a heightened global perspective, Newman was more liberal than Thirkield, which might have also influenced his decision to withdraw institutional opposition to the formation of the Omega Psi Phi Fraternity.

During the 1910-1911 school year Edgar Love's grades suffered, primarily due to his increased involvement in the affairs of Omega Psi Phi and his ongoing feud with the Howard University administration, as well as the greater difficulty of sophomore-level courses in German, French and chemistry. Love excelled, however, in courses such as history and English. Academically, however, he would hit his stride in his senior year. A prolific orator, Love's student record indicates a propensity for both argumentation and public speaking, as Love scored high marks in both subjects. Training under renowned Harvard-educated author and historian Benjamin G. Brawley, Edgar Love perfected what would later be described as a "simple but effective" speaking style that would become his trademark.³³ Love also took his first Bible Literature course in his senior year, a precursor to his post-baccalaureate work in divinity. Love fulfilled the requirements for the *artium baccalaureatus* degree on June 4, 1913, graduating with honors from the institution. Ordained a minister in the Methodist Episcopal church in 1915, Love also pursued and obtained a Bachelor of Divinity from Howard University in 1916, one of only seven students to graduate from the School of Theology in that year.³⁴

Though Love had shown a particular propensity for leadership and organization, he became increasingly outspoken and militant in *toto caello* opposition to the quiet, conservative Congregational environment at Howard. Sometimes known for his sharp

tongue, Love utilized Omega Psi Phi as the conduit through which his concept of *noblesse oblige* could be brought into fruition. Love would often be quoted saying, with respect to the organization's membership, that "there is a place for mediocrity in our society, but not in Omega." While the Omega Psi Phi Fraternity was certainly an *elite* organization, featuring many of Howard University's most prominent students on its membership roster, it was not *elitist* in its infrastructure in that it accepted members whose families were first generation college students or who hailed from lower class backgrounds. In its mission, however, was deeply rooted in the concept of a black gifted class. From the first, the men of the Omega Psi Phi Fraternity committed themselves to the scriptural edict that "unto whomsoever much has been given, of him shall much be required." While predominately black fraternal orders founded at other institutions were primarily social orders, the Omega Psi Phi Fraternity involved itself in the fight for social justice early in its organization. Though the concept of a black intellectual class might, by contemporary standards, seem patrician, it is important to note several important factors that made such a philosophy pragmatic for black leadership during the early 1900s. First, the concept of a talented few, as envisioned most famously and most cogently by sociologist Dr. W.E.B. DuBois (and, ultimately, by Edgar Love) was neither seminal to DuBois, nor fatuous. The Darwinian principle of the survival of the fittest, widely accepted by the scientific community at the turn of the century, would be adapted by Episcopal priest Alexander Crummel and re-interpreted to include the duty of the educated black elite to preach, teach and lead the mass of black people into monogamy, cleanliness and thrift.³⁵ Second, the propitiation of a "guiding hundredth" ideology was the means through which the black intelligentsia combated the popular misapprehensions

about black life that stereotyped blacks as licentious, morally bankrupt, spiritually ill and cognitively deficient *vis-à-vis* whites. In that respect, Love was merely a product of his time and had been indoctrinated into one of the most prevalent schools of thought of the era. The rift within the lute of the Crummel and DuBois theories would be pointed out by DuBois himself, who advanced that, in addition to an education befitting intelligent leadership, it was *condicio sine qua non* that they possess “willingness to work and make sacrifice” in order to address what period nomenclature commonly termed the “Negro problem.”³⁶ It appears both in his professional life and the early organization of the Omega Psi Phi fraternity, that Edgar Love was acutely aware of the degree of moral rectitude and commitment to racial uplift one in the black intelligentsia must possess. Love would advance that members of Omega must be men “of sterling worth, with unsullied character” with “perseverance, which is that attribute of character which holds one steadfast to a purpose or to a cause” and the rectitude “to lend himself to the coexistence of his fellow men.”³⁷ The relative affluence of early members of the fraternity, counting prominent educators, physicians, lawyers and others in the professions among its ranks, merely underscored the intellectual capacity of black intelligent leadership, not necessarily their commitments to work and sacrifice. In effect, DuBois, Love and the early members of Omega Psi Phi lived lives unencumbered by the onerous constraints of being both *black* and *poor* in the United States. As a result, their peculiar interpretations of the American Dream and approaches to racial uplift were rooted in a sense of optimism that would be lost on future generations of race leaders. Those interpretations, however, were not chimerical by any standard; they merely failed to adequately address issues of moral fabric with respect to intelligent leadership and the

visceral reactions the perceived social caste system would inadvertently produce within both the upper, middle and lower classes in the black community.

The growth of the Omega Psi Phi Fraternity was, in its early years, snail's-paced as Love and the organization's Supreme Council refused to allow the formation of chapters at predominately white institutions whereby organization would necessitate induction of all or most of the institution's black students (a direct contradiction of Love's own, unique theories of a meritorious black leadership class).³⁸ Until 1915, the Omega Psi Phi Fraternity existed only at Howard University and at Lincoln University in Pennsylvania. As Love transitioned to Boston University for post-baccalaureate studies, a chapter was allowed for students in Boston, Massachusetts.

While Edgar Love's theological training at Howard University had suffered due to the oversight of the institution's founders, at Boston University he encountered a rigorous academic program in sacred theology that greatly challenged his conventional ecumenical wisdom. Boston University was an epicenter of liberal religious ideologies during the early 1900s under the deanship of Dr. Laress J. Birney. Boston University's School of Theology was pioneering in several respects, particularly as the oldest theological seminary of American Methodism in the United States, as well as for having admitted both blacks and women to all degree programs from its beginnings. Boston University's curriculum, in contrast to Howard University, focused on scholarly pursuits and recruited many of the nation's most promising young theologians. As lectures began on September 21st, 1916, Love found himself surrounded by some of the greatest academic minds in the theological world, studying with a veritable pantheon of theological geniuses, including *Paradise Found* author William F. Warren, missionary

Harlan Page Beach and Albert C. Knudson, a foremost theorist in the school of thought that came to be known as Boston personalism. Love's philosophical beliefs were informed by Albert Knudson and the Boston personalist ethos as Knudson taught courses in Old Testament Theology, Prophetic Literature and Beginning Hebrew.³⁹

Albert Knudson's philosophical ideologies both informed and, in a sense, dominated his theology. Despite his inclinations toward the empirical, Knudson still believed that the fundamental source of theological authority was the "human mind quickened by the divine spirit." Knudson perceived personalism to be the intellectual foundation of Christian theology and eschewed a belief in divine revelation as self-authenticating. Positing that the person was the ontological absolute, Boston personalism taught an ideology that man was the anthropomorphic "clue" to reality with God and that God was the ideal personality to which man should aspire. The core tenet of Boston personalism emerges in Love's statement that man was created by God "as the highest expression of His creation" and should be "the embodiment of the ideals and purposes of God."⁴⁰ Further, personalism espoused a belief in the inherent dignity and equality of all humankind, which was particularly attractive to Love and laid the framework for the ideology that would later become black liberation theology. That theology would be inculcated by Love, as evinced by a sermon to the African Methodist Episcopal Preacher's Meeting in 1928, in which Love emphasized, in forceful terms, that God "seeks not sacrifices and tithes such as a ritual might demand, but...seeks also relief and aid for the poor and oppressed."⁴¹ Love's theological training at Boston University, augmented by Knudsonian Boston personalism, would develop within the young student a radical philosophy that combined elements of the social gospel, philosophical theology

and universalism. Much like theologian, former Morgan College and Howard University instructor and *Voice of the Negro* editor John Wesley Edward Bowen, widely regarded as the first African American personalist, Love adapted the Boston personalist ideology to address social justice issues in the black community and Christianity as a means of assuaging social tensions.

Little has been said thus far of Edgar Love as a theologian, and this of necessity, for Edgar Love's primary life's work involved ecclesiastical and human rights leadership as opposed to expository theological writing. Though Knudsonian personalism would ultimately inform those dual roles, Love's scholarly writings were primarily concerned with the theology of black liberation (a theme that would recur in Love's writing). A closer analysis of Edgar Love's bachelor of sacred theology senior thesis, aptly titled "Messianism Up to and Including the Time of Christ," however, proves that that Love's was a deeply incisive and astute theological mind. The selected topic itself was one that challenged conventional religious dogma and perhaps Love's privately-held beliefs, as well.

In his thesis, Love traces the development of the concept of Messianism throughout Judeo-Christian history. Love defends the Christian principle of Jesus-as-Messiah, though the study is not meant to be an example of Christology. Neither is Love's thesis a study in the religious doctrine of salvation. Love observed that the concept of a Messiah was not universal, even in Toraic literature. Rather, he found that Messianism a matter of prophetic interpretation and relative to the experiences of the prophets, and outlined the ubiquitous meaning of the term "Messiah" in Judeo-Christian literature (beginning as a conception of a military leader who would create a Jewish

theocratic state, then evolving into a conception of a preternatural, god-like individual whose death would usher in the coming of the otherworldly New Jerusalem).

Love's theology is elucidated by his eschewing of apocalyptic texts, particularly those of New Testament origin. Love cites the enculturation of Greek literary styles as the basis for this contention, reasoning that the marriage of "the Greek spirit of art, which on Greek soil found expression in sculpture and skillful decoration" and the "passionate word painting" of Hebrew prophets due to Antiochus Epiphanes' forced Greek naturalism resulted from "the political degradation and consequent misery of the nation in the times immediately succeeding Alexander," which resulted in the New Testament eschatological tradition. "As religious literature, however," Love writes, "it is very inferior to the prophetic. Nevertheless, it is an important source of Messianic hope." That hope, at least for the Jews of antiquity, was inextricably linked to the Jewish identity and a form of jingoism whereby the Messiah's salvific qualities were reserved solely for the Jews. Having been enslaved in Egypt and expelled from the prophesied Promised Land, the Jewish prophetic tradition foretold a Messiah as the fulfillment of a Jewish theocratic state. This conception of the Messiah, according to Love, contradicted the Christian premise of a "personal Messiah" whose presence brought spiritual freedom amid physical bondage. As a matter of fact, the Jewish tradition espoused the binary opposite: a Messiah who would bring physical freedom from physical *and* spiritual bondage. The concept of a personal Messiah was coincident with the persecution of the early Christians. Though Love's thesis cast aspersions on both Jewish and Christian dogma, he concludes that:

The hope of the coming of God's Kingdom is still alive in us; it is yet regarded as 'the one divine far off event towards which the whole creation moves.' Our idea as to what the Kingdom is to be differs from the idea of the devout in Jesus' day. It is a term which today carries with it tremendous social implications and the promise of deliverance from social ills. But we still believe in the Kingdom as of God and we still pray "Thy Kingdom come."⁴²

Love's concluding statement is important in defining his personal beliefs. Love would draw the ire of the Baltimore religious community 13 years later when he eschewed a belief in hell as a literal place, showcasing his break with the conventional Christian wisdom regarding the Apocalypse. The concept of the coming of a Messiah as marking a period of deliverance from "social ills," then, forecast the Boston University graduate student's evolving world view. Love never delves into the divinity of Jesus in his master's thesis; such was neither the primary goal of his thesis, nor the purpose of his life. Much like the concepts of Messianism were interpreted based upon the cultural outlook of Jews in exile and Jews under Greco-Roman influence, so was Edgar Love's incisive analysis of the evolution of Messianic theology informed by and very much a soliloquy of the peculiar life of a "Negro" in America. As such, Love felt it necessary to not "remove this Messianic element from the history of the career of Jesus, as he believed it "impossible to understand much of what He said and did without it."⁴³ As noted, however, Love is careful not to discuss the *divinity* of Jesus; rather, he establishes the Messiah as varying in nature in accordance with religious interpretation. While he posits that "Christianity has eternal worth apart from its Jewish factors," he readily admits that "if He had been born a Greek Jesus would not have thought of Himself as the Messiah

but being born a Jew it was inevitable that He should...He would not have set His teaching within the framework of Jewish messianism, but being born a Jew, it was inevitable that He should.”⁴⁴ It becomes increasingly clear that Edgar Love’s ideation about Jesus is that he was, above all, one who interpreted the office of Messiah as one in which its benefactor must, foremost, impart hope to those individuals on the fringes of society. Of particular note is the fact that Love observes that, according to Christian literature, Jesus was not always aware that he was a/the Messiah, but that it occurred at an epiphanical moment during which it was “borne in upon Him by the logic of events [of his life] and by the fact that the Messianic category better than any other expressed the purpose of His mission and the content of His personality.”⁴⁵ Love’s conception of Jesus as Messiah is of utmost importance because it parallels his own life and, perhaps, self-concept. What emerges at this period of Edgar Love’s life is his own unique approach to spirituality—one which sought to emulate Jesus Himself.⁴⁶

Love completed the requirements for the Bachelor of Sacred Theology degree from Boston University in 1918 and was immediately hired as pastor of Mount Washington United Methodist Church in Baltimore, Maryland. The *fait accompli* of completing a degree from one of the nation’s preeminent theological schools and assuming a choice ministerial position within the Methodist church would be short-lived, however, as the ominous and very immediate threat of the Triple Alliance and the deadly offensives being waged during the War to End All Wars would ultimately render the United States’ policy of isolationism moot amid growing global tensions, and would engross an African-American community eager to prove both their patriotism and their humanity by fighting against the Kaiser.

Chapter Three: Isolation and Inspiration: World War I

The sinking of the Lusitania by a German U-Boat in 1915 saw Edgar Love completing his final year at Howard University. As the war between the Triple Alliance and Triple Entente became one of the bloodiest in military history, President Woodrow Wilson maintained that “America is too proud to fight” and remained neutral against both superpowers. The sinking of seven United States merchant ships on 6 April, 1917 proved to be the catalyst which prompted Wilson to call for war on Germany. By the summer of 1918, the United States was sending ten thousand soldiers per day to France and had entered the war under the slogans “Making the World Safe for Democracy,” “Together, We Win,” and “For Home and Country.” Not to be outdone, the Triple Alliance embarked upon their own propaganda campaigns. Believing that oppressed peoples in India, Ireland and the United States would become insurgent against their governments, operatives from the Triple Alliance infiltrated each country, promising, in the case of blacks, statehood within the contiguous United States, freedom from oppression by whites and permission to organize their own kingdom.⁴⁷ The Fuhrer Publicity Bureau in New York, which controlled German World War I propaganda, was especially active in

its attempts to sway black public opinion toward sympathy with and even support of the Germany war efforts. Their propaganda campaign asserted that the color line in Germany was non-existent, and, should Germany prove victorious in the war, an egalitarian society would emerge in which blacks and whites would be equal. In addition, German propagandists purported that black troops were inadvertently placed in the first line trenches in France and used as shock troops (a charge which would ultimately prove to be true), which was intended to incite rage within blacks and stem the tide of blacks enlisting in the United States military.⁴⁸ Though the German propaganda campaign struck a discordant note within many blacks, the promise of a truly democratic society within the United States rang more strongly and was particularly attractive for black citizens encumbered by separate-but-equal policies, disenfranchisement and subjugation. While Woodrow Wilson told the world that “the future belongs to those who prove themselves the true friends of mankind” with respect to the Triple Alliance, blacks attempting to enlist in the United States military were precluded from doing so as the War Department set “colored quotas” for black volunteers, vitiating any future that included social and political equality for blacks. Attitudes toward blacks in the military during World War I were congruent with those prevalent in the United States, as blacks were relegated to working in the mess halls of the United States military due to the belief that they were “deficient in moral fiber and force of character, rendering them unfit as officers and leaders of men.”⁴⁹

Mounting pressure from political organizations such as the NAACP caused the United States government to create an officer candidate school open only to black college graduates. Only one thousand officers would be trained under the program. Believing

fighting in World War I abroad would aid in making blacks “the recipient of Democratic procedures here in his own nation,” Edgar Love was one of several Howard University students instrumental in the formation of the Central Committee of Negro College Men, an organization which petitioned the United States government for their eligibility to enlist in the war. Love, along with fellow Howard University alumni and Omega Psi Phi fraternity members George E. Brice, William Stuart Nelson, Campbell C. Johnson, Jesse S. Heslip and William I. Barnes demanded and were granted an audience with Woodrow Wilson, as they believed the War Department was making no serious effort to train blacks for the war (though Love, away in Boston, would not attend the conference). So impassioned and persuasive were the young students’ arguments that Wilson concluded the conference with a promise, saying: “Gentlemen, I do not know where the camp will be. I do not know when it will be established, but I promise you that it will be established.”⁵⁰ Howard University had wanted to host the federal government’s officer candidate camp, with school administrators going as far as to transform the campus into a makeshift military campus which took on “the aspect of war.” Government officials, however, believed the black cadets would be incapable of completing the training program and that the obstinate East Coast press would descend on the story, embarrassing the federal government. As a result, Wilson informed George W. Cook, secretary of Howard University, that the officer’s training camp would be established at Fort Des Moines with qualifying examinations given at Howard University.⁵¹ Fort Des Moines was an isolated and secluded location on four hundred acres in Des Moines, Iowa far away from the scrutinizing eyes and ears of the press. Built in 1901 and opened in 1903, Fort Des Moines had housed several infantries since being built, but had become

available when the horse soldiers had left in 1916 for duty along the Mexican border. Fort Des Moines would be the perfect backdrop for the officer's candidate training program.

The establishment of the Fort Des Moines camp was not without consequence, however. Even some in the black community disagreed with a segregated training facility for blacks, and considered participation in the training program to be an imprecation that would diminish pre-existing civil rights work. Going to task immediately following the establishment of the officer's training camp, the Central Committee of Negro College Men created a propaganda machine through which they defended their cause, placing flyers and placards around the Howard University campus, writing of the urgency of black involvement in World War I:

Some few people have opposed the camp as a 'Jim Crow' camp; they say we are sacrificing principle for policy. Let them talk. This camp is no more 'Jim Crow' than our newspapers, our churches, our schools. In fact, it is less 'Jim Crow' than our other institutions, for here the Government has assured us of exactly the same recognition, treatment, instruction and pay as men in any other camp get...Our great task is to meet the challenge hurled at our race...Let us not mince matters; the race is on trial. It needs every one of its red-blooded, sober minded men.

Doctors, lawyers, teachers, business men, and all men who have graduated from high school. Let the college student and graduate come and demonstrate by their presence the principles of virtue and courage learned in the academic halls. Up brother, our race is calling.⁵²

Though the Baltimore *Afro-American* and Chicago *Defender* newspapers would come out swinging against a segregated training camp, the zeal that Edgar Love and the other

young men comprising the Central Committee of Negro College Men possessed was buttressed by many of the most prominent leaders of the day, including the renowned military leader Colonel Charles Denton Young, NAACP president Joel Spingarn and the preeminent black scholar of the day, W.E.B. DuBois. DuBois, a staunch integrationist, ardently defended the logic of the Fort Des Moines camp when he wrote in the April 1917 edition of *The Crisis*, that “We continually submit to segregated schools, ‘Jim Crow’ cars and isolation because it would be suicide to go uneducated, stay at home, and live in the ‘tenderloin.’”⁵³

In May 1917, the first black officer candidates arrived at Fort Des Moines. The elite of the elite of black society arrived from Howard, Tuskegee, Harvard and Yale Universities joined by two hundred fifty black sergeants from the 9th and 10th Cavalries and 24th and 25th Infantries, the only four black regiments maintained by the U.S. Army after the Civil War.⁵⁴ At twenty-five years old, Edgar Love enlisted in the United States military on 5 June, 1917 along with his brother, John Wesley Love.⁵⁵ The Love brothers would be joined at Fort Des Moines by their long-time friend Frank Coleman, with whom Edgar had co-founded the Omega Psi Phi Fraternity during their undergraduate days at Howard University; fraternity members Jesse Heslip, Colonel Charles D. Young and William Nelson; and Elder Watson Diggs of Indiana University, who had been a member of the Kappa Sigma Debating Club at Howard University while Edgar was president of the organization from 1909-1910. Though many believed that Young, a West Point graduate and former Wilberforce University professor of tactics and military science, would be placed in command of the candidates at Fort Des Moines, he had been forcibly retired by government officials due to supposed hypertension (though Young, who had

been inducted *honoris causa* into the Omega Psi Phi Fraternity in 1912, would travel on horseback and on foot from his National Guard command in Chillicothe, Ohio to Washington, D.C. in order to silence his critics and prove himself fit for battle). In his stead, Lieutenant Colonel Charles C. Ballou, a white officer, was assigned commander of the 368th Infantry.

Though Love, the NAACP, the members of Omega Psi Phi and the Central Committee of Negro College Men believed fighting against oppression in World War I would secure equal rights for blacks in the United States, the admission of blacks to the military as captains and lieutenants was merely a pretension of equality. All-black regiments were often poorly trained in comparison to white troops and were routinely discriminated against both professionally and socially. At Fort Dix, for example, artillery and machine gun training had been overlooked, as white officers believed blacks to be incapable of mastering such armaments. The training camp at Fort Des Moines would prove to be infinitely better-equipped than most all-black camps; however, their level of military skill would be seriously impeded by racial attitudes toward blacks. General Ballou attempted to stand in the balance between the troops of the 368th Infantry and white military personnel, as well as white Iowans; however, his efforts would be largely gestural. Other all-black regiments had been met with extreme derision by white citizens, particularly the regiment at Camp Dodge, who regularly faced discrimination and were often illiterate and paid in government scrip. While the Fort Des Moines regiment was better-received by white citizens due to their literacy and remuneration in gold coin, following racial incidents in Texas and Illinois, Ballou immediately organized the “White Sparrow Patriotic Ceremony” at Drake University’s stadium as a sort of *mea culpa* in

1917, drawing a crowd of nearly 10,000 spectators as black cadets marched and sang Negro spirituals. Though the general consensus was that Ballou meant well, his vigilance against racial incidents was often accomplished by way of the cudgel, as evinced by his confinement of the men of the 92nd Division to their camp due to their insistence on attending a whites-only movie theater in Des Moines, stating that “the greater wrong” was to do “anything, no matter how legally correct, that will provoke race animosity.”⁵⁶

On October 15, 1917, the Fort Des Moines Camp closed. After ninety days of rigorous technical and physical training, six hundred thirty-eight captains and lieutenants received their commissions and were dispatched for basic training. Edgar and John Wesley Love were commissioned as first lieutenants and dispatched to Camp Meade in Maryland and Camp Diggs in New Jersey.⁵⁷ Camp Meade was nearly as large as the city of Baltimore itself, comprising about 30,000 acres. The soldiers, clad in khaki hats, hobnails and overalls (their regular army uniforms would not arrive for quite some time) often spent their free time playing basketball, lounging around the quarters and pitching horseshoes. Rising each morning at 6:15 a.m., Edgar Love was assigned to the machine gun squad.⁵⁸ For Love, whose *raison d'être* was fast becoming the uplift of the black race, his involvement in World War I both as a draftee and chaplain was merely an extension of his ecclesiastical calling, positing that “the Church is always needed in the time of a crisis. It gives the vision that inspires and sustains, filling men’s confidence.”⁵⁹ Further, Love believed that, in times of war, the role of the Church was to ensure one’s country is devoted to the “highest interests of all humanity.”⁶⁰ At a ceremony honoring Baltimore’s black draftees at Bethel African Methodist Episcopal Church following the close of training camp, Edgar Love laid bare the urgency felt by the black community

with respect to involvement in World War I, stating that black troops “must help to make history” and that in helping to fight for the solution of the problems with which the world had to deal, “the negro may find his condition ameliorated...in order that righteousness and justice may prevail.”⁶¹ The tragic reality, however, was that racism was so highly pervasive in the United States would not abate, and black troops would find themselves vilified for their war efforts in ways that Love and the other black captains and lieutenants could not possibly have foreseen.

The organization of the segregated 92nd Division, composed of troops from Camps Funston, Grant, Upton, Dix, Meade, Dodge and Sherman was the culmination of Woodrow Wilson’s promise to the members of Omega Psi Phi. The principle units of the division were the 183rd Infantry Brigade, 184th Infantry Brigade (which encompassed the 368th Infantry), 167th Field Artillery Brigade and the Divisional Troops. Edgar Love was, summarily, made chaplain of the 368th Infantry. The black bourgeoisie confraternity that was the officer’s training camp was a distant memory, and Edgar Love and his fellow infantrymen from the Fort Des Moines camp found themselves surrounded by other black soldiers whose educational training left much to be desired. The illiteracy rate among black soldiers at Camp Meade is highly speculative, with some figures asserting that of six thousand blacks, nearly four thousand were illiterate and black officers contending that such a figure was sensationalized and placing the number at a mere 395.⁶² Irrespective of the number of illiterates, Edgar Love was instrumental in the formation of a night school for illiterate soldiers and served on its faculty prior to being deployed to France.

On June 18, 1918, Edgar Love and the 368th Infantry, stoically singing the tune “We’re Going to Get the Kaiser,” set sail for France. As a chaplain, Edgar Love immediately set to task administering to the spiritual needs of the troops of the American Expeditionary Force, writing to his parents of a preaching service he led during the voyage.⁶³ Though Love was committed to the battle against the Triple Alliance, he was also acutely aware of the battle for Civil Rights being waged in the United States and the paradox that was the United States’ involvement in the war, writing that “communities...have expressed horrors over the atrocities abroad,” but “have been almost unmoved and silent when men were beaten, hanged and also burned by the mob.”⁶⁴ Despite Love’s sagacity, the American Expeditionary Force would experience both the freedom of living in a society not constrained by racial hatred, as well as the heartache of being part of a governmental experiment which many in the black community felt had been set up to fail.

The 368th Infantry moved into the trenches of the violent Meuse-Argonne sector of France on the night of September 25th, but were not supplied with the heavy-duty wire cutters necessary to cut through the entanglements, restricting lateral communication. Many had arrived exhausted and not having eaten in two days, and were not equipped with necessities such as signal flares and grenade launchers. Reliant upon French artillery, the 368th Infantry was severely handicapped by not possessing their own armaments. Finally, the troops had been assigned no maps, nor any clear military objectives. Beyond the enemy wire entanglements laid concealed machine gun emplacements and the sector held by the 368th Infantry formed an irregular triangle which projected forward beyond the general line. The ferocity of the German forces was unlike

any the troops had seen and several unsuccessful attempts were made to advance. In the fray, Lieutenant Norwood C. Fairfax and Captain Walter Green were slain. Total casualties exceeded four hundred-fifty men killed or wounded; many more were gassed, including Love, who was hospitalized. Despite the myriad burdens the 369th Infantry faced, they were able to overtake the military forces at Binarville after five days of a violent offensive.

The offensive at Meuse-Argonne would prove to have a deleterious effect on both the 368th Infantry, as well as black military involvement for generations to come. As a result of the failed September offensive, black troops would largely be removed from the front lines. News of the regiment's misfortune spread quickly, as General Hunter Liggett wrote that the regiment "twice ran away under shell fire." Much of the criticism, however, was rooted in racial prejudice, as opposed to the 368th Division's lack of military acumen. Robert L. Bullard, commander of the 2nd American Army, would become a most vocal critic of the 92nd Division, claiming that "The Negro division seems in a fair way to be a failure...They are really inferior soldiers. There is no denying it. Poor Negroes! They are hopelessly inferior!" Perhaps most offensive would be Colonel Fred Brown's self-aggrandizing and scathing paper titled *The Inefficiency of the Negro Officers*, which concluded that the charges against the black soldiers were true while simultaneously extolling the virtue of its author. Brown, who was commanding officer of the 368th Infantry, accused the black officers of insubordination, cowardice and a lack of leadership capabilities. Colonel Ballou recommended the court martial of five, who were found guilty of cowardice and sentenced to death. Plainly, as one author would write after visiting black troops in France, "the Ninety-second Division went through hell."⁶⁵

The failure at Meusse-Argonne had far-reaching implications. In the aftermath of the humiliation of the 368th Infantry, Edgar Love would later write that issue was not one of black cowardice, but that “the root of the matter is the failure to recognize the Negro as a man. The basis of distress on both sides is fear.”⁶⁶ The 92nd Division’s flawed offensive had been the result both of military factors beyond their control, as well as the racial attitudes of both the government and military. The fear of failure that had led the federal government to house the 368th Infantry at Fort Des Moines had become a self-fulfilling prophecy, and rather than willingly admit the sabotage of black troops, military officials levied unwarranted accusations of cowardice on black troops. “As a foremost exponent of the ideals of democratic government, the United States has been lifted to the full view of the world,” Love wrote, “Our present settlement, therefore, of race relations will influence in very large measure the settlement of race relations in other parts of the world.”⁶⁷ The United States had failed its test of race relations as the world looked on.

Returning from France, Love was given an honorable discharge from the military and assumed a position in 1919 as a professor of history and Bible at Morgan College, as well as serving as the institution’s athletic director. The next year, he was named principal of the Academy of Morgan College and served in that capacity until 1921.⁶⁸ The battle for recognition for the 368th Infantry continued long after the guns had fallen silent and the final mortar shells had been dropped in France, with Woodrow Wilson ultimately overturning the convictions of Lieutenants Horace R. Crawford, Judge Cross and Robert W. Cheers, each of whom been sentenced to death for having “shamefully retreated from the enemy.”⁶⁹ The failure of the 368th Infantry in securing civil rights at home marked an epoch in the opinions of blacks in the United States, as black leaders,

including Edgar Love, transitioned away from the battlefields of France toward the battlefields of public opinion and moral rectitude in the fight for equal rights for blacks.

Chapter Four

Chosen to be Consecrated

The death of Julius C. Love in 1926 was a tragedy that occurred as Edgar Love's personal and professional lives were beginning to grow wings. Love had married his sweetheart, Virginia Louise Ross, in a small ceremony at the senior Love's church on 16 June, 1923. As well, after serving as pastor at Grace Methodist Church in Fairmount Heights, Maryland for fifteen months and John Wesley Methodist Church in Washington, Pennsylvania for four years, had been appointed pastor of the much larger Asbury Methodist Church in Annapolis, Maryland. Love promptly increased the congregation's membership by two hundred-thirty members and buttressing the church's coffers by nearly nine-thousand dollars *per annum*.⁷⁰ The senior Love, a fifty-year veteran of the Methodist Church who counted among his numerous accomplishments building eight churches during his tenure as a minister, had been seriously injured in an automobile accident and confined to a hospital bed for several weeks in 1925, ultimately resulting in his retirement at seventy four.⁷¹ Julius Love had been living in Kansas with his son William, a prominent physician, when his health once again began to fail. On 29 October, 1926 the senior Love succumbed to complications resulting from his automobile injuries.

Edgar Love, whose life had been patterned after his father's, was left reeling from the death of his father, mentor and friend. Still, Edgar Love was prescient enough to understand that the role of patriarch was thrust upon him (despite the fact that Julius Henderson Love was now the eldest living son of the union of Julius C. Love and Susie H. Carr). Julius Love's death, then, was a symbolic passing of the torch between father and son, the new, more radical minister and the more conservative ministry theretofore, the coming era and the passing day.

The *rota Fortunae* had been kind to the Love clan. Though Julius C. Love had enjoyed a long and successful career, chief among his accomplishments was his ability to educate six of his children on a salary of roughly \$400 per year (a modest salary even by the day's standards). The senior Love's namesake, Julius Henderson Love, had matriculated from Howard University's law school and risen to fame as an attorney, as had his youngest son John Wesley Love. His eldest daughter, Catherine Love-Smith, had married and was living in North Carolina. William Albert Love, with whom Julius C. Love was living at the time of his death, had become a noted medical doctor in Kansas City, Kansas.⁷² The Love children were virtual anomalies during their time, a coterie of upwardly mobile, socially conscious young black men and women in an era in which only a scintilla of the black population possessed education beyond the post-secondary level. Himself referred to as a "ministerial landmark of the Methodist connection," Julius Love prophesied prior to his death that a new archetype of religious leader was emerging in the Methodist denomination. The elder Love's words proved prescient at a moment when clerics such as Matthew W. Clair and Edgar Love were only beginning to embark on their ministerial careers.

Though immensely shaken by his father's death, Edgar Love's career would not truly begin to soar until he was no longer in the shadow of his better-known father. In a sense, Julius C. Love—minister and social justice activist—passed the torch to Edgar Love with his passing away. Within a matter of a few years, Edgar Love's stellar work during World War I with indigent populations had garnered him a reputation as a social engineer, and as the Ku Klux Klan rallied in Fredericksburg and Baltimore, Governor Albert C. Ritchie appointed Edgar Love to the Maryland Interracial Commission. Love's was an ebullient star that was on the rise, and garnering the pastorship at Washington, D.C.'s John Wesley Methodist Episcopal Church was merely a natural progression for black Methodism's favorite son.

John Wesley Methodist Episcopal Church had been organized in 1839 as little more than a group of twenty-five itinerants who gathered at various homes in Washington, D.C. for private worship. The group was spearheaded by Samuel Greenwood, a local merchant and wood-sawer. Sensing the need to create a more salient church group, Greenwood negotiated with the owner of a carpenter's shop at the corner of Sharp and Hughes streets in Washington, D.C. for the use of the shop for a Sunday morning worship service. Greenwood preached sermons by the light of oil lamps, and as the congregation grew under Greenwood's leadership, that growth necessitated an improvement in its physical apparatus; and in 1865 the carpenter's shop was formally remodeled as the John Wesley Methodist Episcopal Church. In 1878, plans were drawn up to build a much larger facility at Sharp and Memorial streets, and the new facility was completed in 1881. John Wesley Methodist Episcopal Church had long had a reputation as being at the forefront of social justice issues, and Edgar Love's presence

would only augment such a reputation. Love was careful, however, not to offend the Methodist Episcopal leadership at such a critical juncture in his career with his political and social rabble-rousing. In one of his first sermons, Love struck a compromise, telling his parishioners that he believed “the function of the church is to teach personal integrity through the ideals of Christ. All our preaching ought to be Christocentric. We are not here merely to preach a social gospel—it must be centered around Christ.”⁷³

Love’s social conservatism would not last long. From the first, Edgar Love was a controversial minister. And this of necessity, for Love’s personal convictions precluded the preaching of a spineless gospel. Indeed, Love believed that the career of a young minister could be stymied by pursuing a conventional religious path. Almost immediately after becoming pastor of John Wesley Methodist Episcopal Church, Love found himself thrust into the spotlight that his father once occupied as a social justice advocate. When, in 1931, effort was made to deny a young theological school graduate in Boston ordination because of his unorthodox doctrine that denied God was a “ruthless tyrant instead of a God of Love” and asserted that hell was “not a literal lake of fire and brimstone,” Edgar Love immediately wrote a scathing polemic defending the young theologian, stating:

I do not believe in hell in any literal sense...the punishment of the wicked is in no sense a *torture*. Torture denotes delight on the one imposing the torture. The God of Jesus Christ, the God of Love, could not delight in the punishment of the wicked. The punishment of the wicked as well as the reward of the righteous is consequential, that is to say, it grows out of the nature of the life lived here. The development of spiritual capacity here through adherence to the principles of

Jesus Christ, which involves the highest spiritual and ethical ideals and values, gives ability to enjoy spiritual blessedness in the future life...I believe in future reward and in future punishment, each consequent upon the life lived here and absolutely determined by that life. We carry with us the capacity for bliss or the instruments of our own punishment.⁷⁴

Love's sentiment was a marked departure from the doctrine espoused by most black ministers of antiquity. The concept of a richly-rewarding afterlife had been, since the days of human chattel slavery, a source of hope and inspiration for blacks in America. Love's statement, however controversial, was congruent with changing times, as America had entered into an era in which blacks eschewed the promises of streets lined with golden pavement and eternal salvation while silently enduring filth-riddled neighborhoods and the incessant scourge of Jim Crow. Indeed, as the Harlem Renaissance had perspicaciously foretold, a new Negro was emerging: austere, confrontational and refusing to assent or subscribe to any ideology or philosophy which perpetuated the inferiority of blacks.

Edgar Love's ability to confront social issues without threatening the white Methodist establishment soon paid dividends. In 1933, Love was appointed superintendent of the Washington, Pennsylvania conference of the Methodist Church, an advisory role in which the minister provided spiritual and administrative leadership to churches and pastors within the Methodist church. The role of the church superintendent, among other things, was to "facilitate the initiation of structures and strategies for the equipping of the Christian people for service in the Church and in the world" and to attend to all matters both temporal and spiritual. Despite such a rank (typically reserved

for a church elder), Love was only allowed to administer his duties to all-black congregations and under a white bishop. Constrained by the Methodist church's policy of racial segregation, Love saw the formation of the Central Jurisdiction in 1936 as a means of enhancing the power of Methodism's black leadership.

As a matter of record, it was Edgar Love who fired the opening salvo against Methodism's policy of racial segregation well before being named a bishop in the denomination. An equally valid historical fact was that the Central Jurisdiction of the United Methodist Church was a concept supported by Love, who believed that the formation of an all-black episcopal body for blacks would entitle them to the right of self-governance and would unify the emergent United Methodist Church. As the fragmented Methodist Church composed of the Methodist Episcopal North and Methodist Episcopal South and Methodist Protestant Church moved to consolidate into one unified body, the all-black Central Jurisdiction arose out of the outcry of the southern states, which refused to unify under an ecumenical body that would cause them to worship alongside blacks. Though Love and other black church leaders were accepting of a church within a church, the conceptualization and formation of the Central Jurisdiction was a logical move, in a sense. Blacks in the Methodist denomination lacked both the power base and partisan support to force the delegates to the General Conference to grant them any greater powers as an integrated body as those given under the Central Jurisdiction compromise. Particularly in the hostile southern states, a forced integration would have been met with disastrous results for black congregations. Also, as an historical fact, blacks had, with rare exception, been denied the ability to govern their own religious bodies under the umbrellas of the major Catholic and Protestant classified denomination; thus rendering

them mere facades of black possibility and organization. The Central Jurisdiction would allow *black* Methodists to be governed by *black* bishops—an unprecedented strategic power play for blacks in the church world.⁷⁵ Despite its historical value, the Central Jurisdiction compromise did, in fact, establish both a black Methodist church and white Methodist church. The acceptance of the Central Jurisdiction compromise would be one that would weigh heavily on the young minister from Baltimore, and would come to burden him for decades, even as he became entrenched in the battle *against* segregation within the Methodist denomination and assisted in its dismantling.

The Central Jurisdiction's formation in 1936 was not, however, without incident. At the 1936 General Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church in Columbus, Ohio, Edgar Love vociferously led the charge against the election of Dr. Willis J. King, president of Gammon Theological Seminary, as bishop of the all-black conferences. Though King initially trailed superintendent of the Board of Home Missions, Rev. W.A.C. Hughes, last-minute votes by some of the attendees caused King to surge in the polls.⁷⁶ As the motion was made to elect King as the first bishop of the Central Jurisdiction, Love interrupted the proceedings, explaining that the election of an *episkopos* for the Central Jurisdiction was of "greatest importance," and calling for the election to be postponed, as the plan that had been adopted to create the segregated district and name King to the bishopric had been done so over the objections of the conference's black delegates.⁷⁷ King had been the leadership supported by white Methodists and, having compromised in accepting the creation of the Central Jurisdiction, Love and other black leaders in the Methodist church felt the black delegates

alone should select their bishop. In addition, the protest was Love's way of attacking the paradoxical nature of a segregated Episcopal body.

It is not known whether Love's opposition to King's election was based upon a lack of moral rectitude on King's part, a resentment of having leaders of what would become the Central Jurisdiction elected by white majority, or both. Certainly, King and Love had a longstanding professional relationship—Love had pursued his bachelor of sacred theology at Boston University while King was a doctoral student at the institution and both were well-known and highly respected both in the ecumenical and academic worlds. Nonetheless, Love moved to postpone King's election, stating that the choice was made “in the face of a pronounced objection” by the conference's black delegates due to little or no effort being made on the part of white conferees to ascertain the wishes of the black delegation.⁷⁸ Love's motion was immediately defeated 195 to 126, with Orien W. Fifer, chairman of the episcopal committee, purporting that the election of a black bishop could not be predicated solely on the wishes of the delegation over which he would preside, as the delegates to the 1936 conference “have met as one body and have forgotten all our distinctions.”⁷⁹ Despite his support by the episcopal establishment, King withdrew his name from the ballot, but not before making a scathing indictment of Edgar Love's ruthless ambition, telling the black conferees that “we must not allow the matter of the personal ambitions of one, two or any number of individuals who may desire this office to obscure our main objective, which is to retain for the racial group this high privilege of leadership in the Church of God.”⁸⁰ With King's name removed from the ballot, Dr. Alexander P. Shaw, editor of the *Southwestern Christian Advocate*, was overwhelmingly elected.

Though Love did not secure the first bishopric of the Central Jurisdiction, his ecclesiastical activism at the 1936 conference certainly set him up to ultimately obtain the position. Edgar Love's outspokenness at the conference was likely a shrewd stratagem, as it caused him to become the spokesperson for disenchanting and disenfranchised blacks in the Methodist denomination; though not himself elected, by openly opposing King's nomination, Love established himself as the leader of black Methodists. Ensuring that the governance of the Central Jurisdiction was proper was a *cause célèbre* for Love, who used it as a platform for his own self-interests. In a sense Shaw, as a dark horse candidate, became little more than a pawn in an intricate power struggle. A relative unknown, Shaw could not dim Love's own rising star, and became little more than a pawn in an intricate power struggle.

Amid the embroilment over the Central Jurisdiction's beginnings, Edgar Love suffered what would become his personal Golgotha, as his mother Susie C. Love, died following a prolonged illness only a month after Love's triumphant General Conference showing.⁸¹ Crestfallen, Love virtually disappeared from public life for several months, maintaining his duties as superintendent, but remaining largely silent during his period of private mourning. It is unknown how deeply Susie Love's death affected her children, though it is evident that Love took something of a sabbatical during this period, re-emerging in September as representative of the Interdenominational Minister's Alliance at the Committee on Religious Life's mass demonstration at the nation's capitol.⁸² Love, however, did not speak during the occasion. Maintaining a low profile for several years, Edgar Love's rise through the ranks of the Methodist Church gained wind again in 1941 due to a high profile presentation at the second annual meeting of the Board of Missions

and Church Extension of the Methodist Church. Love's remarks, however, were ostensibly bereft of his usual fervor, as he commented that the church was "at the heart of the Negro's life" and that the minister was the most important individual in the black community.⁸³ The following year, Love was elected one of the members of the Commission of Cooperation with the Colored Methodists, a group designed to study the relationship between the Central Jurisdiction and the greater United Methodist body. In this position, Love lobbied for a greater appropriation of funding for all-black Methodist churches, presenting a report recommending the enlargement of the Department of Negro Work (and thus enlarging his own influence in the process).⁸⁴ With the funding, Love would work to create the National Methodist Rural Life Conference in Lincoln, Nebraska. Though it would take nearly five years to come into fruition, the Rural Life Conference was the largest gathering of the United Methodist Church since 1942, drawing the bishops of the United Methodist church, district superintendents representing six-hundred fifty districts, the chairmen and secretaries of the one-hundred ten conferences, a rural pastor and rural layperson from each conference, one urban pastor, executive secretaries, and one representative from each of the eleven boards and commissions of Methodism. The three-day session focused almost exclusively on how the United Methodist Church's one-hundred thirty-one black delegates might best tackle the subject of Jim Crowism and segregated facilities. Of particular note was the delegation's (including Love's and Shaw's) observation that the United States was in no position to address the issues of world without addressing its own issues at home.⁸⁵

Up until the Rural Life Conference, however, Edgar Love had been relatively conspicuous in his absence from his ecumenical and social dealings. That absence (and

subsequent silence on issues of social justice), however, had endeared Love to the white Methodist establishment, resulting in enhanced career opportunities for the minister. Still seemingly grappling with his mother's death, Love resurrected his personalist training in 1946 in an address titled "The Imminent Christian Task—To Build a Brave New World" at the baccalaureate commencement at Gammon Theological Seminary, wherein he told students in esoteric terms that "unless there is a quick resurgence of our moral and spiritual forces, we will all disappear in a cloud of cosmic dust."

The incisive and slightly pugnacious Edgar Love who had risen to national prominence returned in 1947, however, with his scathing criticism of the both the United States government and the rising tide of facism titled "A Covenant With Life" to the graduating class at Clark Atlanta University. Returning to his radical roots during a decade dominated by World War II paranoia, Love told the graduates that "the mad spirit of nationalism threatens to drench the world in blood; that hatred and cruelties are manifested almost everywhere, and that racial antipathies are eating the heart out of the world."⁸⁶ His attentions refocused, Love turned once again toward the social justice movement. Given his privately-held beliefs, and the tenor of the globe would, it was not permissible for the outspoken Love to remain silent, despite the pain he must have felt at the loss of both parents (a pain that would only be exacerbated by the death of his brother John Wesley in 1951). The Holocaust in Germany whereby Adolf Hitler sought to eradicate all peoples deemed *untersmenschen* had exposed the seedy underbelly of racial hatred and misanthropy. Further, the creation of the United Nations in 1945, designed to promote social progress and human rights, had been a paradoxical enterprise, as well, as historian Paul Gordon London remarked that "those very governments most guilty of

violating the human rights of their own people” were involved in its creation. While Franklin Delano Roosevelt was working to secure international human rights abroad, he was mum on the issue of racial segregation in the United States. Despite defending the rights of some seventeen million Jews, homosexuals and people with disabilities in Germany, Winston Churchill would defend the superiority of the Anglo-Saxon race, remarking in 1943 that he was unapologetic about espousing a philosophy of white superiority because, in his estimation, the Anglo-Saxon represented “a stronger race, a higher-grade race, a more worldly wise race.”⁸⁷ While the Holocaust greatly discredited racism and created a rallying point for United States citizens, the causes of racial integration and equality in the United States had been dealt a crippling blow by the events preceding and directly after World War II when segregation practices remained despite government rhetoric. But, as Edgar Love would later observe, a quiet revolution was gaining ground in the United States. World War II, in effect, signaled the dawn of the modern Civil Rights movement. Perhaps more important for individuals such as Edgar Love, mass organization and agitation shifted away from *gifted leadership* in its conventional sense toward grassroots leaders such as A. Philip Randolph and Fannie Loue Hamer and away from the black upper class. At the dawning of this new era, Love mused that the church was “standing between two worlds, the old world that is dying and the new world that is struggling to be born.”⁸⁸ As that new world was coming into being, Edgar Love fully intended to be at the forefront of its transition.

Nineteen fifty-two marked an epoch in Edgar Love’s life. Amid the pomp and circumstance of the opening ceremony for the fourth quadrennial Central Jurisdictional Conference in Philadelphia, a symbolic changing of the guard occurred as retiring bishop

Robert E. Jones beseeched the 1300-plus congregants to “not become vindictive or revengeful over the failure of your brothers to find a full solution to your problem,” with respect to the continued policy of racial segregation in the United Methodist denomination. “I do not intend to try to solve the race problem, but I believe God will give men the power to overcome his difficulties.”⁸⁹ As Marian Anderson’s lilting contralto filled the Tindley Temple in Philadelphia and following addresses from Gammon Theological Seminary president Dr. Harry Richardson and Board of Missions superintendent Dr. Eugene Smith, Dr. Edgar A. Love and Dr. Matthew Wesley Clair, Jr. were selected to replace retiring bishops Shaw and Edward W. Kelly as bishops of the Central Jurisdiction with Love being given the episcopacy over the conference comprising Baltimore, Delaware, Washington, D.C., east Tennessee and North Carolina.

The differences between Edgar Love and Matthew W. Clair, Jr. were stark and ostensible, despite their having been classmates both at Howard and Boston universities. Clair hailed from a less affluent black Methodist family than Love’s, though his father had made history when he was named the first black bishop of the Methodist Church in 1920 alongside Robert E. Jones. His father, who had served as District Superintendent for the Methodist Church in Washington, D.C. was the son of former Virginia slaves, had worked as a dishwasher in order to pay his tuition and fees at Centenary Bible Institute. The junior Clair, like Love, had served in World War I with the American Expeditionary Forces. Clair, Jr. had attended Syracuse University and was an organizer of the Iota chapter of the Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity’s chapter there. He ultimately obtained his B.A. from Howard University in 1915, a bachelor of sacred theology from Boston University and a doctor of divinity from Gammon Theological Seminary in 1936. As a

bishop, however, Clair was much less outspoken and much more accommodating than Love. As friends of several years, Clair would often support Edgar Love in his mission against segregation, however, he was generally less vocal than Love, despite being hailed a “great orator of the Negro race” by the *Los Angeles Times*.

Where former bishop Robert E. Jones had failed in integrating the Methodist Church, the 61-year-old Love intended to succeed, remarking shortly before assuming the episcopacy in an address to the Methodist Federation for Social Action that “the church at 11 o’clock on any given Sunday is the most segregated institutional organization in the country,” an inconvenient truth which he intended to change.⁹⁰ Love’s approach to the most prevalent social ill of the day stemmed back to his days at Howard University, when he and his fellow Omega Psi Phi Fraternity brethren found the glass ceiling of Jim Crow to be the most significant barrier to their development as professionals. Certainly, in Edgar Love’s mind and in the minds of the millions of blacks living under the Jim Crow system, the time had come for America’s promise of life, liberty, equality and the pursuit of happiness to bear fruit for its darker brothers.

Chapter Five:
A Critical Hour

Edgar Amos Love assumed the bishopric of the Washington Conference of the Central Jurisdiction of the United Methodist Church during a difficult period in American history. The church, many blacks felt, was “failing to meet the problems of the Negro.”⁹¹ Unable to adequately address rising business, economic, industrial, educational and political concerns, the black church was fast losing members to more radical religious persuasions. The Nation of Islam, for example, began attracting young people both on the fringes of society and disenchanted with the snail’s pace reaction to mounting racial tensions of the Christian church. The Nation of Islam espoused a staunch racial separatist sentiment, advocating a separate black state within the United States and foreshadowing impending doom for whites who had oppressed blacks during the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade and through institutionalized racism throughout United States history. “The Negro layman has lost faith both in his church and in his lodge,” one black minister would say, “He has found that the church has failed to produce what he has been paying for all these years. Consequently while he is still willing to pay for the benefits offered, he will no longer be contented with the promise of reward in another world for the dollar spent in

this world...the laborer has in his heart that he has been cheated by the church.”⁹² It was precisely that type of sentiment that caused an upsurge in adherents to the radical Islamic faith, as well as a host of other ancillary and tertiary religious persuasions among African-Americans in the 1950s.

While the Nation of Islam traced its origins to the 1930s, it did not gain strong footing among blacks until the 1950s. There are, in effect, several reasons for the radical Muslim sect’s rise in popularity: the fiery and charismatic prophet of rage Malcolm X became the chief spokesperson of the organization in 1952; a string of race riots in the United States in large urban cities such as Harlem and Detroit—major urban recruitment centers for the National of Islam--deepening pre-existing racial tensions and causing an increase in NOI recruitment activity; the Nation of Islam’s shrewdly capitalizing upon black angst and disenchantment with the Black Church and recruiting, in essence, a predominately male membership base. Espousing a racial separatist theology, the Nation of Islam advocated the government extradition of blacks to Africa and parts of the Middle East unless they were given an opportunity to self-govern. During a 1961 press conference in Los Angeles, Elijah Muhammad, leader of the Nation of Islam, explained to interviewers that adherents to Black Islam “don’t want equality. We don’t demand to sit by [whites]. We’re not asking you to get up and give us a seat on railroad trains. We ask a chance to build our own...we haven’t got equality in 100 years of so-called freedom.”⁹³

In the final analysis, the Black Muslim movement within the United States, as a social force opposite the integration efforts of organizations such as the NAACP, was little more than an inconvenience for mainstream black leadership. At its height, the

Black Muslim movement only totaled roughly 200,000 adherents (compared to the 11 million members of various predominately black Christian denominations during the same era). What became a tempest in a teapot, however, was the mob mentality of some adherents to the black Muslim faith. In 1963, for example, a group of black Muslims pelted Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. with eggs following an incendiary speech he gave at the Salem Methodist Church in Harlem in which he voiced criticism of the Black Muslim movement, stating that “there are those among us who call for a separate [Negro] state. This is wrong.”⁹⁴ The antics of the black Muslims prompted the Rev. Joshua O. Williams, pastor of Salem Methodist, to remark that “the only people to fight Dr. King here would be Black Muslims or African Nationalists.”⁹⁵ True to form, Edgar Love’s assessment of the Black Muslim Movement was candid, likening the Black Muslims to the Ku Klux Klan and adding that he “suspects they’re behind a good many of the riots that are going on today” and that their religious affiliation was merely an aegis behind which criminals hid, reasoning that Islam was “just an excuse for hoodlums...to loot and destroy.”⁹⁶

Aside from the religious trends of the day, the 1950s were a decade marked with civil unrest and human rights agitation that was unprecedented in the United States, rivaled only by the anti-slavery and women’s suffrage movements. The threat of Communism, too, was of great concern to the efforts of Civil Rights activists, as conservative forces such as J. Edgar Hoover tethered the burgeoning Civil Rights Movement to the Red Movement. In an address to members of nine Methodist churches at the Buena Vista Street Methodist Church in Pittsburgh following a series of riots, Edgar Love insisted that Communism was not the cause of violent social upheaval, but that “this social force can’t be stopped...I believe it’s time for the church to become

militant in its fight against the evils of Communism.”⁹⁷ Edgar Love the military veteran was less-than-sympathetic toward the Communist cause, which he erroneously believed sought to drive wedges between blacks and whites.⁹⁸ As a matter of fact, Love became a vocal critic of Communism during the 1950s despite the fact that he was repeatedly accused of being sympathetic to the Communist cause by individuals such as Fulton Lewis, Jr., ultimately becoming a target of the House Un-American Activities Committee during the 1960s.⁹⁹

Despite his battles against the Communist menace in the United States, Edgar Love maintained his primary focus as a civil rights activist and minister. Using his position as bishop as leverage, Edgar Love immediately set to task organizing for an impending war that would ultimately take place on two fronts, within the ecumenical and the secular worlds. In order to combat the leviathan that was Jim Crow, Love was keenly aware that he must begin by defeating the smaller foe: segregation within his own religious denomination. The Central Jurisdiction compromise had, for black leaders in the United Methodist Church, proved to be a succubus, and black parishioners no longer found its existence justifiable. Dismantling segregation within the United Methodist Church was Edgar Love’s *cause célèbre*, and he had begun laying the framework for his mission against it. As one of his first acts as bishop, Love gained an audience with president-elect Dwight D. Eisenhower in December, 1952 at the Commodore Hotel in Washington, D.C., the result of which was the creation of a commission to study segregation practices against minority groups in the United States. Sensing the timbre of the nation, Eisenhower would later refer to racial discrimination as a threat to the country’s national security and would take a keen interest in the Civil Rights activities of

the nation during his tenure as president, despite his “moral failure...and lack of vision” with respect to Civil Rights, as one writer assumed.

Meanwhile, frustration over the United Methodist denomination’s snail’s pace response to integration was causing tensions within the church to proliferate. In 1952 at the Methodist General Conference, a report calling for the elimination of racial discrimination within the Methodist denomination had won prompt approval by delegates. Those same delegates, however, rejected a motion to abolish the Central Jurisdiction, referred to by one delegate as a “blot on our church” and a “wrong which must be repealed.” The proposal to eliminate the all-black jurisdiction won only a small showing of hands, as Claude Cooper of Muscatine, Iowa argued that the churches of the Central Jurisdiction would unite with the white conferences “when all agreed to do so” and against a forced merger. At that same conference, Love had moved that the committee resolve that churches and colleges affiliated with the denomination, as well as hospitals operated by the Methodist Church be open to all people regardless of race. Charles C. Parlin, who had drafted the 1952 report, summarily rejected Love’s motion, stating that “the committee merely announces principles; it can not give orders to church institutions,” before exclaiming “I hope the amendment will fail!”¹⁰⁰ It did.

Turning his attention once again toward the Methodist church, Edgar Love delivered a pointedly critical sermon in Chattanooga, Tennessee at the Holston Conference of the Methodist Church. Love’s appearance at the Holston Conference was an historic event, as it marked the first time an African-American had presided over a Methodist Conference in the Deep South. Using the occasion to attack the pervasive belief that God was against racial integration, Love thundered from the pulpit, exclaiming

that “If God hadn’t intended for the races to mix, He would have fixed it so they could not.” He continued, “Social integration is the big hitch, but it will eventually come. It does not necessarily lead to intermarriage as many in the South believe. Intermarriage is very rare between Negroes and whites even in those states where it has been permissible by law through the years. There is something within that binds them to their own race. However, we must come to know the oneness of the human family.” All in all, Love theorized that integration had been slow in its development because whites “feared” social integration.¹⁰¹

The belief that intermingling between the races was the inevitable result of integration was the invariable consequence of white misapprehension regarding the black libido. Popular cultural depictions of blacks, particularly black men, had typecast blacks as especially priapic and possessing a voracious appetite for white, female flesh. D.W. Griffith’s blockbuster film *Birth of a Nation* had gained notoriety among white audiences for capitalizing upon this fear. Further, pseudo-scientific propaganda such as Dr. William Howard’s 1903 assertion in the journal *Medicine* that black males showed a particular proclivity for “sexual madness and excess” merely furthered those misconceptions.¹⁰² Writer George T. Winston described the black male as “a monstrous beast, crazed with lust” and remarked that “his ferocity is almost demoniacal. A mad bull or tiger could scarcely be more brutal.”¹⁰³ With such racist stereotypes running rampant, opponents of social integration pointed to such beliefs in order to justify the separation of the races. While Love’s assault upon inter-racial relationships might seem to contradict his message of racial harmony, attacking the black-man-as-priapus mythos was absolutely essential and equally as necessary as debunking the myth that God had ordained segregation.

Following Love's fiery invective at the Holston Methodist Conference, a whirlwind of political activity began to stir among black Methodists and black citizens. Clearly, the nation was evolving. In 1954, the Supreme Court of the United States had decided in *Oliver Brown et al. vs. Board of Education of Topeka* that separate-but-equal public educational facilities were in violation of the Equal Protection clause of the Fourteenth Amendment (as separate facilities were inherently unequal), thereby overturning the 1896 ruling in *Homer A. Plessy vs. Ferguson* which established segregation as the rule of law. The desegregation of educational facilities, however, was never given a specific timeframe, only having to be performed "with all deliberate speed." Southern states, in particular, took advantage of the ambiguity of such a dictum. Immediately, the NAACP began filing court cases in order to hasten the desegregation process, a move which bred staunch opposition from the southern establishment. Noted writer William Faulkner would criticize the NAACP for their agitation in 1956, urging them to "wait, wait now, stop and consider for a moment." Faulkner's polemic, titled "Letter to the North," prompted a backlash from several Methodist bishops who posed the questions: How much slower can we go if we are going to go at all? How long is a moment? Edgar Love's response summed up the tenor of the black community of the day. Love, with trademark diplomacy, wrote of Faulkner's letter:

When one realizes that the most distinguished writer of the South...has consistently opposed second-class citizenship for Negroes...one hopes to read with sympathetic understanding his warning to the NAACP and other groups 'who would force integration on the South by legal process [sic]' to 'stop for a moment.' Stop for what? We have stopped for a moment for a hundred years. And

that is a long moment. [The Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments] have nothing essentially to do with integration, but...much to do with civil rights which the Negro has been denied by every conceivable device for a century. What do Mr. Faulkner and his fellow Southerners mean when they talk of ‘forced integration’ from the ‘outside?’ Where is the ‘outside’—the North? The motto of the United States is ‘out of many, one’—*e pluribus unum*. So long as Southerners regard Northerners as ‘outsiders’—and vice versa—so long will we remain a divided nation. We are the United States in name, but until we are united in purpose, in philosophy, and in human relations, we will continue to weaken our position of world leadership, and we can not be one even among ourselves. [Those who defy the Supreme Court decision of 1954] are in open rebellion against the Government of the United States as their forefathers were in 1860.¹⁰⁴

The sense of urgency which Edgar Love felt with respect to ending segregation—and the accompanying anger over its persistence—was one shared among most black leaders during the 1950s and 1960s. Love’s contentious opposition to William Faulkner’s “Letter to the North” was a precursor to Dr. Martin Luther King’s 1964 polemic *Why We Can’t Wait*. Despite his rhetoric, Love was criticized by white Methodists for his own slow response to integration.

While the NAACP was agitating for social integration, Love’s leadership within the United Methodist church was beginning to bear fruits. At the 1956 General Conference, a study of the jurisdictional system was conducted by the church, ultimately resulting in the adoption of legislation which became Amendment IX to the Methodist Church’s Constitution, allowing churches in the Central Jurisdiction to transfer to all-

white geographical jurisdictions beginning in 1958. There was a caveat, however. Churches within the Central Jurisdiction were required to obtain permission from the bishops of the all-white geographical jurisdictions, effectively prohibiting the integration of churches in the Southern states. The 1956 decision was a small victory for Love and other integrationists within the denomination, but a victory nonetheless. It is during this period in Love's life that his reputation as a social engineer becomes less clear. Immediately following the adoption of Amendment IX, the Pittsburgh district of the Methodist Church proposed that the Central Jurisdiction merge into it. The proposal received no response from Love, and at the 1957 Interracial Leadership Conference, Bishop Lloyd C. Wicke of Pittsburgh criticized both the bishop and the Central Jurisdiction, asserting that "the Pittsburgh district is chastised for segregation, a situation which is imposed upon us by the lack of response from the Central Jurisdiction," and questioning Love during a colloquy session, asking "do the churches of the Central Jurisdiction, located in the Pittsburgh area, desire to join the Pittsburgh district? If so, why has there been no response to our invitation of two years standing? Or where has the invitation lacked Christian persuasion?" Love response, which was described as "coy" and "evasive" by news media, was, in a sense, merely an exercise in political correctness. Love claimed that he and the Central Jurisdiction did not "doubt Bishop Wicke's sincerity, nor the sincerity of the people here. We are wondering about the attitude of the people on the local church level: the men want to know whether or not they will be circumscribed to Negro pulpits. We are waiting to see what will happen in the general church jurisdiction on the matter of integration." Wicke's retort was equally as coy,

responding that “the Central Jurisdiction must decide whether to cling to their fears or trust the good sense of the Methodist church.”¹⁰⁵

Wicke’s criticism of Edgar Love over the issue of integration would not be the last. In 1958, the bishop became embroiled in yet another feud that began at the 95th annual session of the Washington Conference of the Methodist Church, Central Jurisdiction that threatened to destroy the unity of Central Jurisdiction congregations in opposition to segregation. Rev. A. H. Durham, the former pastor the of Buena Vista Methodist Church, revived the controversy Wicke began, charging that his church had attempted to obtain a release from the Central Jurisdiction and join the all-white Pittsburgh Methodist Conference, but that he and members of his congregation were “strong-armed” into remaining in the Central Jurisdiction by Rev. E.P. Clark, the district’s superintendent. As a result, Durham refused to continue to preside over the Buena Vista church until his request for secession was granted. Subsequently, Edgar Love offered Durham a pastorate in Winston Salem, North Carolina. When Durham refused, Edgar Love allegedly informed him that he could assure him that he would get nothing “comparable to Buena Vista.” Love explained his statement to the attendees of the 95th annual session, reasoning that “when I said that I had nothing comparable to Buena Vista to offer Rev. Mr. Durham that was the exact situation. I would not move another pastor just to make room for the Rev. Mr. Durham.”¹⁰⁶

Durham then publicly attacked Love for having “fired” him— a charge which Clark asserted was “in part truth” and in part “completely unjust and erroneous.” As Edgar Love was traveling on business and unable to comment, Superintendent Clark lambasted Durham in a June 23 statement to the *Pittsburgh Courier*, writing that “the

people of a church must have a desire to integrate if it is to succeed. The majority of the people of Buena Vista were not sure they wanted their pastor to force them into another conference.”¹⁰⁷ Durham refuted Clark’s statement, claiming that during the opening session of the annual conference, Clark had delivered a speech claiming that the merger with the Pittsburgh Conference would divide Buena Vista’s congregation, reduce the church to the status of a mission, rob members of the initiative to do for themselves and cause them to become reliant upon the Pittsburgh Conference’s white membership, and would only buttress the prestige of the pastor to the detriment of his flock. Despite Clark’s impassioned speech, his motion was defeated by a 13-15 vote, according to Durham. While Durham initially only opposed what he perceived to be E.P.Clark’s political posturing, Edgar Love’s support of Clark’s decision struck a discordant note with Buena Vista’s pastor, who disagreed with Love’s offer to transfer him to another congregation and tacit threat that he would not receive as plush an assignment as the Buena Vista congregation. In a June 9 editorial in the *Pittsburgh Courier* titled “Bishop Love Blocked My Integration Move,” Durham lashed out at the bishop, positing that Love had been duplicitous in removing Durham from his pastorate, then praising the Pittsburgh Conference for its “gracious, generous and Christian attitude...in acting favorably on a resolution to accept any church of the Washington Conference within its geographical boundary into its membership.” The reality of the matter, however, was that Durham had specifically requested to take a sabbatical and refused to pastor the Buena Vista congregation if the merger with the Pittsburgh Conference did not immediately go into effect. Love merely granted Clark the sabbatical, while Durham misrepresented the truth in the media, claiming that he had been unceremoniously fired. Still, both Durham

and Wicke had been honest in their assertion that a “cordial and fraternal” welcome of Central Jurisdiction congregations into the North Central Jurisdiction of the Methodist Church, which represented nine Midwestern states, had occurred. On the occasion, Love had himself remarked that the Methodist congregation would “lead the way in this hour of decision...As to whether men shall live as brothers in a peaceful world.”¹⁰⁸ Still, Love had blocked the merger of the Buena Vista congregation, casting aspersions on his sincerity as an integrationist.

The Durham feud would come to haunt Edgar Love, as he was perceived following the incident as being duplicitous. Love would embark upon a *mea culpa* campaign in order to change that perception, claiming that “I am one hundred percent behind integration both in church and state. I do not know how such a rumor—for that is what it is—could ever have started; I have openly declared in conferences that any church within my jurisdiction which desired to transfer into any white conference covering the same territory would go with my blessing. Already one church, the Mitchell Memorial, Harrisburg, has transferred to the Central Pennsylvania Conference.” Speaking in Baltimore, Love continued, “too long our country has declared a social pattern which decrees that two races must live together, yet walk in separate paths. It is impossible for people to live in peace and harmony without knowing each other well, nor can they know each other well unless they are educated together and are privileged to attend the same church together if they desire.”¹⁰⁹ Love’s statements, however, reveal that he was very much aware of how the rumor of his being anti-integration began and that his embroilment with Durham had had an adverse effect on his image both in the ecclesiastical and social worlds. In order to improve his public image, Love would go on

to use his theological knowledge and multi-media relationships to challenge the religious foundations of segregation, telling the *Baltimore Afro-American* that he did not “know of any passage from the Bible that supports segregation. Moses, the leader of the Jewish people, married an Ethiopian woman. His sister, Miriam, was stricken with leprosy because she frowned upon the marriage... This seems to indicate to me that God did not frown upon mixed marriages. It also indicates that he did not support segregation.”¹¹⁰

The feuds with Rev. Durham and Bishop Wicke would not be the only embroilments Love would become involved in during the latter part of the 1950s. Growing in prominence within the Methodist faith, Love was selected in 1957 to represent the Methodist denomination on a multi-country speaking tour for which he would spend two months abroad in London, Brussels, Geneva, Athens, Beirut, Jerusalem and several locations in Africa. Edgar and Virginia Love departed the United States on September 11, 1958 from New York. On a mission to observe Methodist works in Africa, the Loves visited Methodist churches in Egypt, Southern Rhodesia, the Belgian Congo and Liberia.¹¹¹ At the close of his observation and speaking tour, Love concluded to the Council of Bishops of the Methodist Church and Annual Council of Chinese Methodists conventions that independence had come too soon to most African nations, adding “[but] they had to be independent].” Love reasoned that African independence movements had made an end to colonial governments inevitable whether the African nations were prepared for self-governance or not, due to the exploitation and prejudice of colonial settlers. The bishop told the crowd that the panacea for unrest in Africa would be “the formation of a confederacy by the independent states of the continent... like States in the United States.” A champion of democracy, he also pointed to the growing Communist

influence in South America as a reason for renewed African-American interest in newly-emancipated African municipalities. Love advocated something of an inter-national exchange program whereby free nations would send “missions of doctors, teachers, agricultural technicians and engineers” to African nations, explaining that the Africans “have keen minds, but lack good training” Love’s comments drew the ire of the ambassador of Ghana, William Baidoe-Ansah, who responded in a letter to the *Baltimore Afro-American* that Love’s opinion was misinformed and misrepresented, and coming “from such as Bishop Love who spends only a day or two in a small African town and feels himself qualified and competent to interpret Africa to the world.”¹¹²

Love’s comments with respect to united African states were, in the final analysis, simultaneously *avant garde* and antiquated. His perceptions of Africans as a people incapable of self-governance were, in one sense, perspicacious and, in another sense, politically incorrect (tales of corrupt African nations following the end of colonialism on the continent were both copious and quotidian). Though the bishop was not renowned as a Pan-Africanist, his advocacy of a united Africa was very much coterminous with the ideology of Pan-Africanism which was growing in importance and prominence during the Civil Rights era. Pan-Africanism was a sociopolitical world movement which sought to unify native Africans and members of the African diaspora into a global African community and calling for a united Africa. Kwame Nkrumah, whom Baidoe-Ansah cited as an example of qualified native African leadership, emerged as a Pan-Africanist activist and was elected leader of Ghana in 1951, delivering his famous anti-colonialism *Address to the 15th Session of the General Assembly of the United Nations* in 1960—the same year Edgar Love contended that Africa was not completely prepared for self-governance. Still,

Nkrumah's leadership ultimately tremendously influenced Love's perception of the emerging Pan-Africanist ideology. During Love's sojourn to Africa, Nkrumah was laying the foundation for the Kwame Nkrumah Ideological Institute to train Ghanaian civil servants and promote Pan-Africanist thought. Pan-Africanism was growing in prominence in the global community, but it is important to note that Edgar Love, despite his liberal inclinations, was a man very much enchanted with the American ideals of freedom and democracy. Even during his days at Howard University, it had not been the violent nature of racism that had so greatly incensed Edgar Love and his contemporaries, but the premise that the oppressive nature of Jim Crow might preclude them from accomplishing, by virtue of the color of their skin, what any white man with the same background, education and experiences could. The American Dream was not, for Love and men of his rank, an oppressive nightmare as it was for men such as Elijah Muhammad and Malcolm X. In spite of the constraints placed upon blacks as segregation was at its apex, the black middle class still *believed* in America and all she promised. Even when espousing a Pan-Africanist ideology, the bishop was critical of the Communist forces which he believed would taint African unity, stating that "We [African-Americans] should keep the African nations on our side; we need them and they need us, too." It is important to note that Love's comments regarding both Communist and African self-determination were rooted in his turn-of-the-century world view and were pervasive among African-Americans during the day. Still, the prevalence of his beliefs did not exculpate Love from being criticized by Baidoe-Ansah and others who questioned the bishop's ideological beliefs and true commitment to the amelioration of the global issues faced by people of color.

Following the Pittsburgh Conference controversy and subsequent African leadership *faux pas*, it was necessary for Edgar Love to become more active in challenging segregation on a grassroots level—to combine rhetoric with action. In 1961, Love was elected president of the Southern Conference Educational Fund, a position he would hold for several years. The organization, founded in 1943 as the Southern Conference for Human Welfare, had been changed by constitutional amendment to the Southern Conference Educational Fund three years later. Designed to promote integration, influence legislation, and demand equal rights, the SCEF held educational forums in southern cities and sought to transform the economic landscape of the United States. The organization listed its purpose as being “to improve the educational and cultural standards of the Southern people in accordance with the highest American democratic institutions, traditions and ideals.”¹¹³ The organization’s primary focus, however, was to attack segregation.

From its inception, the Southern Conference Educational Fund was a controversial organization. In the final analysis, it is not inconceivable that its mission was conflated with that of Socialist or Communist cells within the United States. A 1962 Federal Bureau of Investigation briefing contended that “Communist Party members were members of and worked actively” in the SCEF and that “the SCEF is a progressive, liberal organization which... is a Communist Party front organization because it has gone along with the Communist Party on certain issues, particularly on the racial question.”¹¹⁴ The SCEF’s egalitarian mission, certainly, could have been misconstrued as promoting a socialist agenda. Its promotion of equal rights for blacks, however, likely caused it to become a target of governmental scrutiny. From the first, it was cited as being a

Communist front organization, prompting then-president of the organization, Aubrey H. Williams to write in 1956 that “the truth is the fund is composed of Southerners of standing in their respective communities as well as in many instances in the nation...it is singularly free from any extraneous influences and is direct in its approach toward the eradication from American life of the injustices and brutalities which result from the prejudices based upon a person’s color or race.”¹¹⁵ Still, the Southern Christian Educational Fund was, over the course of roughly ten years, carefully scrutinized by governmental authorities.

The degree of federal opprobrium which the Southern Christian Educational Fund drew was staggering even in its early days, and stood as a precursor to the underhanded tactics employed by J. Edgar Hoover’s FBI and COINTEL PRO intelligence programs. The SCEF was identified as a Communist cell as early as the 1940s, and such a designation would remain through the organization’s existence. When Edgar Love became president of the organization in 1961, it would have been nearly impossible for him to have been unaware of its reputation. The SCEF’s mission, however, was very much coterminous with Love’s own set of beliefs. By the 1960s, Love had enhanced much of the Knudsonian personalist training which had so greatly defined and informed his career. At the closing session of the 100th Session of the North Carolina Conference of the Methodist Church, held at the historic Bennett College for Women in Greensboro, Love asserted that “what our world needs today is not more knowledge, but more love.”¹¹⁶

It appears that the bishop, however, understood that the personalist tradition’s aloof and intellectual approach to social justice was simply not enough. Love had grown

increasingly active in politics outside of the Methodist Church, and this increase in political activity, particularly the 1958 protest against nuclear tests which called upon the federal government to “declare a moratorium on all testing of weapons of mass destruction” and “deemed it morally indefensible and politically dangerous” to hold weapons tests outside U.S. territory, drew attention to Edgar Love as a potential Communist and threat to national security. One writer would remark of the bishop that he was a “real darling” of the pro-Communist press and movement who brought “untold prestige to the campaign and helped suck in the unwary and the sincere, both financially and actively.” The writer continued that Love and others in the alleged Communist movement “build up egos in the hope that the suckers will bask in the aggrandizement, and what is more important, come back for more.”¹¹⁷ Most vehement and outspoken in his accusation against Love was conservative radio commentator Fulton Lewis, Jr., who often condemned Love from the airwaves of his Washington, D.C.-based radio program, as well as his newspaper column, “The Washington Sideshow.” Though Lewis’ evidence of Love’s involvement with the Communist Party was tenuous, at best, it did not stop him from implicating Love in Communist causes (despite Love’s own virulent denunciation of Communism as being deleterious to the causes of black integration and self-improvement). Love drew the attention of Lewis after Love co-sponsored a gala testimonial for Herbert Aptheker, an internationally known Marxist historian who had joined the Communist Party USA in 1939 and was being feted on the heels of a trip to Vietnam. Lewis pounced upon this event as tangible evidence of Love’s affiliation with the Communist Party.¹¹⁸ Lewis struck yet another blow, claiming that Love, in spite of being a bishop in the Methodist church, was engaging in a cause which was “the very

foundation stone of atheism” in opposing segregation. Arguing against those who insisted that the evidence against both Love and the Southern Christian Educational Fund consisted of “mere technicalities,” Lewis contended that the organization was a mere Communist front because members of its former incarnation, the Southern Conference for Human Welfare, had been identified as members of the Communist Party by the federal government.¹¹⁹ Given the degree of media attention Love and the SCEF were garnering, it would not be long before the federal government had intensified its war against the Southern Christian Educational Fund and Edgar Love would find himself embroiled yet again in a career-altering feud.

As the Southern Christian Educational Fund was headquartered more than one-thousand miles from Washington, D.C. in New Orleans, Love was never highly involved in the SCEF’s grassroots work. Further, his ecclesiastical and civil rights work within the United Methodist Church demanded the lion’s share of his attention. Still, the presidency of the SCEF required a great deal of energy, particularly heading into the 1960s when the federal government waged war on integrationists and Civil Rights social engineers under the visage of anti-Communist efforts. With respect to the SCEF, Carl Braden and Dr. James Dombrowski were the most visible and most controversial members of the organization. Braden, who served as field secretary, would be arrested and convicted on charges of sedition and criminal syndicalism toward the destruction of the government in Kentucky and sentenced to fifteen years in the Kentucky State Penitentiary. Edgar Love was instrumental in lobbying for Braden’s release from prison, sending a letter of protest to then-president John F. Kennedy requesting executive clemency for the organization’s field organizer which was signed by Civil Rights luminaries such as Ralph Abernathy,

Fred Shuttleworth and Martin Luther King, Jr. As a result, Braden was ultimately released upon appeal to the United States Supreme Court after only six months imprisonment.¹²⁰ Meanwhile, James Dombrowski, the organization's executive director, would be arrested in 1963 after city and state police in New Orleans raided the Southern Christian Educational Fund office and Dombrowski's house and charged him with conspiracy under the state's 1962 Communist Control Act. Dombrowski was ultimately released when Orleans Parish judge J. Bernard Cooke dismissed the charges against Dombrowski, citing that there was no probable cause for the arrest warrant to have been issued.¹²¹ It was during the Southern Conference Educational Fund's defense of Carl Braden, as a matter of fact, that the prattle about Edgar Love's involvement with the Communist Party intensified.

Historically, the Southern Christian Educational Fund often found itself fighting battles against government with respect to its own membership, as was the case with Dombrowski and Braden. As president of the Southern Christian Educational Fund, however, Edgar Love's primary focus was non-violent agitation for equal rights and access for blacks in the United States. A vocal critic of gradualism, Love would use his position with the SCEF to promote demonstrations and peaceful agitation in the South, stating that "there are timid souls who will speak bravely behind closed doors about human rights. Demonstrators, by contrast, are witnessing publicly." Love publicly preached, above all, that action—swift action—was necessary in order to fully secure equal rights for the disenfranchised and marginalized, contending amid a rising chorus of individuals who felt the Civil Rights Movement in the United States was moving too swiftly that "if it is right tomorrow, why not give it to us today." Still, he assented to the

gradualist approach of ministers with respect to the integration of the Methodist Church, a discrepancy between his rhetoric and reality. As the Civil Rights Movement kicked into high gear on the eve of the 1963 March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom (Love would sit on the dais as an honored guest), Edgar Love offered uncharacteristic *oraculum*, asserting that “maybe we will have to pay a big price for what we want, but what price is too great to pay for human redemption or human freedom?”¹²²

For many blacks in the Methodist denomination, the perceived price of human freedom proved too great. Even as the near-constant agitation against segregation practices in the United Methodist church seemingly began to bear fruit, many black ministers were opposed to integrating, fearing such a move would vitiate their own power within the denomination. Bishop Love shot back at the opponents of the denomination’s integration and the dissolution of the Central Jurisdiction which had, theretofore, been a bastion of self-governance for black Methodists. Speaking to the North Carolina Conference of the Central Jurisdiction in 1964, Edgar Love made the contention that members of his race had “been in an inferior position so long that when the time comes to take our place beside other men we’re a little reluctant.” The militant element of the 1960s “Black Power” creeping into black Methodism’s quest for acceptance, Love observed that “some of us are just as opposed to integration as [white Methodists] are...we’re afraid of losing office. If we want office, we’ve got to stay segregated but if we want a really united Christian church we’ve got to divest ourselves of some of these offices and this attitude.”¹²³

Coincidentally, Edgar Love retired as bishop of the Baltimore Conference of the Central Jurisdiction of the United Methodist Church by limitation of age in 1964.

Stepping down at the Quadrennial Celebration of the Central Jurisdiction in Daytona Beach, Love's vision of one integrated ecumenical body within the Methodist church came one step closer to being a reality. As one of his final acts as bishop of the Central Jurisdiction, Love orchestrated the successful transfer of the Central Jurisdiction to the previously all-white Northeastern Jurisdiction of the church. The move was both historic and unprecedented, and solidified Love's legacy as the pre-eminent leader of Black Methodism in his day. This legacy, however, would be indelibly tarnished by several historical factors: Love's assent to the formation of the Central Jurisdiction in the 1930s, his questionable motives during his interactions with A.H. Durham in the late 1950s, as well as the pervasive rumors that he clandestinely opposed integration. The timing of the merger, too, cast aspersions on the sincerity of Love's integrationist underpinnings. At the same time that Love was proselytizing of the divestment of positions, of recognizing that *the perfect was the enemy of the good* in the pursuit of a truly united United Methodist church, Love was nearing the denomination's limitation of age for bishops and would soon be replaced in accordance with Methodist tradition. As such, Love (and, by virtue of his position, wife Virginia and son, Jon Edgar) had enjoyed the prestige and privileges that were part and parcel of self-governance within the Methodist church. It is, however, unknown whether Love's intentions were pernicious, and copious evidence exists that showcases that Love approved mergers of *individual churches* into all-white conferences. The 1964 merger marked an epoch in the history of the United Methodist Church. Love's final push for integration was the first such step toward integration since the adoption of the church's integration policy in 1957, and was the *piece de resistance* of Love's long and storied career.¹²⁴

Though retired from the episcopacy, Edgar Love would continue his work as a minister and civil rights activist for several years, becoming an outspoken critic of government in Baltimore and warning of impending race riots in the city, which were the logical result of the “fear and hatred” of blacks pushing for full integration.¹²⁵ Without the soapbox of the United Methodist bishopric, however, Love would slowly fade from public life, relegating his activities to work within the Omega Psi Phi Fraternity and the NAACP. Edgar and Virginia Love’s only son, Jonathan Edgar, had married Virginia Lottier, the niece of *Baltimore Afro-American* publisher Carl J. Murphy, Jr., great-great-granddaughter of *Baltimore Afro-American* founder John H. Murphy, and daughter of George Lottier and Arnetta Murphy, in a wedding that saw Baltimore’s black polite society in attendance in 1960. Virginia Lottier-Love would be elected to the *Baltimore Afro-American*’s board of directors shortly following their wedding. Later, Jonathan and Virginia Love would have two children, a son born in 1960, Jon Nathan and a daughter born in 1962, Virginia Elizabeth. Jonathan Edgar Love, however, was never able to attain the same level of success and notoriety of his father, and Virginia Lottier-Love ultimately divorced him and re-married Sam Bowens, a baseball player for the Baltimore Orioles. Edgar and Virginia Love would maintain a busy social schedule during his retirement, entertaining such black polite society luminaries as *Ebony* magazine publisher John H. Johnson and poet Langston Hughes in their Baltimore home at 2416 Montebello Terrace. Edgar Love’s health would begin to fail around 1970, forcing him to further retire from public life.

Love would continue to make sporadic public appearances and would remain active with a number of civic organizations such as the NAACP, as well as remaining on

the board of trustees of a number of schools, including Gammon Theological Seminary, Morgan College and Bennett College. Love's final public appearance was at a gala testimonial in his honor by the Omega Psi Phi Fraternity shortly before his death. More than four hundred attendees turned out to celebrate the sole surviving founder of the organization, recognizing him for his civil rights activity and stellar fraternal leadership. That event, however, would be Love's last. Following a prolonged illness, Edgar Love died on Wednesday, May 1, 1974 at the age of 82

Epilogue:
'The Time Has Come'

Edgar Amos Love's life's mission, in a sense, can be justly summed up by a statement made by the civil rights leader, United Methodist bishop, theoretician and theologian made at an Emancipation Day celebration in Baltimore in 1953. "The time is coming," Love reasoned in his trademark baritone, "when a white man can look at a black man and a black man can look at a white man and each one only see men."¹²⁶ Throughout his long life, Love saw his only encumbrance to be the constraints of living in a society which, by mere virtue of the color of his skin, constrained him to second-class citizenship. After all, in his own estimation, he had been born into fortuitous circumstances of which most of his white contemporaries could never boast, he possessed the same credentials as sterling many of his white contemporaries, and he had, through diligence and toil, established a reputation as a scholar and public intellectual. Why, then, must he be restricted to a system of deference, subservience and obeisance? Perhaps, for some, the system of second-class citizenship was an acceptable way of life. But for Love and others of his ilk, who were the socio-economic and intellectual equals of whites, such

a social system could never be expedient. Such was the paradox of Jim Crow for America's black upper class. Irrespective of their socio-economic status, upper class blacks faced the constant reminder that they were of an inferior status to their white counterparts. Despite his attainments, Love could never simply be a religious leader; he would always be a *Negro* minister. Love would never be a bishop; he would forever be known as a *Negro* bishop who presided over the *Negro* jurisdiction. And the qualifier "Negro," by the fact itself, diminished the worth of whichever rank or office the individual held and spoke to their innate inferiority as an officer of such a position. It appears that, from the earliest moments of Edgar Love's awareness of a race consciousness, his motivation was to prove that he, a black man born into the comforts of an established social order, could accomplish whatever a white man of like attainments could. It was this single motivating force that created within Edgar Love a sense of social justice. Certainly, this does not imply that the bishop's civil and human rights activism was disingenuous; rather, it merely pinpoints the internal motivation that reinforced his dedication to such causes.

Though Bishop John Wesley Lord's intimation during Edgar Love's last rites that "no breath of scandal ever touched [Love] in his long ministry," was erroneous, Love's quest for power within the Methodist church was, at once, motivated by his desire to prove his mettle and his not being comfortable with accepting the accoutrements of being a member of the black bourgeoisie while simultaneously turning a blind eye to the suffering of tens of millions of blacks in America. Love's methods during his ascent to power might have been questionable, but his legacy as an activist is not, and must be justly analyzed in its true and full context. It is an ineffable and inscrutable fact that it

was Edgar Love's consistent agitation over a forty year period which resulted in the integration of one of the United States' largest religious bodies. Love would die two years after the United Methodist church's target date for full integration of 1972. His physical body departed, and the Central Jurisdiction a mere memory in the minds of its former congregants, Love's record of ecumenical and social activism became lost to time. Edgar Love is heralded for the founding of the Omega Psi Phi Fraternity, a premier fraternal organization for men of color in the United States, but his ecclesiastical and civil rights record nearly always come ancillary to his role as a fraternity founder.

What, then, is the actual legacy of Edgar Amos Love? Beyond being beloved by members of his fraternal order, Love's leadership was an example not necessarily of the Talented Tenth, but of that small minority of leaders DuBois would later refer to as the "Guiding Hundredth." Irrespective of his own personal quest for power and recognition, Love remained committed to uplifting the mass of peoples on the periphery who would never benefit from the social systems available to the black upper class. In the final analysis, Love exemplified the type of vision and power necessary to positively effect change on a large scale. Love was a man who, during his long and constructive life, refused to preach a spineless, conforming-to-things gospel and lived unafraid to challenge the people, practices and systems he believed constituted and perpetuated injustice. Love's was a life and legacy whose relevance can be summarily evinced in his message to the 1946 graduating class at Clark Atlanta University:

"[The world is] bewildered, baffled, frustrated, hopeless and in despair. We can not build God's world with children's blocks. We must build again, a faith that is dynamic and real, which teaches a God of understanding and interest: a God who

knows and cares. We must build again hope, making it a part of our definition of faith. Finally, we must build into this new world love: a love all-inclusive, sacrificial, vitalizing, broadening, understanding, forgiving, cooperative, and winsome.”¹²⁷

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He Giveth His Beloved Sleep

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² "Bishops Love, Clair Retire," *Baltimore Afro-American*, June 1964, p.

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¹²⁶ "Words of the Week," *Jet Magazine*, Feb. 5, 1953, p. 37.

¹²⁷ "Man Called to Build 'A Brave New World,'" *Atlanta Daily World*, May 21, 1946, p. 1.