

ELLEN G. WHITE ESTATE

ELLEN G. WHITE'S
USE OF THE TERM
"RACE WAR", AND
RELATED INSIGHTS

DELBERT W. BAKER

**Ellen G. White's Use Of
The Term "Race War,"
and Related Insights**

Ellen G. White

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About the Author

Ellen G. White (1827-1915) is considered the most widely translated American author, her works having been published in more than 160 languages. She wrote more than 100,000 pages on a wide variety of spiritual and practical topics. Guided by the Holy Spirit, she exalted Jesus and pointed to the Scriptures as the basis of one's faith.

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by Delbert W. Baker

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Introduction

“I knew that this very race war would be introduced.”—Ellen G. White, April 29, 1907

What did Ellen White mean when she made this statement? How is it to be viewed and interpreted today?

This statement could have profound implications, therefore any honest attempt to explain this statement and others related to it would call for a thorough examination of the many associated factors.

First, the context must be examined. Consequently, this paper will spend some time developing the various contexts of the “race war” statement that will help to clarify its usage.

However, whenever one approaches the race-related statements of Ellen White in the post-Civil-War years there are a number of factors that initially must be weighed:

(1) There was the volatile slavery/freedom question that was legally settled, but practically unanswered.

(2) There was the tense racial climate that took on different forms in different parts of the country.

(3) There was the low ebb of national unity when it concerned the “how to” of the Reconstruction era.

(4) There was the question of how the ex-slave and former master should relate themselves to each other.

(5) There was the myriad of civil and legislative perplexities facing a nation just out of a bloody civil war.

Particularly relevant in the midst of all these considerations was the fact that the infant Seventh-day Adventist Church was suffering growing pains as it faced an often hostile environment. Seventh-day Adventists were, by their very name and nature, confrontive to the religious and secular world surrounding them. [2]

Ellen White was faced with the unique challenge of being God’s messenger. In this setting she spoke out repeatedly as to what God’s counsel was concerning the most prudent approach to the

question of race relations between whites and blacks. All the counsel appropriately fitted in historically and functionally, “until the Lord shows us a better way” ([Testimonies for the Church 9:207](#)). Her writings gave specific counsel as to how race relations were to be handled, particularly as they affected and involved the work and movement of Seventh-day Adventism.

Without a balanced sensitivity to the above considerations, the modern reader may raise questions concerning the prompting rationale and motives for some statements. Statements concerning race in the *Testimonies*, volume 9, are among these. However, an understanding of the historical, sociological, and religious settings and current issues gives one a helpful and workable perspective. Such a perspective may reveal the wisdom of Ellen White, who was willing to forgo literary and social acceptance by both whites and blacks, and who risked misunderstanding to set forth views that would provide for the greater good and the long-range advantage of the temporal and eternal ramifications of the race issue.

Mrs. White’s awareness of her pioneering and vulnerable role was classically set forth in a message entitled *Our Duty to the Colored People*.¹

- [3] This message, addressed to a group of church leaders March 21, 1891, in connection with a General Conference Session at Battle Creek, Michigan, contained the following statement:

I know that that which I now speak will bring me into conflict. This I do not covet, for the conflict has seemed to be continuous of late years; but I do not mean to live a coward or die a coward, leaving my work undone. I must follow in my Master’s footsteps.²

She then went on to set forth a series of reformatory statements and principles that were ahead of her times.

Fourteen years later, during an interview with three church leaders, on Tuesday, April 29, 1907, in Loma Linda, California, Ellen

¹See Appendix A for a historical background to this message

²Ellen G. White, [The Southern Work](#), 10 (Washington, D. C.: 1966). All further reference to this work is to the 1966 edition and will subsequently be notated as SW.

White predicted: “I knew that this very race war would be introduced.”³ Present at this interview were William C. White (1854-1937), Ellen White’s third son, who served as her editorial assistant and publishing manager; Percy T. Magan (1867-1947), physician, administrator, educator, and a co-founder and dean of what came to be known as Madison College; and Dores E. Robinson (1879-1957), compiler, editor, and secretary to Ellen White until her death in 1915.

In the same interview and shortly before making the “race war” statement, Ellen White also said: “There will be slavery just as verily as it has been, only upon a basis that is more favorable and secure to the white people.”⁴ The context neatly ties these two statements together and, as we shall see, each statement sheds light on the other.

Statements such as these would catch the attention of even the most casual student of history. Questions such as “What did she mean?” “To what was she referring?” “Was this fulfilled?” are natural and legitimate inquiries.

In this paper I shall attempt to make a clear explanation of these statements and their fulfillment. For clarity, I shall offer a *Pre-Summary Statement* at the outset. In the next section I shall examine the various *Contexts*. Then, to offer additional insights, I shall provide a section entitled, *Considerations*. The *Conclusion* will close this examination. The *Appendices*, while not essential to an understanding of the paper, can assist the reader in discovering the rich balance and unique perspective that Ellen White had on the sensitive and turbulent race issue.

[4]

A study of the subject matter of this paper, beside clarifying what can be problematic statements, can be instructive in a number of other areas. It can show the unique guidance given by Ellen White to the church in the delicate area of race relations. It can disclose principles that can be of help today. It can admonish God’s people today by historically illustrating the need for greater activity based on the counsel given. It also can bring to light the solidarity derived from confidence in God’s prophet as voiced in [Jeremiah](#)

³Ellen G. White, Interview DF 151, 1907, p. 6. All subsequent references to this, the interview under study, will be notated as Interview.

⁴Interview, p. 5. Unquestionably this statement, along with that referred to in note #2 are among her more significant race statements.

28:9: "When the word of the prophet shall come to pass, then shall the prophet be known, that the Lord hath truly sent him."

Pre-Summary Statement

[5]

A careful study of history will reveal that both statements or predictions of Ellen White mentioned in this interview,

“I knew that this very race war would be introduced”

and

“There will be slavery just as verily as it has been, only upon a basis that is more favorable and secure to the white people”

were distinctly fulfilled within an approximate fifteen-year period after she made them.

The fulfillment of these predictions was dramatically distinct and historically valid.

[6]

Contexts

The following settings will give depth and add insights relative to the two Ellen White statements we are examining.

A. The Interview Setting

The major portion of Ellen White's statement and writings on the race issue were made between 1891, when she first began to call attention to the need for work among the blacks, in her *Our-Duty-to-the-Colored-People* message, and 1908, when she completed the materials for sections of the *Testimonies*, volume 9, entitled *Among the Colored People*.

As a result of this emphasis, her son, William White, had felt for some time the need to prepare a book that would give Adventists a just and fair picture of the evangelistic work that needed to be done in the "Southern field" (a term generally referring to work among the blacks in the South). It had been more than forty years since the Emancipation Proclamation, and William believed that people would better appreciate the work to be done if a book were available to give a fairly complete overview of the needs.¹

He said he wanted such a book to "give our people a picture of the fields in the Southern states and the work to be done there";² and further, to be the "means of encouraging young people to give themselves to the work"³ to be done there. He believed that a book like this would help build up the Southern work.

[7]

As of January, 1895, James Edson White, his brother, was doing a commendable work in the South on the riverboat, *Morning Star*. But he needed help, and his cry was for more means and more workers. William, like his mother, no doubt realized that the sooner work could be done there, the more lasting and fundamental would be the progress made before the avenues started to close up.

¹Unfortunately, this book was never published

²*Ibid.*, p. 6. Unfortunately this book was never published.

³*Ibid.*, p. 6.

For these reasons, and with these burdens on their minds, William White, Percy Magan, and Dores Robinson arranged an interview with Ellen White on Tuesday, April 29, 1907, at Loma Linda, California. They wanted to share their thoughts with her and get her counsel.

William explained in his opening comments that every time he would plan to work on such a proposed book, something would come up to throw the plans off. His conclusion as to how to complete such a project was:

What we have needed all the time was someone in the South—someone who was in contact with the actual conditions there—to take part in preparing the book by giving a picture of the field. ⁴

He saw that need as being filled by Percy Magan, who was then serving as dean of Madison College in the Nashville, Tennessee, area. He summed up his feeling by saying:

It seems now as though Brother Magan would help in this work. He has been long enough in that field to know the conditions, and he has access to the writings of the best men there, and it seems to me that he could do the work nicely. ⁵

As a result he had invited Percy Magan out to California to help him with the book, to give insight on the planning and re-organizing of the work in the South, and to plan to get before the people “a correct understanding of the work of [the] Madison School.” ⁶

They tentatively planned to put the book out in sections. Percy Magan was to describe the conditions in the South and then at some point include the counsel that Ellen White had made in regard to the Southern work. [8]

In a similar line, Ellen White had said in 1895, twelve years before:

⁴*Ibid.*, p. 1.

⁵*Ibid.*, p. 7.

⁶*Ibid.*, p. 8.

The colored people might have been helped with much better prospects of success years ago than now. The work is now tenfold harder than it would have been then. ⁷

And again in 1900, seven years previous to this same interview, she said:

The Lord is grieved at the indifference manifested by His professed followers toward the ignorant and oppressed colored people. If our people had taken up this work at the close of the Civil War, their faithful labor would have done much to prevent the present condition of suffering and sin. ⁸

In *Southern Work* she restated this same thought (in 1895) and referred to the fact that some work had been done:

When freedom was proclaimed to the captives, a favorable time was given in which to establish schools and to teach the people to take care of themselves. Much of this kind of work was done by various denominations, and God honored their work. ⁹

B. The Sociological Setting

But what gave way for the statements under study?

They discussed a variety of related issues during the interview, such as the advantage of such a book, how people might benefit from it, the need for a special kind of work in the South, the need for schools, and the value of appreciating and working the soil.

At this point Magan reminisced and said to Ellen White: "You know, years ago you made the statement that the time would come when there would be a terrible race war in the South." ¹⁰ He went on

⁷Ronald D. Graybill, *E. G. White and Church Race Relations* (Washington, D. C.: 1970), p. 21. All subsequent references to this work will be notated as *Race Relations*.

⁸Graybill, *Race Relations*, p. 21.

⁹White, *The Southern Work*, 43, 44. John Hope Franklin, in his book, "From Slavery to Freedom: A History of Negro Americans," has an excellent section dealing with the period (see pp. 227-250).

¹⁰Interview, p. 4.

to say: “I do not know whether you ever said it in so many words, but you intimated that slavery would exist again.” ¹¹ [9]

Magan seemed to recall a statement or reference made by Ellen White at an earlier time. ¹² It is significant that a little later in the interview he compared his recollected “race war” statement with the “slavery” statement, and, as we shall see, Ellen White made the same comparison herself.

Following Magan’s statement, and without responding directly to his recollection, Ellen White explained the essence of what he was referring to, by saying:

Just as soon as people begin to make any kind of movement to educate blacks, there are some who are determined that it shall not be done. ¹³

Here Ellen White connected Magan’s reference of the “race war” /“slavery” statement with the opposition that would be exerted as soon as there were efforts to “educate” or better the condition of blacks.

Magan went on to elaborate on this same thought by giving a case at hand, then referred to a well-circulated line of thinking that shows the implications of this opposition:

It is the common talk all over the South that there will be a race war within the next few years. Senator Tillman has talked it in the house. Governor elect Hoke Smith, and Tillman have published a plan that they are

[10]

¹¹Interview, p. 4.

¹²It is of interest to note that 12 years earlier Ellen White made a similar statement in what has come to be known as the Armadale interview, November 20, 1895. When being questioned by some church leaders as to the Sabbath/Sunday issue and the Black work, she said: “Slavery will again be revived in the Southern states; for the spirit of slavery still lives.” When printing *Southern Work* it was thought best to leave out this statement. It has since been released in the shelf document entitled, “Comments on the Ellen G. White Statements Relative to the Revival of Slavery,” October 17, 1953, (pp. 4, 14). This reference, or one similar to it, was no doubt what Magan was referring to that they are advocating everywhere. Their plan is something like this: They will divide every county into districts, and every Negro is to be numbered. He will have a brass plate strapped to his arm with a leather strap, giving his number, 536 or 6023, or whatever it may be, and then he is never to be allowed outside of that district without a passport from the officers.

¹³*Ibid.*, p. 4.

advocating everywhere. Their plan is something like this: They will divide every county into districts, and every Negro is to be numbered. He will have a brass plate strapped to his arm with a leather strap, giving his number, 536 or 6023, or whatever it may be, and then he is never to be allowed outside of that district without a passport from the officers.—Ibid p. 5.

In response to the above remark, Ellen White made one of the key statements that we are examining:

There will be slavery just as verily as it has been, only upon a basis that is more favorable and secure to the white people. ¹⁴

Magan elaborated on what the meaning of “secure to the white people” might mean and what the penalties might be to those found assisting blacks under such a system:

More secure, because they do not have to feed the Negroes and care for them. Then if the Negro has got outside that district, or if he is loafing and not working, they can put him on the chain gang for a year. Now they state in their plan that if anyone is caught, whose teachings excite the blacks to foolishness, that he can be taken and put in the chain gang. Senator Tillman has printed that; he has printed it in the leading magazine in the South, that he has spoken it in Chicago and also in Atlanta, Georgia. There are many of the Negroes today who are selling their property and hiding their money in the earth for fear that their land and houses, if they were known to own any, would be taken from them. ¹⁵

Joining in with his sentiments, Ellen White declared: “Then intelligent blacks may read from cause to effect.” ¹⁶

¹⁴*Ibid.*, p. 5.

¹⁵*Ibid.*, p. 5

¹⁶*Ibid.*, p. 5

Some eight years before, in June of 1899, Ellen White made this comment reflecting the same theme in a letter to a responsible Adventist minister who was interested in the work in the South:

It is the prejudice of the white against the black race that makes this field hard, very hard. The whites who have oppressed the colored people still have the same spirit. They did not lose it, although they were conquered in war. They are determined to make it appear that the blacks were better off in slavery than since they were set free. ¹⁷

Magan moved back to the subject of the book and its format by saying: [11]

I had thought we ought, without taking sides or creating a disturbance, tell in a moderate way the conditions in the South.... If we could depict the present status somewhat, it would interest our people to go south to work before it is too late. And yet I felt, on the other hand, that we should be very careful in the doing of that, lest we stir up a hornet's nest. ¹⁸

This type of careful approach was one that Ellen White had been advocating for years. ¹⁹

At this juncture in the interview, Ellen White emphatically responded by making the statement under study:

This is the danger. This is why I have pleaded, and entreated, entreated, and entreated for the work to be done in the South, because I knew that this very race war would be introduced. ²⁰

¹⁷The Southern Work, 86, 87.

¹⁸Interview, p. 6.

¹⁹See the series of ten articles (*The Southern Work*, 19-65) she had written in the Review and Herald from April 2 of 1895 to February 4 of 1896, explaining the needs of the Southern field and appealing for workers and funds. The majority of these articles were published by Edson White in the original edition of Southern Work

²⁰*Ibid.*, p. 6

In this context the “race war” statement is not enigmatic. Magan had just expressed concern about the need to be careful in putting out such a book so as not to “stir, up a hornet’s nest,” or antagonism, over the race question. He knew of the delicacy of the racial balances in the South; but Ellen White responded by revealing a wider concern for accomplishing the work to be done in the South. She knew that the ever-imminent racial tension was in danger of springing up and hindering the work. She knew, and had stated on earlier occasions, that racial tensions would ignite and, as she said here, there would be “race war.”

[12] This prediction had profound implications, and though forcefully and directly stated here, it was by no means the first or only time she had voiced this warning. Eight years before this interview, on June 5, 1899, in a letter to a minister (also included in Edson White’s edition of *Southern Work*), she made the following prediction:

At the least provocation the poison of prejudice is ready to show its true character, and provocations will be found. It is very hard to make the work run smoothly. Outbreaks will come at any moment, and all unexpectedly, and there will be destruction of property and even of life itself. Hot-headed people, professing the faith, but without judgment, will think they can do as they please, but they will find themselves in a tight place. I speak that which I know. . . . Parties are already formed, and they are waiting, burning with a desire to serve their master, the devil, and do abominable work. ²¹

And again, on November 20, 1895, in the Armadale interview in Australia, she said to a group of church leaders in relation to the work in the Southern field, that “a terrible condition of things is certainly opening before us. According to the light which is given me in regard to the Southern field, the work there must be done as wisely and carefully as possible.” ²²

Twelve years later, at the 1907 interview, the crisis was upon the nation and the church. Problems were increasing in intensity.

²¹The *Southern Work*, 86, 87.

²²The *Southern Work*, 69.

And they were taking a more extreme form—aggressive physical violence between the races. The antagonism mentioned before, or the “race war” mentioned here, was becoming an increasing national occurrence. Already the fulfillment was being etched on the national consciousness.²³ But the greater part was yet to be realized within the next 13 to 15 years. [13]

So we see that while “slavery” and “race war” were imminent and foreseeable, they were not to be of the historical kind. With the “slavery” reference²⁴ the condition was not to be the same as that which had existed in the past, with slaves on the plantation with masters, etc.; it was to be a slavery that expressed itself in political, economic, and social bondage. The “race war” reference was to be the natural outgrowth of it—open and violent antagonism between the whites and blacks. It would express itself in literal physical opposition—mobs, race riots, fights in which people were bruised, beaten, burned, shot, and lynched.

C. Vann Woodward described the scenario in the following sad words:

It was inevitable that race relations should deteriorate rapidly under such pressure [referring to Hoke Smith’s anti-Negro disfranchisement campaign]. The immediate consequences in two states were bloody mob wars upon the Negro. Shortly after the red-shirt, white-supremacy election of 1898 in North Carolina a mob of 400 white men led by a former congressman, invaded the colored district of Wilmington, set fire to buildings, killed and wounded many Negroes, and chased hundreds out of town. The sequel to Hoke Smith’s white-supremacy victory in Georgia in 1906 was a four-day

²³Just prior to this Hoke Smith was in his 1906 campaign for governor of Georgia. Throughout his campaign he supported his disfranchisement platform with a “barrage of Negro atrocity stories.” Following his election there was, in fact, war and anarchy in Atlanta. For four days there was wild and violent “anarchy, during which mobs roved the city freely looting, murdering and lynching.” “Whites began to attack every black person they saw.” (C. Vann Woodward, *The Strange Career of Jim Crow*, p. 87; John H. Franklin, *From Slavery to Freedom*, p. 314?)

²⁴For a helpful study on Ellen White’s different usage of the word “slavery” in the *Spirit of Prophecy* writings, see Appendix C

rule of anarchy in Atlanta, during which mobs roved the city freely looting, murdering, and lynching.

[14] This ugly temper did not pass with the white-supremacy campaigns. Indeed the more defenseless, disfranchised, and intimidated the Negro became the more prone he was to the ruthless aggression of mobs.
25

In a period that witnessed the struggle for Home Rule, the Kings of the White Camelia, the revival of the Ku Klux Klan, and a resistant reaction from blacks, “slavery” in its new form, and “race war” with its bitter results, were realities that refused to hide themselves.

C. The Historical Setting

History abounds with vignettes that portray the realities of the racial tensions of the post-Civil-War and Reconstruction period. But, as Ellen White had foreseen, the problems would take on a new appearance at the turn of the century. They would especially manifest themselves during the first two decades of the twentieth century, for it was these decades that set the pace for the following 30 to 40 years.

We will look briefly at three historical realities of the early 1900’s that directly relate to Ellen White’s prediction on race developments.

1. Emancipation into “more favorable slavery”

The post-Civil-War years were tumultuous, to say the least. Abraham Lincoln sought to ease the tensions after the war by assuring the Southern states, which had broken away from the Union, that his aim was to “bind up the nation’s wounds,” “with malice toward none.”

That was commendable, but there were problems—pulling the nation back together again, rebuilding the South, how to handle the four million freed slaves. Yet beyond those, there were deeper problems.

[15] The state of affairs required a whole new way of thinking about

²⁵Vann Woodward, *The Strange Career of Jim Crow* (New York: 1974), pp. 86, 87. In subsequent references this book will be notated as *Jim Crow*.

blacks, since they were now legally free and citizens with rights equal to those of whites. It was this adjustment in thinking that many whites found impossible to make.

Blacks, on the other hand, found themselves faced with the realities and adjustments of freedom. As families had been separated when they were sold into slavery, blacks tried to locate and unite with their lost relatives. They had to find work and a place to live. Education and a sense of purpose were vital, but many factors dimmed these realities.

While some whites were glad that blacks were no longer slaves, many feared the new condition, with its implications and possibilities. And in too many situations that fear mushroomed into malignant, open hatred and hostility.

These social and historical dynamics quickly expressed themselves into what Ellen White referred to as “slavery just as verily as it had been, only on a basis more favorable and secure to the white people.” There was, in fact, an avalanche of discriminatory legislation in the decade following the Civil War (circa 1870 and following), especially around the turn of the twentieth century. During the period, also, these new conditions settled and cemented into the structure of society. In the history text, *The American People*, it is said about this period:

The Civil War officially ended slavery in the United States, but in the postwar decades of Reconstruction and the rebuilding of the “New South” slavery was replaced by other forms of economic and social bondage. Sharecropping and peonage plus the persistence of racial segregation in the form of “Jim Crow” laws, assured White Southerners of continued control over the black population.²⁶

2. *Jim Crowism, the master of the new slavery*

[16]

Jim Crow, the name that came to represent the legally sanctioned laws and system of segregation of blacks and whites, showed itself in the various strata of society. The “slavery” that Ellen White referred

²⁶David Burner, Eugene D. Genovese and Forrest McDonald, *The American People* (New York: 1980), p. 481.

to that would be “more favorable and secure to the white people” was, in fact, just that. The black race could still be controlled, contained, and confined, but now without the responsibility of feeding, housing, attending to needs as in the former slavery system. This new “slavery” surfaced in all the strategic areas that related to blacks:

a. Legislative

This racial bondage expressed itself in a succession of decisions by the United States Supreme Court that were all in place by the turn of the century:

1) Slaughter House Cases of 1873

United States v. Reese, 1876

United States v. Cruikshank, 1876

(The Court drastically curtailed the privileges and immunities recognized as being under federal protection, thereby removing the protection of the government of the rights of blacks.)

2) Civil Rights Case of 1883

(The restrictive parts of the Civil Rights Act were virtually nullified. C. Vann Woodward says of these laws that “the court held that the Fourteenth Amendment gave Congress power to restrain states but not individuals from the acts of racial discrimination and segregation.”)

²⁷

3) Hall v. deCuir, 1877

(The court ruled that a state could not prohibit segregation on a common carrier.)

4) Louisville, New Orleans and Texas Railroad v. Mississippi, 1890 (The court ruled that a state could constitutionally require segregation on carriers.)

[17]

5) Plessy v. Ferguson, 1896

(The court decided that “legislation is powerless to eradicate racial instincts,” therefore laid down the “separate but equal” rule for the justification of segregation.)

6) Finally, two years later (1898) in Williams v. Mississippi: “The court completed the opening of the

²⁷Jim Crow, p. 71.

legal road to proscription, segregation and disfranchisement by approving the Mississippi plan for depriving the Negroes of the franchise.”²⁸

Each of the above legislative decisions endorsed and made legal this more “favorable slavery,” and set the stage for the tolerance of “race war” thinking.

b. National

After the imperialistic exploits of the United States following 1898 by which it suddenly had under its jurisdiction some eight million people in the Pacific and Caribbean area, the nation took on many of the Southern attitudes on the subject of race. This reality was voiced by the editor of the *Atlantic Monthly* when he said: “If the stronger and cleverer race is free to impose its will upon the new-caught sullen people on the other side of the globe, why not in South Carolina and Mississippi?”²⁹ This led to a national retreat to the doctrine of Anglo-Saxon superiority and to all the implications of the “bloody shirt.”

Senator Tillman, an anti-black, disfranchisement proponent, said: “Not even Governor Roosevelt will now dare to wave the bloody shirt and preach a crusade against the South’s treatment of the Negro. The North has a bloody shirt of its own. Many thousands of them have been made into shrouds for murdered Filipinos, done to death because they were fighting for liberty.”³⁰

c. Intellectual

At the same time as the previous considerations, the doctrine of racism reached its crest of acceptability. It even had a high degree of popularity among scholarly and intellectual circles. Everywhere white biologists, sociologists, anthropologists, historians, and, beyond them, journalists and novelists, gave support to the doctrine that races were discrete entities and that “Anglo-Saxon” or “Caucasian” was superior to them all. As Woodward says: “It was not that Southern politicians needed any support from learned circles to sustain their own doctrines, but they found that such intellectual

²⁸Jim Crow, p. 71.

²⁹Allen Weinstein and Frank Gatell, eds., *The Segregation Era* (New York: 1970), pp. 78, 79. In subsequent references this book will be notated as *Segregation*.

³⁰*Ibid.*, pp. 78, 79.

endorsement of their racist theories facilitated acceptance of their views and policies.”³¹ This theory paved the way for the racial intolerance and white supremacy that gave rationality to the more “favorable slavery” and “race war.”

[18] In 1895 Ellen White capsulized the supporting sentiments of this new type of slavery in the following words: “Judges and jurors, lawyers and citizens would, if they had a chance, bring decisions which would bind about them rites which would cause much suffering, not only to the ones whom they term guilty of breaking the laws of their state, but all the colored people everywhere would be placed in a position of surveillance, and under cruel treatment by the white people, that would be no less than slavery.”³²

d. Civil

By 1900 the form of segregation was “cast” but it had yet to harden and lock in place. Allen Weinstein says about the period: “Once white southerners regained full political power in their states in the 1870’s, even the few outward trappings of black power disappeared or began to recede. Northerners increasingly contented themselves with self-congratulation over ending slavery and restoring the Union, while ignoring or deprecating the economic and political problems of the freedmen. Conservative white ‘Redeemers’ in the South drew closer to their northern counterparts, while rebuilding a strong Democratic party in the region; and as the Grant Era drew to a close, the ‘Negro Question’ seemed safely pigeon-holed as a matter for local authorities to handle. Southern blacks and a tiny band of northern white sympathizers knew quite well what ‘Redemption’ meant for the Negro; peonage in freedom replaced peonage in slavery for most blacks.”³³

After the turn of the century, one state after another enacted the process of legislative bondage. One of the key aims was the total disfranchisement of blacks. Into the state constitutions were written clauses that had the primary goal in mind to eliminate the black voter. Whether by the literary qualification rule (inclusive of the “understanding,” grandfather or “good character” clauses), the

³¹*Ibid.*, p. 79.

³²[The Southern Work](#), 72, 73. The realization of this prediction is depicted in Appendix B.

³³Weinstein and Gatell, *Segregation*, p. 57.

poll tax or the white primary, the end was the same—to hold blacks down by silencing the means of expressing themselves and effecting change. This was the time that the black historian, John Franklin, called “a long dark night.”

This new type of slavery was summed up well by the historian, C. Vann Woodward: “If the psychologists are correct in their hypothesis that aggression is always the result of frustration, then the South toward the end of the nineties was the perfect cultural seedbed for aggression against the minority race. Economic, political, and social frustrations had pyramided to a climax of social tensions.”³⁴

By the end of the first decade in the new century (1910), segregation was not only legislatively established, it had become an accepted part of society in both the North and the South. From the President and the Supreme Court, to the average citizen it was the way for the day. There was resistance to segregation in some quarters, especially by blacks, but overall it had gained the status of “the American way of life.”

3. “Race War”—*the extreme and undesirable*

[19]

Beyond speaking of the “more favorable slavery,” Ellen White also specifically stated that a “race war would be introduced.” It has already been shown that there is a difference between “slavery” and “race war,” with “race war” directly being equated with flagrant and identifiable hostility and violence between the races.

Did this “race war” happen according to Ellen White’s prediction? Was this prophecy fulfilled? Emphatically Yes! The history of racially inspired wars, riots, or battles is too well attested to historically to be questioned.

In explaining the tactics used to sell the disfranchisement platform, C. Vann Woodward explains that the leaders of this movement resorted to an intensive propaganda of white supremacy, Negrophobia, and race chauvinism. Such a campaign preceded and accompanied disfranchisement in each state. Stories of the Carpetbaggers, the history of the Ku Klux Klan, the Knights of the White Camelia, the heroes of the Home Rule, were all sensationally played up in speeches, newspapers, and books. Everywhere there were trumped up stories of Negro crime, charges of rape, attempted rape, alleged

³⁴Jim Crow, p. 81.

instances of arrogance and impertinence, surly manners, or lack of prompt and proper servility in conduct.

Lynchings, beatings, and other forms of violence were perpetrated by white supremacist groups who were out to keep blacks in "their proper place." It was in this context that Ellen White also made the prediction that:

I said that perilous times were coming, and that the sentiments that could then be expressed in regard to what should be done along missionary lines for the colored people could not be expressed in the future without imperiling lives. I said plainly that the work done for the colored people would have to be carried on along lines different from those followed in some sections of the country in former years.³⁵

And again, as in other areas, her prediction was unerringly accurate.

[20] She further said that "As time advances and race prejudices increase, it will become almost impossible, in many places, for white workers to labor for the colored people."³⁶

It should be noted here that Ellen White was not predicting for the mere sake of predicting; she was warning of the coming strife and seeking to motivate the church to do the work at hand. Through the articles she wrote for the *Review and Herald* in the mid-1890's she set forth the same principles in greater detail (see [The Southern Work, 19-65](#)).

The reality of the need for this warning is seen in conditions at the turn of the century:

The new century opened tragically with 214 lynchings in the first two years. Clashes between the races occurred almost daily, and the atmosphere of tension in which people of both races lived was conducive to little

³⁵Ellen G. White, [Testimonies for the Church 9:206](#)(California 1948). In subsequent references this book will be notated as 9T.

³⁶[Testimonies for the Church 9:207, 208.](#)

more than a struggle for mere survival, with a feeble groping in the direction of progress.³⁷

There are at least three well-documented areas that validate the fulfillment of the “race war” prediction.

Lynchings

A modest approximation of the lynchings that took place during the first two decades of the twentieth century was around 1,800 that were recorded. Lynching was a form of punishment administered by hanging (and sometimes included burning) and was normally done by a mob in a spirit of revenge, malice, or frenzy.

The first two decades saw a decline in lynching in general but a rise in the lynching of blacks in the South. Statistics show that in the first decade of the twentieth century, 90 percent of the lynchings took place in the South, with more than 85 percent of its victims being black (NAACP: *30 Years of Lynching in the U.S., 1889-1918*, pp. 29, 30). This increasing phenomenon of violence toward blacks accurately marked the rise of racial hatred. The irony was that in fewer than one-fifth of all the lynchings was there a charge of a crime deserving of capital punishment. [21]

In a letter to Frank Belden, dated October, 1899, Ellen White made what might be her only direct allusion to lynching:

The colored people have had before them the example of commonness and adultery. These evils are all through our world, but when the poor, wretched, ignorant race, who know scarcely anything of purity and righteousness, do commit sin—sin that committed by white people is scarcely condemned—colored people are tortured to death whether proved guilty or not. And the nation that permits this bears the name of Christian. God says, “Shall I not judge for these things?”³⁸

The use of the word *war* in the “race war” phrase takes on [22]

³⁷John Hope Franklin, *From Slavery to Freedom: A History of Negro Americans* (New York: 1980), pp. 266, 267. In subsequent references this book will be notated as *Slavery to Freedom*.

³⁸Race Relations, p. 112.

even stronger meaning when one understands that during this period most lynchings took place in mob settings of whites against a black, or blacks. Sometimes blacks would seek to defend themselves, although most such attempts proved to be unsuccessful, in the light of weapons, numbers, and sometimes even the authorities being against them.

In reaction to a bloody lynching at Coatesville, Pennsylvania, in 1911, one black writer warned whites that the “Negroes had had enough ... if we are to die, in God’s name let us perish like men and not like bales of hay.”³⁹ Again when blacks in Gainesville, Florida, failed to resist an attacking white mob in 1916, a black editorial entitled “Cowardice” insisted “that they should have fought in self-defense to the last ditch....”⁴⁰

*Acts of Violence*⁴¹

[23] Lynchings were only part of the antagonism. There also were beatings, stabbings, whippings, house burnings, gang molestations, and rape. This violence became so common against blacks that it is generally agreed that it regularly occurred without any documentation. Citizens from every strata of society took part in it—editors, churchgoers, professors, and clergymen. It is documented that in some cases law enforcers legally condoned the violence by observing, or, in some extreme cases, by taking part themselves.⁴²

A low point was reached, and the reality of Ellen White’s words were forcibly felt. It was not until the third decade that a significant decline of lynching and blatant violence took place in the South, as well as nationally, but even afterward violence surfaced at times of crisis.⁴³

³⁹Melvin Drimmer, ed., *Black History: A Reappraisal* (New York: 1968), p. 365. In subsequent references this book will be notated as *Black History*.

⁴⁰*Ibid.*, p. 365.

⁴¹The more well known of the acts of violence were against blacks in the last half of the twentieth century, such as (1) the massacre at East St. Louis, Ill, in 1917; (2) the multiple lynchings of Brooks and Lowndes Counties in 1918; (3) the Chicago riots in 1919; (4) the Elaine, Ark. massacre in 1919

⁴²Weinstein and Gatell, *Segregation*, p. 112. The Atlanta (1906) and Tulsa (1921) violent disturbances bear out such instances.

⁴³*Ibid.*, p. 185. The defeat of the Arkansas lynch law in the *Moore v. Dempsey* case (1923) was a milestone in marking the legal reaction against racial violence. This will be developed further.

*Race Wars*⁴⁴

As intimated earlier, there was a backlash of violence in some cases from blacks against whites. Thus, interspersed between the lynchings and acts of violence there were bloody racial wars or battles fought between the years 1908 and 1921.⁴⁵

Six major race riots occurred between 1900 and 1910. In the riots the North vied with the South in both the number and scope of the violent outbreaks. And while there may be some temptation to minimize the seriousness of these riots in the light of more recent civil disorders, there is an essential difference between the riots of the first decade of this century and those of more recent vintage. The riots before 1910 entailed far less death and destruction, but they were authentic “race riots” in that they involved mobs of white citizens perpetrating crimes against Negro life and property, and Negro citizens returning the favor. Thus far, the recent riots have generally been directed toward symbols of economic and social oppression, not so much against persons of the opposite race. Mobs of white citizens were virtually unheard of in the riots of the 1960’s. Very few, if any, have been killed recently by *white private citizens*, and extremely few by Negro citizens.⁴⁶

D. The Religious Setting

Finally, we want to briefly note that the religious climate was one of extreme tension for the Seventh-day Adventist Church, due to the Sunday/Sabbath question. This issue is succinctly summed up in the White Estate shelf document, “Comments Relative to the Revival of Slavery.” In reference to the work being done by Edson

[24]

⁴⁴For an account of an actual war fought in 1920 known as The Eruption of Tulsa, see Appendix B-2

⁴⁵Peter M. Bergman and Mort N. Bergman, *The Chronological History of the Negro in America*, (New York: 199), see pp. 350-400. This section referred to in *The Chronological History* provides a complete chronological record of significant events related to Black history during the 1908 to 1921 period.

⁴⁶*Race Relations*, pp. 24, 25.

White and his missionary riverboat, *Morning Star*, among the blacks of the South, it went on to say:

This was just at a time when a number of Seventh-day Adventists were having serious problems in the South because of their violation of the state Sunday laws. Some were imprisoned or placed in chaingangs. Among us there were some differences of opinions as to just what attitude we should take under such circumstances. Some felt that we must show our faith by doing manual labor in the sight of others on Sunday so that they would know where we stood. Others took the chopping-block out near the street and split wood on Sunday morning. Some of our sisters hung out their washing on that day. Now with a work beginning among the colored people, Seventh-day Adventist leaders faced this question: What counsel shall we give to these new believers in this tense region of North America? ⁴⁷

It is obvious that the religious issue was compounded on the color question. On one hand it was like walking on a bed of pins and needles, and on the other hand it was like walking a tightrope. Though the slaves had been freed in the 1860's, not until the mid-1890's was any serious work done by the Adventists in the South, and, as we have seen earlier, by that time segregationism had settled and taken roots. This made the church's work precarious, and it also made the converted black's role doubly dangerous.

So it was in the midst not only of racial tension but of religious tension, that Ellen White spoke of "slavery" and "race war." There were problems, yes; but she urged the church to move quickly to do evangelistic work quietly in the South because there were more difficulties to come (see [The Southern Work, 63-65](#)). She said during the Armadale interview in Australia (November 20, 1895) that:

When the truth is proclaimed in the South, a marked difference will be shown by those who oppose the truth

⁴⁷White Estate Document, Comments Relative to the Revival of Slavery (Monograph), p.3. In subsequent references this document will be notated as Comments Relative to Slavery.

in their greater regard for Sunday, and great care must be exercised, not to do anything to arouse their prejudice. Otherwise, we may just as well leave the field entirely, for the workers will have all the white people against them. Those who oppose the truth will not work openly, but through secret organizations, and they will seek to hinder the work in every possible way.⁴⁸

[25]

True to form, God was warning His church of what was yet to come (see [2 Peter 1:19](#)).

⁴⁸The Southern Work, 67.

[26]

Considerations

In this section key considerations that surface as a result of the study in this paper are summarized.

A. Ellen White’s usage of the term “race war” and other similar statements was/is understandable in historical context.

A careful perusal of the contexts of this statement and other related ones reveals that the people to whom Ellen White spoke could understand that she referred to imminent racial strife and problems. Though the predictions may not have been developed fully and realized when predicted, they were, in fact, fulfilled in approximately the first two decades of the twentieth century.

B. Ellen White’s usage of the term “slavery” was given different connotations and meanings according to the particular context in which it was used.

As in the case of the “slavery” statements used in this paper, the meaning of the term refers to the subjugation experienced by blacks in economic, legal, educational, social, and civil matters. See Appendix C for a complete examination of Ellen White’s use of the word *slavery* in her writings.

C. The prediction concerning “race war” was fulfilled, but like other statements by Ellen White, it has continuing application.

Ellen White made several statements that had specific fulfillment, but also had continuing, contemporary relevance. These statements may include:

[27] Her 1864 statement concerning the poisonous nature of tobacco ([Temperance, 57](#)).

Her 1890 statement on the effect of negative pre-natal influences ([Patriarchs and Prophets, 561](#)).

Her 1905 statement pointing to cancer as a virus or germ ([The Ministry of Healing, 365](#)).

Her other statements concerning the negative use of drugs ([Selected Messages 2:442](#)).

The rise of Spiritualism ([The Great Controversy, 561](#)), etc.

So it is with her 1907 prediction concerning the “race war.” It was, in fact, fulfilled, but in the train of that fulfillment there has been an historical line of racial disturbances and antagonism. On the racial front there have been riots and counter-riots, marches and counter-marches, backlashes and counter-backlashes. The continuing effects of this fulfilled prediction are being felt in our day.

D. Ellen White saw the race question as being a matter of continual potential sensitivity, and hence there would always be a need for concern and balance in dealing with it. ¹

The external conditions she predicted were the result of an internal problem, and thus she spoke of the “spirit of slavery” (November 20, 1895, [The Southern Work, 67, 81](#)). She saw that in the unconverted heart the issue would ever have a potential explosiveness about it, to both blacks and whites.

In 1909, during the period of the fulfillment of the “race war” and “slavery” predictions, she wrote in the *Testimonies*, volume 9, concerning the relations between the races: “The relation of the two races has been a matter hard to deal with, and I fear that it will ever remain a most perplexing problem.” ²

[28]

Ten years earlier she had written the same phrase in a letter to “a responsible minister,” which is recorded in full in [The Southern Work, 84](#) (dated June 5, 1899).

In spite of the advances made and the fact that conditions are vastly improved over what they were in the early years of this century, twentieth century man still deals with the reaction to previous problems and their current manifestations. Though there should be thankfulness over progress achieved, sensitivity, caution, and

¹For relevant race principles revealed in Ellen White’s writings in connection with this subject, see Appendix D

²[Testimonies for the Church 9:214](#).

balance should still characterize those who deal with race relations today.

E. Slavery, prejudice, and all of their resultant evils were viewed by Ellen White as originating with Satan, and she saw that the only true antidote is acceptance of the Spirit of Christ, and genuine conversion.

Origins

The whole system of slavery was originated by Satan, who delights in tyrannizing over human beings. ³

Through human agencies, Satan has manifested his own attributes and passions.... ⁴

Parties [secret organizations] are already formed, and they are waiting, burning with a desire to serve their master, the devil, and do abominable work. ⁵

[29] The powers of hell are working with all their ingenuity to prevent the proclamation of the last message of mercy among the colored people. ⁶

Antidote

Men have both hereditary and cultivated prejudices, but when the love of Jesus fills the heart, and they become one with Christ, they will have the same spirit that He did. If a colored brother sits by their side, they will not be offended or despise him. They are journeying to the same heaven, and will be seated at the same table to eat bread in the Kingdom of God. If Jesus is abiding in our hearts we cannot despise the colored man who has the same Saviour abiding in his heart. ⁷

³The Southern Work, 61.

⁴The Southern Work, 61.

⁵The Southern Work, 87.

⁶Testimonies for the Church 9:208.

⁷The Southern Work, 14 (March 20, 1891).

The walls of sectarianism and caste and race will fall down when the true missionary spirit enters the heart of men. Prejudice is melted away by the love of God. ⁸

Walls of separation have been built up between the whites and blacks. These walls of prejudice will tumble down of themselves as did the walls of Jericho, when Christians obey the Word of God, which enjoins on them supreme love to their Maker and impartial love to their neighbors. ⁹

When the Holy Spirit is poured out, there will be a triumph of humanity over prejudice in seeking the salvation of the soul of human beings. God will control minds. Human hearts will love as Christ loved. ¹⁰

F. History testifies to the validity of Ellen White's prophetic insight in urging the church to work for the blacks in the South before conditions changed, making work more difficult.

Prior to the Emancipation Proclamation most of the major denominations (Presbyterians, Episcopalians, and Baptists) restricted the black ministry and placed blacks in segregated sections in their congregations. However, following the release of the slaves, the conditions were entirely changed. As John Hope Franklin comments:

The end of the war led to the expansion of independent churches among Negroes. There were no longer Southern laws to silence Negro preachers and proscribe their separate organizations. Negroes began to withdraw from white churches once they had secured their freedom, and consequently the Negro church grew rapidly after the war.... The African Methodist Episcopal Church, which had only 20,000 members in 1856, boasted 75,000 ten years later. In 1876 its membership exceeded 200,000, and its influence and material possessions had increased proportionally. The Baptists

[30]

⁸The Southern Work, 55 (January 21, 1896).

⁹The Southern Work, 43 (December 17, 1895).

¹⁰Testimonies for the Church 9:209 (1909).

likewise enjoyed phenomenal growth. Local churches sprang up overnight under the ministry of unlettered but inspired preachers. . . . Within a few years every Southern state had a large Negro Baptist organization. Their total membership increased from 150,000 in 1850 to 500,000 in 1870. ¹¹

With four-million-plus blacks free and open and searching in their religious outlook, the fields were ripe, the time was prime for evangelism among blacks. The reaction? Hundreds of ministers moved in to assume religious leadership. Unfortunately, Seventh-day Adventists were not among them, at least not in significant numbers. And so the vast majority of blacks turned to the doctrines of the Baptists, Methodists, Episcopalians, and Presbyterians. This phenomenal period of potential is graphically set forth in the statistics of the Baptist Church and other denominations as seen in the above quotation.

It was a brief period of relief and opportunity for the freed black. For a ten-to-twenty-year period after the Civil War, known to some as the "mystic years," there was an unprecedented time for evangelism. Ellen White knew of this opportunity, hence wrote, spoke, and helped to support the black work in any way she could. She also knew that this period would not last long, and so appealed to the church and its leadership to work the Southern field, leaving the "results with God." She was firm, clear, and decided, but the overall church response was virtually nil until the mid-nineties. (See also [The Southern Work](#), 25, 26, and 31ff, 37ff, 54ff, 58ff, 63ff.)

¹¹ Slavery to Freedom, pp. 237-238.

Conclusion

[31]

A. Past Fulfillment

History shows that the race predictions we have examined were fulfilled in an historic and specific manner within the first two decades of the twentieth century.

There was “slavery”—politically, economically, socially. That which was already operative by the end of the first decade (1910) was perpetuated. But beyond that, in the second decade (1911ff) the bondage increased ten-fold and continued to proliferate.

As to “race war,” again history bears out the accuracy of this prediction. Whereas before the turn of the century there had been acts of violence, generally perpetrated by whites against blacks in the early 1900’s, there was an increased amount of violence by whites against blacks, particularly in the South. These cases of violence increased, and in some cities and counties blacks in large numbers were attacked, lynched, burned, shot, etc.

In reaction to this violence, a few black voices advocated self-defense, the need to fight back as a means of protection. There were, in fact, situations where blacks banded together and resisted.

This was, without question, a dark period in our national chronicles. Fortunately, these flagrant occurrences peaked and began to decline during the second decade of the twentieth century.

History sadly notes that there was yet more violence in the succeeding years, especially until lynching was legally discontinued; yet these times did not match the earlier years in the widespread and flagrant acts of bloodshed and loss of life. Providentially, however, human passions had opportunity to cool with the passing of time and preoccupation with other matters.

[32]

B. Present Implications

To assume naively that all is well on the racial front would be to miss the principle. In spite of her balanced caution, Ellen

White was hopeful on the race question and spoke of the power of Christ over the power of prejudice. Advances have been made. We have realized progress as a result of her “until-the-Lord-shows-us-a-better-way” principle ([Testimonies for the Church 9:207](#)). We have realized in our day the truth of her words, “When these unchristian prejudices are broken down more earnest effort will be put forth to do missionary effort among the colored race” ([The Southern Work, 55ff](#)). At times and in different places it appears as if we are nearing the time that she spoke of by inference when she said, “The time has not yet come for us to work as though there were no prejudice” (White Estate Shelf Document, *Comments Relative to the Revival of Slavery*, p. 14). Yet we cannot afford to be oblivious of the counter realities as well.

We can well praise the Lord for the progress made, but we also need to give thought to the somber note she sounded when saying:

It will be impossible to adjust all matters regarding the color question in accordance with the Lord’s order until those who believe the truth are so closely united with Christ that they are one with Him. Both the white and the colored members of our churches need to be converted. There are some of both classes who are unreasonable, and when the color question is agitated they manifest unsanctified, unconverted traits of character. Quarrelsome elements are easily aroused in those who, because they have never learned to wear the yoke of Christ, are opinionated and obstinate. In such, self clamors with an unsanctified determination for the supremacy.¹

[33]

Such a statement should cause honest, thinking Christians to examine themselves carefully lest a spirit other than Christ’s be found; for the devil is quick to fan the flame of self and prejudice alive wherever he may see its faint glow.

¹Comments Relative to Slavery, p. 10.

C. Future Promise

It is at this point that we can thank God sincerely and deeply for what He has done for us through the words and work of His messenger, and even for what He will yet do.

We, the repositories of God's "present truth," the Seventh-day Adventist Church, have the ever-present forum to mirror the spirit of Christ exhibited in love and unity in the area of race relations. In our day such a spirit will be a witness and drawing power, and will be a rebuke to the negative emotions of prejudice that are evident in the world around us.

In summary we are challenged with the words of unity by Ellen White and Christ Himself:

When the Holy Spirit moves upon human minds ... in our worship of God there will be no distinction between rich and poor, white and black. All prejudice will be melted away. When we approach God, it will be as one brotherhood. We are pilgrims and strangers, bound for a better country, even a heavenly. There all pride, all accusation, all self-deception, will forever have an end. Every mask will be laid aside, and we shall "see him as he is." There our songs will catch the inspiring theme, and praise and thanksgiving will go up to God. ²

May they be brought to complete unity to let the world know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me ([John 17:23 NIV](#)). ³

²Race Relations, p. 121.

³The prayer of Christ concerning His desire for the unity of His followers is the ultimate confrontation to prejudice in all of its forms and is a powerful challenge' to promote human and religious brotherhood.

Appendices

Appendix A—“Our Duty To The Colored People”

This message has been recognized for its signal effect on the Adventist Church and its work in the South. It is one of the most significant and revealing of Ellen White’s messages on the race question. It also was one of the key factors that motivated and instructed James Edson White in his work for the blacks in the South. As stated in *Mission to Black America*, Edson found a copy of this message on the floor in the former room of the International Tract Society in the Review and Herald building in Battle Creek, Michigan (pp. 17, 18).

This message, entitled *Our Duty to the Colored People*, was prepared and delivered by Ellen White at the Battle Creek Tabernacle church to a group of church leaders in connection with a General Conference session March 21, 1891. After its delivery, “key men and the leading ministers in the South” were supplied with it. In light of the times it was a bold and significant message that was instrumental in giving the Southern work the initial boost, because at the time of its delivery in 1891 little work was being done for blacks in the South by the church as a whole.

This message presents Ellen White as the reformer she was. Here she clearly set forth principles of racial equality and denominational impartiality that had been neglected. In this same message she seasoned her counsel with a sense of caution and prudence that was vital in light of the racial conditions of her times.

The message in its entirety is found in [The Southern Work, 9-18](#).

Appendix B—Historical Case Studies

1. “Slavery” more “favorable” and “secure”

Both the Debt Slavery System and the Convict Slavery System, which were increasingly practiced in various Southern states during the first decades of the twentieth century, poignantly illustrate Ellen

White's reference to a "slavery ... more favorable and secure to the white people."

The following two accounts are taken from the volume, *A Documentary History of the Negro People in the United States*, edited by Dr. Herbert Aptheker: [35]

a. The Debt Slavery System

"The slavery is a cunningly contrived debt slavery to give the appearance of civilization and the sanction of law. A debt of a few hundred dollars may tie a black man and his family of ten as securely in bondage to a great white planter as if he had purchased their bodies. If the Thirteenth Amendment, which has never been enforced in this region, means anything, it is that a man's body cannot be held for an honestly contracted debt; that only his property can be held; and that if a contracting debtor has no property, the creditor takes the risk in advancing credit. Otherwise a law abolishing slavery could be easily evaded, for the wealthy enslaver could get the poor victim into debt and then hold his body in default in payment. Wages could then be so adjusted to expenses and the cost of 'keep' that the slavery would be unending.

"And that is precisely the system of debt-slavery. The only way for this debt-slave to get free from such a master is to get someone else to pay this debt; that is, to sell himself to another, with added charges, expenses of moving and bonuses. By this method, the enslaver gets his bondmen cheaper than in a regular slave system, for in the debt system he does not have to pay the full market price of a man.

"The effect is to allow the ignorant and the poor unwittingly and unwillingly to sell themselves for much less than an old slaveholder would have sold them. The debtmaster has other advantages. He is free from liabilities on account of the debtor's ill-health or the failure of his crops. The debtor takes all risk. In case of mis-

fortune or crop failure, he gets deeper in debt, more securely tied in bondage.”¹

b. The Convict Slavery System

“The temptation of the large plantation owner to exploit the brawn of the defenseless Negro avails itself of another unfair advantage in which the state becomes a party to the wrong. It is the custom of farming out prisoners—state prisoners and even county and city prisoners. A Negro who has been jailed for some misdemeanor or fined for vagrancy, may be ‘sold’ to some landlord who needs farm hands, for the price of the Negro’s fine. The farmer pays the fine and is supposed to work it out of the Negro in a specified time. The colored man is still a prisoner of the state and is kept in chains and stockaded, maybe on the landlord’s private estate, under guards who may shoot him down if he attempts to escape, or whip his naked back if he does not work to suit them. Thus the state, under the technical right of law, does a slave business.

[36] “It can be readily understood why this system is so much more vicious than was the old slave system. In a regular slave system, the owner might have such selfish interest in the slave as any man may have in the preservation of his valuable property. But in the convict lease system of Georgia, it is to the landlord’s advantage to put the least into the Negro and get the most out of him whom he owns for a limited time only.”²

2. *The Eruption of Tulsa*

The account that is mentioned here took place in Tulsa, Oklahoma, in May, 1921, six years after the death of Ellen White. It was literally called a “veritable racial war.”³ Leaving out everything

¹Herbert Aptheker, *A Documentary History of the Negro People in the United States*, (New Jersey: 1973), p. 319.

²*Ibid.*, p. 323.

³*Ibid.*, p. 318.

not essential to illustrate the point at hand, the following, like many other accounts, will adequately show the realities of Ellen White's "race war" prediction:

"Around five o'clock Wednesday morning the mob, now numbering more than 10,000 made a mass attack on Little Africa. Machine guns were brought into use; eight aeroplanes were employed to spy on the movements of the Negroes and according to some were used in bombing the colored section. All that was lacking to make the scene a replica of modern 'Christian' warfare was poison gas. The colored men and women fought gamely in defense of their homes, but the odds were too great. According to the statements of onlookers, men in uniform, either home guards or ex-service men or both, carried cans of oil into Little Africa, and, after looting the homes, set fire to them. Many are the stories of horror told to me—not by colored people—but by the white residents."⁴

Appendix C—"Slavery" Categories In The Spirit Of Prophecy

Ellen White does not always use the term "slavery" to mean the same thing. In most cases a careful study of the context, objective reasoning, and a sense for the main point will identify the meaning of the usage of the term in context. It is essential that the reader understand this, or wrong conclusions and/or confusion will ensue. She identifies this danger in a letter she wrote June 28, 1906:

Those who are not walking in the light of the message, may gather up statements from my writings that happen to please them, and that agree with their human judgment, and, by separating these statements from their connection, and placing them beside human reasoning, make it appear that my writings uphold that which they condemn.⁵

⁴*Ibid.*, p. 331.

⁵Arthur White, Ellen G. White, Messenger to the Remnant, (Washington, D.C.: 1969), p.86.

There are least five categories of meaning that Ellen White employs when using the term "slavery."

1. Literal Physical Slavery

When reference is made to the institution of slavery prior to the Civil War/Emancipation Proclamation, slavery denotes actual bondage, with slaves, masters, etc. This usage is reflected in references such as:

[37]

I was shown that if the object of this war had been to exterminate *slavery*, then if desired, England would have helped the North. But England fully understands the existing feeling in the Government, and that the war is not to do away [with] *slavery*, but merely to preserve the Union; and it is not for her interest to have it preserved. Our Government has been very proud and independent. The people of this nation have exalted themselves to heaven, and have looked down upon monarchical governments, and triumphed in their boasted liberty, while the institution of *slavery*, that was a thousand times worse than the tyranny exercised by monarchical governments, was suffered to exist and was cherished. In this land of light a system is cherished which allows one portion of the human family to enslave another portion, degrading millions of human beings to the level of the brute creation. The equal of this sin is not to be found in heathen lands. ⁶

2. Social Racial Slavery

The social or civil bondage or disfranchisement of blacks by the whites in the late 1800's and early 1900's is here spoken of. Slavery here was used to refer not to actual slavery (as referred to above), but to the social, economic, and political bondage exercised over blacks. (In this context "race war" is used to refer to the mutual antagonistic exchange between the races, primarily in a physical sense.) This usage is reflected in such references as:

⁶Ellen G. White, [Testimonies for the Church 1:258, 259](#)(California: 1948).

There will be *slavery* just as verily as it has been only upon a basis that is more favorable and secure to the white people.⁷

That is the danger. That is why I have pleaded and entreated, entreated, and entreated for the work to be done in the South, because I knew that this very race war would be introduced.⁸

3. *Symbolical Spiritual Slavery*

Here Ellen White refers to the bondage to habits of sin, such as intemperance, appetite, or selfishness. This, of course, is much different from the other uses of the word, and clearly is symbolic in a spiritual sense. The usage is reflected in:

It is now evident to all that the wages of sin is not noble independence and eternal life, but *slavery*, ruin, and death.⁹

“Abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul” is the language of the apostle Peter. Many regard this warning as applicable only to the licentious; but it has a broader meaning. It guards against every injurious gratification of appetite or passion. It is a most forcible warning against the use of such stimulants and narcotics as tea, coffee, tobacco, alcohol, and morphine. These indulgences may well be classed among the lusts that exert a pernicious influence upon moral character. The earlier these hurtful habits are formed, the more firmly will they hold their victims in *slavery* to lust, and the more certainly will they lower the standard of spirituality.¹⁰

[38]

The Christian will be filled with joy in proportion as he is a faithful steward of his Lord’s goods. Christ yearns to save every son and daughter of Adam. He lifts

⁷Interview, p. 5.

⁸*Ibid.*, p. 6.

⁹Ellen G. White, [The Great Controversy](#), 668(California: 1911). In subsequent references this book will be notated as Great Controversy.

¹⁰Ellen G. White, [Counsels on Health](#), 67, 68(California: 1951).

His voice in warning, in order to break the spell which has bound the soul in captivity to the *slavery* of sin. He beseeches men to turn from their infatuation. He brings the nobler world before their vision, and says, "Lay up not for yourselves treasure upon the earth."¹¹

4. *Religious-Prompted Slavery*

This aspect refers to slavery prompted by religious issues, such as the Sunday/Sabbath question. In context these references and inferences had particular relevance in Ellen White's day as it related to the Sunday/Sabbath question. There were questions in this area dealing with the "imprisonment of Seventh-day Adventists for the breaking of Sunday laws,"¹² and also how the same issue should be handled as it related to teaching "the newly converted colored people."¹³ In this context Ellen White referred to how the devil was very active, by saying:

I am instructed to say to our people throughout the cities of the South, let everything be done under the direction of the Lord. The work is nearing its close. We are nearer the end than when we first believed. Satan is doing his best to block the way to the progress of the message. He is putting forth efforts to bring about the enactment of a Sunday law, which will result in *slavery* in the Southern field, and will close the door to the observance of the true Sabbath which God has given to men to keep holy.¹⁴

In light of the history of the South, the possibility of religious initiated slavery being revived was very strong. Obviously, this conditional reference passed its crisis point, and the truth was able to be proclaimed in the South. For an in-depth treatment of this particular aspect, see the White Estate document entitled, *Comments on the Ellen G. White Statement Relative to the Revival of Slavery*.

¹¹Ellen G. White, *Counsels on Stewardship*, 136, 137 (Washington, D.C.: 1940).

¹²Comments Relative to Slavery, p. 4. 71 *Ibid.*, p. 4.

¹³*Ibid.*, p. 4

¹⁴*Ibid.*, p. 8.

5. *Eschatologically Related Slavery*

This type of bondage will take place prior to the second coming of Christ when again the Sabbath/Sunday issue will gain prominence on a national scale. And as a result of legislative enactments, slavery, such as bondage, imprisonment, and physical control of one person by another, will again become a reality. The Bible refers to it, as does Ellen White. Again a very clear delineation should be made between this type of slavery, which will affect all races and the other categories mentioned. It is confusing or misleading to merge her different usages of the term. This very real slavery, to be in the last days, will affect Blacks, Whites, Chinese, Hispanics, Indians, et cetera—anyone who refuses homage to the powers that be and honors the true Sabbath and not the spurious one. This usage is referred to in passages in the book of Revelation and *The Great Controversy*:

[39]

And the mighty men, and every bondman, and every free man, hid themselves in the dens and in the rocks of the mountains; And said to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb: For the great day of his wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand? ¹⁵

As the defenders of truth refuse to honor the Sunday-sabbath, some of them will be thrust into prison, some will be exiled, some will be treated as *slaves*. To human wisdom, all this now seems impossible; but as the restraining Spirit of God shall be withdrawn from men, and they shall be under the control of Satan, who hates the divine precepts, there will be strange developments. The heart can be very cruel when God's fear and love are removed. ¹⁶

As the decree issued by the various rulers of Christendom against commandment-keepers shall withdraw the protection of government, and abandon them to those who desire their destruction, the people of God

¹⁵Revelation 6:15-17 (KJV).

¹⁶The Great Controversy, 608.

will flee from the cities and villages and associate together in companies, dwelling in the most desolate and solitary places. Many will find refuge in the strongholds of the mountains.... but many of all nations, and of all classes, high and low, rich and poor black and white, will be cast into the most unjust and cruel *bondage*.¹⁷

When the reader is armed with an understanding of the different types of meaning Ellen White used in referring to slavery and related terms, while being sensitive to the context, it is possible to get a better understanding of the principles and points set forth.

Appendix D—Relevant Race Principles Evident In Ellen White's Writings

1. Ellen White unequivocally condemned the system of slavery and its related evils and depicted this as one of the arenas where the great controversy was being fought.

She made a fervent and passionate denunciation of the entire system and gave it its sinful, temporal dimension, but also gave it its spiritual and eschatological dimension:

[40]

One finite human being compelling another to do his will, claiming to be mind and judgment for another, and this sentiment that has Satan for its originator, has presented a history, terrible, horrible in oppression, tortures and bloodshed.

Man is God's property by creation and redemption, but man has been demanding the right to compel the consciences of men. Prejudices, passions, satanic attributes, have revealed themselves in men as they have exercised their powers against their fellow men.

All is written, *all*, every injustice, every harm, every fraudulent action, every pang of anguish caused in physical suffering, is written in the books of heaven as done to Jesus Christ, who has purchased man at an infinite price, even his own life. All who treat His property with

¹⁷[The Great Controversy, 626.](#)

cruelty, are charged with doing it all to Jesus Christ in the person of His heritage, who are His by all the claims of creation and redemption. And while we are seeking to help the very ones who need help, we are registered as doing the same to Christ.

A correct knowledge of the Scripture would make men fear and tremble for their future, for every work will be brought into review before God, and they will receive their punishment according as their works have been. God will give to the faithful and true, patience under trial. ¹⁸

2. *The conditions of the blacks in the South was a consistent concern to Ellen White, and one that she spoke of often. Further, she compared their condition as being similar to that of the Hebrew slaves when they left Egypt.*

Those who study the history of the Israelites should also consider the history of the slaves in America, who have suffered, who have been educated in crime, degraded, and oppressed, and left in ignorance to perish. Their physical freedom was obtained at a great loss of life, and Christians generally should have looked with compassion upon the colored race, for which God had a care. They should have done a work for them that would have uplifted them. They should have worked through the wisdom of God to educate and train them. We have been very neglectful of our colored brethren, and are not yet prepared for the coming of our Lord. The cries of these neglected people have come up before God. Who has entered into the work since their deliverance from bondage, to teach them the knowledge of God? The condition of the colored people is no more helpless than was the condition of the Hebrew slaves. ¹⁹

3. *While being mindful of the negative effects of the system of slavery, Ellen White was also mindful of the potential of the black race.* [41]

She spoke of potential:

He sees precious jewels that will shine out from among the colored race. Let the work be taken up de-

¹⁸Race Relations, pp. 109, 110.

¹⁹The Southern Work, 42, 43.

terminedly, and let both the young and those of mature age be educated in essential branches. ²⁰

She spoke of possibilities:

The colored people may be compared to a mine that is to be worked, in which is valuable ore of most precious material.... One tenth of the advantages that their more favored brethren have received and failed to improve, would cause them to become mediums of light through which the brightness of the righteousness of Christ might shine forth. ²¹

4. *One of Ellen White's burdens to the church was that the gospel might be spread and work might be done among the blacks.*

In a series of ten articles written for the *Review and Herald* in the mid-1890's, Ellen White eloquently presented the needs and appealed for workers and support in the Southern field (see [The Southern Work, 19-65](#)). These messages reveal God's concern and divine will for the Adventist Church in relation to the black work. Ellen White spoke these with conviction, unflinchingly and with directness.

5. *Ellen White repeatedly put the race issue in a Biblical religious setting, by analogically comparing it with various Bible subjects. It was more than merely a civil national issue; rather, for Christians and Seventh-day Adventists, it was a spiritual issue, one with eternal implications.*

The following are some of the comparisons: (All page references are to *Southern Work*, unless otherwise noted.)

a. Deliverance message of liberty	pp. 9-14
b. Christ's mission to humanity	p. 9
c. Christ and the Scribes and Pharisees	p. 10
d. Parable of Lazarus	p. 12

²⁰[The Southern Work, 63.](#)

²¹[The Southern Work, 65.](#)

e. Gentiles and the Jews	p. 20
f. Parable of the Marriage Supper	p. 21
g. Moses before Pharoah	p. 23
h. Israel’s experience as a nation	pp. 23-24
i. Parable of the priest, Levite and Samaritan	pp. 19, 26
j. Exodus movement	pp. 41-45
k. Wilderness experience	p. 41
l. Walls of Jericho	p. 43
m. Love concept in the Ten Commandments	p. 54

n. Jonah’s attitude and mission	p. 79
o. Christ and His condecension	p. 85
p. Spies sent to the Promised Land	p. 88
q. Serpent and doves	p. 91
r. Vineyard	p. 96
s. Wall of partition	Ministry of Healing
	pp. 25, 27
t. Power of the Sun of Righteousness	Church Race Relations,
	p. 121
u. The Light of the World	Testimonies, vol. 9,
	pp. 199-203

6. *The inherent equality of the races was clearly understood and expounded by Ellen White, in spite of many of the racist views that were being circulated. Adventism had the opportunity of being a reconciler.* [42]

Christ came to this earth with a message of mercy and forgiveness. He laid the foundation for a religion

by which Jew and Gentile, black and white, free and bond, are linked together in one common brotherhood, recognized as equal in the sight of God. The Saviour has a boundless love for every human being. In each one He sees capacity for improvement. With divine energy and hope He greets those for whom He has given His life. In His strength they can live a life rich in good works, filled with the power of the Spirit. ²²

The religion of the Bible recognizes no caste or color. It ignores rank, wealth, worldly honor. God estimated men as men. With Him, character decides their worth. And we are to recognize the Spirit of Christ in whomsoever it is revealed. ²³

Thus Christ sought to teach the disciples the truth that in God's kingdom there are no territorial lines, no caste, no aristocracy; that they must go to all nations, bearing to them the message of a Saviour's love. ²⁴
—(See also [The Southern Work](#), 29, 31, 35, 55, 57.)

²²Ellen G. White, [Testimonies for the Church 7:225](#)(California: 1948).

²³[Testimonies for the Church 9:223](#).

²⁴Ellen G. White, [The Acts of the Apostles](#), 20(California: 1911).

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