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ABSTRACT

PRINCIPLES OF CHURCH-STATE RELATIONSHIPS  
IN THE WRITINGS OF ELLEN G. WHITE

by

Marcio D. Costa

Adviser: Jerry Moon

ABSTRACT OF GRADUATE STUDENT RESEARCH

Dissertation

Andrews University

Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary

Title: PRINCIPLES OF CHURCH-STATE RELATIONSHIPS IN THE WRITINGS OF  
ELLEN G. WHITE

Name of the researcher: Marcio D. Costa

Name and degree of faculty adviser: Jerry Moon, Ph.D.

Date Completed: March 2010

The Topic

Since the beginnings of Seventh-day Adventism there have been real or perceived tensions between two contrasting perspectives of church-state relationships: (1) the “eschatological view” that a union of church and state will lead to persecution in the times preceding the second coming of Christ, and (2) the “temporal view” that in order to accomplish its mission in the present, the church needs to work in an independent, but non-conflictual relationship with the state as far as it can do so without violating its primary allegiance to God.

The Purpose

In order to discover Ellen G. White’s position on the two perspectives, the study

analyzed all the writings of Ellen G. White on the topic of church-state relationships, searching for her principles of church-state relationships. Her principles were compared with the views of others during the colonial and early federal periods of American history, and with the historical records of the church-state debate among Adventists until the end of her life.

### The Sources

The search for principles used all relevant published and unpublished writings of Ellen G. White. The studies of the American historical background and the progression of the debate among Adventists used both primary and secondary sources.

### The Conclusions

Ellen White's principles of church-state relationships grew out of her worldview of a Great Controversy between good and evil. She believed that both church and state had been established by God as separate institutions with distinct purposes for the benefit of humankind. However, in the conflict between good and evil, both church and state are objects of Satan's attack. According to White, the state has divinely given authority to enforce the last six of the Ten Commandments which define human responsibilities to other humans, and to safeguard the freedom of humans to obey the first four commandments which describe their responsibilities to God. Thus the proper role of government is to protect both the religious and civil liberties of its citizens.

Ellen White expected the church to pursue its mission in compliance with the laws of the land, but with nonnegotiable loyalty to God, and that Adventist participation in social and political activism should always be subordinate to the requirements of the church's mission.

Andrews University  
Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary

PRINCIPLES OF CHURCH-STATE RELATIONSHIPS IN  
THE WRITINGS OF ELLEN G. WHITE

A Dissertation  
Presented in Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree  
Doctor of Philosophy

by  
Marcio D. Costa  
March 2010

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CAR	Center for Adventist Research, James White Library, Andrews University, Berrien Springs, Michigan
GCA	General Conference Archives, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, Silver Spring, Maryland
Lt	Letter
Ms	Manuscript
<i>RH</i>	<i>Review and Herald; or Second Advent Review and Sabbath Herald; or Advent Review and Sabbath Herald</i>
SDA	Seventh-day Adventist

## PREFACE

### **Background**

Since the founding of the Christian church, its relationship to civil government has been a pivotal issue. Jesus Himself was confronted about it, and gave His famous dictum: “Render to Caesar what belongs to Caesar, and to God what belongs to God.” The early Christians were often persecuted by the state, until Constantine made Christianity the official religion of the Empire. Union with the state gave the church political protection, preference, prestige, and wealth, but took away its moral independence, leading to corruption and decline during the middle ages.

The Protestant Reformation of the sixteenth century had two major streams. The Magisterial Reformers accepted the medieval tradition of giving the magistrates of the state a share in the governance of the church. Thus the Lutheran, Reformed, and Anglican churches continued the custom of the church being officially “established” by state law and supported by state taxes. The Radical Reformers founded what became known as the “free churches,” because they were free from state support and control.

Magisterial Protestants used the term “reformation” in the sense of cleansing the church of the worst of its political and doctrinal corruptions, while still maintaining the church-state relationship of privilege, support, and control that had evolved since Constantine. Radical Protestants qualified their concept of “reformation” by using two more specific terms: “restoration” or “restitution,” indicating their goal of restoring both the doctrines and the practices of the church to their original condition as described in the

New Testament.<sup>1</sup>

The Restorationist ideals enjoyed a renaissance in the early nineteenth century in North America, finding expression especially in the Christian Connection. It has been argued that the Seventh-day Adventist church largely inherited its concerns about church-state relationships from the Christian Connection.<sup>2</sup> This movement stood in general continuity with the restitutionist/restorationist line of Protestantism, which advocated a complete return to primitive New Testament Christianity.

Even before May 1863, when the Seventh-day Adventist church was organized, many debates on church-state relationships were published in the *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, the most significant periodical of the Sabbatarian Adventists.<sup>3</sup>

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1. Daniel Liechty, *Sabbatarianism in the Sixteenth Century: A Page in the History of the Radical Reformation* (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 1993), 1-7.

2. Bert Haloviak, "A Heritage of Freedom: Christian Connection Roots to Seventh-day Adventism," *GCA*, 1995. The Christian Connection was a religious reform movement started in the early 1800s whose adherents preferred to be called only "Christians." Among the characteristics of the Christian Connection, three were significant: (1) the acceptance of the Bible as the only creed, (2) their identification only as "Christians," and (3) Christian character as the only test of fellowship. Elias Smith and James O'Kelly were two of the founders of Christian Connection who, along with their work in ministry, also pioneered the advocacy of religious liberty. See also, Michael G. Kenny, *The Perfect Law of Liberty: Elias Smith and the Providential History of America* (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institute, 1994); W. E. MacClenny, *The Life of Reverend James O'Kelly and the Early History of the Christian Church in the South* (Raleigh, NC: Edwards and Broughton, 1910); and Mark A. Noll, *America's God: From Jonathan Edwards to Abraham Lincoln* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002).

3. The *Second Advent Review and Sabbath Herald (RH)* began to be published in July 1849. Its original name was *The Present Truth* and it was edited by James White. The same periodical is today the *Adventist Review*. According to Ellen White's advice the primary duty of the *RH* was to publish the "present truth" that was shining upon the Adventist pathway. Ellen G. White, *Christian Experience and Teachings of Ellen G. White* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1940), 128. Therefore, it was with much resistance that the editors of *RH* started to publish articles debating worldly issues. For an examination of the early debates among Adventists, see O. Nichols, "Babylon," *Review*

Sabbatarian Adventism began in 1846 in New England as a small group of approximately fifty former Millerites, many of whom were also members of the Christian Connection.<sup>4</sup> The significant growth in the decade following the formation of the Sabbath-keeping group and the establishment of their beliefs did not ease the debate over church-state relationships. On the contrary this debate gained a new dynamic because of the issues involved in becoming an organized church.<sup>5</sup>

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*and Herald*, January 13, 1852,75; Roswell F. Cottrell, "How Shall I Vote?," *Review and Herald*, October 30, 1856, 205; D. Hewitt, "The Vine of the Earth," *Review and Herald*, September 11, 1856, 150; Uriah Smith, "Politics," *Review and Herald*, September 11, 1856, 152; Uriah Smith, "Ye Are Not of This World," *Review and Herald*, July 10, 1856, 84.

4. The early Sabbath-keeping group was an offspring of the Millerite Movement which had believed the second coming of Christ would occur on October 22, 1844. Soon after that date, a group of some fifty believers who accepted the seventh-day Sabbath from the Seventh Day Baptists, through a tract by Thomas M. Preble, started gathering in small congregations in New England. Arthur L. White, *Ellen G. White*, 6 vols. (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1981-1986), 5:196; P. Gerard Damsteegt, *Foundations of the Seventh-day Adventist Message and Mission* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1977), 136-138; cf. Sylvester Bliss, *Memoirs of William Miller*, Adventist Classic Library (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 2005).

5. The opposition to formal organization was part of the ideal of complete separation developed during the Millerite movement and inherited by pioneer Sabbath-keepers. Roswell F. Cottrell, "Making Us a Name," *Review and Herald*, May 29, 1860, 8-9. The situation was influenced by the harsh opposition that Millerites suffered from the established denominations during 1843 which led to many exclusions. On one hand, the Millerites had no desire or plans to become an organized denomination; on the other hand they had identified the nominal churches as being the "Babylon" of Rev 14:8 and 18:1-5. The main advocates for radical separation of the believers were George Storrs, and later R. F. Cottrell. Richard W. Schwarz and Floyd Greenleaf, *Light Bearers: A History of the Seventh-day Adventist Church*, rev. ed. (Nampa, ID: Pacific Press, 2000), 90-91; Malcolm Bull and Keith Lockhart, *Seeking a Sanctuary: Seventh-day Adventism and the American Dream*, 2nd ed. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2007), 7; Edwin S. Gaustad, *The Rise of Adventism*, 1st ed. (New York: Harper and Row, 1974), 173-175; Roger L. Dudley and Edwin I. Hernandez, *Citizens of Two Worlds: Religion and Politics among American Seventh-day Adventists* (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 1992), 59-62.

The early pioneers of the Sabbath-keeping movement, such as James White, Uriah Smith, and John N. Andrews, shared a belief in complete separation between the spiritual and temporal realms and openly rebuked any entanglement with the secular government.<sup>6</sup> Although the early Sabbatarian Adventists promoted the ideal of complete separation of temporal and spiritual realms, difficulties gradually arose as the movement grew in extent and complexity. Civil matters, such as oath-taking, involvement in politics, voting, and owning property, presented early challenges to the original ideal of complete separation of church and state. To further complicate this issue, early initiatives towards church organization taken in 1861 during the American Civil War demanded that consensus be achieved regarding such matters as military service, duties to one's nation, tax exemption, and involvement in politics.<sup>7</sup>

By the end of the nineteenth century, the specific ideal of total separation between church and state as originally envisioned by Uriah Smith and other pioneers of the Seventh-day Adventist church had become completely impracticable. The church embarked on global expansion and became internationally recognized, with offices on all

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6. Uriah Smith argued that the focus of Sabbatarian Adventists is the journey to Heaven, like pilgrims crossing the land marching home. Therefore, it is unjustifiable to halt the journey to engage in issues that do not concern them and will only distract from the marching. U. Smith, "Ye Are Not of This World," 84.

7. The organization of the movement into a church was in itself a matter of intense debate. For some, organization constituted association with the powers of the world and, consequently, a disconnection from God; to others it meant the survival and prosperity of the movement. The keenest argument against organization was based on George Storrs's advice given in February of 1844: "Take care that you do not seek to manufacture another church. No church can be organized by man's invention but what it becomes Babylon the moment it is organized." George Storrs, "Come Out of Her My People," *Midnight Cry*, February 15, 1844, 237-238. Cf. Gaustad, 168. See also John N. Loughborough, *The Church: Its Organization, Order and Discipline* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1907).

continents. As a consequence, foreign governmental relationships needed to be established. The growth of the Seventh-day Adventist church also led to the addition of many new branches to its ministry, including hospitals, universities, and food factories. In all these added activities, the church had to work closely with national and local government authorities around the world.<sup>8</sup>

In the twentieth century, the denomination created two other agencies that interfaced even more closely with governments: (1) The Adventist Development and Relief Agency International (ADRA),<sup>9</sup> which is financed mostly by government funds, both of the United States and other countries;<sup>10</sup> and (2) the Department of Public Affairs

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8. Starting in 1874, the international expansion of the Seventh-day Adventist church intensified the relations with government authorities in U.S. and in other countries where missionaries were sent. In Peru, the work of Fernando Stahl gained leverage up to the point of changing the constitution in support of the natives. Floyd Greenleaf, *The Seventh-day Adventist Church in Latin America and the Caribbean*, 2 vols. (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 1992), 2:117. In Brazil, Leo and Jessie Halliwell received large donations of medication from local government authorities for their work on the medical launches, the Luzeiros. Greenleaf, 1:448.

9. The Adventist Development and Relief Agency International (ADRA) was established in November 1956 (originally SAWS: Seventh-day Adventist Welfare Services) and considers itself to be “the Agency that the [Seventh-day Adventist] church has chosen as a primary tool in the work of ‘exposing’, ‘discrediting’, and trying to address social distortions and deprivation.” ADRA also sees itself “as the collective expression of the church’s desire to globally improve the situation of those in need.” The work of ADRA is associated with both the state and the church; as a consequence ADRA faces challenges from both sides. On one hand, ADRA depends on the Seventh-day Adventist Church. To avoid potential isolation from the church organization, ADRA invests considerable effort to help the church understand the usefulness of politics. On the other hand, the relationship that ADRA must develop with donor governments is often considered as “another large problem” that must be carefully negotiated. Adventist Development and Relief Agency International, *Operations Manual* (Silver Spring, MD: Adventist Relief Agency International, 1998), A31, B9.

10. ADRA’s *Annual Review of 2005* showed that in the United States ADRA received approximately \$50 million from the United States government and \$6.4 million from the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Adventist Development and Relief Agency



and Religious Liberty, which is “charged with representing the church to the U.S. Congress, the White House, and administrative agencies.”<sup>11</sup>

The need for an integrated position on church-state relationships, which started before the organization of the Seventh-day Adventist church, continues to this day. The growing number of Adventists in voluntary military duty,<sup>12</sup> the increasing engagement in political affairs, the use of governmental loans by students in Adventist universities, and governmental funding for ADRA, are all developments that show the continuing need of clearly stated principles for the church at the beginning of the twenty-first century.

The writings of Ellen White are considered to have major influence on many church issues, including church-state relationships. Her counsels are regarded by the Seventh-day Adventist church as representing the spiritual gift of prophecy.<sup>13</sup> Since the foundation of the Seventh-day Adventist church, White’s writings have been considered

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International, *ADRA Annual Review* (Silver Spring, MD: Adventist Relief Agency International, 2005), 18-19.

11. James D. Standish, "A Voice on the Hill," *Adventist Review*, January 25, 2007, 8-12.

12. The Adventist Chaplaincy Ministries’ periodical, *For God and Country*, estimated that “there are as many Adventists in active duty military service today as during the draft” and the numbers are growing. [Deena Bartel-Wagner], "Editorial," *For God and Country*, April-June 2002, 2. In 1991, Harvey Brenneise estimated that 2,000 Adventists served in the Gulf War, “the vast majority in combatant roles.” Harvey Brenneise, "The Gulf War on SDA Campuses," *Spectrum*, May 1991, 4-6.

13. In 1877, the General Conference of the Seventh-day Adventist church in session took an action to “express our continued conviction that we are largely indebted to the gift of prophecy, as manifested through Sister White, for the harmony and unity which this people enjoy.” "Minutes of the Sixteenth Annual Session of the General Conference of the Seventh-day Adventists," 4th session (September 28, 1877). Those stated convictions are currently expressed in the *Seventh-day Adventist Church Manual* (Silver Spring, MD: General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 2005), 15.

to be in harmony with biblical teachings and therefore authoritative in nature.<sup>14</sup>

However, the view of the Adventist church is that Ellen White was neither infallible nor verbally inspired.<sup>15</sup>

In many circumstances, Ellen White wrote amidst intense debate about church-state relationships and the opinions she expressed are relevant to the Seventh-day Adventist church and deserve a detailed investigation. A deeper understanding of Ellen White's integrated principles of church-state relationships will enable leaders to evaluate more fairly and carefully the application of those principles to contemporary issues of church-state concerns.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Ellen G. White's view of church-state relationships includes two contrasting perspectives. The "eschatological view" of church and state is her consistent teaching that during the final crisis preceding the second coming of Christ, church and state powers combined will become the implacable persecutors of true believers.<sup>16</sup> Her "temporal

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14. In 1871 the General Conference of the Seventh-day Adventist church decided that "we re-affirm our abiding confidence in the Testimonies of Sister White to the church, as the teaching of the Spirit of God, and that we have each year continual and growing evidence that they are such." "Minutes of the Ninth Annual Session of the General Conference of the Seventh-day Adventists," 2nd session (February 7, 1871).

15. *SDA Church Manual*, 15; Uriah Smith, "General Conference Proceedings," *Review and Herald*, November 27, 1883, 741.

16. It is well known that she predicted that "the Protestant churches [will] unite with the world and with the papal power against commandment keepers. The same spirit which actuated papists in ages past will lead Protestants to pursue a similar course toward those who will maintain their loyalty to God." Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, 9 vols. (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1948), 4:449. Compare, e.g., Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy Between Christ and Satan: The Conflict of the Ages in the Christian Dispensation* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1911), 445-466; idem,

view” of church-state relationships taught that in order to accomplish its mission, the church needs to work in an independent, but non-conflictual relationship with state powers, as long as it can do so without compromising its loyalty to God. Ever since the beginning of the Seventh-day Adventist movement, there have been real or perceived tensions or conflicts between these two perspectives.<sup>17</sup>

Despite the ongoing relevance of church-state relationships, and the Adventist recognition of authority in Ellen White’s writings on church and state, there seems to have been no scholarly attempt to systematize those counsels. The available studies of her writings on church-state relationships are based largely on fragments or particular aspects of Ellen White’s views and do not provide a comprehensive framework for the principles set forth in her writings.<sup>18</sup>

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*Last Day Events: Facing Earth's Final Crisis* (Boise, ID: Pacific Press, 1992), 134, 145, 228.

17. In 1895, there was an intense “debate” about whether to accept a land gift of 6,000 acres from the South African government, or to stand by the General Conference vote of March 3, 1893, to refuse involvement with temporal powers. A. L. White, *Ellen G. White*, 4:185. Ellen White responded, “It is very strange that some of our brethren should feel that it is their duty to bring about a condition of things that would bind up the means that God would have set free. *God has not laid upon them the responsibility of coming in conflict with the authorities and powers of the world in this matter....* I have repeatedly been shown that we might receive far more favors than we do in many ways if we would approach men in wisdom, acquaint them with our work, and give them an opportunity of doing those things which it is our privilege to induce them to do for the advancement of the work of God.” Ellen G. White, *Testimonies to Ministers and Gospel Workers* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1962), 203, emphasis supplied. Also in 1895 she wrote, “The movements they [Adventist leaders] have made to pay taxes on the property of the Sanitarium and Tabernacle have manifested a zeal and conscientiousness that in all respects is not wise nor correct. Their ideas of religious liberty are being woven with suggestions that do not come from the Holy Spirit. Idem, *Special Testimonies to Ministers and Workers*, [series A] no. 3 (1895), 32.

18. The review of literature and prior research, pp. 11-18, below, shows that the primary concern in most of the material available is to present the historical progression

## Statement of the Purpose

The purpose of this dissertation is to discover, analyze, and synthesize the theological principles of church-state relationships in the writings of Ellen G. White, in order to understand the logical coherence between her two views: the “temporal view” of the benevolent state that can advance the church’s mission in the present, and the “eschatological view” of a malevolent state that will threaten the church’s very existence in the end-time. In order to achieve this purpose, the dissertation will explore her ideas regarding matters of church and state in their biblical and historical context, in order to discover their underlying principles, especially the framework that connects her apparently contrasting “temporal” and “eschatological” perspectives of church-state relationships. A framework for reconciling her “temporal” and “eschatological” perspectives is found in her Great Controversy theme that viewed all events on earth as part of a cosmic conflict between good and evil. This framework does not apply principles in a linear sequence, but simultaneous to each other.<sup>19</sup>

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of the issues that shaped the Adventist views on church or social issues that the church had to respond to.

19. The Great Controversy theme is perhaps the greatest theological contribution of Ellen White. She argued that all the earth is involved in a great controversy between Christ and Satan regarding God’s character and His ruling. She described the spiritual struggle in detail in the Great Conflict Series. The first publication in 1858, entitled *Spiritual Gifts*, was expanded during her literary life and spread into 5 books. The *Great Controversy between Christ and Satan* is the most known among the others. The controversy theme is also part of Adventists’ 28 fundamental beliefs. Ministerial Association of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, "The Great Controversy," in *Seventh-day Adventists Believe: A Biblical Exposition of Fundamental Doctrines* (Boise, ID: Pacific Press, 2005). See E. G. White, *The Great Controversy*; idem, *Patriarchs and Prophets* (Oakland: Pacific Press, 1890); idem, *The Desire of Ages* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1898); idem, *The Acts of the Apostles* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1911); idem, *The Captivity and Restoration of Israel: The Conflict of the Ages Illustrated in the Lives of Prophets and Kings* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1917). For studies on the Great Controversy theme see John M. Fowler,

Thus, the dissertation is essentially a theological study that uses tools and insights from church history and historical theology to discover principles of church-state relationships in the writings of Ellen G. White.

### **Justification for the Research**

Three major reasons justify this research. They are presented in order of importance.

First, there is a need for an enhanced perspective of Ellen White's principles of church-state relationships to balance the Adventist church's mission-driven temporal needs, with its prophetic understanding of Rev 13 and 14. The Adventist understanding of Rev 13:11-18, as also expressed in the writings of Ellen White, identifies church-state relationships as one indicator of prophetic fulfillment in the end time. During Ellen White's lifetime, her warnings that the union of church and state would lead to persecution were balanced by her rebukes of the extreme separatism advocated by some Adventist members and leaders. Despite the apparent conflict between these two sets of warnings and the church's necessity to work with many governments, no analysis has been made of the principles applied to church-state relationships from Ellen White's perspective.<sup>20</sup>

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*The Cosmic Conflict between Christ and Satan* (Nampa, ID: Pacific Press, 2001); Joseph Battistone, *The Great Controversy Theme in E. G. White Writings* (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 1978).

20. The "Agenda for the Committee for the Study of Religious Liberty" provides relevant material on the principles and practices of religious liberty and also on separation of church and state. The work is a collection of twelve topics for discussion followed by an extensive list of supporting material that includes lawsuits, bills, government letters, biblical passages, historical quotations, and extracts from Ellen G. White works. The literature is a valuable source for a broader perspective of arguments on many topics associated with religious liberty, including the politico-social

Second, there is a growing involvement of the Seventh-day Adventist church in government and military activities. The significant number of Adventists in active military duty, government-funded ADRA, and lobbying activity on Capitol Hill is an indicator of new opportunities and threats resulting from a closer relationship between the Seventh-day Adventist church and the state. Furthermore, there is a growing number of Adventist candidates for public offices in countries such as Brazil,<sup>21</sup> Peru, Bolivia, and many others.<sup>22</sup> For this reason, this research will attempt to analyze principles to inform the many Adventists who consider the option of political involvement at different levels, such as voting, being active in political parties, or holding political office.

In general, the available books, articles, papers, and reports that analyze the historical development of Adventist views on church and state place primary emphasis on the historical progression of events, but do not provide a theological framework for Ellen

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backgrounds of religious liberty problems, non-combatancy, and the relation to the state of religious institutions for charitable purposes. General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, "Seventh-day Adventist Principles and Practices of Religious Liberty and the Separation of Church and State: Agenda for the Committee for the Study of Religious Liberty" (Silver Spring, MD: n.p.).

21. The scenario in Brazil is an example of the conflict of understandings of church-state relations among the Seventh-day Adventists. Some church members believe that instead of working "with" the government it is far more effective to be "in" the government. The record of Congressman/Attorney Marcos Vinicius de Campos is a good illustration. Congressman Campos is an Adventist church member, elected to the Brazilian Congress with help from his Adventist peers. Ironically, his platform was centered on religious liberty. As a result, Marcos Vinicius de Campos has become the leading figure of religious liberty of the Adventist Church in Brazil. *Liberdade Religiosa*, "Pagina Principal," <http://www.liberdadereligiosa.org.br/principal.html> (accessed January 26, 2009).

22. Alberto R. Timm describes "serious controversies" in Brazilian congregations, when members become candidates for political office. Alberto R. Timm, "Os Adventistas e a Política," *Revista Adventista*, May 2006, 12-15.

White's church-state principles. The ideas extracted from these works often refer only to a specific instance or a fragmented perspective, rather than to a more broadly integrated perspective on church-state relationships.<sup>23</sup> Furthermore, although much light can be gained from the studies of the historical events that formed the original basis for Adventist attitudes towards the state, there is also a need for principles that can be applied to the Adventist church beyond North America.

### **Scope and Delimitations**

This study is centered in the writings of Ellen G. White. It does not intend to present an analysis of past or current religious liberty issues, or the legal aspects of the church's operations, or even a historical development of the Seventh-day Adventist church's involvement with civil governments. However, some of these aspects will be mentioned in order to provide a broader perspective of the context of Ellen G. White's writings. This study is not comprehensive concerning the views of other early Adventists on church-state relationships, but rather it makes selective use of their views for comparison and contrast with Ellen White's views.

This research does not use church-state events after the lifetime of Ellen White to substantiate any principles underlying her writings, neither is it the intention of this dissertation to prove or disprove the validity of any of the Seventh-day Adventist church's actions or inactions towards the state. This investigation focuses on the principles and tendencies in the writings of Ellen White on church-state relationships.

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23. See literature review.

## Review of Literature and Prior Research

### Published Documents

The two-and-a-half-page article on “Church and State” in the *Seventh-day Adventist Encyclopedia* demonstrates the general concerns of the Adventist church with church-state relationships. The extensive list of votes and decisions made by the General Conference makes a strong case for an Adventist stance on the issues of church and state.<sup>24</sup> Another reference work, the *Historical Dictionary of the Seventh-day Adventist Church*, brings a chronological summary of church and state issues since the organization of the denomination in 1863.<sup>25</sup> Although both of these references focus on the period since 1863, Adventist concerns about church-state relationships began even earlier, before the movement became organized as a denomination.<sup>26</sup> Despite the relevance of church-state relationships to the Adventist identity, very little has been written specifically on the principles behind these interactions of the Adventist church.

D. E. Robinson’s “A Study of Principles” is a series of nine consecutive articles in the *Review and Herald*. They are mostly collections of Ellen White statements on Adventist interaction with the secular world, in support of the principles he introduces. In the first three articles, Robinson proposes general “true” principles of church-state relationships. Although he presents consistent quotations to support his initial statements,

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24. The article on “Church and State” in the *SDA Encyclopedia* presents a chronological development of administrative decisions and statements from the organized Adventist church. *Seventh-day Adventist Encyclopedia*, 1996 ed., s.v. “Church and State.”

25. The work is a historical account of the most relevant issues of church and state for the Adventist church. This pattern is repeated in many works that will be visited in this subsection. Gary Land, ed., *Historical Dictionary of the Seventh-day Adventist Church*, Historical Dictionaries of Religions, Philosophies, and Movement, no. 56 (Oxford: Scarecrow Press, 2005), s.v. “Religious Liberty.”

26. Haloviak, 5.



he falls short of establishing a stronger link with the principles proposed.<sup>27</sup>

O. A. Johnson's *Studies on Principles of Government and Civil and Religious Liberty* presents general aspects of church-state relationships in a study guide format. Johnson introduces one principle per lesson; each lesson has approximately ten statements from many historical and biblical sources and it ends with the same amount of questions. Despite its unusual format, this study gives a broad perspective of the understanding of the church-state relationships of the Seventh-day Adventists. Thus the works of Robinson and Johnson approach the general concerns of this dissertation, but not in sufficient depth or detail.<sup>28</sup>

Several other works on religious liberty that make a limited contribution to the concern of this dissertation need to be briefly mentioned. The compilation, *Church-State Relationships in the United States*, prepared by the Department of Public Affairs and Religious Liberty is a chronological account of the actions and policies adopted by the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists.<sup>29</sup>

A Religious Liberty Leaflet Series produced by the Review and Herald in the early twentieth century included one special issue on *Principles of Religious Liberty*. The leaflet presents texts from the Bible and quotations from Ellen White and gives a good

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27. Robinson's studies run in nine consecutive issues of the *Review and Herald* starting March 9, 1911. See D. E. Robinson, "Study of Principles," *Review and Herald*, March 9, 1911, 3-4.

28. Olie Andrew Johnson, *Studies on Principles of Government and Civil and Religious Liberty* (College Place, WA: Walla Walla College, 1910).

29. The period covered by the material starts in 1894 and gives indispensable hints of how the issues were dealt with internally. General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, *Church-State Relationships in the United States* (Washington, DC: Public Affairs and Religious Liberty Dept., 1973).

example of how Adventists presented their views to the public.<sup>30</sup>

Francis D. Nichol's "Religious Liberty and Church-State Relations" focuses on the issue of government aid in Adventist colleges and the possible influences that government could gain from the situation. He relied heavily on Ellen White's writings to promote a policy of radical church and state separation. While Nichol's work does address the issue of principles, it is not comprehensive, but rather is narrowed to one main issue.<sup>31</sup>

Dennis Pettibone<sup>32</sup> and Ronald Lawson<sup>33</sup> have produced significant material on the historical development of church-state relationships in the Adventist church. Although helpful, they do not deal specifically with the principles that undergird the church-state interaction.

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30. Although the material makes no reference to Ellen White's writings, some quotations are extracted from the *Desire of Ages*. Willard Allan Colcord, *Civil Government and the Church*, Religious Liberty Leaflets (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1909), 8. See also E. G. White, *The Desire of Ages* (Oakland: Pacific Press, 1898), 35.

31. Francis D. Nichol, "Religious Liberty and Church-State Relations," presentation at conference on Church and State Relations, Berrien Springs, MI, June 11, 1966 (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1966), 8, CAR.

32. Dennis Lynn Pettibone, "An Outline History of Seventh-day Adventist Church-State Relations in the United States 1888-1992" (Chattanooga, TN: Southern College of Seventh-day Adventists, 1993).

33. Lawson argues that Ellen White "raised prejudice" against labor unions throughout her writings and portrayed the unions as tools of the governing power of Satan. Ronald Lawson, "Seventh-day Adventists and the U.S. Courts" (n.p.: 1997), 9. Most of Lawson's quotations and Ellen White's inferences are extracted from Robert C. Kistler, *Adventists and Labor Unions in the United States* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1984), 39-44. See also Ronald Lawson, "Church and State at Home and Abroad: The Evolution of Seventh-day Adventist Relations with Governments," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 64 (Summer 1996): 279-311.

Two books, *American State Papers on Freedom in Religion*, edited by William A. Blakely, and *Liberty in the Balance*, by Colin Standish and Russell Standish, include chapters that establish historical principles of church-state relationships that are relevant to my research. Although Blakely and the Standishes have a historical approach, their work does help to establish the basis and the context of Adventist principles of church-state relationships.<sup>34</sup>

Eric D. Syme's dissertation, "Seventh-day Adventist Concepts of Church and State," is a study intended to explain the historical Adventist concepts of church-state relationships, and how these relationships were modified over time.<sup>35</sup> In part, Syme's research gives credit to Ellen White's influence on the early development of Adventist perspectives of church and state, and he occasionally defines some principles she implied.<sup>36</sup> Despite a few principles described, however, Syme was concerned primarily with the history of events as they unfolded before the Adventist church. His research considers Ellen White's influence as one element among many in the historical

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34. See the chapters, "Federation Period: Time of Awakening to Principles of Civil and Religious Liberty," and "National Period: Foundation Principles of the United States Government," in William Addison Blakely and Religious Liberty Association of North America, *American State Papers on Freedom in Religion*, 3rd rev. ed. (Takoma Park, Washington, DC: Pub. for the Religious Liberty Association, by the Review and Herald, 1943). See also Colin D. Standish and Russell R. Standish, "Development of the Principles of Religious and Civil Freedoms," in *Liberty in the Balance* (Rapidan, VA: Hartland Publications, 1998).

35. Eric Douglas Syme, "Seventh-day Adventist Concepts on Church and State" (PhD diss., American University, 1969), 15.

36. For example, Syme attributed to Ellen White the ideals of freedom and liberty as a value still maintained by God to all His creation. *Ibid.*, 49. Syme also pointed out Ellen White's pivotal influence on the debate about tax exemption which led to different thinking from early Adventist leadership. *Ibid.*, 141.

development, but does not attempt to analyze her principles.<sup>37</sup> Syme's dissertation was later published in book format.<sup>38</sup>

Douglas Morgan's *Adventism and the American Republic* also gives a historical account of the transition from deterministic to pluralist perspectives of church-state relationships in Adventist thought. Morgan describes that transition as the result of a diversity of scholarship within Adventism, and places Ellen G. White within a historic framework in contrast to the progressive ideas.<sup>39</sup> Morgan's work is not concerned with Ellen White's writings or principles; however it provides a good perspective on scholarly developments of church-state relationship in Adventist academia.<sup>40</sup>

Alonzo T. Jones's writings were limited mostly to two topics: the Sunday law issue and a historical account of church-state relations. In *Christian Patriotism*, chs. 8 and 9, Jones argued for the "true principle" of complete separation of church and state.<sup>41</sup>

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37. Syme's approach is at variance with previous Adventist authors. Syme and Nichol took different perspectives when they dealt with the issue of government funds in Adventist colleges. While Syme looked at the issue from an institutional and judicial perspective, Nichol associated the issue with the core of Adventist doctrines and the writings of Ellen White. *Ibid.*, 315-325. See also Nichol, 7-8.

38. Eric D. Syme, *A History of SDA Church-State Relations in the United States* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1973).

39. Douglas Morgan, "A Pluralistic Remnant, 1976-2000," in *Adventism and the American Republic* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1969), 177-208.

40. Morgan, *Adventism and the American Republic*, is based on his PhD dissertation. Douglas Morgan, "The Remnant and the Republic: Seventh-day Adventism and the American Public Order" (PhD diss., University of Chicago, 1992).

41. The chapters, "The True Principle Taught to Babylon," and "The True Principle Taught to Medo-Persia," emphasize the principle of separation of church and state. Alonzo Trévier Jones, *Christian Patriotism: Or Religion and the State*, Bible Students' Library (Oakland: Pacific Press, 1900). See also Alonzo Trévier Jones, *Civil Government and Religion*, Sentinel Library (Oakland: Pacific Press, 1890).

Another work that gives a very limited treatment of church-state relationship principles is Roger L. Dudley and Edwin I. Hernandez, *Citizens of Two Worlds*. This work studies “how religion influences political thinking and behavior among American Seventh-day Adventists.”<sup>42</sup> Dudley and Hernandez analyzed the practices, cultural contexts, and beliefs that could indicate the political views of Adventists in North America. This research is unique in considering Adventist political leanings, but it does not deal directly with principles of church-state relationships.<sup>43</sup>

The *Battle for Liberty* is a collection of topics discussed in Adventist religious liberty conventions. The participants made consistent use of Ellen White’s writings to draw out church-state principles on a variety of practical issues.<sup>44</sup>

Harold E. Metcalf’s *Sunday Laws and the Papacy* and M. E. Loewen’s *Religious Liberty and the Seventh-day Adventists* discuss the growing influence of Roman Catholics in America. Metcalf gathers Ellen G. White’s statements of the escalating religious influence in American government. Loewen projects early Adventist apprehension with Supreme Court decisions that were disturbing from the Adventist perspective. Both works combined give a good background of the Adventist concerns in

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42. Roger L. Dudley and Edwin I. Hernandez, *Citizens of Two Worlds* (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 1992), 3-5.

43. Although the study was not primarily designed to establish Ellen White’s principles on the subject, in ch. 13 the authors concluded that she had presented the principles of social justice to the church “when she spoke against the injustices being committed against a blind man.” *Ibid.*, 297. The quotation and comments about Ellen White’s views in this text are from Ellen G. White, *Testimonies*, 3:519.

44. General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, *The Battle for Liberty; Being a Summation of Material and Addresses Given at Recent Religious Liberty Conventions Held in the Pacific Union Conference* (Glendale, CA: Religious Liberty Association, 1938).

mid-twentieth century and Adventist expectations for the future, but they do not analyze principles.<sup>45</sup>

#### Unpublished Documents

The “Spirit of Prophecy Counsels Relating to Church-State Relationships” is a compilation of Ellen G. White’s statements from books, periodical articles, out-of-print pamphlets, and manuscript files. This work is perhaps the most complete Adventist compilation of church and state material. It is categorized in eight sections and offers a good starting point for the proposed research.<sup>46</sup>

“Seventh-day Adventist Principles and Practices of Religious Liberty and Separation of Church and State” is a very broad collection of quotations organized according to principles. It gives a comprehensive idea of where the Adventist church stands on religious liberty issues and the reasons for the stand.<sup>47</sup>

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45. Marvin E. Loewen, *Religious Liberty and the Seventh-day Adventists* (Nashville: Southern, 1964); Harold E. Metcalf, *Sunday Laws and the Papacy: A Compilation from the Writings of Mrs. Ellen G. White* (Takoma Park, MD: Washington Missionary College, 1941).

46. This compilation was assembled for the Committee of Church-State Relationships in 1964. The compilation does not include any of Ellen White statements about Sunday legislation and related concerns, which makes the work incomplete and wanting as a statement of the Adventist prophetic understanding of church-state relationships. Ellen G. White, *Spirit of Prophecy Counsels Relating to Church-State Relationships: A Compilation of E. G. White Materials Supplemented with Illuminating Statements of Denominational Leaders and Significant General Conference Session Actions* (Washington, DC: Ellen G. White Estate, 1964).

47. This study goes beyond my proposed research; however, it is indispensable to enlarge the perspectives on the subject. The quotations presented in the compilation are very diverse, including Ellen White’s text, historical figures, legislations, biblical texts, and speeches. General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, “Seventh-day Adventist Principles and Practices of Religious Liberty and the Separation of Church and State” (Washington, DC: Public Affairs and Religious Liberty Dept., n.d.).

Roger W. Coon's "Ellen White and the Issue of the Reception of State Aid" is an analysis of White's writings on tax exemption and the acceptance of gifts. Coon's primary concern was to show the relevance of White's writings. He proposed six "true" principles of religious liberty implied by Ellen White's arguments.<sup>48</sup> His research analyzed White's fourteen-page letter to S. N. Haskell in 1895 on the issues then current in Michigan and South Africa.<sup>49</sup> Coon's analysis of Ellen White's message offers a starting point to establish principles of church-state relationships; however, he did not verify his propositions by reference to different episodes and writings of Ellen White; he rather confined his work to one letter referring to a single event.<sup>50</sup>

The Autumn Council of 1972 created a documented exposition of the fundamental principles of church-state relationships as believed by the Seventh-day Adventist church. The document also proposes institutional guidelines to maintain the proper separation between church and state.<sup>51</sup>

None of the works above, however, provide an in-depth analysis of the principles applied by Ellen White in her writings on church-state relationships, which is the

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48. Coon initially proposed five "grand principles" in Ellen White's message but only two of them are relevant for this research: (1) "True principles of religious liberty;" and (2) "false principles [of religious liberty]." Roger W. Coon, "Ellen White and the Issue of the Reception of State Aid" (Silver Spring, MD: Ellen G. White Estate, 1990), 9-11.

49. Coon's arguments are based on Ellen G. White to S. N. Haskell, January 30 1895, CAR. The content of the letter was later incorporated into different books, though the larger portion of the message is in E. G. White, *Testimonies to Ministers*, 197-203.

50. Coon, 1-2.

51. North American Division Committee on Administration, "Church-State Relationships in the United States," for the denomination's Autumn Council in Mexico City in 1972.

justification for the proposed dissertation.

### **Methodology and Primary Sources**

This dissertation analyzes the writings of Ellen White on the topic of church-state relationships using both published and unpublished primary sources.

Primary sources provide information needed to understand the situation associated with Ellen White's statements, and, in case of correspondence, also provide a clearer picture of the queries that came to her.

Much of the historical background and the development of Seventh-day Adventist involvement with the state can be traced in the early Seventh-day Adventist periodicals. Although James White intended that Seventh-day Adventist periodicals focus on spiritual concerns, state involvement issues rapidly gained space in the *Review and Herald*. Articles from both *The Review and Herald* and the *American Sentinel*<sup>52</sup> were valuable to reconstruct the issues that concerned the early Adventist community. They also provided perspective on issues associated with church and state.

Ellen White's books, articles, and manuscripts, along with the incoming and outgoing correspondence files in the Ellen G. White Research Center, represent the most valuable primary sources for this research. Also of great value is the compilation made by Arthur White of Ellen White's statements in regard to church-state relationships.<sup>53</sup> Although Arthur White's work is a simple collection of statements, it includes most of

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52. *The American Sentinel* (1886-1900) was established as the leading Adventist publication advocating religious liberty issues. It was the forerunner of the current *Liberty*.

53. E. G. White, *Spirit of Prophecy Counsels Relating to Church-State Relationships*.



Ellen White's writings on the topic and thus provides an excellent starting point.

Secondary sources are used where appropriate to provide background, historical context, insightful perspectives, and interpretive options. These sources include books, biographies, and newspapers which describe and analyze circumstances in Ellen White's times.

### **Design of the Study**

The study includes an introduction, four main chapters, and a conclusion. Chapter 1 surveys the early American backgrounds of the two views of church-state relationships, the temporal and the eschatological. The Christian Connection includes both views, but seems to have placed more emphasis on the eschatological. Ellen White's early perspectives from a Methodist family were probably more in line with the temporal theme, since that was the dominant eschatology of the mainline Protestant churches in America before the Millerite movement. This chapter provides a foundation for considering Ellen White's perspective on the subject before 1844. These influences provide a benchmark for comparison and contrast with White's views as they developed after 1844.

Chapter 2 introduces Ellen White's views of the divine government, how the principles and methods of God's government are reflected in His intentions for the church, and how they contrast with the methods and goals of Satan's government.

Chapter 3 studies White's views of civil government—the state, including the proper, divinely ordained authority of the state, and the boundaries of that authority when interacting with the church, social-political issues, and moral conscience.

Chapter 4 examines Ellen White's own application of the foregoing principles to the concrete historical situation of the SDA church's interaction with government during

her lifetime, in order to illustrate and clarify her understanding of the eschatological and temporal perspectives.

The study concludes with a summary of Ellen White's principles of church-state relationships and makes recommendations for further study.

## CHAPTER I

### EARLY AMERICAN VIEWS OF CHURCH AND STATE

This chapter traces church-state relationship issues in America from about 1776 until 1844, to show the early American background of both of the two main perspectives on church-state relationships that found their way into the Seventh-day Adventist church, namely the eschatological view that the church must be wary of the state as a future persecuting power, and the temporal view that in order to accomplish the church's mission in the present, it must seek an independent, but non-conflictual relationship with the state.

#### **Religious Liberty and the Founding of the United States of America**

This section investigates the new concepts of church-state relationships introduced by the United States Founding Fathers. The new ideas of republicanism had great social impact and profoundly changed church-state relationships in the newly formed country. Those foundations of church-state separation were later revered by early Sabbatarian Adventists such as Ellen and James White, J. N. Andrews, Joseph Bates, and Uriah Smith, among others.

#### Ideals of Liberty in the New Republic

In addition to the Great Awakening, Locke's republican ideals were pivotal to the growing importance of liberty in the American thought. The republican ideals of John

Locke were not necessarily opposed to religion, but neither did they openly promote traditional Christianity. Locke's arguments indicated that the central beliefs and morality of Christianity were close to rationalist ideals. Locke's reason leaned toward a morality reached by ordinary people through Christian revelation, but reached by the intellectuals through reason. Under those premises, the teachings of Christianity were not necessarily opposed to reason.<sup>1</sup> Locke's powerful claims regarding liberty and rights found in America two major advocates, Thomas Jefferson and James Madison, who were passionately committed to civil and religious liberty even before the War of Independence.<sup>2</sup>

As early as 1776, Virginians and others were already seeking to cut the bonds between church and state. They wanted to end the enforcement of belief and behavior by

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1. Unitarian theological thought rejected the views of Christian theology on issues such as the divinity of Christ, the Trinity, and God's foreknowledge. Deism was the religious and philosophical belief that a non-present Supreme Being has created the universe; however these conclusions are reached only through reason without the aid of faith or religion. Because of Locke's non-opposition to Christianity and positive approach to its values, there is an ongoing debate between secularist academics and theologians in regard to Locke's personal belief. Some want to keep his ideas strictly in the philosophical realm, while others want to place him in the camp of the Christian faith. See e.g., Reverend Edward Right, by John Locke, "A Letter to the Right Reverend Edward, Lord Bishop of Worcester, Concerning Some Passages Relating to Mr. Locke's Essay of Human Understanding: In a Late Discourse of His Lordship's, in Vindication of the Trinity," Oates, England, June 29, 1697; in Jeremy Waldron, "By Our Saviour's Interpretation," in *God, Locke, and Equality: Christian Foundations of John Locke's Political Thought* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002). Cf. Edwin S. Gaustad, *Faith of the Founders Religion and the New Nation, 1776-1826* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2004), 31-32; John Locke and Thomas Preston Peardon, *The Second Treatise of Government* (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1952).

2. A more detailed analysis of Locke's influence on the development of the United States can be found in Barbara Arneil, "Locke, Jefferson, and Amerindian," in *John Locke and America: The Defense of English Colonialism* (New York: Clarendon, 1996); Steven M. Dworetz, *The Unvarnished Doctrine: Locke, Liberalism, and the American Revolution* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1990).

the established church and the use of tax funds to support religious causes. Thomas Jefferson was the main advocate against religious conformity, but overall they preferred a more positive approach rather than simply the disestablishment of religion. In 1777 Jefferson composed the Bill for Establishing Religious Freedom, which he proposed in 1779 when he became governor of Virginia. Though new ideas were becoming relevant, the leaders were not fully convinced that the time was appropriate for such changes. Madison also saw religious freedom as the proper way for the American nation even before the revolution. He considered the religious system in Virginia to be a “diabolical, hell-conceived principle of persecution” that “shackles and debilitates the minds” from any possible progress.<sup>3</sup>

The Declaration of Independence in July 1776 and the American Revolutionary War that ended with the Treaty of Paris in 1783 decisively achieved both political and religious liberty for the new nation. Because the British model of government had featured great political and religious impositions, the Americans broke away by eliminating the combined political-religious system that the colonies considered a vicious tyranny.<sup>4</sup>

### Freedom and Disestablishment of Religion

Jefferson, Madison, and Patrick Henry were at the center of the religious freedom

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3. Marci Hamilton, *God Versus the Gavel: Religion and the Rule of Law* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 261; Isaac Kramnick and R. Laurence Moore, *The Godless Constitution: The Case against Religious Correctness*, 1st ed. (New York: Norton, 1996), 92-93, 103; Charles W. Meister, *The Founding Fathers* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 1987), 143.

4. Colin Bonwick, *The American Revolution*, 1st ed. (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1991), 165; Martin I. J. Griffin, *Catholics and the American Revolution* (Ridley Park, PA: Marin Griffin, 1909), 397.

debates in 1784-1786 when Virginians feared religious decline after the Revolutionary War. Henry's bill, *Establishing a Provision for Teachers of the Christian Religion*, proposed that all Christian churches should have the same privileges that the established church did. His propositions argued that all Christian churches should receive equal tax funding for their operations, for "all denominations of Christians demeaning themselves peaceably and faithfully shall enjoy equal privileges, civil and religious." One of the problems with this proposition was that it still required the government to support churches with taxes and to determine the definition of "Christian church" in order to provide the benefits. Henry's bill appealed to the Anglicans, but Baptists, Presbyterians, German Lutherans, and Quakers were still unhappy to see the government ruling on spiritual matters.<sup>5</sup>

In 1785, Thomas Jefferson succeeded Benjamin Franklin as American minister in Paris, but James Madison, Jefferson's close friend and political ally, remained as vigorously opposed to government intrusions into religious dealings as Jefferson was. In June 1785, Madison wrote his famous "Memorial and Remonstrance against Religious Assessments," in which he presented fifteen reasons why government should not become involved in the support of any religion. This document became a landmark in the discourse on political philosophy and religious liberty. The views of Madison and Jefferson became popular in the Virginia Assembly, and in 1786, the Assembly adopted

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5. David Benedict, *A General History of the Baptist Denomination in America, and Other Parts of the World* (Boston: Lincoln and Edmands, 1813), 83-84; Michael W. McConnell, John H. Garvey, and Thomas C. Berg, *Religion and the Constitution* (New York: Aspen Law, 2002), 60-63; John J. Patrick and Gerald P. Long, *Constitutional Debates on Freedom of Religion: A Documentary History* (Westport, CT: Greenwood, 1999), 31.

the religious freedom statute that Madison and Jefferson had developed.<sup>6</sup>

The American Constitution, drafted in Philadelphia in the summer of 1787 and ratified in 1788, was purposely intended to be silent about God and religion. This celebrated secular document makes one nominal mention of religion in negative form in Article 6: “No religious Test shall ever be required as a Qualification to any office or public Trust under the United States.” This new approach to church-state relationships provoked two opposing reactions among citizens. Some believed that the absence of a religious test would allow all sorts of undesirable persons to enter the American government and that it was the government’s duty to secure peace in society through the practice of good morals. Others supported the measure because religious tests had been used by governments to exclude dissenters from public office and as a means of persecution.<sup>7</sup>

#### The Separation from the State

The process of ratification of the Constitution and the Massachusetts Compromise of February 1788 raised many concerns for religious minorities. They feared the lack of a clear statement on religious establishment and free exercise of their beliefs. Despite the promises of a Bill of Rights, the religious minorities believed that having no laws on

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6. Susan Jacoby, *Freethinkers: A History of American Secularism*, 1st ed. (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2004), 19; Patrick and Long, 33.

7. Details about the drafting and ratification process of the constitution can be found in Historical Society of Pennsylvania, John Bach McMaster, and Frederick D. Stone, *Pennsylvania and the Federal Constitution, 1787-1788* (New York: Da Capo, 1970). An in-depth study of the arguments about God and the American Constitution can be found in Kramnick and Moore.

religious matters would leave them unprotected and at the mercy of the new government.<sup>8</sup>

The assurances given to Jews, Quakers, Roman Catholics, Baptists, Presbyterians, and others were codified in the First Amendment to the Constitution, introduced by James Madison as part of the Bill of Rights in June 1789. This was the fulfillment of Madison's promise to the Virginians,<sup>9</sup> and the precise wording of the First Amendment was modified and refined several times in order to appropriately express the country's ideals for religious liberty. Madison initially started with "The Civil Rights of none shall be abridged on account of religious belief or worship," then changed it to "No religion shall be established by law," but finally the definite text was formulated: "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion or prohibiting the free exercise thereof."<sup>10</sup>

The actions of the new president clearly indicated that a new era of church-state relationships had begun. In August 1790, George Washington visited Newport, Rhode Island, and received a warm welcome from the local Jewish families and the Hebrew Congregation of Newport. Moses Sexias, one of the leaders of the synagogue, wrote a

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8. Samuel George Arnold, *The Life of George Washington, First President of the United States* (New York: T. Mason and G. Lane, 1840), 190.

9. "First, the omission of a bill of rights, providing clearly and without the aid of sophism for freedom of religion." Thomas Jefferson, "Thomas Jefferson: On the Omission of a Bill of Rights from the Constitution," in *The Writings of Thomas Jefferson: Being His Autobiography, Correspondence, Reports, Messages, Addresses, and Other Writings, Official and Private*, ed. H. A. Washington (New York: Deby and Jackson, 1892). See also Noble E. Cunningham, "Letter to James Madison, December 20, 1787," in *Jefferson Vs. Hamilton: Confrontations That Shaped a Nation* (Boston: Bedford, 2000), 23-25.

10. John Witte, *Religion and the American Constitutional Experiment*, 2nd ed. (Boulder, CO: Westview, 2005), 45.



welcoming letter to Washington exalting the religious liberties achieved.<sup>11</sup>

Sexias articulated the Jewish convictions that the United States had established “a Government which to bigotry gives no sanction, to persecution no assistance—but generously affording to All liberty of conscience, and immunities of citizenship.” In those characteristics he saw “the work of the Great God.”<sup>12</sup>

In response, Washington borrowed Sexias’s own words to assure religious freedom in the new nation. “For happily the Government of the United States, which gives to bigotry no sanction, to persecution no assistance, requires only that they who live under its protection, should demean themselves as good citizens.”<sup>13</sup>

Despite the ratification of the Bill of Rights in December 1791, several states retained established churches. The courts at that time interpreted the First Amendment as preventing the federal government from legislating about religion, but allowed the states to do so. Seven states, including Connecticut and Massachusetts, continued to support Christian churches through tax funds; moreover, some state laws required public officeholders to be Christians, denied the vote to non-Christians, and enforced the Christian “Sabbath.”<sup>14</sup> Connecticut abandoned church establishment in 1818 when its new state constitution was ratified. Massachusetts was the last state to abandon church

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11. Don Higginbotham, *George Washington Reconsidered* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 2001), 59-60. Both Sexias’s and Washington’s letters can be found in Jacob Rader Marcus, *The Jew in the American World: A Source Book* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1996), 108-109.

12. David A. Rausch, *Friends, Colleagues, and Neighbors: Jewish Contributions to American History* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1996), 18.

13. See Marcus, 109.

14. Bryan F. LeBeau, *Religion in America to 1865* (New York: New York University Press, 2000), 83-84.

establishment; it did so gradually, moving from multiple establishment to non-preferential establishment before finally eliminating establishment entirely in 1833.<sup>15</sup>

Later, in 1793, George Washington, reaffirmed his ideas in a letter to the New Church of Baltimore. “We have abundant reason to rejoice that in this land the light of truth and reason has triumphed over the power of bigotry and superstition and that every person may here worship God according to the dictates of his own heart.”<sup>16</sup> Thus, Washington’s presidency was a milestone of the beginning of a new era characterized by freedom of conscience and a new stage of church and state relationships.

### Entering a New Relationship

When Thomas Jefferson became president in 1801, he continued to advance the idea of strict separation of church and state. In October of that year, the Danbury Baptist Association sent him a letter arguing that the religious liberties they enjoyed were not perceived as immutable rights, but merely as “favors granted” by the legislature. Jefferson argued in his reply of January 1802 that the First Amendment, by prohibiting legislation on religion, was “building a wall of separation between church and state.” Later, in 1808, he was criticized for refusing to proclaim a national day of prayer and thanksgiving, as Presidents George Washington and John Adams had done before him. Jefferson argued that such activities are exercises that “every religious society [i.e., church, synagogue, or denomination] has a right to determine for itself” and this right

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15. Jon Butler, Grant Wacker, and Randall Herbert Balmer, *Religion in American Life: A Short History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 144-145.

16. Letter from George Washington to the members of the ‘New Church’ in Baltimore, dated January 27, 1793. Quoted in Gary Scott Smith, *Faith and the Presidency: From George Washington to George W. Bush* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 49.

“can never be safer than in their hands.”

The ideas implemented by Jefferson and other libertarians brought new dynamics to the churches. Those denominations accustomed to government funding, like the Congregationalists in New England and the Episcopalians in Virginia and other colonies, feared that religious liberty would bring diminishing support for the churches, but their negative expectations did not materialize. In fact, to the surprise of many, just the opposite occurred: The end of government support initially brought new life to the disestablished churches. Beecher, a Congregational clergyman of New England, considered the separation of church and state in Connecticut the “best thing that ever happened,” because it forced the churches to depend on their own resources and on God.<sup>17</sup>

Religious minority groups that had been formerly working under the social and political disadvantages of church establishment experienced dramatic growth under the new policy. By 1820 there were a quarter-million Methodists, and their numbers doubled by 1830; the number of Baptists multiplied tenfold in the same period.<sup>18</sup> Many other new religious organizations and movements would spring up in this period of voluntary participation. The new nation entered a period of expansion and another revival, which gave rise to the Christian Restoration movement.<sup>19</sup>

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17. Lyman Beecher, *The Autobiography of Lyman Beecher*, ed. Barbara M. Cross, 2 vols. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1961), 1:251-253.

18. Nathan O. Hatch, *The Democratization of American Christianity* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989), 3-6.

19. Edwin S. Gaustad, *Neither King nor Prelate: Religion and the New Nation, 1776-1826*, rev. ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1993), 121.

## Summary

The propositions of Jefferson and Madison changed the paradigm of church-state relationships in America according to their republican views. The Constitution, the Bill of Rights, and the establishment of religious freedom marked a new era of church-state separation and caused the realignment of major religious denominations.

### **The Influence of the Restorationist Movement on Millerite Adventist Views of Church and State**

This section focuses on church-state relationship issues in the Restoration movement that paralleled the American expansion and the Second Great Awakening. The term “Restorationist” in the religious context is a reference to the reformation of the church “in terms of its origin, mission, and hope” as described in the writings of the New Testament. These concepts, which gained significance in the early 1800s in America, are in principle the same ones partially endorsed by Luther, Zwingli, and Bucer, and radically practiced by the Anabaptists. During the period of the Second Awakening, those principles were largely advocated by Barton W. Stone, Thomas Campbell, Alexander Campbell, and Elias Smith, among others. These men’s propositions, combined with the new paradigm of church and state of the American Republic, formed the core of early Adventist assumptions of religious liberty.<sup>20</sup>

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20. The American Restoration movement is also called “the Reformation of the nineteenth century.” This concept was presented based on the presupposition that none of the contemporary religions were able to maintain “primitive Christianity.” Douglas A. Foster, *The Encyclopedia of the Stone-Campbell Movement* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2004), 638; Winfred Ernest Garrison, *An American Religious Movement, a Brief History of the Disciples of Christ* (St. Louis: Bethany, 1960), 17-18. After Constantine’s conversion and the establishment of a new model of church-state relationship, Roman Catholicism named all of its foes “schismatics” or “heretics.” The new “hybrid” power (church-state) had no desire or need for differentiation between similar doctrines or nuances of biblical understanding. Some of the rival “heretics,” who often had more biblical knowledge, were called “Anabaptist” (not anti-baptism, but

## The Second Great Awakening

The rise of the American Restorationist movement occurred in connection with the American expansion and the Second Great Awakening. Between the American Revolution and 1845, the population of the United States grew at astounding rates, from two and a half million to 20 million in 70 years. After 1790, westward migration accelerated and settlements quickly spread as far as the Mississippi River. By 1821, the Mississippi region was assimilated and Missouri became a state.<sup>21</sup>

The Second Great Awakening, a wave of spiritual revival that spread across the country from the 1790s to the 1840s, caused a similar rapid growth in Christianity. Religious interest had declined in the late seventeenth century following the American Revolution, in part because places of worship were destroyed, and also due to religious

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“rebaptizers”) because they rejected infant baptism and practiced adult baptism. In 1525, Conrad Grebel, Felix Manz, and their followers were challenged by Zwingli regarding infant baptism. In the face of this challenge, Zwingli (and later Luther and Calvin) went magisterial and segregated a radical faction of the Reformation. Other leaders like Michael Sattler, Hubmaier, and Menno Simons followed these radical ideas, which eventually reached England and found the support of Robert Browne. The rise of the “Brownists” in England is considered the most important event of the English Reformation in relation to American political formation. Robert Browne was the first Englishman to embrace the Anabaptist doctrine of the complete separation of church and state. Gideon David Hagstotz and Hilda Boettcher Hagstotz, *Heroes of the Reformation* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1951), 28; Leonard Verduin, *The Anatomy of a Hybrid: A Study in Church-State Relationships* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1976), 101, 140, 160, 219. See also J. Douglas Kenyon, *Forbidden Religion: Suppressed Heresies of the West* (Rochester, VT: Bear, 2006); Daniel Liechty, *Sabbatarianism in the Sixteenth Century: A Page in History of the Radical Reformation* (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 1993); Leonard Verduin, *That First Amendment and the Remnant* (Sarasota, FL: The Christian Hymnary, 1998).

21. Ray Allen Billington, *Westward Expansion; a History of the American Frontier*, 4th ed. (New York: Macmillan, 1974), 41-42; Charles C. Gross, *Statistical History of the First Century of American Methodism* (New York: Carlton and Porter, 1866), 106; Thomas F. McIlwraith and Edward K. Muller, *North America: The Historical Geography of a Changing Continent*, 2nd ed. (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2001), 162.

philosophies based on reason that dismissed most of the traditional teachings of Christianity. The expansion into the West had begun to create more individualistic and vibrant communities, and the revival that began in the 1790s had two goals: to regain the more intellectual East, and to succeed among the frontiersmen of the West.<sup>22</sup>

The Second Great Awakening took different forms in different areas, depending on the local population and their religious situation. In New England during the 1790s, scattered revivals promoted by congregations raised the spiritual interest of the people; at this stage, the Second Awakening was promoted mostly by settled ministers such as Timothy Dwight, Nathaniel Edwards, and Lyman Beecher, who motivated their own congregations. The renewed interest in religion inspired a wave of social activism and the creation of missionary and benevolent institutions. In parts of New York, the spirit of revival caused spiritual movements to emerge as new denominations. In the Appalachian region of Kentucky and Tennessee, revival camp meetings strengthened the faith of Methodists and Baptists and also propelled new evangelistic sects such as the “Christians.”<sup>23</sup>

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22. David Edwin Harrell, *A Social History of the Disciples of Christ* (Nashville: Disciples of Christ Historical Society, 1966), 2-4; Winthrop Still Hudson, *Religion in America: An Historical Account of the Development of American Religious Life*, 2d ed. (New York: Macmillan, 1973), 128; Clifton E. Olmstead, *History of Religion in the United States* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1960), 155-156.

23. This emergence of new sects is due to the change of concepts in American religion. The preaching became more accessible to the frontiersman and the common people through self-taught “theologians.” These clergy came from among the people and intended to empower the people rather than impose a belief. Often the preachers challenged the limitations of their times. Thomas S. Kidd, *The Great Awakening: The Roots of Evangelical Christianity in Colonial America* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007), 313-314.

## The Emergence of Denominational Christians

To understand the views within early Adventism and what Ellen G. White was often responding to, it is necessary to investigate the emergence of Restorationism and its propositions. Many important figures of early Adventism were influenced by the beliefs proposed in the Restoration Movement.

The Cane Ridge Revival, which took place in Kentucky in August 1801, became perhaps the most important camp meeting of the Second Awakening. Shortly after the Cane Ridge Revival, Barton W. Stone, a Presbyterian minister at Cane Ridge and Concord, became convinced that he should break away from the Calvinistic doctrines. His decision was followed by his exclusion in 1803.<sup>24</sup> One year after the Cane Ridge Revival, five other ministers joined him and vowed to follow nothing but the simplicity of the New Testament and the Christian name. They signed a document on June 28, 1804, called "The Last Will and Testament to the Springfield Presbytery," which they called a "declaration of independence" from the synod of Kentucky.<sup>25</sup>

Stone's trajectory of breaking away from denominational religion to start a Restorationist movement is very similar to those of other revivalists who were striving for the rebirth of a biblical primitive church. Religious leaders such as James O'Kelly in Virginia and North Carolina and Abner Jones and Elias Smith in New England were simultaneously moving away from denominational doctrines, insisting on the name "Christian" and the Bible alone as a source for faith and practice. In 1809, Thomas and

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24. Royce Lynn Money, "Church-State Relations in the Churches of Christ since 1945: A Study in Religion and Politics" (PhD diss., Baylor University Press, 1975), 17.

25. Hatch, 70-71; John Rogers, "The Last Will and Testament of the Springfield Presbytery," in *The Biography of Elder Barton Warren Stone* (New York: Arno, 1972), 51-53.

Alexander Campbell started to preach similar ideas in Pennsylvania.<sup>26</sup>

The “Christian” groups that emerged in different regions became aware of each other in the early nineteenth century. In 1809, these groups held general meetings in New England and contemplated organization, but it did not happen until 1819 when the first General Conference met in Portsmouth, NH.<sup>27</sup> The conference met regularly until the union of the Stone and Campbell movements in 1832, then was replaced by a general convention that started in 1833.<sup>28</sup>

The general meetings brought more consistency to the movement and evangelistic outreach, but the printing press was perhaps the strongest factor in spreading

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26. Richard Tristano, *The Origins of the Restoration Movement: An Intellectual History* (Atlanta: Glenmary Research Center, 1988), 49. In 1809, Campbell finished his *Declaration and Address*, which today is considered the Magna Carta of the Disciple Movement. See Hartzell Spence, *The Story of America's Religions*, 1st ed. (New York: Holt Rinehart and Winston, 1960). For detailed information on the link between the Second Awakening and the Restoration Movement, see Max Ward Randall, *The Great Awakenings and the Restoration Movement: A Study of the 1790-1860 History of the Awakenings and Their Impact Upon the Formation and Early Development and Growth of the Christian Churches-Churches of Christ* (Joplin, MO: College Press, 1983). Teegarden reinforces the idea that Christian churches began “separate but similar groups.” Kenneth L. Teegarden, *We Call Ourselves Disciples* (Saint Louis: Bethany Press, 1975), 13. Garrison and DeGroot argue that New England Christians represented by Elias Smith “preceded and paralleled” the Disciples of Christ. Winfred Ernest Garrison and A. T. DeGroot, *The Disciples of Christ, a History* (St. Louis: Bethany, 1958), 254.

27. The Restoration movement became basically grouped into two fronts: the O’Kelly, Smith, and Jones Christians and the Campbell-Stone Christians. In theory, they all stood for the same restoration, but in practice, they did have some major differences on subjects like the trinity, the Godhead, and anti-trinitarianism. While the Campbell-Stone Christians believed in some sort of trinity, Christians under Smith and Jones’s influence were strictly anti-trinitarians. The predominant similarities motivated a temporary unification of the Stone Christians with the Campbell Christians in 1832.

28. Department of Commerce and Labor Bureau of the Census, “Religious Bodies: 1906,” ed. E. Dana Durand, 2 vols. (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2001), 1:192.



Restorationist ideas. Many periodicals were started by Restorationist groups: In 1808 Elias Smith started the *Herald of Gospel Liberty* in New England, in 1826 Barton Stone started the *Christian Messenger* in Kentucky, and in 1820 Alexander Campbell started the *Christian Baptist* in Pennsylvania, which became the *Millennial Harbinger* in 1830. There were so many new periodicals springing up that Campbell observed, “There is some sort of editorial mania abroad in the land.”<sup>29</sup>

The libertarian views of James O’Kelly were the primary reason for his break from the Methodists in Virginia. O’Kelly withdrew from the Methodist Conference in 1792 because he disagreed with the British clergy’s dominance of the American church. O’Kelly, who counted Thomas Jefferson and Patrick Henry among his closest friends, also considered “private judgment and the liberty of conscience” to be the “rights and privilege of all.”<sup>30</sup> In 1794, his followers decided to change their name from “Republican Methodists” to “Christians” alone and to use the Bible as their only rule of faith.

### Politics and Publishing

The recent creation of the new republic gave the Second Awakening more political relevance: The evangelicals and the conservatives were fiercely debating the authority of the church, and indirectly, of the state.<sup>31</sup> Elias Smith’s exposure to the

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29. Garrison and DeGroot, *The Disciples of Christ, a History*, 255-256.

30. Walter Wilson Jennings, “Origin and Early History of the Disciples of Christ” (PhD diss., University of Illinois, 1918), 63-64.

31. Nicholas P. Miller, “A Populist Religious Movement,” *Liberty*, March/April 2006, 4-5. Because Massachusetts church establishment ended only in 1833, the religious liberty debate extended to the authority of the state as well. This was the context of the emerging works of liberty from Elias Smith. Michael G. Kenny, *The Perfect Law of Liberty: Elias Smith and the Providential History of America* (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institute, 1994), 97.

political struggles of Massachusetts in 1800 through the articles of Benjamin Austin changed his spiritual journey.<sup>32</sup>

By November 1802, Smith came to publicly abhor the aristocratic control of the clergy and to openly support Republicanism. Smith believed in the ideals of the Democratic-Republicanism of his time and shared the propositions of the “infidels” Jefferson and Madison that were fiercely opposed by the Federalists. His Baptist background also led him to believe that the evils of the European system needed to be eradicated. Smith placed his opinions side by side with the Bible and considered his political views of freedom to be biblically correct.<sup>33</sup>

At the beginning of 1803, Smith and the members of the Portsmouth church decided to call themselves Christians only and refer to their congregation as “The Church of Christ.”<sup>34</sup>

Their independent thought did not prevent them from being accepted into the fellowship of the Baptist order. Smith felt deeply alone theologically, but found courage when he met Abner Jones, who held similar ideas. Later, Smith left the Baptist fellowship and paired his labors with Jones to form the “Christian Connection.”<sup>35</sup>

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32. Hatch emphasizes that Elias Smith was “self-consciously imitating” Benjamin Austin, who was a radical advocate of Jefferson’s ideas. Hatch, 128.

33. Ibid.; Kenny, 98.

34. The Portsmouth church was initially accepted into the fellowship of the Baptist order; however, in reality they were so independent in thought that within a year they completely cut the ties. Elias Smith, *The Life, Conversion, Preaching, Travels, and Sufferings of Elias Smith* (Portsmouth, NH: Beck and Foster, 1816), 313-314.

35. Christians from the O’Kelly, Jones, Smith, and other Christian congregations that shared closer views on doctrines like anti-trinitarianism did not join the Stone-Campbell Disciple/Christian Movement, but became known as the Christian Connection.

Later in 1803, Smith started to publish articles and pamphlets with vigor and determination, for he believed “that every Christian has a right to publish and vindicate what he believes.”<sup>36</sup> The controversy and audacity of Smith’s materials “greatly enraged the clergy and their subjects.”<sup>37</sup> William Bentley complained in 1805 that “the press has lately vomited out many nauseous things from [Smith].” In 1808, Smith began publishing the *Herald of Gospel Liberty*, which replaced the *Christian Magazine*. The *Herald of Gospel Liberty* became Smith’s masterpiece and the first religious newspaper in the United States advocating religious liberty. As it said, “The design of this paper is to shew the liberty which belongs to men, as it respects their duties to God and others.”<sup>38</sup>

Two aspects of Smith’s ministry are important for this work. First, the original objective envisioned for his newspaper is vital for determining whether his ideas were assimilated by the “Christians.” Smith reported that in the summer of 1807 while he was at Little Compton, Rhode Island, Congressman Isaac Wilber offered him liberal support “to conduct a religious newspaper that should give a description of that religious liberty that is in harmony with civil liberty.” In fear of ideological compromise, Smith refused the partnership and decided to pursue the task alone.<sup>39</sup> The work that followed defined

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Foster, 190; Abner D. Jones, *Memoir of Elder Abner Jones* (Boston: W. Crosby, 1842), 74; Smith, *The Life of Elias Smith*, 124, 281.

36. Thomas Andros, *The Scriptures Liable to Be Wrested to Men's Own Destruction, and an Instance of This Found in the Writings of Elias Smith* (Taunton, MA: A. Danforth, 1817), 10, 21; Smith, *Life of Elias Smith*, 309.

37. Smith, *Life of Elias Smith*, 309.

38. Elias Smith, "Address to the Public," *Herald of Gospel Liberty*, September 1, 1808, 1.

39. Smith, *Life of Elias Smith*, 374.

religious liberty:

Religious Liberty signifies a freedom to believe in God, and to obey Him according to the manifestation which he has made to man, in his works, in the Scriptures, and by the Spirit of truth, the manifestations of which are given to every man to profit withal. Every kind of human law respecting religion is inconsistent with real religious liberty.<sup>40</sup>

A second important aspect of Smith's ministry was its location. Though the newspaper was to be forwarded "to any part of the United States where conveyance is practicable," Smith's ideas and ministry propagated initially from a location halfway between Boston, Massachusetts, and Portland, Maine.<sup>41</sup> From 1809 to July 1816, Smith moved between Portland; Philadelphia; Portsmouth, New Hampshire; and Boston.<sup>42</sup> Even in 1832 when his newspaper became the *Christian Herald*, it was considered the periodical that "belongs to the Christian Churches of New England."<sup>43</sup>

From the very early issues of the *Herald of Gospel Liberty*, it is possible to extract at least three values that justified the existence of the periodical in the mind of Elias Smith. First, Elias Smith had a strong belief in the sentiment expressed in the Declaration of Independence that "all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights." He repeatedly asserted in his articles that liberty was an enjoyment "that God has given us" with the guarantees of the government of this country. His writings reflected a deep trust in the values of liberty established by the new government and the documents of governance. Second, the ideas he intended to challenge

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40. J. Pressley Barrett, *The Centennial of Religious Journalism*, 2d ed. (Dayton: Christian, 1908), 43.

41. *Ibid.*, 41; Smith, *Life of Elias Smith*, 372-373.

42. Barrett, 40-41.

43. *Ibid.*, 55.

were those remaining from the European system of church-state relationship. Those ideas were considered destructive and a tyrannical threat to the enjoyment of liberty. And third, Smith saw an urgent need for religious people to know what liberty meant in a free government. He wrote from the assumption that religious people were ignorant of religious liberty in general. Their opinions were blurred by the old European lifestyle that hindered the judgment of those public men who defended liberty.<sup>44</sup>

Besides the articles on subjects like the tyranny of the papacy and religious liberty in America, the *Herald of Gospel Liberty* presented intense debate about prophecies. The approach used by Elias Smith in general intertwined discussion of prophecies with discussion of church and state relationships; the articles presented ideas like the papacy as the image of the beast of paganism, pre-millennial discussions, current events moving toward the fall of the Turks, and analysis of civil establishments and Christianity.<sup>45</sup>

In October 1817 Elias Smith issued the last *Herald of Gospel Liberty*. In 1818 Robert Foster resumed the editorial work started by Smith with a new name and a change of policy. The *Christian Herald* was issued with the proposition of using “arguments instead of censure, and entreaties instead of the scourge.” Later in April 1835, Foster sold

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44. Smith, "Address to the Public"; Elias Smith, "Liberty. No. 1," *Herald of Gospel Liberty*, September 1, 1808, 2; idem, "Important Discovery No 6," *Herald of Gospel Liberty*, December 24, 1813, 1; idem, "Distress of Nations," *Herald of Gospel Liberty*, January 7, 1814, 559; idem, "Liberty," *Herald of Gospel Liberty*, December 9, 1814, 9; idem, "A Looking Glass," *Herald of Gospel Liberty*, December 9, 1814, 649.

45. The periodical also carried three articles by William Miller on the subject of prophetic analysis, on October 11, October 25, and November 22, 1808. His name is simply identified as “Wm. Miller of Low Hampton.” Elias Smith, "Sermon on Celestial Signs of the Times," *Herald of Gospel Liberty*, September 8, 1808, 6; idem, "Curiosity for the Curious," *Herald of Gospel Liberty*, February 1, 1811; idem, "Important Discovery," *Herald of Gospel Liberty*, December 24, 1813; idem, "Abolished Inquisition in Spain," *Herald of Gospel Liberty*, January 7, 1814, 559; idem, "Distress of Nations," *Herald of Gospel Liberty*, January 7, 1814.

the newspaper to the Eastern Christian Association that changed its name to *Christian Journal* and relocated to Exeter, NH. Elijah Shaw was the new editor.

#### The Christian Connection and Millerite Adventists

When the periodical switched hands in 1835, Joshua V. Himes was already considered a prominent contributor to the *Christian Herald*.<sup>46</sup> Himes was nearly thirty years old and had been the preacher at a Christian church since 1823. Though he was from an Episcopal background, the ideals of liberty were part of his life.<sup>47</sup>

In 1830, Himes resolved the crisis in the Christian church at Boston and became “popular with moral and political reformers in general.”<sup>48</sup> By 1833, he was actively engaged with the New England Anti-Slavery Society.<sup>49</sup> In 1838, Himes participated in the formation of the Non-Resistance Society and became its director. Their Declaration of Sentiments proposed that they would pay no allegiance to any government, hold no public office, and refrain from voting or making use of the courts of law.<sup>50</sup> It was right after the annual meeting of the Non-Resistance Society in November 1839 that Himes

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46. Barrett, 50-67.

47. David Tallmadge Arthur, “Joshua V. Himes and the Cause of Adventism: 1839-1845,” (MA thesis, University of Chicago, 1961), 7-8; Barrett, 57; John Gale, “A Brief Recollection of Rev. Joshua V. Himes,” *Advent Christian Times*, February 6, 1872, 220.

48. Arthur, 18, excerpted from Gale, “Recollection of Rev. Joshua V. Himes,” *Advent Christian Times*, February 6, 1872, 220.

49. Arthur, 10. Himes appears as a contributor to the cause in the official organ of the society in 1833. *Abolitionist* 1 (August 1833): 128.

50. William Freeman Galpin, *Pioneering for Peace; a Study of American Peace Efforts to 1846* (Syracuse, NY: The Bardeen, 1933), 130-131.

met William Miller and heard his message of the coming return of Jesus.<sup>51</sup>

Joseph Bates was a retired sea captain who was baptized in the Christian church of Fairhaven, Massachusetts, in 1827. Like Joshua Himes, Bates also participated in the founding of an Anti-Slavery Society around the “close of 1831, and commencement of 1832,” and recognized the importance of the issue. Bates was aware of the political and social pressure, violence, and bigotry against anti-slavery advocates. Even though he had been converted and awakened to spiritual issues, he still felt “the importance of taking a decided stand on the side of the oppressed.”<sup>52</sup> It is interesting to notice that Bates applied religious principles to civil matters: “I could not be a consistent Christian if I stood on the side of the oppressor, for God was not there. Neither could I claim his promises if I stood on neutral ground. Hence my only alternative was to plead for the slave, and thus I decided.”<sup>53</sup>

The affinity between Himes and Bates went beyond the slavery issue. They both embraced the Second Advent message in the fall of 1839, and such was their involvement that they even rubbed shoulders at the first general conference of October 13, 1840.<sup>54</sup>

James S. White was another member of the Christian church who came into contact with Joshua Himes and William Miller in October 1842 at the Advent camp

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51. Arthur, 18.

52. Joseph Bates, *The Early Life and Later Experience and Labors of Elder Joseph Bates*, ed. James White (Battle Creek, MI: SDA Publishing Association, 1878), 243.

53. *Ibid.*, 236.

54. Francis D. Nichol, *The Midnight Cry: A Defense of the Character and Conduct of William Miller and the Millerites, Who Mistakenly Believed That the Second Coming of Christ Would Take Place in the Year 1844* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1944), 36.

meeting held in Exeter, Maine. White was twenty-one years old and had been baptized in the Christian church when he was fifteen. His parents embraced the Adventist message proclaimed by Himes and Miller in 1842, but James White did not fully commit to preaching the message until 1843.<sup>55</sup>

The beliefs of the Christian church were very familiar to James White. His father, John White, supported the ideals of freedom of conscience and the search for advancement, and his belief in liberty was so strong that he did not hesitate to move from the Baptist faith to the Christian church. John White remained in the Christian church for almost forty years, serving as a deacon.<sup>56</sup>

The ideals of the Christian church embraced by James White and Joseph Bates, including those regarding the church-state relationship, later passed into the Sabbatarian Adventist movement.<sup>57</sup> White and Bates mentored John Nevins Andrews and Uriah Smith, who became leaders in the Sabbatarian Adventist movement and later in the Seventh-day Adventist church.

John Nevins Andrews was only fourteen years old when he and his family embraced the Millerite message. After personal struggles to biblically understand the

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55. James White, *Life Incidents: In Connection with the Great Advent Movement as Illustrated by the Three Angels of Revelation 14* (Battle Creek, MI: SDA Publishing Association, 1868), 72, 15, 73.

56. *Ibid.*, 10-11.

57. Wheeler makes a clear connection between Joshua Himes, James White, Joseph Bates, Uriah Smith, the Farnsworth family, and the teachings of the Christian churches. He also implies some doctrinal inheritance. Gerald Wheeler, *James White: Innovator and Overcomer* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 2003), 30-31.



events of 1844, the bright teenager met James and Ellen White in 1849.<sup>58</sup> The couple stayed with the Andrews family while working on their periodical, the *Second Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*; they later moved to Rochester, New York, then Battle Creek. The relationship between James White and John Nevins Andrews grew stronger over the years and “has been compared to that of the apostle Paul and his convert Timothy.”<sup>59</sup>

Uriah Smith came to Adventism at the age of twenty through the preaching of Joseph Bates. His mother Rebekah had a strong belief in the Adventist faith and a great regard for Bates; she trusted his influence to win her children, Uriah and Annie Smith, to the “present truth.” Liberty of thinking was important to the Smith family; they also considered Unitarianism, Universalism, and Quakerism as religious options. However, after carefully studying the Adventist doctrines, Uriah became convinced and joined his sister in the work for the *Review and Herald* in 1853. Uriah developed a great bond of friendship with James White and John Nevins Andrews that lasted throughout their lives.<sup>60</sup>

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58. Harry Leonard, *J. N. Andrews, the Man and the Mission* (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 1985), 15; James White and Ellen G. White, *Life Sketches: Ancestry, Early Life, Christian Experience, and Extensive Labors of Elder James White, and His Wife Mrs. Ellen G. White* (Battle Creek, MI: SDA Publishing Association, 1888), 260-261.

59. Virgil E. Robinson, *John Nevins Andrews: Flame for the Lord* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1975), 20.

60. Eugene F. Durand, *Yours in the Blessed Hope, Uriah Smith* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1980), 20; Richard Julian Hammond, “The Life and Work of Uriah Smith” (MA thesis, Andrews University, 1944), 7-10; John N. Loughborough, *The Great Second Advent Movement Its Rise and Progress* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1905), 313, 320. The ties between White, Smith, and Andrews went beyond work. Andrews married Smith’s wife’s sister; Smith and Andrews were both highly regarded by

Charles Fitch's understanding of Babylon in Rev 18 contributed to the Millerite movement beyond the eschatological anticipation of the second coming of Jesus. Fitch was a Congregationalist pastor educated under the Baptist influence of Brown University in Providence, RI; he was associated with the revivalists of the 1830s and in 1838 embraced the Millerite message. In the summer of 1843, Fitch identified the Babylon of Rev 18 as the Protestant churches that had not accepted the message of the second coming of Christ. Fitch's sermon is claimed to be the very beginning of the Seventh-day Adventist church, because Miller had never intended to start a new denomination. Many who accepted Miller's message were being expelled or leaving their churches due to growing denominational pressures. Fitch's interpretations encouraged radical separation from the "fallen" denominations: "Come out of her, my people!"<sup>61</sup>

Fitch's interpretations on Babylon helped to solidify the Whites', Bates's, Andrews's, and Smith's perspectives on liberty in ways that made unacceptable any form of compromise or cooperation with the government.<sup>62</sup> These radical views of separation and liberty of conscience shared among these four pioneers were carried into the Sabbatarian Adventist movement and later the early Seventh-day Adventist church. Concerns about church-state relationships did not exist only at the leadership level,

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both Ellen and James White, and Smith worked in close contact with James White until James White's death in 1881.

61. George R. Knight, *Millennial Fever and the End of the World: A Study of Millerite Adventism* (Boise, ID: Pacific Press, 1993), 157-157; Stephen D. O'Leary, *Arguing the Apocalypse: A Theory of Millennial Rhetoric* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 105-6, 109.

62. In regard to Fitch's impact on the Millerites, the "Come-Outerism" gave them the characteristic of not compromising their understanding with other ideas. Ruth Alden Doan, *The Miller Heresy, Millennialism, and American Culture* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1987), 122-124.

however, for many who initially came to Sabbatarian Adventism were also Millerites and members of the Christian churches in New England.<sup>63</sup>

### Summary

The church-state ideals upheld by the Restorationist Christian Connection in the East were mostly advocated by Elias Smith. His ideas relied heavily on a combination of the Republicanism advocated by Jefferson, Madison, and the Restorationists, and the Anabaptists' views. Smith's ideas were later passed on to New England Millerite Adventists around 1863. Leaders such as Joshua Himes, Joseph Bates, James White, Uriah Smith, and John Andrews were influenced by the ideas of Elias Smith. The latter four (joined by Ellen G. Harmon) became the founders of Sabbatarian Adventism, and propagated distinctive concepts about church and state that were later carried into the Seventh-day Adventist church.

### **Ellen White's Early Contacts with Church-State Issues**

In this section, I position Ellen G. Harmon (later Ellen G. White) in the context of the church-state debates of her days in Maine before 1844. It is very likely that she came into contact with the major issues of the time, and these issues could have impacted her

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63. Uriah Smith wrote and edited many articles calling for radical separation of church and state; Andrews worked with state and federal government authorities to establish the Adventist noncombatant position; James White expressed his leadership on issues like voting and combatancy; and Bates worked actively for the antislavery cause. Bates, 238, 242, 261; Foster, 190; Robinson, 46; U. Smith, "Ye Are Not of This World," 84; idem, "The Age of Theft," *Review and Herald*, June 19, 1860, 35; James White, "Politics," *Review and Herald*, August 28, 1860, 108; idem, "The Nation," *Review and Herald*, August 12, 1862, 84; Francis McLellan Wilcox, *Seventh-day Adventists in Time of War* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1936), 62-64.

personal views, even before she received her first vision in December 1844.<sup>64</sup>

### The Harmon Family and Religion in Maine

The exclusion of the Harmon family from the Methodist church in 1843

exemplifies the ordeals of those who were forced to leave their churches for upholding

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64. Ellen White gave the following report about her first vision: “While I was praying at the family altar, the Holy Ghost fell upon me, and I seemed to be rising higher and higher, far above the dark world.” After describing what she had seen, she concluded. “After I came out of vision, everything looked changed; a gloom was spread over all that I beheld. Oh, how dark this world looked to me. I wept when I found myself here, and felt homesick.” Ellen G. White, *Early Writings of Mrs. White*, 2d ed. (Battle Creek, MI: Review and Herald, 1882). In another account she said, “The Spirit of God rested upon me; I was wrapped in a vision of God's glory, and for the first time had a view of other planets. After I came out of vision, I related what I had seen.” The origin of these visions was severely questioned; some charged her with “mesmerism” but failed to duplicate the event. idem, *Christian Experience and Teachings of Ellen G. White* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1922), 88, 78. Others charged her with being from the devil, but the accusers were in no spiritual condition to recognize such a difference. James White and Ellen G. White, *Life Sketches* (1880), 232-233. At least two instances led her to be assured that her visions were really from God: (1) a vision where she was reprehended for having some doubts (E. G. White, *Christian Experience and Teachings of Ellen G. White*, 78); and (2) her understanding of the text in Joel 2:28, “And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out of My Spirit upon all flesh: and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams: and on My servants and on My handmaidens I will pour out in those days of My Spirit; and they shall prophesy.” Ellen G. White, “The World to Be Warned,” *Review and Herald*, July 28, 1904, 7-8. Many critics have argued against Ellen White’s visions and her ministry; likewise, many books and articles has been written in regard to the authenticity of her visions and counsels. Further details can be found in Leonard Brand and Don S. McMahon, *The Prophet and Her Critics: A Striking New Analysis Refutes the Charges That Ellen G. White "Borrowed" The Health Message* (Nampa, ID: Pacific Press, 2005); Dudley Marvin Canright, *Adventism Refuted in a Nutshell* (New York: Fleming H. Revell, 1889); Francis D. Nichol, *Ellen G. White and Her Critics: An Answer to the Major Charges That Critics Have Brought against Mrs. Ellen G. White* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1951); Ronald L. Numbers, *Prophetess of Health: A Study of Ellen G. White*, 1st ed. (New York: Harper and Row, 1976); Walter T. Rea, *The White Lie* (Turlock, CA: M and R Publications, 1982). It is not part of this dissertation to argue the validity of Ellen G. White’s visions and counsels; I will investigate the content of her writings rather than make a case in favor of or against them.

the Millerite message. Although Robert Harmon was a longstanding committed member, the Methodist church was more interested in making examples for others than in debating new teachings. He was excluded for his beliefs without a chance to argue his case. At this point, the idea of separation preached by Fitch became very attractive to the Harmon family, especially seventeen-year-old Ellen Gould Harmon.<sup>65</sup>

Ellen Gould Harmon<sup>66</sup> was born in Gorham, Maine, in 1827, only seven years after the disestablishment of the state religion in that state.<sup>67</sup> This late disestablishment demonstrates the strong inheritance of European Calvinist views of church and state that prevailed in Massachusetts, New Hampshire, and Vermont.<sup>68</sup> During Ellen's growing years, the Methodists and Baptists in New England aggressively expanded and quickly outnumbered the Congregationalists.

The religious freedom in Maine allowed different attitudes and beliefs to grow in both state and church. In the state, the magistrates were perceived to have high standards because Maine laws met Christian expectations and were considered to be in accord "with the genius of Christian religion."<sup>69</sup> Autobiographies of politicians indicate that

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65. Arthur White makes the connection between Fitch's message and the exclusion of the Harmon family. Arthur L. White, *Ellen G. White*, 4 vols. (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1981), 1:44.

66. She was married August 30, 1846, to James White, a colleague from the Adventist Movement and became known as Ellen G. White. Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, 9 vols. (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1948), 1:75.

67. Loren P. Beth, *The American Theory of Church and State* (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 1958), 68.

68. Witte, 23-26.

69. Glenn C. Altschuler and Stuart M. Blumin, *Rude Republic: Americans and Their Politics in the Nineteenth Century* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2000), 128. The quotation refers to a novel inspired in the days when temperance

some could not stand the “dirty” political games of the early 1840s and chose to leave politics.<sup>70</sup> In the organized church, individuals were motivated to participate and organize societies that promoted behavioral standards. The activism of the early 1840s promoted Christian beliefs in the community and created a collective perception of a Christian nation.<sup>71</sup>

### Early Civil Movements in Portland, Maine

In Ellen Harmon’s youth, she very likely became aware of Neal Dow and his achievements in Portland. Dow was born in 1804 to pious Quaker parents in Portland. In his youth, Dow became outraged by the social destruction associated with liquor, and this led him to become actively involved in the prohibition laws as early as 1837. Following his lead, in 1843 the authorities of Portland denied additional licenses to sell liquor. His moral-Christian leading prompted him to become mayor in 1851 in order to solve the problem of liquor.<sup>72</sup>

The women’s rights movement in Maine was another concern that affected the

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societies were pressing for “good laws” prohibiting the “evils of liquor.” A. D. Milne, *Uncle Sam’s Farm Fence* (New York: James French, 1854), 245.

70. Levi Leighton of Maine is a good example of one who cut short his political career because of the way politics worked in those days. In his autobiography he considered himself “foolish enough to be drawn into the world of politics,” which was filled with “party tricks and corruption.” Altschuler and Blumin, 105; Levi Leighton, *Autobiography of Levi Leighton* (Portland, ME: Brown Thurston, 1894), 83.

71. Roy Palmer Domenico and Mark Y. Hanley, eds., *Encyclopedia of Modern Christian Politics*, 2 vols. (Westport, CT: Greenwood, 2006), s.v. “American Temperance Society.”

72. Jack S. Blocker, David M. Fahey, and Ian R. Tyrrell, *Alcohol and Temperance in Modern History: An International Encyclopedia* (Santa Barbara, CA: ABC, 2003), 199; Henry S. Clubb, *The Maine Liquor Law: Its Origin, History, and Results, Including a Life of Honorable Neal Dow* (New York: Fowler and Wells, 1856), 13-24.

church and state during Ellen Harmon's formative years. The many social issues and distinct gender roles in the nineteenth century brought together women with similar concerns. Melder lists six "sisterhoods"—areas of female fellowship and united action. Women were united by their concern for their families, friends, classmates, religious movements, voluntary causes, and working.<sup>73</sup>

At least two out of the six sisterhoods that flourished in the 1800s were concerned with church-state relationships: the religious movements and the voluntary causes. Both the sisterhoods of religious movements and voluntary causes had their roots in the Second Great Awakening. With the establishment of religious freedom and the paradigm shift from the formality of church membership toward spiritual allegiance, the women experiencing conversion started to share the burdens, anxieties, and exultations of their faith. Mary Lyon and Catherine Beecher encouraged women to move from passive receptors of God's will to active instruments of God. The voluntary causes among women followed the religious movements. From 1800 to 1840, benevolent movements among women grew to major relevance, amassing thousands of organized members. The benevolent sisterhoods became the right hand of the clergy and a changing influence for women. Such leaders as Dorothea Dix and Clara Barton, realizing women's influential power, moved on to the different areas known today as "social feminism."<sup>74</sup>

As early as the 1830s, women were entering the political scene in Maine. In response to their voiced claims, the number of political appeals for women's moral

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73. Keith E. Melder, *Beginnings of Sisterhood: The American Woman's Rights Movement, 1800-1850* (New York: Schocken Books, 1977), 31.

74. Ibid., 39-43; Jean Fagan Yellin and John C. Van Horne, "The Female Antislavery Movement," in *The Abolitionist Sisterhood: Women's Political Culture in Antebellum America* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994), 159-177.

support increased. At political rallies, special areas for women's presence began to appear in recognition of their participation. John Neal of Portland was the first lecturer to address women's rights, in a speech delivered in July 1833 that propelled his career battle against "the prolonged slavery of women." By the 1840s the issue was already vibrating, not only in Portland, but also in other larger cities such as Boston and New York.<sup>75</sup>

### The Challenges for the Churches in Maine

While Ellen Harmon was young, the churches in Maine faced challenges from at least three other movements. First was the "wild delusion" of Millerism that entered Portland in 1842 and was heavily propagated through Gerschom's preaching at the Chestnut Street Methodist Church and articles in the *Maine Wesleyan Journal*.<sup>76</sup> Second, the spiritualism practiced by Phineas P. Quimby in Belfast and Portland was considered "strangely fascinating" by Maine society. From 1838 on, Quimby tried to evolve his methods of healing.<sup>77</sup> Third, Swedenborgianism, also known as the Philosophy and

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75. Windsor Pratt Daggett and Isaac Bassett Choate, *A Down-East Yankee from the District of Maine* (Portland, ME: A. J. Huston, 1920), 30; Jean V. Matthews, *Women's Struggle for Equality: The First Phase, 1828-1876*, The American Ways Series (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 1997), 45. See also Wendy Martin, "Legal Disabilities of Women," in *The American Sisterhood: Writings of the Feminist Movement from Colonial Times to the Present* (New York: Harper and Row, 1972), 33-46.

76. Stephen Allen and W. H. Pilsbury, *History of Methodism in Maine, 1793-1886* (Augusta: C. E. Nash, 1887), 118; Leighton, 187; Ann Taves, *Fits, Trances, & Visions Experiencing Religion and Explaining Experience from Wesley to James* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1999), 129-130.

77. Sydney E. Ahlstrom, *A Religious History of the American People*, 2nd ed. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004), 487; Giogine Milmine, "Mary Baker G. Eddy and the History of the Christian Science," *Maclure's Magazine*, 1907, 608-627; Eva S. Moskowitz, *In Therapy We Trust: America's Obsession with Self-Fulfillment* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001), 10-11.



Theology of Barron Swedenborg,<sup>78</sup> provoked a lot of interest in Maine. The additional biblical interpretations the Swedenborgians professed to gain through help from spirits, and their aggressive printing of literature caused Christians many worries during the 1830s.<sup>79</sup>

Fitch's proposition of radical rupture (in his sermon "Come Out of Her My People") indicted the formal churches for a state of corruption despite the influence of the Second Great Awakening. In Maine during the 1830s and 1840s, the problems of sin and impiety were still present. Between 1829 and 1844, at least a dozen people were excommunicated from the Congregationalist church in Sanford. In other Maine cities, the Puritan inheritance was being tarnished by members' transgressions ranging from "sinful anger" to fornication. In 1840, there was also heated debate in favor of dancing, and at least six clergymen were found guilty of actions such as gross immorality, unworthy conduct, and "indulgence of intoxicating drink."<sup>80</sup> Ellen Harmon also felt discouraged

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78. A movement of revival led by Emmanuel Swedenborg, a brilliant government scientist who resigned his position in 1747 to dedicate himself to a spiritual call that deviated into extreme forms of mysticism. James Hastings, John Alexander Selbie, and Louis Herbert Gray, eds., *Encyclopædia of Religion and Ethics*, 24 vols. (New York: T. and T. Clark, 1908), s.v. "Swedenborg." See also Cyriel Sigrud Ljungberg Odhner Sigstedt, *The Swedenborg Epic: The Life and Works of Emanuel Swedenborg* (New York: AMS, 1971); George Trobridge, *Swedenborg Life and Teaching* (New York: Swedenborg Foundation, 1955).

79. It is important to notice that in 1842 Millerism was already considered a threat to the Christians in Portland, ME, along with two spiritualist movements. This implies that Millerism had a spiritualistic nature, according to the judgment passed on the movement. Marguerite Beck Block, *The New Church in the New World: A Study of Swedenborgianism in America* (New York: H. Holt, 1932), 110, 174, 308; Ruth Tucker, *Another Gospel: Alternative Religions and the New Age Movement* (Grand Rapids, MI: Academie, 1989), 381.

80. Fitch's proposition of radical separation became dominant in the philosophy of church-state relationships among Sabbatarian Adventists following October 22, 1844.

after her baptism in 1842. At this highlight of her denominational experience, it appears that her disappointment over the defects she noticed in her church seriously diminished her joy in becoming a member.<sup>81</sup>

The Methodist Church in which Ellen Harmon grew up had issues with tobacco, alcohol, and music that divided opinions internally; however, politics did not cause much excitement in their organization. Following the same line, the Methodist frontiersmen were known as political “neuters.” For example, when the issue of disestablishment of the Anglican Church was raised in Virginia, the Methodist preachers decided to remain neutral rather than join the Baptists in the fight. The same behavior was generally suggested in regard to party affiliation and voting in Methodist conferences. Interestingly, slavery was not considered an issue that should be addressed by the conferences; the issue was kept at the periphery of moral and institutional concern. It was perhaps this position on slavery that propelled radical abolitionists such as Lloyd Garrison, Benjamin Lundy, and Orange Scott to begin their crusade that culminated in 1845 with the schism of Methodists. During the 1820s and 30s, the issues faced by Ellen White’s church were associated mostly with the chewing and sniffing of tobacco, drunkenness among preachers, and worship style, though anti-slavery debate was on the rise.<sup>82</sup>

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The Harmon family was obviously impacted by Fitch’s message. Michael D. Carter, *Converting the Wastelands of Zion: The Maine Missionary Society, 1807-1862* (Wolfeboro, NH: Longwood Academic, 1990), 16-17.

81. About her experience, Ellen affirmed that “the teaching of this scripture [1 Timothy 2:9] seemed to be openly disregarded by those whom I looked upon as devoted Christians, and who were much older in experience than myself.” White, *Testimonies*, 1:20.

82. Throughout the colonies, Methodists debated the use of musical instruments in their worship. Until the 1830s, Methodists were deeply concerned about the use of anything other than the voice: “the playing of organs was a vanity, and the violin an

After the Great Disappointment of the Millerite Adventist movement, Ellen Harmon, along with Bates, James White, Andrews, and Uriah Smith, led the Sabbatarian Adventist movement that was later organized into the Seventh-day Adventist church. Many of their inherited views of church-state relationships had changed since their early work and preaching. Coming from the Methodist church, Ellen Harmon joined this group of leaders with a different background and a different ministry. She came from a background that was not as strongly or radically separatist as those from the Christian Connection, including James, her own husband. The visions she began to have “not long after” October 1844 were the major influence on her thoughts and writings, including those that dealt with church-state relationships.<sup>83</sup>

After the Lovett’s Grove vision of March 14, 1858, E. G. White developed a frame of thought that placed all events of earth as part of a spiritual battle between God and Satan. The Great Controversy theme of Ellen White proposed a cosmic battle between God and Satan with consequences to the entire universe. The struggle is centered at Satan’s accusation that God is an arbitrary and selfish ruler and God demonstrating His character of love and compassion. According to White, every aspect of life on earth has

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incarnation of the devil.” Emory S. Bucke, *The History of American Methodism*, 3 vols. (New York: Abingdon, 1964), 1:540; Nolan B. Harmon, World Methodist Council, and United Methodist Church, *The Encyclopedia of World Methodism* (Nashville: United Methodist, 1974), 1691-1692; Donald G. Mathews, *Slavery and Methodism: A Chapter in American Morality, 1780-1845* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1965), 113-122; Carter Godwin Woodson, *The History of the Negro Church* (Washington, DC: The Associated Publishers, 1921), 129-130. For a good perspective on the struggles among Methodists, see Lucius C. Matlack and D. D. Whedon, "Methodism Versus Abolitionism, 1836-40," in *The Antislavery Struggle and Triumph in the Methodist Episcopal Church* (New York: Negro Universities Press, 1969).

83. Ellen G. White, *Christian Experience and Teachings of Ellen G. White* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1922), 57; idem, *Testimonies*, 1:113-115.

been affected by this spiritual struggle. She advised that those who study the Bible “should see how this controversy enters into every phase of human experience; how in every act of life he himself reveals the one or the other of the two antagonistic motives; and how, whether he will or not, he is even now deciding upon which side of the controversy he will be found.”<sup>84</sup>

The Great Controversy theme became central to all of E. White’s thought, including church and state issues. Though she probably had personal opinions about the issues of church and state, there is strong evidence that she did not knowingly uphold her own ideas when they conflicted with the instructions presented to her in visions.<sup>85</sup>

#### Summary

In terms of the purpose of this dissertation, the early church-state views of Ellen White changed from a predominantly “temporal” view of church-state relationships to a more “eschatological” view as she became a Sabbatharian Adventist. The many political issues of her teenage years and the “neutral” position of the Methodist church indicate a “temporal” perspective of the church’s present mission, emphasizing cooperation with civil government. After the Millerite movement, White’s perspectives gained a different focus from other Sabbatharians. The classical Protestant eschatology that identified the

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84. Ellen G. White, *Education* (Oakland: Pacific Press, 1903), 190. See also p. xiii, n. 18.

85. Ellen G. White, *Life Sketches* (1888), 334-338. The question about the commencement of the Sabbath is a good illustration of Ellen G. White’s personal opinions being subordinated to her visions. Ellen held the opinion, in line with Joseph Bates, that the weekly Sabbath extended from 6:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m., even after John N. Andrews presented his biblical arguments for sundown to sundown. After receiving a vision on the subject, she adjusted her views. James White, "Time to Commence the Sabbath," *RH*, February 25, 1868, 168.

papacy as the antichrist was further reinforced by Sabbatharian eschatology that identified the future enforcement of Sunday observance as the mark and image of the beast. Thus her conversion from Methodism to Adventism led her to a more eschatological view of church and state. Her position on the great controversy between good and evil was shaped by her visions, specially the vision of March 14, 1858, and became dominant in her writings.<sup>86</sup>

### Summary and Conclusion

In colonial America, Restorationist James O'Kelly began his independent preaching in 1794.<sup>87</sup> In that year O'Kelly left the Methodist Episcopal Church and established a new group called the "Republican Methodists." In 1802, his group became known only as Christians; they strongly opposed Puritan beliefs about church-state relations. The Christian beliefs proposed by O'Kelly were in line with Jefferson's ideas

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86. It is necessary to emphasize that Ellen G. Harmon was about 17 years old in 1844 when she began receiving visions. It was also early in her Christian experience, shortly after her conversion. Therefore, she was growing in learning and even biblical understanding. Some of Ellen's significant thought on church-state relationships is attached to her understanding of non-immortality of the soul. She argued that immortality of the soul and Sunday sacredness will cause a mingle between spiritualists and professed Christians that will bring together all powers of the country: civil and spiritual. Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy between Christ and Satan* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1911), 588. However, Ellen's first contact with this new understanding came from her mother in 1843, and it was different from what she had learned previously. White, *Testimonies*, 1:39-40. On another occasion of growing in understanding, she said, "During the few minutes in which I received instruction from Elder Stockman, I had obtained more knowledge on the subject of God's love and pitying tenderness than from all the sermons and exhortations to which I had ever listened." E. G. White, *Testimonies*, 1:30. Cf. above in pp. 25-26.

87. See above in p. 25. Randall Herbert Balmer and Lauren F. Winner, *Protestantism in America*, The Columbia Contemporary American Religion Series (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002), 39; Verduin, *The Anatomy of a Hybrid*, 146.

of religious freedom and rejected the original European governing system.

A threefold combination of events gave rise to new movements of restoration that mirrored O’Kelly’s ideals: (1) the end of the Revolutionary War and Treaty of Paris of 1783 that marked American independence, (2) the expansion westward starting in 1790, and (3) the second Great Awakening of the 1790s to the 1840s, which gave rise to the democratization of American churches.

In Kentucky in 1801, Barton Stone, like O’Kelly, embraced the restoration of the church according to the Gospels; this brought another thrust to the emerging Restoration Movement. In New England in 1802, Elias Smith broke away from the Calvinistic ideas of the Baptists and aligned with Abner Jones in founding Christian congregations that followed only Bible teachings; their combined independent congregations became known as the Christian Connection. In Pennsylvania in 1812, Alexander Campbell also started preaching about the simple confession of Jesus and the believers being the disciples of Christ, which eventually culminated in the denomination known as the Christian Church, Disciples of Christ.

The delay in the establishment of religious freedom in New England and the debate generated by the process that ended in 1833 spurred the Christian church in the East to promote the consciousness of religious and civil liberty. The Christians and the Restoration movement were well acquainted with the usage of periodicals, and Elias Smith was already writing passionate articles for the cause of liberty.<sup>88</sup>

Other New England Christians embraced William Miller’s message of the coming of Christ; among them were Joshua Himes, Joseph Bates, and James White. After the

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88. See above in p. 39.

Great Disappointment of 1844, Bates and White were joined by John Andrews (1845) and Uriah Smith (1852). Both newcomers were eventually mentored by James White, who passed on the religious liberty beliefs upheld by the Christian Connection.

Joseph Bates, James White, John Andrews, and Uriah Smith had life developments that made them familiar with the ideals of freedom of conscience and an extreme separation of church and state, but Ellen Harmon was more accustomed to denominational religion. She was raised in a community where her “father had long been considered one of the pillars of the Methodist church,” and the entire family was active in the religion.<sup>89</sup> This does not imply that Ellen and her family were not capable of standing for truth, which they did in 1843, but differing from the church to follow individual conscience was relatively new to Ellen.<sup>90</sup> Her family had been deeply connected with the Methodist church for a long time, and most likely, the possibility of spiritual life independent of the Methodist religion was not part of her family life until 1843. Even though Ellen’s Methodist church was not as adamant on church-state issues as the Christian church, Ellen and the other Millerite Adventists shared an opposition to slavery.

In short, Jefferson’s and Madison’s republican ideals along with a Restorationist-like view of separation from the state, which were embraced by O’Kelly and later by such other Restorationists as Elias Smith in the East, were passed on to the Sabbatarian Adventist movement through Bates and James White. Therefore, republican ideals helped to shape the eschatological motif.

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89. White, *Testimonies*, 1:40.

90. After Ellen’s baptism and acceptance into the Methodist church, she started noticing things in the church that were not in accordance with her biblical understanding. In response, she decided to leave it alone and “determined to follow [her] convictions of duty.” *Ibid.*, 1:20.

A second major contribution to the eschatological motif came from Bates and James White, who modified Christian Connection ideals with new eschatological insights from Rev 13 and 14.

A third major contribution came from J. N. Andrews and Uriah Smith who fine-tuned and further developed the details of the second beast of Rev 13. The development of the eschatological motif came to relative maturity in 1858 with Ellen G. White's "Great Controversy" vision and its subsequent publication.

The Great Controversy theme provided a comprehensive theological framework for eschatological motif and thus made possible another emphasis, consistent with the eschatological view, but appropriate for the temporal circumstances under which church and state must function until the eschaton. These two views of the Great Controversy theme which unites them are further developed in the next two chapters.



## CHAPTER II

### ELLEN WHITE'S VIEWS OF DIVINE GOVERNMENT

This chapter examines the principles, methods, and characteristics of God's government as portrayed in the writings of Ellen White. It looks at the principles and methods of God's government in the context of her Great Controversy theme. The examination of the life of biblical leaders provides a perspective of supreme loyalty to divine government and how leading characters of the Bible dealt with temporal interests that conflicted with God's government.<sup>1</sup> This chapter also investigates Ellen White's view of Satan's methods of government and leadership during the warfare against God and the limitations and influences behind decisions from religious and governing powers.

#### **Principles of God's Government**

This section explores what Ellen White considered to be the core elements of God's government in the controversy against evil. It investigates what she says about the implications of choice in man's creation and how those implications are reflected in the charges that Lucifer made against God's government. The relevance of God's laws is also considered, and how men's obedience is "enforced" by God and His angels. Then, I look at what she says about Jesus' ministry in regard to God's government, the ways He

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1. Ellen White's comments and illustrations about the lives of the prophets and other leading characters of the Bible provide practical examples that can be used to better characterize God's government.

behaved in relation to civil authority, and the implications of the claim that His kingdom is “not of this world.”

### A Heavenly Government of Choice

When Ellen White listened to the preaching of William Miller in March 1840 about the second coming of Christ she was seized with “great terror” contemplating the challenges of the coming of Christ preceding the millennium. This was a turning point for White’s view on the kingdom of God and God’s government. Her early views on the kingdom of God were postmillennial from the Methodist church. But when she heard and accepted the Millerite message, she rejected the idea of the temporal millennium preached in her time.<sup>2</sup> Thus, her ideas and anticipation of God’s kingdom moved away from an earthly establishment to one of God’s kingdom that was “not of this world.” By December 1844 she had begun to gain the perspective that mankind is involved in a spiritual controversy between good and evil still developing on earth. This led her to become more actively engaged in writing, preaching, and giving testimonies in order to “relate to others what [God] had revealed” to her.<sup>3</sup>

White’s rejection of a political establishment of God’s kingdom during a temporal millennium before the Second Advent did not remove her understanding that God’s laws are as valid on earth as in the entire created universe. In her perspective, though the earth had fallen into sin, the laws of God were still valid and applicable to humankind

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2. E. G. White, *Great Controversy*, 379; E. G. White and James White, *Life Sketches*, 137. For Methodist views of the millennium, see Joseph Agar Beet, *The Last Things*, 5th ed. (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1897); David Hempton, *Methodism: Empire of the Spirit* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005), 31-40; D. D. Whedon, "Methodist Quarterly Review," in *The Millennium and Second Advent* (Cincinnati: Hitchcock and Walden, 1876).

3. E. G. White, *Early Writings*, 19-20.

including the church and state. In fact, White saw God as the highest authority and His laws as applicable to all infinity, but with a major difference between humankind and nature.<sup>4</sup> To humankind “alone” was given the discernment “to realize the sacred claim of the divine law,” along with the freedom to obey or not obey God’s established laws. Men in the church and the state have the capacity to discern goodness and to choose what to do.<sup>5</sup>

Obedience either from the church or the state is not an end in itself, but a response of God’s government and His laws. She argued that humans were created under His law, which is an “indispensable condition of [their] very existence.” At the same time, she also stated that God’s law is part of His government and His rule is not erratic or arbitrary, for “there can be no government without law.” Obedience is the connection between humankind and government, as well as the link that establishes voluntary actions of humans toward God, resulting in the development of a character similar to His.<sup>6</sup>

The establishment of voluntary relationship and obedience are liberties that indicate a fundamental principle of choice. God’s government gave to all His creatures the freedom to choose to serve Him or not. Freedom of choice does not deny the sovereignty of God, but rather, indicates a principle of divine government expressed through both church and state.<sup>7</sup> White argued that if God had “created man without the

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4. Ellen G. White to Ministering Brethren, December 05, 1899 (Lt 201, 1899), CAR; idem, "The Return of the Exiles, No. 2," *Review and Herald*, March 28, 1907, 8-9.

5. Ellen G. White, *Selected Messages*, 3 vols. (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1958), 1:216.

6. Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets* (Oakland: Pacific Press, 1890), 49; idem, "Without Excuse," *Review and Herald*, September 24, 1901, 615-616.

7. Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages* (Oakland: Pacific Press, 1898), 22.

power to transgress His law,” it would have been an imposition of His will upon the created being, making man a “mere automaton.” Further, the denial of free choice would have two implications: first, that human “obedience would not have been voluntary, but forced,” and second, that it would establish “Satan’s charge of God’s arbitrary rule.” Both implications also incriminate churches that seek to force religious observance and states that rule by tyranny.<sup>8</sup>

### The Problem of God’s Government

The fact that God allowed His creatures to choose whether to obey Him or not opened the door to the problem of rebellion, which originated when Satan “chose to follow his own selfish, independent will.”<sup>9</sup> Ellen White tells us that Satan became dissatisfied and started questioning God’s methods and raising serious complaints against the “King of Heaven.”<sup>10</sup> Satan charged God with governing arbitrarily and stated that in requiring submission and obedience to His laws, God was seeking merely His own exaltation.<sup>11</sup>

The same argument that was presented in heaven against God’s government is also presented on earth, according to Ellen White. Satan “declared God’s government

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8. E. G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 49, 331-332.

9. The vast majority of the comments about God’s government in the writings of Ellen White are focused on the contrast between good and evil. The major argument against God is that God’s government is faulty and the principles by which He operates are faulty; which makes forgiveness impossible and diminishes the importance of human existence under His laws. *Ibid.*, 635; *idem*, *Desire of Ages*, 761.

10. Ellen G. White, "Obedience Better Than Sacrifice," *Signs of the Times*, September 14, 1882, 409-410.

11. E. G. White, *Great Controversy*, 498; *idem*, *Desire of Ages*, 37; *idem*, "The Moral Law," *Signs of the Times*, June 5, 1901, 355-356.

unjust, the restrictions of his law unnecessary,” proposing that humans reject God’s laws and use their own nature as “guide and law.” Satan urges humans that by asserting their “liberty” from the “tyranny” of God’s government, they may attain self-governance and a more dignified and “more glorious state of existence.” The temptation to independence might seem to be more appealing to the state than to the church. However, White argued that throughout history Satan has often succeeded in his propositions to both institutions.<sup>12</sup>

Ellen White saw that God needed to answer certain questions about the very nature of His government: Is His law imperfect, in need of amendment or abrogation, or is it immutable? Is His government in need of change, or is it stable? The burden now lies with God to demonstrate that His government is just, His law is perfect, and both are associated with the well-being of all His creatures. White proposed that to achieve this, God should continue to uphold the principle of choice in all levels of society, under which neither God nor His angels control human will; each person must choose for himself or herself, for God's government is one of personal responsibility<sup>13</sup>

### The Law without Obligation

Ellen White suggested that the existence of sin has challenged the laws of God in many specific areas. The many laws that exist on earth, such as “laws of physical

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12. E. G. White, *Great Controversy*, 499; idem, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 42; idem, "The Words and Works of Satan Repeated in the World," *Signs of the Times*, April 28, 1890, 257-258; idem, "The Plan of Salvation," *Signs of the Times*, February 13, 1893, 230-231.

13. E. G. White, *Early Writings*, 221; idem, *Great Controversy*, 498; idem, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 39-40; idem to J. Edison and Emma White, December 28, 1900 (Lt 162, 1900), CAR; idem, "God's Justice and Love," *Signs of the Times*, August 27, 1902, 546-547.

development,” “laws of heredity,” “laws of life,” “laws of being,” and “laws of healthful living,” are ultimately the “laws of God” applied to specific areas.<sup>14</sup> The authority of God caused Him to establish laws for “all operation of nature.”<sup>15</sup> White suggested that transgressing any of these specific laws implies a direct opposition to the character of God, which was most explicitly expressed in the Decalogue. Thus, the transgressing of the one is also the transgression of the other because of her belief that “the laws of nature are the laws of God—as truly divine as are the precepts of the Decalogue.” Thus the temporal powers rule according to natural law, in indirect accountability to the Decalogue. In contrast, the church should function according to laws given as special revelation.<sup>16</sup>

God’s governing laws, which reflect His character, are designed to bring people to perfection in every aspect of life, social and spiritual.<sup>17</sup> White cited industry, economy, business, peace, goodwill, and harmony between humans and heavenly intelligences as

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14. Ellen G. White, *Christ's Object Lessons* (Battle Creek, MI: Review and Herald, 1900), 84, addresses the laws of God in nature; *idem*, *Child Guidance: Counsels to Seventh-day Adventist Parents as Set Forth in the Writings of Ellen G. White* (Nashville: Southern, 1954), 187, speaks of the laws of God in the physical realm; and *idem*, *Testimonies*, 4:404, refers to the laws of God in regard to health and life. See also *idem*, *An Appeal to Mothers: The Great Cause of the Physical, Mental, and Moral Ruin of Many of the Children of Our Time* (Battle Creek, MI: SDA, 1864), 20; *idem*, *Child Guidance*, 64, 361-363.

15. E. G. White, *Selected Messages*, 1:216.

16. Ellen specifically stated that “God's law is the transcript of His character. It embodies the principles of His kingdom. He who refuses to accept these principles is placing himself outside the channel where God's blessings flow.” E. G. White, *Christ's Object Lessons*, 305; *idem*, *Christian Temperance and Bible Hygiene* (Battle Creek, MI: SDA, 1890), 120.

17. E. G. White, *Testimonies*, 5:445.

the benefits of God's law,<sup>18</sup> "which is the foundation of his government in heaven and earth."<sup>19</sup> She ultimately concluded that "in obedience to God's law there is life,"<sup>20</sup> but that in God's government, death is the result of the free decision to transgress His laws.<sup>21</sup>

One main characteristic of God's government is that God does not use external force to achieve obedience, though He will use force in applying the consequences of human choices.<sup>22</sup> Ellen White clearly stated that force and coercion were "contrary to the principles of God's government." In her view, God desires obedience and love from us, but because love cannot be commanded or "won by force or authority," God uses His own love to achieve the obedience He desires, for "only by love is love awakened."<sup>23</sup> Thus, she concluded, "love is the principle that underlies God's government in heaven and on earth."<sup>24</sup>

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18. Ellen G. White, "Whole-Hearted Service," *Signs of the Times*, February 1, 1899, 82-83; idem, *Mind, Character, and Personality: Guidelines to Mental and Spiritual Health*, 2 vols. (Nashville: Southern, 1977), 2:627; idem, *The Adventist Home: Counsels to Seventh-day Adventist Families as Set Forth in the Writings of Ellen G. White* (Nashville: Southern, 1952), 185.

19. Ellen G. White, *Gospel Workers: Instruction for the Minister and the Missionary* (Battle Creek, MI: Review and Herald, 1892), 181.

20. Ellen G. White, "An All-Sufficient Saviour," *Signs of the Times*, December 4, 1904, 770-771.

21. White goes further to argue that disobedience to the laws of God not only brings death but can also anticipate it. E. G. White, *Christian Temperance*, 8; idem, *Special Testimonies on Education* (n.p., 1897), 13.

22. There are examples in the Bible where the consequences of sin involved God's judgment and the application of force, such as the sin of Uzzah during the transportation of the Ark of the Covenant in 2 Sam 6:3-8, and the sin of Ananias and Sapphira before Peter in Acts 5:1-10.

23. E. G. White, *Desire of Ages*, 22.

24. Ellen G. White, "The True Standard of Character," *Youth's Instructor*, June 10, 1897, 178.

Though humans may freely decide to ignore their obligation to God's laws and disregard God's love, they cannot escape human laws. White proposed that while the laws of God may be of voluntary obedience to Him, the laws of men are mandatory for the benefit of society, to protect the people and restrain inappropriate behavior. White indicated that within the context of social living God allows the use of force through the actions of government, in order to protect life and restrain evil. She indicated that such containment of evil brings safety and prosperity to the nation.<sup>25</sup>

#### Eternal Principle of Love

Although humans chose to disobey God's law, God has not abandoned the principle of love as the basis of His governing power.<sup>26</sup> In Ellen White's understanding, the character of God did not change because of sin. She argues that the attributes of His character were the same before and after the fall of humankind: "'God is love.' His nature, His law, is love. It ever has been; it ever will be."<sup>27</sup>

The entrance of sin into creation did not change God; however, it caused the methods of God to be adapted to the reality of sin. This can be seen clearly when comparing Ellen White's comments about God's method of education and God's method

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25. The subject of God and the use of force are discussed in depth in chapter 3. E. G. White, *Great Controversy*, 635; idem, "The Two Classes in the Days of Noah Sermon by Mrs. E. G. White in Basel Switzerland 1886," CAR, Andrews University, Berrien Springs, MI.

26. Ellen G. White, "Purified through the Truth," *Signs of the Times*, July 21, 1887, 433-434.

27. It has been established above that when Ellen White talked about God's law, she was implying His character, because she considered the law to be a reflection of His character: "The law reveals the attributes of God's character." E. G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 34-35; idem, *Christian Education* (Battle Creek, MI: International Tract Society, 1893), 67; idem, *Desire of Ages*, 762.



of governing. She stated that “the divine plan of education” had to be “adapted to man's condition after the fall,” and that in this new situation, “Christ stands as the representative of the Father,”<sup>28</sup> but she also stated that in “God’s method of government . . . there is no oppression,” but rather kindness, love, and voluntary influence.<sup>29</sup>

She affirmed that “love is the underlying principle of God's government in heaven and earth” and that it must be the foundation of any relationship with Him.<sup>30</sup> For humankind, this principle of love in heaven and in earth is further expanded and classified: first is the love in heaven, which is the “love to the creator,” and second is the love on earth, which is the “love to our neighbor.”<sup>31</sup>

The love and the freedom of choice that Ellen White saw in God’s government is confirmed in the way she saw His relationship with humankind. White argued that God does not operate by imposition, for “God never forces the will or the conscience,” “He does not torture the body” to compel “compliance with His law,” and “God does not employ compulsory measures” to achieve His will. In positive terms, His dominion is of cooperation and by choice.<sup>32</sup>

The argument of God’s principle of love is more relevant to the church than to the state for the church’s primary responsibility is to lead people to Christ and back to a

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28. E. G. White, *Adventist Home*, 181.

29. E. G. White, *Child Guidance*, 259.

30. E. G. White, *Christ's Object Lessons*, 49.

31. Ellen G. White, "Christian Beneficence," *Review and Herald*, February 9, 1886, 81-82.

32. E. G. White, *Great Controversy*, 591; idem, "Words to the Young," *Youth's Instructor*, August 17, 1893, 263; idem, *Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing* (Battle Creek, MI: International Tract Society, 1896), 77.

relationship of love with God. Therefore, according to White the use of force as a means of persuasion is completely outside the ministry of the church.

### Jesus: Representation of God

Ellen White portrayed the life of Christ as the perfect fulfillment of God's government. Christ followed the law of God and "lived in accordance with the principles of God's moral government."<sup>33</sup> Accordingly, she held that Christ's incarnation typified God's ideal of government; that is, the life of Christ revealed the principles of the law and the character of God. She understood His interactions with people to be a revelation of the "divine government," not only for the earth, but for the entire universe.<sup>34</sup> Thus, God's principles were present in Jesus' methods and His interactions with people (forming the Christian church) and the state.

Ellen White also saw the incarnation of Christ as a representation of the principle of unselfishness. She argued that His voluntary act of giving up glory in heaven to be despised by humans reflected the redemptive principle of unselfishness present in God's government, and that this "is the principle that Satan hates" and works against in both the church and the state.<sup>35</sup>

To Ellen White, the ministry of Jesus revealed more details about God's government: Jesus incarnate was the "head" of God's kingdom on earth, though His

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33. Ellen G. White, *To Be Like Jesus* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 2004), 59.

34. Ellen G. White, "Christ or Barabbas," *Review and Herald*, January 30, 1900, 65-66; idem, "A Demonstration to the Universe," *Signs of the Times*, December 22, 1914, 787.

35. Ellen argued that "it was to give in His own life an illustration of unselfishness that Jesus came in the form of humanity." E. G. White, *Education*, 154; idem, *Testimonies*, 4:120-121.

authority was not over temporal matters. Jesus taught that justice and mercy were two other principles of God's government (Matt 23:23). According to Ellen White, justice, mercy, and love made up "the foundation of the law and government of God."<sup>36</sup>

One of the challenges in Jesus' life was to abide by these principles: Ellen White asserted that "constantly the Pharisees tried to lead Christ away from the principles of God's government." One of the human concepts that she pointed out as contrary to God's government is "the end will justify the means."<sup>37</sup> Even though God works for the redemption of humankind, "there is no compulsion, no external force is employed."<sup>38</sup> Ellen White saw complete harmony with principles of God's government and Christ's attitudes toward the people. She clearly stated that it was not "part of Christ's mission to compel men to receive Him," but that He sought "to win by the revealing of His love,"<sup>39</sup> and that "in His plan of government there is no employment of brute force to compel the conscience."<sup>40</sup>

In Jesus' time, the Messiah was expected to use external measures to implement God's kingdom like any other temporal power. One of the elements that led to the rejection of Jesus was His unwillingness to establish a temporal system of government. According to Ellen White, the Jews expected Him to enforce what "they regarded as the

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36. Ellen G. White, *The Spirit of Prophecy*, 4 vols. (Battle Creek, MI: SDA, 1870), 4:261-262; idem, *Great Controversy*, 69, 503; idem, *Testimonies*, 9:218.

37. Ellen G. White, *The Upward Look* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1982), 195.

38. E. G. White, *Desire of Ages*, 466.

39. Ellen G. White, *The Acts of the Apostles* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1911), 541.

40. Ellen G. White, "The Kingdom of Christ," *Review and Herald*, August 18, 1896, 513-514; idem, *Christ's Object Lessons*, 77.

laws of God” and to recognize them as the “expositor[s] of His will and the agents of His authority.”<sup>41</sup>

Ellen White suggested that Jesus’ behavior clearly distinguished the spiritual kingdom from the temporal kingdom. She indicated that Jesus was rejected by many because He did not offer the government expected by the Jews. “The government of the kingdom of Christ is like no earthly government,” she asserted, meaning that they operated in different ways.<sup>42</sup> The Jews of the first century had many reasons to abhor the Roman government: corruption, oppression, every sort of abuse, extortion, intolerance, and cruelty. However, Ellen White pointed out that Jesus did not interfere with that government, as bad as it was: “[He] attempted no civil reforms. He attacked no national abuses, nor condemned the national enemies. He did not interfere with the authority or administration of those in power.”<sup>43</sup>

#### Not of This World

To say that the church and the state are under the authority of God and that both are ultimately measured by His laws, does not imply that they are supposed to be combined in this world. In the episode following the feeding of the five thousand in John 6:15-17, Ellen White saw another evidence of how Christ maintained the distinction of God’s kingdom from earthly kingdoms. She suggested that the multitude did not notice the “dangers arising” in their intention to establish Jesus as temporal leader, and that Jesus avoided the crowd and escaped to Capernaum in order to change the political

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41. E. G. White, *Desire of Ages*, 509.

42. Ellen G. White, "A Message to the Churches," *Review and Herald*, March 19, 1908, 8-9.

43. E. G. White, *Desire of Ages*, 509.

feelings of the people. She perceived that the rulers became suspicious of Jesus' political intentions as His influence grew among the people.<sup>44</sup>

It is possible to see a contrast between Jesus' methods as representative of the Kingdom of God and the methods of governance exercised by the Jews. In His ministry, which should be followed by the church, Christ worked with the people to implant new spiritual values and build the character. But the Jews, more focused on the issues of the state, expected a leader who would empower them physically through external measures and plans. Though Jesus' ministry was focused on the spiritual needs of the lost, it still caused social changes with positive ramifications to the established power. White indicates that the ministries of church and state are of different realms. While the work of the church through the actions of its members can enhance life conditions in the state, the state cannot directly enhance the spiritual life of the church, except by protecting individual and collective rights to act according to conscience.<sup>45</sup>

The church inherited Jesus' ministry in all its aspects. Ellen White indicated that the work of the twelve apostles was an "extension of Christ's work" that was to follow His example and teachings. White argued that Jesus did not command His disciples as His church to connect with temporal powers to carry out His ministry, either to minimize or to subdue the power of the state. Yet, as they followed His orders, they came into direct conflict with the rabbis and revived the "jealousy of the leaders" in Jerusalem and other places. For the church, loyalty to Christ takes precedence over obedience to

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44. E. G. White, *Spirit of Prophecy*, 2:264.

45. E. G. White, *Christ's Object Lessons*, 77.

temporal powers.<sup>46</sup>

On one occasion, Jesus used a seed to demonstrate the principles of God's government. Ellen White called attention to the fact that Jesus could not find a human society to compare with His kingdom because they were so distinct, and thus He resorted to a seed to illustrate His point.<sup>47</sup> She analyzed Jesus' comparison and concluded that a seed's development, like God's kingdom, does not depend upon human power. Thus, there is nothing the state can do to cause the growth of God's kingdom.<sup>48</sup>

The complete separation of realms between church and state, as White indicated in the ministry of Jesus, still allows each to influence the other. The church that owes allegiance to Christ can ameliorate the state, but the state can do nothing to improve the spiritual state of the church.

### Summary

Ellen White placed choice and love at the center of God's government despite the ongoing struggle between God and Satan. According to her, the choice that is extended to humankind is not simply a gift from God, but an expression of His character. Love, as it

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46. The idea of the "extension" of Jesus' work is very dominant in Ellen White's thought. Very often she referred to the ministry of the church and the work of Christians as an "extension" of Jesus' teachings and work. E. G. White, *Desire of Ages*, 42, 395, 826; idem, "A Spiritual Awakening," *Australasian Record*, April 15, 1912, 3-5; idem, "Sowing Beside All Waters," *Review and Herald*, December 11, 1913, 1198; idem, *Gospel Workers: Instruction for All Who Are Laborers Together with God*, rev. and enl. ed. (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1915), 454; idem, *Evangelism* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1946), 45; idem, *Testimonies*, 3:417; idem, *Acts of the Apostles*, 354.

47. This is a reference to the mustard seed in the narrative of Matt 13:31 and Mark 4:31; E. G. White, *Christ's Object Lessons*, 76.

48. Similarly, Ellen White argued that "justice and mercy" are controlling powers in God's government. *Ibid.*, 76-77.

relates to God's government, is also another expression of His character, but in this case, love is also subjected to choice. She reasoned that a creation without the capacity to choose or love would have been an argument of tyranny against its Creator. It is part of God's purpose to reach humankind through love, and His love will awaken human love; this then results in voluntary obedience to and observance of God's laws, which are also part of His government. White suggested that when God engages in government, He uses limited means to influence people's decisions—not because He is limited, but because it is against His principles of love and choice to oppress His creation in order to achieve His goals. However, God allows government to use force for the sake of the protection and upbuilding of society.

Not everyone agrees that God's way of government is the best, but the existence of a spiritual controversy does not remove God's supreme authority or nullify His established laws. Jesus came to fulfill the laws of God and become the head of God's kingdom on earth, following only God's principles of love and freedom of choice. Ellen White observed that although people expected Him to establish a temporal government, Jesus did not interfere with the existing government. No existing "civil society" could even "afford Him a symbol" to compare with the kingdom of God.<sup>49</sup>

### **God's Methods of Governing the Earth**

This section investigates Ellen White's concept of how God exercises His sovereignty on earth and how God enforces His authority in a temporal and sinful earth. This situation requires an understanding of her thoughts about God's authority and how it relates to the authority of temporal rulers. I examine what White said about how God

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49. E. G. White, *Christ's Object Lessons*, 76.

manages the powers that govern the earth within the context of the controversy between good and evil.

### The Problem of the Temporal Ruling of God

The spiritual controversy developing on earth poses a challenge to White's idea that God exercises His government through love without coercion or force. The presence of evil on earth becomes a problem, in view of the fact that the earth is part of God's sovereign dominion where He governs based on love and without force. The solution of the problem of God's temporal ruling suggested by E. White requires a careful consideration of what she meant by the authority of God and the rule of God.

Looking at Jesus' example, the temporal governance and the exercise of authority of God appear to run parallel in Ellen White's perspective. On the one hand, she declared that there is no kingdom independent of God's because He is the "supreme ruler" and His laws are valid throughout the universe He created. She went further to state that He is the ruler "not only of all living beings, but of all the operations of nature. Everything, whether great or small, animate or inanimate, is under fixed laws which cannot be disregarded."<sup>50</sup> In her understanding, God is the ultimate authority upon the earth; "all kings, all nations, are His, under His rule and government."<sup>51</sup>

On the other hand, Ellen White affirmed that the principles of God's governance are not in line with the principles of this world. She proposed that the presence of sin has caused this conflict and the church is now charged to live under the principles of God's

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50. Ellen G. White, "The Character of the Law of God," *Signs of the Times*, April 15, 1886, 225-226.

51. E. G. White, "The Return of the Exiles, No. 2," *Review and Herald*, March 28, 1907, 8-9.



kingdom while still on earth.<sup>52</sup> This dissonance was at the center of Jesus' refusal to accept an earthly throne or to interfere in "legal and political questions."<sup>53</sup> White illustrated this point using Luke 12:13-14, in which Jesus refused to settle a controversy over inheritance. She arrived at the conclusion that Jesus had the "authority from on high" to enforce justice and mercy, but He did not become entangled with temporal disputes. This suggests that Jesus' authority was recognized, but it was neither exercised nor claimed.

God works differently on earth because of the presence of sin. White argued that temporal rulers receive authority from God in order "to promote righteousness" by "external measures. They devised methods and plans" to enforce justice. She reasoned that the "earthly kingdoms are established and upheld by physical force" in ways that force and violence become a justifiable means for those who seek authority and power. But God's authority does not come from the external display of His power, but from His influence over the human conscience, working internally. Despite these opposite methods of operation, White believed in a unidirectional relationship between God's kingdom and earthly kingdoms. According to White, God's authority "imprints its influence upon earthly governments," but it does not receive in return "the slightest" influence toward evil, for that would disfigure the divine characteristic of the kingdom of God.<sup>54</sup>

Ellen White used the parable of the hired workers in Matt 20:1-16 to illustrate the contrast between temporal governance and God's authority. She argued that God's

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52. Ellen G. White, "The Need of Complete Consecration," *Review and Herald*, January 21, 1890, 33-34.

53. E. G. White, *Christ's Object Lessons*, 254; idem, *Testimonies*, 9:218.

54. E. G. White, "The Kingdom of Christ," 513-514; idem, *Christ's Object Lessons*, 77; idem, *Mind, Character, and Personality*, 1:14.

dealings with the human family were contrary to the customs that “prevail among men.” Under what humans see as fair temporal rule, the workers would have received only what they earned, but under the “principle of His kingdom,” God invites and gives what He considers to be right. He deals with people who are willing to enter into an agreement with Him on a voluntary basis, and His authority surpasses the expected temporal standards of mankind.<sup>55</sup>

#### Enforcement, Reward, and Punishment

The freedom and love offered by God are not free from consequences, and as Ellen White suggested, one can decide to obey God’s law based on the premises of reward and punishment.<sup>56</sup> However, this type of service is considered to “avail nothing,” since the basis for genuine obedience is love and choice.<sup>57</sup>

Ellen White’s ideas of divine reward and punishment are generally related to divine judgment. Even in the present, violation of God’s laws involves consequences, which are a form of judgment. In temporal government, the main reason for punishment is to restrain or prevent individuals from taking certain actions. In God’s government, judgment and the subsequent reward and punishment are a consequence of sin and the

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55. E. G. White, *Christ's Object Lessons*, 396.

56. The concepts of reward and punishment are associated with control over behavior through positive and negative stimuli. The stimulus that causes satisfaction is more likely to recur, while the one that causes discomfort is less likely to recur. Frank A. Logan and Allan R. Wagner, *Reward and Punishment* (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1965), 1-2; Joseph Nuttin and Anthony G. Greenwald, *Reward and Punishment in Human Learning: Elements of a Behavior Theory* (New York: Academic Press, 1968), 32-34.

57. E. G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 523; idem, "A Perfect Law," *Signs of the Times*, July 31, 1901, 482; idem, *Manuscript Releases: From the Files of the Letters and Manuscripts of Ellen G. White*, 21 vols. (Washington, DC: Ellen G. White Estate, 1990) 21:354.

end of the struggle between good and evil. God also uses reward and punishment to influence people's actions in the present; these also function as security measures for His governance of the universe.<sup>58</sup> She affirmed that there is a need for clear and unquestionable development of evil before ultimate punishment,<sup>59</sup> and that the absence of this punishment would establish doubt throughout the universe.<sup>60</sup> Ellen White claimed that God's government relies on love to induce obedience naturally, instead of directing or preventing behavior through fear of judgment or self-interest in heaven.<sup>61</sup>

The enforcement of God's laws in the world does not follow the established notion that rewards and punishments are necessary to enforce the law in organized society.<sup>62</sup> Ellen White clearly asserted that "God will enforce his own laws on nations, families, and individuals," but she was also clear that God had to be the one to establish them.<sup>63</sup> The method of implementation is not external but internal; Jesus' life and

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58. E. White argued that "to our merciful God the act of punishment is a strange act." E. G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 628; idem, *Early Writings*, 89, 98; idem, *Great Controversy*, 627; idem, *The Faith I Live By: The Morning Watch Texts with Appropriate Selections Compiled from the Writings of Ellen G. White* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1958), 338.

59. Jeremy Bentham, *The Rationale of Reward* (London: R. Heward, 1830), 51-52; E. G. White, *Selected Messages*, 1:341.

60. Ellen G. White, "The Moral Law," *Signs of the Times*, June 5, 1901, 355-356.

61. E. G. White, *Christian Education*, 69; idem, *Fundamentals of Christian Education: Instruction for the Home, the School, and the Church* (Nashville: Southern, 1923), 98. In some instances Ellen referred to judgment as "that day of final punishment and reward." idem, "The Day of Reckoning," *Review and Herald*, November 22, 1898, 745.

62. Noah Porter, *The Elements of Moral Science, Theoretical and Practical* (New York: C. Scribner's, 1885), 472.

63. Ellen G. White, "Purified through the Truth," *Signs of the Times*, July 21, 1887, 433-434.

preaching set the perfect example, and His followers saw that example and imitated His obedience to God's laws.<sup>64</sup> The same idea is reproduced in the family, where the parents represent the government of God, and in ministry: In both cases, obedience to rules is implemented by setting an example, though punishment may be physical.<sup>65</sup>

Ellen White proposed that in God's laws, His authority to establish the duties of humans (and angels) takes priority over reward for obedience. Though she recognized that it would be abdication if God did not require people to obey His laws, she placed even greater importance on the character and wisdom of God that are reflected in His ordinances. This should make God's (voluntarily obedient) church more like Him, because His command reflects His perfect will and infinite wisdom and "the law of God should be obeyed even though there were no authority to enforce it, and no rewards for its obedience." According to her, the benefit of obedience goes beyond reward or punishment: It is ultimately an issue of character and loyalty.<sup>66</sup>

#### Delegated Authority and Accountability

The controversy between good and evil has questioned God's authority but it has not changed it. "God alone is above all authority, over all kings and rulers," Ellen White said. Her recognition of God as ultimate authority did not remove the authority of

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64. Ellen G. White, "The Exalted Position of the Law of God," *Review and Herald*, September 27, 1881, 209-210; idem, "A Happy New Year," *Signs of the Times*, January 5, 1882, 1; idem, *Manuscript Releases*, 19:249.

65. White went further to condemn parents and teachers who oppress the minds of the children to gain control. She proposed that they would cease their attitudes "could they trace out the future lives of the children who are thus brought into subjection by force or through fear." E. G. White, *Child Guidance*, 182, 227, 530; idem, *The Adventist Home*, 306.

66. Ellen G. White, "Tested by the Law," *Signs of the Times*, September 24, 1894, 723-724; idem, "The Moral Law," 355-356.

temporal powers, though she subordinated it to God. Because God is the supreme source of goodness, humans cannot rule wisely unless they know God as their father. God is the only one who does not err and does not commit injustice, and this idea was conveyed to God's people when they left Egypt. The power displayed by God against Pharaoh and His laws given on Mount Sinai were the proofs that God is ruler above all rulers.<sup>67</sup>

In line with the supreme authority of God, Ellen White also declared that the power exercised by temporal kings is "Heaven-imparted." She saw temporal ruling as a type of service under God's authority, where success depends exclusively on the ruler's commitment to follow God's purpose. She also called attention to rulers' deceitful appearances. God is the one who removes and sets up kings, despite their boasted greatness and the opportunities that make them appear invincible. People may see only the ruler's power and ambitions, but God is above them.<sup>68</sup>

God is the one who grants authority to temporal rulers, and He also holds them accountable for it. Ellen White stated that rulers are watched closely by God, who has a great interest in them exercising their power in accordance with His will. She also suggested that the capacity to rule should be naturally bound to such values as justice and personal dignity that come directly from God.<sup>69</sup>

The effective use of the divine authority delegated to rulers depends upon their

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67. Ellen G. White to John H. Kellogg, September 2, 1903(Lt 187, 1903), CAR; idem, "The Return of the Exiles, No. 3," *Review and Herald*, April 11, 1907, 8-9; idem, *Fundamentals of Christian Education*, 505.

68. Ellen G. White, *The Captivity and Restoration of Israel: The Conflict of the Ages Illustrated in the Lives of Prophets and Kings* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1917), 499-502.

69. E. G. White, "The Return of the Exiles, No. 2," *Review and Herald*, March 28, 1907 8-9.

communion with God and the recognition of His supremacy. White warned that those who preside over the affairs of nations should realize that there is a King of kings. The man who does not know God as his Father, and Jesus Christ as the only begotten Son of the infinite God, cannot rule wisely. He who has been placed where he has authority over others should seek the Lord for wisdom, that he may govern wisely the subjects of God's kingdom.<sup>70</sup>

White also suggested that those in authority should base their ruling on the principles established by the law of God. "In the law of the kingdom of God who rules the sinless inhabitants of heaven are to be found the principles that should lie at the foundation of the laws of earthly governments."<sup>71</sup>

The previous two quotations show Ellen White's belief in the continuity between divine government and the authority delegated to human rulers. However, this was not her only emphasis. She also understood the distinction between the two tables of the law: "On the first table of stone were inscribed the four precepts showing the duty of man to God; and on the second table were the six showing the duty of man to his fellow man."<sup>72</sup> It is obvious in her writings that civil governments were given jurisdiction over issues of civil morality, but not over questions of spiritual truth and practice. Civil governments had no role in regulating the duties to God that comprised the first table of the law.

The prophets are a key element in this relationship between God and rulers. The rulers' authority is delegated by God, but in times of peril God calls the prophets to give, even to the rulers, messages of correction. Though both rulers and prophets draw their authority from God, they do not always cooperate. Ellen White suggested that prophets acted as God's messengers to kings: They raised "their voices against the sins of kings,

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70. E. G. White, *Manuscript Releases*, 3:37

71. *Ibid.*, 17:318; cf. *ibid.*, 3:37.

72. Ellen G. White, "The Law from Sinai," *Signs of the Times*, March 7, 1878, 73; cf. *idem*, "Never Yield the Sabbath," *Signs of the Times*, February 28, 1878, 65.

rulers, and subjects, speaking the words God gave them to utter.” She also saw a current need for Christians to hold men of authority accountable for their actions, even though not all Christians are prophets; they still have the duty to reprove sin with the same authority as John the Baptist.<sup>73</sup>

### Balance and Limits

The unidirectional relationship between God and temporal kingdoms proposed by White is channeled to set limits and balances to the presence of evil in temporal government. She indicated that when carried out with love, justice and mercy, the actions of temporal governments are an extension of God’s supreme authority. While He constantly works for “correction and preservation” to balance the power of evil, He also establishes limits for the temporal powers. Ellen White suggested that when rulers reach a certain point of cruelty, God does not allow them to go any further.<sup>74</sup>

Even under control, the presence of evil in temporal government cannot prevent God’s supreme authority and designs towards humankind. White stated that the development of kingdoms and nations through history is “worked out” by God according to His plans; events may appear to be determined by the “power, ambition, or caprice” of humankind, but in reality God works to counteract people’s interests, power, and passions.<sup>75</sup>

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73. E. G. White, *Spirit of Prophecy*, 3:66; idem, *Selected Messages*, 2:151-152.

74. E. G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 694; idem, "Rule in the Fear of God," *Review and Herald*, October 1, 1895, 625-626.

75. The term used by E. G. White, within the context, indicates “influence” rather than determination. In the same quotation, she used the word “determined” in a negation sentence, E. G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 499-500. Nowhere in Ellen White’s writings did I find the idea that God determined the events of history; rather, she indicates that in history there are plans made by man and plans made by God. Ellen G. White, "The

Ellen White also cited Dan 10:12-13 as evidence of God's methods for holding temporal powers in check. She argued that God, through His agents, contended with the powers of evil to hold them in check, as good influence works against evil influence in the minds of kings and rulers. White described a scenario of struggle of "right counsel against evil counsel," in a situation where the "highest of all evil angels" had control over a ruler. She understood that God intervened, *not by taking control of the ruler*, but by holding evil powers in check, allowing His influence to reach the ruler. Though God is the supreme ruler and could have done otherwise, this was the method He has decided to use.<sup>76</sup>

Ellen White suggested that God's angels are actively involved in the struggles of earthly government, interacting with humans and influencing temporal disputes. Unknown to presidents and kings, angels have been speaking up for God in their meetings and in the courts of justice. Though the angels draw their authority from God, Ellen White stated that humankind has opposed their suggestions and ridiculed their counsels with insults and abuses.<sup>77</sup>

The work of the angels, as described by Ellen White, supports God's method of

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Great Need of the Holy Spirit," *Review and Herald*, July 23, 1895, 465-466. In many cases researched where the word "determined" appears in association with God, it refers to a decision-making process; in the case of the flood; White highlights the fact that when God "determined" the flood, He gave humankind a 120-year probation. Ellen G. White, "Doing God's Will," *Review and Herald*, September 19, 1907, 7-8. I did not find indications of historical predestination in White's writings.

76. Ellen G. White to Ministering Brethren, December 05, 1899 (Lt 201, 1899), CAR; idem, "The Return of the Exiles, No. 5," *Review and Herald*, December 5, 1907, 8-9; idem, *Testimonies*, 9:92; idem, *Lift Him Up* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1988), 370; idem, *Christ Triumphant: Devotional Meditations on the Great Controversy Story*, Inclusive language ed. (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 1999), 368.

77. E. G. White, *Great Controversy*, 632; idem, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 138.



holding evil in check through influence and counsel; however, there are limits to this process. In this struggle for human conscience, God has worked in many different ways as “determined by the necessities of the case,” but always promotes freedom of choice, as opposed to a captive or controlled mind. All the dynamic development between good and evil on earthly kingdoms is developed under the complete authority of God.<sup>78</sup>

### Summary

The presence of sin on earth created an impediment to a temporal rule of God based on His principle of love and free choice. The presence of sin and the struggle between good and evil which have encompassed church and state have caused God to work differently in one area from the other. Despite Jesus’ rejection of involvement with temporal government during His earthly ministry, God is still the supreme ruler and, as Creator, His authority endures; therefore, all temporal rulers are under His authority. The extent of His delegated authority to rulers, which will be explored in chapter 3, is rooted in the difference between the two tables of His law and kept in check by God’s established limits. White also believed that God’s angels work to influence rulers as well as to limit the actions of evil angels; however, He does not force His laws upon humankind. Despite the consequences that will come on the Day of Judgment (or of ultimate reward), He desires obedience motivated by love rather than by fear of punishment. In fact, Ellen White argued that service motivated by fear is not an appealing response to Him.

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78. Ellen G. White, "Revival Work in the Battle Creek Church," *Review and Herald*, February 12, 1889, 106-107; idem, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 331-332; idem, *Selected Messages*, 1:347.

## **Biblical Religious Leaders' Supreme Loyalty to God**

In order to further characterize God's government, this section will examine Ellen White's comments about the church-state issues faced by temporal leaders and prophets of the Bible. She expressed some principles and expectations of church and state relationship in the prophets' behavior before temporal powers. The study will focus on Bible characters who had significant interactions with the rulers of their times, to show how they managed conflicts of interest, and what principles of God's government Ellen White saw being applied in their lives.

When Ellen White talks about those under God's guidance who dealt with temporal powers in the most appropriate manner, she refers to biblical figures such as Joseph, Daniel, and Paul. She stated that their attitudes characterized them as "true noblemen" who witnessed and stood for God's word against human authority and power, and presented themselves with dignity, virtue, and integrity. Her list starts in Genesis, with Enoch and Noah, and proceeds through the Bible to John in his exile on the island of Patmos; I will discuss the Old Testament and New Testament figures separately.

### **Old Testament**

Though Ellen White mentioned many Old Testament figures, in the matter of dealings with temporal powers she focused primarily on Abraham, Joseph, Hananiah, Mishael, Azariah, Daniel, Nehemiah, and Elijah.

Abraham was considered a "man of valor" as a true worshiper and as a man of civil responsibilities; one depended on the other. His principles of government allowed him to remain a faithful worshiper of God in times of idol worship and false religion. His patriarchal governing method gave him authority over his children and their descendants. Abraham was the undisputed head of his people in both religious and secular matters, and

Ellen White stated that “the Lord approved his faithfulness in the government of his household,” for he worked in harmony with God. In his daily life, Abraham exercised authority over and required respect from his children, but he demonstrated that his authority was not arbitrary or selfish, “but was founded in love, and had their welfare and happiness in view.”<sup>79</sup> In many of her books, Ellen White called attention to the way Abraham managed his children. She observed that Isaac’s obedience and fear of the Lord displayed was the result of Abraham’s leadership in constantly mentoring Isaac in harmony with the precepts of God.<sup>80</sup>

Abraham’s method of ruling, according to Ellen White, was a combination of affection and authority. He instructed his people to do right and upheld the firmness of “just and righteous laws.”<sup>81</sup> Despite his authority and right to rule, he ruled with such “wisdom and tenderness that hearts were won,” and his influence was expanded beyond his own household. His leadership extended throughout the places where he passed, by the life he led, and by the altars of worship he left behind. Perhaps the greatest motivations for Abraham to uphold a different standard of living from those around him were his intimate knowledge of God and the clear understanding that his government was

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79. Ellen G. White, "The Sin of Achan," *Signs of the Times*, May 5, 1881, 193-194; idem, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 141; idem, *Christian Education*, 229; idem, *Mind, Character, and Personality*, 2:765.

80. Ellen G. White, *Spiritual Gifts* (Battle Creek, MI: SDA, 1858), 99-107; idem, *Spirit of Prophecy*, 1:105; idem, "The Work of Preparing for the New Year," *Review and Herald*, December 24, 1889, 801-801; idem, "Sanctify Them through Thy Truth," *Review and Herald*, March 1, 1892, 129-130; idem, *The Story of Redemption* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1947), 86.

81. E. G. White, "The Work of Preparing for the New Year," *Review and Herald*, December 24, 1889, 801-802; idem, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 142; idem, "Family Government Is to Be Maintained," *Review and Herald*, March 13, 1894, 161-162; idem, "The Importance of Home Training," *Review and Herald*, June 6, 1899, 353-354.

based in the authority of God's law.<sup>82</sup>

The events of Gen 14:12-14 are seen as Abraham's great service to his country, and his expedition to rescue those captured by the four kings was interpreted as an appropriate act on behalf of the oppressed and unfortunate. In war, Abraham did not pursue vengeance or financial gain; on the contrary, he paid what his "confederates were entitled" and did not claim the spoils of victory for himself or want to prosper from his battle. His attack was described as "vigorous and unexpected" and resulted in a speedy victory. Even though Abraham waged war, Ellen White believed he did so while upholding "claims of justice and humanity." After his victory, Abraham's influence and respect expanded among the kings, though his religion was ridiculed among the people. Ellen White considered this to be evidence of the "superiority of the religion" that Abraham practiced; the results were purely based on principles, not on equipment, number, or training.<sup>83</sup>

When Joseph was a leader in Egypt, the king of Egypt extended favors to the Israelites that included tax exemption and food provision for his family group. Ellen White saw no ethical misconduct by Joseph or the king in this; in fact, she commented that it was justifiable before the rulers of Egypt, because if it were not for Joseph, there would have been no abundance or enrichment of the kingdom.<sup>84</sup> She considered Joseph to be one who preserved the life of the people through his accomplishments, which were the

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82. Ellen G. White, "Parental Responsibility," *Review and Herald*, September 2, 1884, 561-562; idem, "Ye Are the Light of the World," *The Present Truth*, November 4, 1886, 161-162; idem, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 370; idem, *Education*, 187; idem, "Co-Operation between the School and the Home," *Review and Herald*, April 21, 1904, 8-9; idem, "Message to Parents," *Review and Herald*, February 1, 1912, 3-4.

83. E. G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 135.

84. E. G. White, *Spirit of Prophecy*, 1:160.

fruits of his trust in God.<sup>85</sup>

Ellen White attributed Joseph's capacity to govern with integrity and virtue to his trust in God and desire to obey. These traits of character were developed mostly in his youth, as a result of his love for obedience; when his father's demonstration of preference caused him to be persecuted, it did not change his character, but solidified it. She argued that this adversity taught Joseph to govern "by first learning to obey the laws of God."<sup>86</sup>

Some of the characteristics that Joseph incorporated into his governing style were acquired in prison. Ironically, Ellen White considered that Joseph's "faithful integrity" caused his incarceration. He moved from a child of distinction to a young man without reputation, and further, without liberty. The time Joseph spent in Potiphar's house helped him grow in knowledge, but it was in prison that he developed the most important personal qualities for government: He became cheerful and willing to share the trouble of his fellow prisoners. Joseph's humility, desire to learn, and service to others brought blessings and honor to his government.<sup>87</sup>

Ellen White indicated that Joseph's method of governing was religion-based. According to her, his religion was part of his personality, and therefore present in all situations and places. His perception of right and wrong was based on God's will, and this brought prosperity to his government. For these reasons, part of the country was granted to his family and they were supplied with liberal amounts of food during the

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85. E. G. White, *Acts of the Apostles*, 13.

86. Ellen G. White to J. Edison White, August 11, 1868 (Lt 20, 1868), CAR; idem, "In the Downward Path," *Signs of the Times*, October 13, 1881, 457-458; idem, *Child Guidance*, 197; idem, *Acts of the Apostles*, 575.

87. Ellen G. White to Chapin Harris, August 6, 1879 (Lt 3, 1879), CAR; idem, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 214; idem, *Sons and Daughters of God: The Morning Watch Texts* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1955), 320.

famine.<sup>88</sup>

The theme of allegiance to God above governing duties can also be seen in Ellen White's account of Daniel's three Hebrew friends in Dan 3. Here, White made a distinction between faithfully carrying out government duties, which the three friends did, and paying ultimate allegiance to the government, which they did not. Her account shows that their fear of God went beyond their fear of the king, and they relied upon the religious teachings of their fathers rather than obedience to the foreign king.<sup>89</sup>

There are two striking points in Ellen White's writings on the events of Dan 3: first, that the three friends engaged in rightful civil disobedience, and second, that it was a religious issue. White recognized that there was a mandate from the king, and she used the word "violation" in describing the attitudes of the three Hebrews. She even recognized that "the Hebrews [did] break the law of the king." Yet, when she extracted lessons from the episode, she implied that they were "innocent of wrong-doing." By her rationale, they were obedient to the law of God, which comes first.<sup>90</sup>

As described in Dan 3, Nebuchadnezzar summoned his government officials and assistants for the dedication of a statue. Ellen White mentioned that others were jealous of the "honors bestowed" upon the young Hebrew men and the king's acknowledgment of their good service; however, she presented the story as one of religious persecution motivated by "envy and religious bigotry." She reasoned that God's authority was

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88. Ellen G. White, "The Great Controversy," *Signs of the Times*, January 8, 1880, 1-2; idem, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 241.

89. E. G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 513-516.

90. Ellen G. White, *Bible Sanctification: A Contrast of True and False Theories* (Oakland: Pacific Press, 1889), 37-39.

challenged, not that of the Hebrews.<sup>91</sup>

More impressive are the social implications of Ellen White's conclusion about the deliverance of the Hebrews. The social distinction between the three Hebrews and the people of Babylon is also emphasized. The three young men were representatives of a "despised and captive race," facing a foreign king who was challenging their religious beliefs. White explained that God declared His favor for the oppressed and rejected the king's abuse of His rightful authority: "[God] will take His stand with the oppressed and overthrow all earthly powers that would trample upon the authority of heaven." In short, she saw religious oppression as an intolerable act of the state, not against religion, but against God.<sup>92</sup>

Ellen White's comments on Daniel expressed an even greater tension between temporal laws and God's laws in the realm of allegiance and fidelity. In fact, in the story of Daniel in the lion's den (Dan 6), Daniel's enemies relied on the principles of his character and his fidelity to God to achieve success. She wrote, "He knew full well," suggesting that Daniel was aware of the conflict between the civil ordinance and his religious practice. Once again, White judged the issue as one of paying allegiance either to God or to the king. She denied any dishonesty on Daniel's part, and argued that Daniel faithfully fulfilled "his duties as chief of the princes," even knowing that his co-workers were conspiring against him.<sup>93</sup>

Ellen White explained Daniel's refusal to bow to temporal authority in two ways.

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91. E. G. White, *Prophets and Kings*, 511-512.

92. E. G. White, *Bible Sanctification*, 37-40; idem, "We Should Glorify God," *Review and Herald*, April 29, 1890, 273-274.

93. E. G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 540-544; idem, *Fundamentals of Christian Education*, 78-79.

First, she emphasized that it was an act of freedom of conscience: Daniel believed that his religion and manner of worship should be determined only by himself, even if the laws of the land dictated otherwise; it was his business and belonged to nobody else, not even the king. According to White, Daniel's decision set an example of "boldness and fidelity."<sup>94</sup> Second, she pointed out that Daniel knew the authority of God could not be replaced by that of a king. Following the chain, Daniel was subject to the king's authority, but the king was subject to the authority of God. Ultimately, obedience to God superseded obedience to the king.<sup>95</sup> This analysis of Daniel's behavior as a statesman leads to the conclusion that he was not really working for the state, but rather working for God. White clearly indicated that Daniel was offering a partial obedience or service to the king, whose immediate authority was conditional and limited.<sup>96</sup>

Moving on from Dan 6, Ellen White considered the events of Neh 2:1-9 from a completely different perspective. In contrast to Daniel's lesson of radical separation of church and state, Nehemiah presented a scenario of state cooperating with the church. Because the petition in this case came from the prophet and not the king, she saw the need for the authority of the king in his endeavor. White strongly implied that the king's cooperation with letters, material, and protection gave "dignity and authority" to Nehemiah's mission, setting an example of unity between temporal powers and "holy endeavors." The lesson she drew from Nehemiah's success was for Christians to avail

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94. Ellen G. White, "God's Care for His Children," *Youth's Instructor*, November 1, 1900, 338.

95. Ellen G. White, "Lessons from the Life of Solomon, No. 17," *Review and Herald*, January 11, 1906, 8-9; idem, *Fundamentals of Christian Education*, 78-79.

96. E. G. White, *Bible Sanctification*, 42-44; idem, "Our Rebellion to Commercial Work," Ms 47a, 1898, CAR.



themselves of the help God prompts others to give, even if they do not know God or His word: The circumstances do not disqualify the giver.<sup>97</sup>

The accomplishments of Nehemiah and then Ezra under the third decree of Artaxerxes Longimanus to rebuild Jerusalem are deeply ingrained in Adventist beliefs. First, this decree provided the starting date for the calculation of the 2,300 “days” in the prophecy of Dan 8:14, and, second, because the works of Ezra and Nehemiah reflected a stage of church-state cooperation rejected by many early Adventists. But White considered the decree of Artaxerxes the direct result of the influence of Ezra; she argued that the king was “deeply impressed” with Ezra’s ability and integrity and granted his request. In White’s assessment both the prophet and the king had done their part to fulfill God’s purpose.<sup>98</sup>

Elijah’s interactions with the temporal power were characterized by opposition to the temporal government. From Ellen White’s perspective, Elijah’s actions were so radical that they seemed to “invite swift destruction” from the king. Unlike Daniel and Nehemiah, Elijah made his way into the presence of the king with little or no concern for the temporal authority of the king over him. White reasoned that Elijah’s understanding of power and authority was based exclusively on God, and that his direct confrontation of the king was an expression of his conviction that God was above King Ahab, and that the king had no authority to kill him while he was serving as God’s spokesman.<sup>99</sup>

In her description of the meeting between the prophet and the king, Ellen White made it clear that Elijah granted no honor to the king: no flattery, no excuses, no evasion,

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97. E. G. White, *Prophets and Kings*, 631-635.

98. *Ibid.*, 607-617.

99. *Ibid.*, 120-121.

no apology. Far from it; the prophet was “indignant” and fearless in the face of the king. No recognition of authority was mentioned; no obligation toward the king was cited. Her analysis suggested that the prophet owed no honor or subjection to a temporal power that God had rejected.<sup>100</sup>

### New Testament

In her commentary on the church and state issues in the New Testament, Ellen White highlighted the difficult relationship between the early Christian church and the state during the ministry of the apostles. Her comments were based on Christianity’s early struggles against temporal power to establish its existence, while at the same time fulfilling Jesus’ prophecies about persecution. Despite the suffering she described, Ellen White once more reinforced the principle of “loyalty to God,” even to the point of open opposition to temporal authorities. She suggested that the young church of the apostles was fiercely persecuted by the state, but accepted persecution without “fear or hesitation.” The principal reason she saw for this clash of behaviors was not the apostles’ own intentions or disrespect for the temporal powers, but the command that was given to them.<sup>101</sup>

The issue of loyalty also comes up in Ellen White’s comments about Stephen’s martyrdom. She alleged that Stephen and Peter had their loyalty tested to death and remained faithful. Their teachings, according to her, “enraged priests” and excited mobs

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100. E. G. White, *Prophets and Kings*, 137-140, 147.

101. When commenting on the episode of Acts 5:20, Ellen makes an emphatic, almost ironic, comment about the apostles’ obedience to the command of God to escape prison and keep preaching. “This command was directly contrary to the order given by the Jewish rulers; but did the apostles say, We cannot do this until we have consulted the magistrates and received permission from them?” E. G. White, *Acts of the Apostles*, 78-82.

against them, but by suffering this persecution, they were able to bring more sense to the words of Christ. She implied in her comments that though the state had the power to use violence against the apostolic Christian church, the Christians were not intimidated: On the contrary, it was an opportunity for them to reaffirm their belief.<sup>102</sup>

Interestingly, not all the arguments of Ellen White revolved around the negative aspects of persecution. She also proposed that there were many cases where authorities were misled into persecution; they were actually acting on behalf of their own people, even when persecution was involved. The preaching of the apostolic church led the authorities to fear incitement to insurrection and the endangerment of their cities. The apostles were often accused of “secret and dangerous designs” and brought before the authorities with “false and exaggerated” rumors preceding them.<sup>103</sup>

In some cases, like that of Paul and Silas in Philippi, the apostles resorted to the rule of law when arguments could be made in their defense and for their cause. White indicated that they were familiar with the rights they could claim as Roman citizens, although they did not “play politics.” Sometimes, the apostles’ reasoning led magistrates to concede the benefits of their preaching to the citizens. Furthermore, the struggles of Paul, Barnabas, Silas, Peter, and John were widely publicized, and instead of diminishing the interest of the people, added “greater numbers to the new faith.”<sup>104</sup>

Ellen White’s arguments for the apostles’ knowledge of temporal laws and state procedures are supported by the many trials of the apostolic Christians before the rulers

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102. Ellen G. White, "The Deliverance of Peter," *Review and Herald*, April 27, 1911, 3-4.

103. E. G. White, *Acts of the Apostles*, 178.

104. *Ibid.*, 178, 213-218.

of their time. She commented on at least five specific episodes that added to their experience: Paul before Felix, Paul before Festus, Paul before Agrippa, John and Peter in Rome, and Paul and Silas in Philippi.<sup>105</sup>

Though White provided a detailed view of the persecution and suffering of the apostles, she did not always portray the state or its rulers as their enemy. Felix was intelligent and knowledgeable of the work of the apostolic church among Jews, and White argued that God allowed His light to shine upon Felix and his wife, though he opted not to commit at that time.<sup>106</sup> Festus is not portrayed as an evil persecutor either. White attributed to Festus a clear understanding of his duty and power and the capacity to discern that the issue presented did not concern the state, but was purely a question of “Jewish doctrines.”<sup>107</sup>

Ellen White concluded that the challenges faced by the apostles before the state can be summarized in two crucial elements: faith and loyalty. She did not deny the importance of knowing the laws of the land or the role of a fair ruler, but faith and loyalty to God superseded all requirements and mandates of temporal rulers. It was this combination, she argued, that allowed the apostles to stand without fear of human law, for they knew they were doing right and no temporal power could intimidate them or defeat them, even by killing them.<sup>108</sup>

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105. E. G. White, *Acts of the Apostles*, 414-416, 429, 435, 569-570, 230.

106. *Ibid.*, 420-423, 427.

107. *Ibid.*, 429-430.

108. Ellen G. White, "We Ought to Obey God Rather Than Men," *Signs of the Times*, February 27, 1912, 131-132; *idem*, *Acts of the Apostles*, 434-438, 569-570, 574.

## Summary

The Biblical stories of God's servants dealing with temporal authorities confirmed Ellen White's view of the supreme authority of God amidst the controversy between good and evil. Her analysis of these figures from the Old and New Testaments focuses on duty and allegiance: their duty to the king and their allegiance to God. For White, allegiance took precedence over duty to government: One could not serve the king at the expense of one's allegiance to God. Duty to government had to be rejected if it conflicted with allegiance. This, combined with her concept of the supreme authority of God, caused her to see religious persecution by the state as an act against God; when laws were enacted with the intent to persecute Christians should ignore them and remain faithful to God. Nevertheless Ellen White did not hold a negative perception of temporal rulers who upheld the laws in disputes involving Christians, as can be seen in her comments on the apostolic church's persecution. White did not deny the relevance of being acquainted with the laws of the land, nor did she deny that in the current condition of the earth God's plan involved different roles for the church and the state in God's plan; but overall she reaffirmed the distinction between duty to the state and allegiance to God.

### **Methods and Goals of God's Opposition (The Devil and His Angels)**

This section explores Ellen White's thoughts about Satan's government, some of which have already been introduced in her ideas of Satan's controversy with God. It also looks into White's thoughts on the hierarchy and instruments of Satan's government, and how she perceived its struggles and methods. Then I review her thoughts on the Roman church leadership influencing the state, and the relationship of intemperance with lawmaking.

## Two Rival Governments

According to Ellen White, Lucifer challenged God's government and created a new type of government style that defied God and charged Him as a tyrant. She understood that these two opposing governments were both striving to expand and consolidate power over the earth, and that in this confrontation there was no middle ground for the mind of mankind and their actions: It would be led "either by Satan or by Jesus." White stated that Satan worked through the influence of other people or fallen angels to reach the conscience and gain control.<sup>109</sup>

It is impossible for mankind to be isolated from the spiritual struggle or hide from the influence of evil. This controversy between the governments of Satan and God limits humankind to these two options. White did not consider neutral ground as a possibility for human actions; she rather perceived them as influenced by either good or evil: "No one can occupy a neutral position," she said. In her mind, whoever was under the leadership of Satan could not be at the same time under the leadership of God. The two governments were mutually exclusive; however, one can be under God's influence most of the time, but still under certain circumstances, give opportunity for Satan's influence (Matt 16:23).<sup>110</sup>

## Methods Used in the Controversy

The devices and methods used by Satan in the controversy are very different from those that God uses. God and Satan share the goal of reaching human minds, but Satan will use any available tool to accomplish it, including deception, seduction, oppression,

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109. Ellen G. White, "The Danger of Skepticism in Our Youth," *Signs of the Times*, April 21, 1890, 241-242; idem, "The Scriptures a Safeguard," *Review and Herald*, June 28, 1906, 7; idem, *Testimonies*, 4:495.

110. E. G. White, *Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing*, 94.

torture, and self-indulgence. Ellen White pointed out that Satan's devices all work to perpetuate a government based on slavery.<sup>111</sup>

Seduction and compulsion are the main channels used by Satan to gain control of the conscience. In many cases, he seduces people with promises of new knowledge, higher conceptions of life (power), and honor, luring their minds with "gifts" that are an end in themselves. White argued that with acceptance of these "gifts" comes susceptibility to passions, impetuous desires, rash impulses, and moral weakness. Then, those who fall under the control of Satan are led by him, consciously or unconsciously, to cause others to rebel against God's government.<sup>112</sup>

In other cases, Satan relies on fear and force to gain control. In principle and practice, choice has no place in his methods; though he pretends to offer freedom from God's tyrannical government, he promotes only the enslavement of human beings. Torture of the body is one of his devices to inflict fear, bring into subjection, and force people to comply with his desires.<sup>113</sup>

### The Agents and Agencies of Satan's Government

Satan's power against God's people can be exerted directly or through a person controlled by Satan's agencies. Working through what Ellen White called "enemies of

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111. Ellen G. White, "What Shall It Profit?" *Signs of the Times*, June 26, 1893, 519; idem, "Words to the Young," *Youth's Instructor*, November 23, 1893, 365; idem, *Temperance* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1949), 36.

112. E. G. White, *Great Controversy*, 597; idem, "Some Shall Depart from the Faith," *Review and Herald*, May 8, 1888, 89-290; idem, *Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing*, 94-95; idem, *Education*, 150; idem, "The Measure of Light Given Measures Our Responsibilities," *Review and Herald*, October 24, 1912, 3-4.

113. E. G. White, *Great Controversy*, 591; idem, "What Shall It Profit?" 519; idem, "Words to the Young," *Youth's Instructor*, August 17, 1893, 263.

the cross,” Satan will use “silken cords of affection” to bind others through “parental, filial, conjugal, or social” attachments. White mentioned one situation where she admonished a husband not to yield to his wife because Satan was trying to control him through her.<sup>114</sup>

The fallen angels also play their part in expanding Satan’s rule, waiting for an opportunity to press their falsehoods upon humankind. Though fallen humans and fallen angels are different in power and nature, they cherish similar sentiments and are natural friends. White stated that this was the very union desired by the “persecutors of the faithful” and that under such conditions, people would turn into enemies of God and His church, persecuting them and advancing Satan’s cause.<sup>115</sup>

Nature is another means Satan uses to influence human minds. Ellen White suggested that Satan made an effort to learn about nature in order to use his powers to control its elements. He attempts to reach people’s minds through the physical suffering that results from catastrophic events, such as tornadoes, hailstorms, tempests, floods, tidal waves, earthquakes, famine, and pestilence, and by inducing people to believe that those events would certainly be caused by God. White argued that those who are not

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114. E. G. White, "The Scriptures a Safeguard," 7; idem, *Manuscript Releases*, 16:303.

115. White furthered the arguments of similar characteristics between fallen men and fallen angels; she proposed that their state of rebellion is very similar if not the same, which led Satan to reason that if God would provide ways to pardon one He should also provide pardon for the other. But this was a mistake in Satan’s reasoning. Ellen G. White, "Redemption, No. 1," *Review and Herald*, February 24, 1874, 82-83; idem, "Let Both Grow Together," *Review and Herald*, January 10, 1893, 17-18; idem, "Good and Evil Agencies," Ms 11, 1900, CAR; idem, *Manuscript Releases*, 16:305; idem, *Christ Triumphant*, 28, 322.



shielded<sup>116</sup> by God are subject to “natural” catastrophes, which Satan causes in order to trouble people and turn them against God and his followers.<sup>117</sup>

### Hierarchy of Satan’s Government

The very existence of a chain of command, as Ellen White wrote, implies certain limitations within Satan’s ranks and dependency among his agents. She suggested that Satan was the wisest of the fallen angels and that he provided counsel and “vital force” for the others; there are also those humans who have surrendered to Satan and depend on the powers of fallen angels for their guidance.<sup>118</sup> The chain of command starts with Satan at the head, followed by his evil angels, who depend upon Satan and submit to him. Next come the human beings, who are susceptible to the control of evil angels, and finally, the institutions of power,<sup>119</sup> which are controlled by humans in association with fallen angels.

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116. The meaning of “shield” in this context goes beyond protection: It refers to the story of Job and his righteousness in his relationship with God.

117. E. G. White, *Spirit of Prophecy*, 4:407-408; idem, *Great Controversy*, 589-590.

118. The same ranking is applied in Ellen White’s statement, “There is no warfare between Satan and his agents, between fallen angels and those who have yielded themselves to evil.” Ellen G. White, “Help for the Tempted,” *Bible Echo*, September 3, 1900, 571-572. She leaves out the elements of nature, suggesting that nature does not belong to the realm of evil, though Satan is capable of using it. Ellen G. White, “God’s Purpose in the Gift of His Son,” *Review and Herald*, May 30, 1899, 337-338; idem, “Loyalty or Disloyalty?” *Review and Herald*, February 6, 1900, 81-82; idem, “The Result of Beholding Christ,” *Review and Herald*, March 31, 1904, 8-9; idem, *Testimonies*, 5:142; idem, *Reflecting Christ* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1985), 250.

119. Ellen referred to this organized power of Satan as the “confederacy of Satan,” “confederacy of darkness,” and “confederacy of evil.” She stated that this is a power that is united against God and the laws of His government. Ellen G. White, “Harmony with Apostate Powers: A Sign of Enmity to God,” *Signs of the Times*, June 18, 1894, 500-501; idem, *Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing*, 94; idem, *Desire of Ages*, 693; idem, *Christian Experience and Teachings of Ellen G. White*, 208; idem, *Manuscript Releases*, 16:119.

These institutions strive to impede God's work among temporal governments and establish Satan's rule.

An institution of satanic power is a collection of Satan's agents (men and angels) that dominate a legitimate earthly institution. Satan uses them to disrupt God's authority upon the church and the state, and as White clearly stated, he works through religious and secular authorities to enforce temporal laws and religious precepts that are in "defiance of the law of God." Satan resorts to civil and religious power under his control to capture those who do not submit to his influence. This intended coalition of powers (civil and religious) under Satan's leadership led White to affirm that Satan is the god behind a deteriorating world. His power and practices in "palace and temple" are aimed to overthrow God's authority from both.<sup>120</sup>

#### Satan Struggles for Earthly Power

Ellen White asserted that there is a daily struggle between good and evil angels for influence and power over earthly government. The work of Satan's angels is twofold: They try to block the truth (God's promises) from reaching those in positions of power, and also work directly against God's angels to prevent them from assisting rulers during the decision-making process. According to White, both efforts converge toward one end: keeping God's influence away from people so that humans can be led to judge based on their own limited perspectives.<sup>121</sup>

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120. E. G. White, *Great Controversy*, 591; idem, "Let Both Grow Together," *Review and Herald*, January 10, 1893, 17-18; idem, "Perfect Service Required by God," *Review and Herald*, February 11, 1902, 17-18.

121. "Battling With Unseen Powers," *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, rev. ed., 7 vols. (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 1956-1980), 6:1119; E. G. White, *Manuscript Releases*, 11:103.

Satan's method of operation, as suggested by Ellen White, involves three important elements: (1) provocations leading to accusations, (2) condemnation of those (wrongly) considered as "evildoers," (3) and action through civil powers. Instigations and provocations are the special work of Satan to generate controversy; White argued that they quenched personal conviction and drew people into a diversity of opinions, which led to accusations that generated judgmental arguments. She went on to observe that it was far more destructive for Christians to retaliate against false accusations than to suffer their results, and that Satan watched for any error that he could use as a foundation for accusations.<sup>122</sup>

Those unjustly labeled as "evildoers" are condemned, not because of their deeds, but because those under Satan's power do not want to pursue the truth. Satan knows what can be construed into someone's condemnation, and thus he knows exactly how to arrange the circumstances. By orchestrating the condemnation of innocent people, Satan expects to widen the distance between God's government and the earth. The most critical example mentioned by Ellen White was the condemnation of Jesus Christ: The Pharisees, not wanting to believe in Jesus, preferred to condemn the "Spirit of God."<sup>123</sup>

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122. Ellen made a serious note on accusation, declaring that not even Jesus dared to bring a "railing accusation against the prince of evil." She noted that Jesus, as a representative of God's government, refrained from accusing Satan, even when claiming the body of Moses (see Jude 9). Ellen G. White, "The Work of the Minister," *Review and Herald*, September 11, 1888, 577-578; idem, "The Spirit of a Christian," *Review and Herald*, February 24, 1891, 113-114; idem, "Let Both Grow Together," *Review and Herald*, January 10, 1893, 17-18; idem, "Our Work and the Manner of Doing It," *Home Missionary*, September 1, 1894, 198-199; idem, *Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing*, 17; idem, *Testimonies to Ministers and Gospel Workers* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1923), 222, 249; idem, *Christ Triumphant*, 14.

123. E. G. White, *Gospel Workers*, 417; idem, "Let Both Grow Together," *Review and Herald*, January 10, 1893, 17-18; idem, "We Are Nearing the Close of This Earth's History," Ms 34, 1897, CAR; idem, *Christ's Object Lessons*, 74; idem, *Mind, Character, and Personality*, 2:658-659; idem, *Christ Triumphant*, 245.

Attempting to solve spiritual issues through civil power is perhaps the greatest danger sign pointed out by Ellen White in the church-state relationship. White stated that Satan had used this method in the past and mentioned the example of Luther before the Diet of Worms. The Roman church compelled the civil powers to deliver Luther to their custody so he could face allegations that the church (not the state) considered appropriate. Though this method has pressed men to surrender their consciences, it can have unintended positive consequences; as in the case of Luther, it may allow others to come to an understanding of God's laws.

#### The Apostate Church Leadership as Agents

Before the incarnation of Christ, Satan worked mostly through "paganism" to achieve dominance and defeat God's government, but with the advent of Christianity, Satan began to disguise himself in religious pretense within the Roman church. Ellen White did not say that the early church was under Satan's control, but rather that "it was the apostasy" of the early church that "prepared the way" for the formation of an institutionalized power of Satan, the "papacy beast." Then the Roman church became the center of the combined civil and religious power.<sup>124</sup>

Ellen White declared that Satan would use this method in the future, when religious bodies that disassociated themselves from God's message would "unite with civil powers" and form an evil coalition to persecute those who did not submit. The purpose of this hybrid power (civil and religious), also called the "image of the beast,"

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124. E. G. White, *Great Controversy*, 443; idem, "The Dragon's Voice," *Signs of the Times*, February 8, 1910, 33-34.

would be the imposition of their dogmas.<sup>125</sup>

According to Ellen White, all those who oppose the knowledge of God and His righteousness are representatives of Satan's government. While developing her arguments about Satan, in the apostasy of the Roman church the popes and priests had usurped the place of Jesus in His ministry toward sinners, and that this was part of Satan's plan to draw the people away from Christ. Thus, she concluded that in the process the church leaders functioned as representatives of Satan, and the pope was Satan's main representative, and that the apostate Roman Catholic Church was his corporate body.<sup>126</sup>

White traced a parallel between the pope and Satan in their work against God's government. She stated that Satan tried to amend the law of God with corrections of his own, placing his knowledge above God and declaring "God to be fallible." The pope's claims of infallibility placed him in the same position, seeking to adjust the law of God "to meet his own ideas." Making changes to the Decalogue, in her view, was equivalent

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125. In *Great Controversy*, Ellen White expands in detail her biblical understanding of the union of church and state. She understood this phenomenon to be the formation of the image of the beast spoken by John in Rev 13. E. G. White, *Great Controversy*, 439-445, 607; idem, "I Will Keep Thee from the Hour of Temptation," *Review and Herald*, April 15, 1890, 225-226; idem, "Let Both Grow Together," *Review and Herald*, January 10, 1893, 17-18; idem, *Manuscript Releases*, 14:161.

126. A distinction must be made between Ellen White's comments on the Roman Catholic Church as an institution and her comments on Catholics as believers. On this subject, Ellen White went to opposite extremes. She named the Roman church as an institution of Satan, but on the other hand, she showed great regard for Catholics: "We should not go out of our way to make hard thrusts at the Catholics. Among the Catholics there are many who are most conscientious Christians and who walk in all the light that shines upon them, and God will work in their behalf." E. G. White, *Early Writings*, 213; Ellen G. White to D. T. Bourdeau, n.d. (Lt 39, 1887), CAR; idem, "The Need of Earnest Intelligent Workers," Ms 14, 1887, CAR; idem, *The Story of Redemption*, 327; idem, *Testimonies*, 9:243.

to stating that the pope believed himself able to “correct the mistakes” in the ordinances and commandments of God and make them more appropriate to humankind.<sup>127</sup>

The similarity between the works of the “papal church” and those of Satan led her to conclude that the character of the papacy was “exactly in opposition” to the character of Christ. While Christ abided by God’s government and followed the laws established by God’s authority, the pope made his own laws contrary to God’s laws and established his own authority. White considered it an outrage for a human to alter God’s law. From her perspective, it was appropriate for secular powers to change their laws from time to time according to necessity, but humans were “prohibited” from changing the laws of God.<sup>128</sup>

Beyond the changes in the Decalogue, Ellen White pointed out that the same pattern of exercise of power could be seen in the adoration of images, the invocation of saints, and the very “exaltation” of the pope. According to her, Satan had influenced the minds of the people away from God and closer to the “papists,” extending his power into the Roman institution and through the hierarchy up to the representation of the pope. She clearly stated that “God has not given this power to pope or prelate,” and thus the pope’s claim to power and authority was like Satan’s claim before God.<sup>129</sup>

### The Strategy of Intemperance

Intemperance plays a key role in Satan’s control of human minds. Ellen White

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127. Ellen G. White, "Perpetual Memorial," *Signs of the Times*, November 19, 1894, 851.

128. Ibid.

129. Ellen G. White, "Dangers Which Threaten," *Signs of the Times*, June 30, 1898, 4-5; idem, *Manuscript Releases*, 5:102.

proposed that many forms of abuse of the body can lead one to surrender control to Satan, and bluntly stated, “Men who use liquor make themselves the slaves of Satan.” Satan looks for people in key positions of trust to mislead and destroy; when they fall, the damage is even greater because they are responsible for many lives. Besides that, intemperance plays an important role in the process of human law superseding God’s law. As White argued, intemperate men are led to believe that “true knowledge places man above all law,” that “whatsoever is, is right,” and that God does not condemn. When they are mentally, physically, and morally weakened, many will surrender to Satan’s suggestions that “self” is what needs to be pleased.<sup>130</sup>

White’s concerns with intemperance are extended reflected to the magistrates. She believed that “through appetite, Satan controls the mind and the whole being” which makes an intemperate magistrate unfit for his duties. As a result, she placed temperance as a moral condition for magistrates to properly exercise their office. “Are [the law-maker, judges, and jurors] temperate in their habits? If not, they are not fit for such responsible positions. When the appetites are perverted, the mental powers are weakened, and there is danger that men will not rule justly.” White indicated that Satan will have control of an intemperate magistrate.<sup>131</sup>

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130. Ellen estimated that through intemperance one could lose between one-half and two-thirds of one’s physical, mental, and moral power, turning into a “plaything” for Satan. On some occasions, she stated, Satan can take “absolute control” of a person. Ellen G. White, *Redemption: Or the Miracles of Christ, the Mighty One*, Life of Christ: No. 3 (Battle Creek, MI: SDA, 1877), 42; idem, “Temperance Essential to Christian Character,” *Health Reformer*, March 1, 1878, 74-75; idem, *Great Controversy*, 555, 586; idem, “The Work for Today,” Ms 17, 1898, CAR; idem, “The Warfare between Good and Evil,” *Review and Herald*, April 16, 1901, 241-242; idem, *Temperance*, 12, 46.

131. It is in the context of Satan’s attempt to control the person that Ellen White exhorted government representatives and lawmakers that they should keep their mental faculties in their best condition. She anticipated the serious implications of fulfilling

The arguments presented above are the basis for White's support of temperance laws to contain evil in society. However, intemperance is only a portion of Satan's larger scheme to establish his government. Ellen White pointed out that Satan has shifted his tactics over generations in order to keep the world under his dominance. She remarked that in past generations the people had more self-control; they were more prone to temperance and less inclined to indulgence. In those days, Satan kept the world under control through ignorance, withholding the Scriptures from the people.

Ellen White suggested that after the Scriptures became widely available, Satan placed more emphasis on self-indulgence and began to expand his government by diminishing the power of self-control and encouraging intemperance. White also noted that the institutions Satan used to promote his dominance shifted. While he dominated through ignorance of the Scriptures, Satan used the Roman church as his executing arm, but when he became more focused on ruling through intemperate men, he used the judiciary system and men of social relevance. Rampant intemperance combined with biblical ignorance facilitate the enactment and enforcement of civil laws that misrepresent the will of God.<sup>132</sup>

### Summary

Ellen White suggested that in matters of allegiance, there is no middle ground between the governments of Satan and God. The methods, devices, and principles of Satan's government are very different from those of God. Mind control and slavery are

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judicial responsibilities while under the controlling power of Satan. E. G. White, *Christian Temperance*, 19.

132. E. G. White, *Spirit of Prophecy*, 4:403; idem, *Great Controversy*, 586; idem, *Christian Temperance*, 37-40; idem, "The Measure of God's Love," *Signs of the Times*, February 22, 1899, 129-130.



the main channels for Satan's power, and to achieve them, he uses fallen angels and humans. He also controls powerful institutions that influence temporal governments. White identified the Roman Church and its leadership as agents of Satan's government. White argued that in the latter days Satan emphasized intemperance to expand the civil influence of his government which gave her grounds to support temperance laws.

### **Summary and Conclusion**

The government of God, as presented by Ellen White, was centered in choice and love. She considered choice to be an important part of God's law and of His character, because He as the Creator allowed humankind to freely decide whether to abide by the rules of His government. Despite the ongoing struggle against Satan, God does not enforce His ways on humankind through external torture or coercion, but inspires obedience through love. His reign is based on love that is given, expecting love in return, but freedom of choice and love do not imply lack of authority. White clearly held that God had all authority over mankind, and that His laws could not be revoked. She suggested that God's laws were beneficial in many aspects, and that the freedom to choose proved that God was not an arbitrary ruler.

However, White admitted that with the establishment of Satan's government, God's methods needed to be adapted, but not changed in principle. She made a strong argument based on the incarnation of Jesus, writing that Jesus lived in full accordance with God's government and never used ends to justify means. She proposed that Jesus intentionally chose not to involve himself in temporal causes because the principles of God's kingdom were different from the principles of the established temporal governments. Therefore, God works differently in the two different realms.

The way God chooses to establish His government caused Him to work

differently in temporal governance without affecting His supreme authority. God's acts of goodwill toward humankind work from the inside out, influencing the mind towards a desired action or behavior. Though God could have demonstrated His power differently, He chose to keep human freedom of choice. Jesus revealed that the role of the church in bringing justice and mercy should be exercised without entanglement with temporal government. White reasoned that if God imposed His power on humankind, people would serve Him out of fear of punishment or desire for a reward, but this type of service is not what God seeks.

Ellen White proposed that God's government is one of love and choice, but that to limit evil He exercises authority over the power of rulers. She argued that all temporal authority is "heaven imparted," and therefore God is above all kings and holds them accountable for their power. God limits the actions of fallen angels and interacts with temporal powers through unfallen angels who are sent to influence the decision-making process. However, White argued, God's angels work to influence the minds, and not to take control of mankind.

The stories of biblical figures who chose to follow God rather than temporal rulers shed more light on some of Ellen White's ideas about church-state conflict. The examples she cited present a consistent issue of service and allegiance. She made it clear that those under God's government maintained a greater commitment to the ordinances of God's kingdom than to the commandments of the temporal king, and that what made them better servants of their governments was their commitment to their religion.

Interestingly, Ellen White did not condemn for religious reasons any actions these men took. She argued that when Abraham waged war to rescue his nephew, his success was due to his principles rather than equipment or numbers, and associated Abraham's

acts with justice and humanity. White also did not see any wrongdoing in Joseph making his family tax-exempt and granting them plenty of provisions in the land of Egypt, and she clearly indicated that Joseph's methods of ruling were based more on religion than policy. She regarded the events of Dan 3 as rightful civil disobedience and although she acknowledged that the three young Hebrews had violated the king's law, she held them innocent of wrongdoing. At the same time White indicated through the experience of Ezra and Nehemiah that God has a role for church and state in the carrying out of His plans. White did not criticize the apostles' appeals to the Roman legal system, nor the usefulness of their knowledge of the laws of the land; furthermore, despite the persecution of the apostolic church, she saw indications that *not* every legal authority of the land was corrupted. In each of these stories, White identified two elements—service to the king and allegiance to God—and implied that these men of the Bible recognized where the real power and authority lay.

According to Ellen White, Satan's methods of government could be characterized by destruction of choice through coercion, or breakdown of the power of reason through intemperance. The methods and devices he uses stand in opposition to what God offers and ultimately aim to control the mind. Though Lucifer charged God with being a tyrant, White argued that only in Satan's government do the ends justify the means; Satan expands his dominion by whatever means he can, including seduction and compulsion.

White suggested that a certain hierarchy exists in the realm of Satan: After Satan himself come the fallen angels who seek opportunities to press falsehoods upon people; then the humans controlled by Satan who work via bonds of affection, and lastly the union of men and fallen angels in institutions within society. Satan can also use the elements of nature to govern humans' minds through disasters labeled "acts of God" or

curses disguised as “gifts.”

White strongly denounced the Roman Church as an institution used to further Satan’s governance. In the past (and future) acts of its leaders, she saw the strategy of combining religion with civil powers and using coercion of the mind to enforce dogmas. She also referred to the change of the Decalogue as implying that God’s laws needed to be fixed and God’s government was fallible.

Ellen White argued that in earlier times Satan worked through the church to maintain people’s ignorance of Scripture in order to implement his domination. She suggested that after biblical knowledge increased, intemperance became a greater means to lead many to cede their minds to Satan’s dominance in the state. She warned against the dangers of intemperance, especially among people in leadership positions, since capturing those key persons could greatly extend Satan’s civil control.

The thoughts expanded in this chapter were focused on Ellen White’s perspectives of government as they relate to the spiritual realm affecting the church and state. With those perspectives in mind, I will enter into an investigation of her concepts of civil government in the threats and opportunities it has posed to the church within the context of the great controversy.

## CHAPTER III

### ELLEN WHITE'S VIEWS OF CIVIL GOVERNMENT

This chapter looks into Ellen White's ideas about the ministry of the state (Rom 13) as it relates to the mission of the church in the framework of her Great Controversy Theme. Her thoughts are grouped into four main topics: (1) the rules established to maintain order in the land and how Ellen White saw the right of government to establish and enforce laws; (2) when and to what extent the church and its members should comply with government requirements, and what the basis for guidance should be; (3) how the issue of religious liberty has affected the church and what White considered appropriate behavior for the Adventist church; and (4) how White looked at the favors and benefits extended by government and the intersection of both ministries. Keeping in mind that White's view of the state is largely focused in the U.S. context, I present concepts that can be applied to churches under different forms of government. I close the chapter with a summary and analysis of the main findings of this chapter.

#### **Law and Order in the Land**

This section investigates the instruments of governance and how they relate to the cosmic struggle (Great Controversy) between good and evil. It starts with White's general perception of government and then moves on to examine how she saw its rule over the land within the context of evil presence. The section closes with a brief analysis of White's perception of the founders of the American republic and their relationship to

the moral laws of God.

### General Concepts of Government

Ellen White often referred to civil government with a larger emphasis on the conflict between good and evil. Her analysis of true exercise of government is based on moral values that take a spiritual emphasis and application. Her expositions upon the subject are seldom limited to the realm of practical purposes and often entered the spiritual realm.

White used the great tree in Nebuchadnezzar as a representation of the true object of civil government and typified the subjection to God's authority. The strong and organized structure provided protection and nurtured the growth of many lives. White presented these characteristics as her interpretation of Dan 4:11-12 and considered them elements of a proper government that fulfills God's purpose for the nation. Using the analogy of the tree, White defined the main functions of a government that fulfills God's purpose as protecting and building up the nation and its people. "The true object of national government was represented under the figure of a great tree," she argued. "This representation shows the character of a government that fulfills God's purpose--a government that protects and upbuilds the nation."<sup>1</sup>

When White spoke of protection, she highlighted the issue of liberty of the conscience. She argued that freedom of conscience is bound to the duties and limits of civil government, and that protection of "the liberty of conscience is the duty of the state" and it is beyond civil authority to "regulate or enforce" matters of conscience.<sup>2</sup>

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1. E. G. White, *Education*, 175.

2. E. G. White, *Great Controversy*, 201.

The prosperity of the nation and of individuals is also bound to moral principles. White referred to Babylon and its prosperity and pointed out that its ruin came when rulers decided to exercise authority based on their own ideas and principles. When corruption, wickedness, and blasphemy grew within civil government, the “glory of their kingdom,” with all its prosperity, was shattered and broken.<sup>3</sup>

White indicated that the established civil power that provides peace and quietness has the right to request and receive support. She was convinced by the episode in Matt 22:21 that Jesus did not condemn the duties imposed by civil government. She reasoned that in those days the Roman Empire was the civil power established to keep order in society, and it was rightful for Rome to receive the support of all its people. White did not question the power of civil government in her arguments about this episode, but rather emphasized the issue of allegiance versus obedience among the people of God. This validated the rightful exercise of government in making and enforcing laws.<sup>4</sup>

The moral obligation of citizens to their civil government may go beyond the established laws. White proposed that it was part of Jesus’ teachings that moral obligations to civil government should be conscientiously fulfilled, and at times such fulfillment may even exceed “what the law of the land required.” White referred to the teaching of Jesus in Matt 5:40-41 that moral obligations exceed legal requirements, even in matters of business principles. “Jesus bade His disciples, instead of resisting the demands of those in authority, to do even more than was required of them,” she reasoned, concluding that Jesus’ teachings remain binding on all Christians and should be followed by Adventists. “If these principles were carried out today, what a different place this

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3. E. G. White, *Prophets and Kings*, 500-502.

4. E. G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, 602-603.

world would be!”<sup>5</sup>

### The Rule of the Land

White ideally defined the law “as a rule of action,” a representation of the “supreme power of the State” to regulate people’s actions and prevent them from doing wrong under “penalty of punishment.” Her frame of thought confirmed the actions of civil government and indicated that obedience to the law is the basis for “the good of society and safety of men.”<sup>6</sup>

The prosperity and safety previously indicated are closely associated with the laws governing the land. White derived this principle more from biblical and spiritual knowledge than from her own observations in life. She stated that “true” prosperity and safety come from the laws and principles of God’s government, and when the principles of God’s government are properly applied in temporal government, prosperity and safety come as fulfillment of God’s promise.<sup>7</sup> She affirmed that laws based on the Decalogue are “righteous and good” and that subjects who love and keep the commandments of God will automatically conform to every “good law of the land.”<sup>8</sup>

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5. E. G. White, *Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing*, 72; idem, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 522; idem, *The Ministry of Healing* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1905), 187-188.

6. Ellen G. White, "A Lesson for the Times," *Health Reformer*, August 1, 1878, 236-238. We can assume that White held law and government as good in principle because they relate to God’s government and are means to order and peace. She saw the governments of earth as subject to the laws and government of God in heaven; thus laws and government were instituted by God, even though they are subject to the deprivations of sin.

7. E. G. White, *Prophets and Kings*, 500-502.

8. White carried the attributes of God (goodness and righteousness), which she saw established in his Decalogue, into the laws of land that are based on the Decalogue.



White's recognition of goodness in some laws of the land is an indication that she perceived civil laws as part of the conflict between God and Satan, which therefore could promote either good or evil. She saw the enactment of the laws of God as the law of the land in Exod 21 as an utterance against Satan and his methods of government. It should be noted, however, that White's reference to the Decalogue as the source of principles for good ruling assumes a reference to the "second table" of the law, that is, the last six commandments. "Two mighty principles are declared in those ten precepts. On the first table of stone were inscribed the four precepts showing the duty of man to God; and on the second table were the six showing the duty of man to his fellow man."<sup>9</sup> She clearly did not expect government to enforce religious laws. She rather affirmed that "to protect liberty of conscience is the duty of the State, and this is the limit of its authority in matters of religion. Every secular government that attempts to regulate or enforce religious observances by civil authority is sacrificing the very principle for which the evangelical Christians so nobly struggled."<sup>10</sup>

White associated God's involvement in the laws of the land with Jesus' priestly ministry in the sanctuary in favor of His people. His ministry is made effective on earth through His Spirit, and brings restraint to rulers, lawmakers, and people. The influence of the Spirit is reflected in laws that protect human rights and reduce human suffering. She also indicated that this influence sets boundaries and balances Satan's "great extent" of control, and stated that "were it not for these laws, the condition of the world would be

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E. G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 668; idem, *My Life Today* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1952), 280.

9. Ellen G. White, "The Law from Sinai," *Signs of the Times*, March 7, 1878, 73; cf. idem, "Never Yield the Sabbath," *Signs of the Times*, February 28, 1878, 65.

10. E. G. White, *Great Controversy*, 201.

much worse than it now is.”<sup>11</sup>

There is no question that White considered the state necessary to enforce order but its actions also reflect the controversy between good and evil that dominates the earth. Though White considered prosperity and protection to be the results of good laws reflecting biblical principles, she also warned that there are some laws associated with evil. In November 1909, when White was asked about the laws governing medical practitioners, she was very careful to mention that not all of them were bad; she pointed to some “wise laws” that were framed in order to “safeguard the people against the imposition of unqualified physicians.” Unfortunately, evil is also present in government which leads to laws that go against God’s principles of government. In her perception, these bad laws can be categorized into two major groups: laws that allowed evil and laws that actually promoted evil.<sup>12</sup>

#### Laws That Allow Evil

The perspective of the controversy extended into the legal system implied that although law is a necessary device for good government, it can also become a tool for evil. The issue of liquor prohibition in America moved White to express her opinions about the judicial system and the morals implied in the laws.<sup>13</sup>

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11. E. G. White, *Great Controversy*, 610; idem, *Counsels for the Church: A Guide to Doctrinal Beliefs and Christian Living* (Boise, ID: Pacific Press, 1991), 315.

12. Ellen G. White, "Medical Evangelistic Education," *Medical Evangelism*, October 1, 1906, 20-24.

13. From the late 1800s to the early 1900s, there was a growing agitation by the Anti-Saloon League for state and national legislation prohibiting alcohol. This was the climax of a long history of social behavior that turned into a significant factor in American politics. The Anti-Saloon League, being supported by the Protestant churches and its members, acted as a pressure group in the major parties against the selling of alcohol. In December 1917 the United States Congress passed the Eighteenth

Reasoning from the Bible and general history, White considered liquor to be “evil” and temperance to be “noble,” and she openly rebuked the laws that tolerated what she perceived as evil. When White wrote about it in 1890, she saw that the laws regulating liquor sales seemed like a compromise between lawmakers and liquor-sellers and fell short of protecting the people or providing for their prosperity. In reaction, she did not rebel against the legal system or deny the power of government, but rather called on lawmakers to work in a different direction: “Can our legislators furnish no better solution of the liquor question?”<sup>14</sup>

As one who was alert to the moral issues involved in liquor sales, White believed that lawmakers understood the problem but were legislating for political gain. She proposed a less politicized approach: “Let laws be enacted and rigidly enforced prohibiting the sale and use of ardent spirits as a beverage.” She was concerned that promotion of temperance and virtue would not be enough to contain drunkenness, writing that “more than [promotion of temperance and virtue] is needed to banish the curse of inebriety from our land.” In short, she saw legislation as part of the solution.<sup>15</sup>

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Amendment outlawing the manufacture, sale, or transportation of “intoxicating liquors.” By January 29, 1919, the amendment had been ratified by three-fourths of the states, and in January 1920 Prohibition became law. Joseph R. Gusfield, “Coercive Reform and Cultural Conflict,” in *Symbolic Crusade; Status Politics and the American Temperance Movement* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1963); John A. Krout, “Prophets of Prohibition,” in *The Origins of Prohibition* (New York: Russell and Russell, 1967).

14. Ellen G. White, *Christian Temperance and Bible Hygiene* (Battle Creek, MI: SDA, 1890), 30.

15. Ellen G. White, “Temperance and the License Law,” *Review and Herald*, November 8, 1881, 289-290; idem, “Daniel a Temperance Reformer,” *Signs of the Times*, March 2, 1882, 97-98; idem, *Bible Hygiene*, 30.

White's comments about the laws regulating liquor sales<sup>16</sup> demonstrated her concern that laws could be used to safeguard evil in society. She condemned the destructive influence of selling liquor that was "carried on under the protection of the laws of the land" and pointed out that "lawmakers and liquor-sellers" knew their work interfered in the financial, social, and spiritual lives of the people. In this particular case, she considered the law to be part of the problem: Though it mandated severe punishment for the actions of drunkards, it did little to restrain liquor selling.<sup>17</sup>

White used the same language to refer to both liquor sales and slavery. In both cases, she did not name the state or the laws as the primary cause of the problem, but indicated that Satan was the one who invented both. Other Sabbatarian Adventists such as Joseph Bates, James White, and Uriah Smith also openly considered slavery a moral issue. There was a unanimous conviction that slavery and liquor were associated with evil, sin, and vice and needed to be addressed by the laws of the land.<sup>18</sup>

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16. Laws that regulate the sale of intoxicating liquors became part of the anti-liquor campaign. Around the mid-1850s many states had already received petitions from temperance activists asking state legislatures to review license laws to make more stringent regulation of liquor traffic. Joseph R. Gusfield, "Status Control and Mobility," in *Symbolic Crusade; Status Politics and the American Temperance Movement* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1963); John A. Krout, "Organizing for Victory," in *The Origins of Prohibition* (New York: Russell and Russell, 1967).

17. White affirmed that a man given to liquor will spend the money that should be used to provide for his family; the society also suffers because the number of crimes escalates due to intoxicated people; and finally, "step by step, the work goes on, until the man who was once a good citizen, a kind husband and father, seems changed to a demon." E. G. White, "A Lesson for the Times," *Health Reformer*, August 1, 1878, 236-238; idem, "Temperance and the License Law," *Review and Herald*, November 8, 1881, 289-290.

18. White wrote that the Southern States of America were under the curse of slavery. Joseph Bates, *The Autobiography of Elder Joseph Bates* (Battle Creek, MI: SDA, 1868), 128, 236; Ellen G. White, "The Warfare between Good and Evil," *Review and Herald*, April 16, 1901, 241-242; idem, *Testimonies*, 9:213; idem, *Manuscript Releases*:

## Laws That Promote Evil

Ellen White was very concerned with certain laws that established religious practices such as Sunday keeping. Because of her biblical understanding of worship, she voiced many warnings against these laws and categorized them as the work of Satan.<sup>19</sup> In May 1888, a Sunday law was proposed in the Senate by Senator H. W. Blair, and in December 1888, White announced that it was “the business of all believers in the Bible to arouse” against the bill.<sup>20</sup>

The National Sunday-Rest Bill of 1888 conflicted with White’s concept of civil government that proposed protection and prosperity. Her biblical understanding of the seventh-day Sabbath and her ongoing ideas of the clash between the two spiritual governments led her to give a spiritual focus to Senator Blair’s propositions. She argued that such a law was in extreme opposition to the “principles of republicanism upon which the [American] government has been founded.” She also proposed that those who

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*From the Files of the Letters and Manuscripts of Ellen G. White, 21 vols. (Washington, DC: Ellen G. White Estate, 1981-1993) 4:6; James White, "Is the Nation Guilty?" *Review and Herald*, September 23, 1862, 133-134; idem, "The Fruit of Prayer," *Review and Herald*, December 22, 1863, 27; James White and Uriah Smith, *The Biblical Institute: A Synopsis of Lectures on the Principal Doctrines of Seventh-day Adventists* (Oakland: Pacific Press, 1878), 108.*

19. Ellen G. White, "A Call for Active Work," *Review and Herald*, February 16, 1905, 12.

20. Ellen G. White, "The Approaching Crisis," *Review and Herald*, December 11, 1888, 7-8. Senator Blair of New Hampshire introduced into Congress in May 1888 a bill proposing national legislation forbidding “all secular business and work on Sunday in all places under the control of Congress.” The list of places included the postal service, the army and navy, the territories, and in interstate commerce. See *Appleton's Annual Cyclopædia and Register of Important Events of the Year 1888*, 1889 ed., s.v. "Sunday Legislation."

advocated this kind of bill did not realize what they were doing.<sup>21</sup>

White predicted that a Sunday observance law would force civil government to act against the religious beliefs of others who did not observe a Sunday Sabbath. This was understood as religious persecution, and comparisons were drawn between the American government and the Roman Empire. The law constituted a restriction of the conscience of the American people and violated the purpose proposed by Jefferson, Madison, Washington, and the other founding fathers.<sup>22</sup>

Despite all her efforts against the enactment of a law ruling on conscience, White predicted that the nation would allow such laws, saying that “sooner or later Sunday laws will be passed,” and that it would happen by popular demand. She expected rulers and legislators to yield to pressure in order to secure public favor, and stated that this would be a major setback for republicanism and Protestantism, marking the start of religious persecution.<sup>23</sup>

Another clear example of a law that Ellen White viewed as promoting evil is the fugitive slave law.<sup>24</sup> White wrote that on August 3, 1861, she “was taken off in vision and

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21. E. G. White, "The Approaching Crisis," *Review and Herald*, December 11, 1888, 7-8; idem, "The Present Crisis," *Signs of the Times*, November 28, 1900, 763; idem, *Testimonies*, 5:712; idem, *Manuscript Releases*, 7:192.

22. E. G. White, *Great Controversy*, 573.

23. Ibid., 592; E. G. White, "A Call for Active Work," *Review and Herald*, February 16, 1905, 12.

24. The Fugitive Slave Act was part of the “Compromise of 1850” between slave states and free states advocates in Congress. This law allowed slave-hunters to seize alleged fugitive slaves without due process of law and prohibited anyone from aiding escaped fugitives or obstructing their recovery under the penalty of six months' imprisonment and a \$1,000 fine. See Harmon Kingsbury, *The Slavery Question Settled* (New York: John A. Gray, 1862); Samuel May, *The Fugitive Slave Law and Its Victims*, rev. ed. (New York: American Anti-slavery Society, 1861); Jane H. Pease and William

shown” a broader perspective of the problem of slavery, and the vision showed her that the “fugitive slave law was calculated to crush out of man every noble, generous feeling of sympathy that should arise in his heart for the oppressed and suffering slave.” In her account of the vision, she described many horrors of the American Civil War that were the result of civil actions by both South and North: the South for enforcing slavery through the enactment of such laws, and the North for being submissive and failing to oppose the “slave power.” Thus, White’s analysis of the laws that promote evil implies that those who have the authority to oppose evil and fail to do so are also held responsible before God.<sup>25</sup>

#### Religious Intolerance and the Power to Persecute

When Ellen White commented on the lifestyle of Colonial America, she declared that the “spirit of intolerance” was still present among the Pilgrims. To fully understand her comments, it is necessary to determine what she considered intolerance and what she considered persecution. These definitions will help clarify what she understood as enforcement of legal order and what was considered abusive civil power.<sup>26</sup>

White indicated that persecution and intolerance are commonly associated and that one develops out of the other. She argued that “persecution in its varied forms is the development of a principle” based on two opposing ideals that cannot reach a compromise, where the followers of one side do not tolerate the other side. In other circumstances, she indicated that intolerance is based on opposed ideas and assumptions,

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H. Pease, *The Fugitive Slave Law and Anthony Burns: A Problem in Law Enforcement* (Philadelphia: Lippincott, 1975).

25. E. G. White, *Testimonies*, 1:264.

26. E. G. White, *Great Controversy*, 292.

while persecution is associated with actions of opposition like the kindling (or rekindling) of a fire to burn the opponents.<sup>27</sup>

On another occasion, White remarked that intolerance and persecution are the inevitable results of placing secular power in the hands of the church. To her, the combination of church and state was dangerous because it allowed civil powers, which had legitimate authority to act against improper behavior, to rule upon spiritual matters. When church and state are combined, there is no distinction between heresy and crime. It was based on this disassociation, White explained, that Roger Williams proposed a difference between matters of church and state. She referred to this discernment as “the equality of opinions before the law” and proposed that lack of interest in religious practices cannot be a concern of the civil government and should not be considered a crime, for it concerns the conscience in its dealings with spiritual matters. She also indicated that crime should be dealt with by civil powers because it was the dealings of men with other men.<sup>28</sup>

Religion and biblical practices were considered separately in civil government. White did not propose that a nation should not hold biblical principles, or that laws and civil government were better off being entirely secular. She considered the absence of begging, drunkenness, and other vices in Puritan society to be an indicator of good laws. It was a sign that biblical principles were being upheld, and therefore, that the people were living in greatness. On the opposite side of the phenomenon, the decline in support

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27. E. G. White, *Great Controversy*, 610; Ellen G. White, "The Scriptures: A Safeguard," *Review and Herald*, January 10, 1907, 8.

28. E. G. White, *Great Controversy*, 292-295, 292, 442.



for biblical principles is the leading cause of corruption in society.<sup>29</sup>

White's proposition questioned the nature of the laws and placed moral responsibilities upon lawmakers. She believed that civil laws in themselves cannot remedy the state or the process of corruption; as much as a law can forbid drinking, it will never release one from the habit. It is the exercise of biblical (spiritual) principles that will help to transform the lives of people. Therefore, the development of society depends on its laws and upholding biblical values. Acting from this reasoning, White placed specific burdens upon the magistrates and the legal system; she expected them to strictly enforce the principles presented in the "second table" of the Decalogue, but at the same time, she held that the state had no legitimate authority to enforce the "first table," that is, the first four commandments, which deal with "the duty of man to God." Concerning the first table of the law, human government must not interfere with the conscience of the individual.<sup>30</sup>

#### Republicanism and the Law above the Laws

Ellen White often indicated her admiration for the work of the republican forefathers of America. On several occasions, she stated that the work done in the Constitution established the wise principle of church and state separation and pointed out that the principles of "civil and religious liberty" were the cornerstones of the American republic. White made direct reference to the Declaration of Independence ("that grand old document") and the First Amendment as safeguards of the nation. According to her, the trouble would begin when the country repudiated the principles established by

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29. E. G. White, *Great Controversy*, 295-297.

30. Ellen G. White, "The Law from Sinai," *Signs of the Times*, March 7, 1878, 73; cf. idem, "Never Yield the Sabbath," *Signs of the Times*, February 28, 1878, 65.

Jefferson and the other founders. Through the instruments of governance, White wrote, “the founders of the nation wisely sought to guard against the employment of secular power on the part of the church.”<sup>31</sup>

Much of the current literature proposes an intentional absence of God in the Constitution and ascribes non-religious motives to the founders. However, White argued that “the framers of the Constitution recognized the eternal principle that man's relation to his God is above human legislation.” She believed that this dependence on God was so obvious that there was no need to mention it. She also pointed out that Jefferson, Madison, and the others were subject to an “inborn principle” that dictated “that their duty to God was superior to human enactments, and that man could exercise no authority over their consciences.”<sup>32</sup>

Though White admired the work accomplished by Jefferson, Madison, and the other American forefathers, she never lost her perspective on how the laws of the land compared to the laws of God. She argued, “Can man frame a constitution for the governing of the world that is better adapted to the purpose than that which God has framed?”<sup>33</sup> Obviously not. White expanded the idea that “God has a constitution and laws to govern those whom he has created” and clearly indicated that the laws of the land are below the laws of God.<sup>34</sup>

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31. E. G. White, *Great Controversy*, 294, 442; idem, *Testimonies*, 5:451.

32. E. G. White, *Great Controversy*, 295.

33. Ellen G. White, "Fear God and Keep His Commandment," *Signs of the Times*, November 14, 1895, 710-711.

34. Ellen G. White, "Obedience to the Law Necessary," *Review and Herald*, July 15, 1890, 433-434.

On the occasion of the oath-taking<sup>35</sup> debate in 1855, many argued that Adventists should not take oaths under any circumstances. White interjected the opposing argument that “if there is anyone on earth who can consistently testify under oath, it is the Christian.” Though she understood that “if it were not for law, this world would be in an awful condition,” she also saw Christians as bound to a higher standard. She stated that “when it is actually necessary, and they are called upon to testify in a lawful manner, it is no violation of God's word for His children to solemnly take God to witness that what they say is the truth, and nothing but the truth.”<sup>36</sup>

White made clear her ideas about the supremacy of the law of God when she commented on a circumstance of divorce in the church where “a woman may be legally divorced from her husband by the laws of the land and yet not divorced in the sight of God and according to the higher law.” In her perspective, the laws of the land established order and wisely upheld essential principles, but she claimed that there is a higher instance where those laws will not reach.<sup>37</sup>

### Summary

White saw true government as offering protection to the people while upholding their rights and freedom of conscience, and building the nation through observance of biblical principles. She saw legitimacy in the government's power of arbitration and

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35. The “oath taking” issue was an argument based on Matt 5:34, “Thou shalt not swear,” which some Adventists understood as a moral precept and which was extensively debated in the *Review and Herald*. See Merritt E. Cornell, “Chapter VII,” *Review and Herald*, May 29, 1855, 237; idem, “Sabbath Discussion,” *Review and Herald*, April 3, 1855, 205; Uriah Smith, “The Third Commandment,” *Review and Herald*, October 14, 1858, 164.

36. E. G. White, *Testimonies*, 1:202; idem, *Counsels for the Church*, 315.

37. E. G. White, *Manuscript Releases*, 17:156.

believed it was necessary to pass and enforce laws to secure peace and quietness. As a power instituted by God, government has the right to receive support, as mentioned by Jesus and practiced by the apostles. However, government's ability to suppress evil can be compromised by political interests during legislative formulation. Thus, legislators play a pivotal role in the controversy between good and evil.

Government deviation from biblical principles disrupts the principles of protection and prosperity, and places secular power in the hands of the church, which leads to laws of persecution. White suggested that those laws would destroy the wise work of the American founding fathers, who opposed religious legislation. She also affirmed the equality of religious opinions before the law, although she considered God's law to be supreme above all earthly laws and believed Christians should abide by it.

### **Responsibilities to Civil Power**

In this section I investigate how White suggested Adventists should comply with the valid requirements of government, and what she thought they should avoid in the political sphere. I explore some of White's propositions concerning duties and responsibilities such as military service and voting, in order to reach principles that make distinctions between the interests of the church and of the state.

#### **Issues about Complying with Government Standards**

The issue of compliance with government requirements is associated with the origins of the Seventh-day Adventist church. From 1855 on, debates ran in the pages of the *Review and Herald* over whether or not oath-taking was appropriate for Christians, despite government requirements. The general consensus was that conforming to government requirements might mean denying Christ and becoming Babylon. Ellen White challenged this early attitude of disobedience in the Sabbatarian-Adventist

movement with a different perspective on government requirements.<sup>38</sup>

In challenging the Adventist rebellion against oath-taking, White made propositions that would be further applied when the issue of conforming reached the educational institutions. In her 1864 compilation of testimonies, *Spiritual Gifts*, vol. 4b, she argued that mistakes were being made in regard to judicial disputes, but that they had little to do with biblical knowledge; rather, they were caused by the lack of a clear perspective on the nature of the dispute. Some Adventist believers were enticed into misleading opinions that contributed to a lack of “tact [and] wise management of worldly matters.” White worried that erroneous views about laws and requirements were placing early Adventists in unnecessary conflicts with government and at the same time giving an opportunity to Satan.<sup>39</sup>

White went as far as calling the indisposition to obey government requirements a profound misunderstanding. She pointed out that Sabbatarian Adventists were refusing to obey good laws that existed for their own benefit. From her comments, it is possible to conclude that White suggested Adventists should gather more knowledge among themselves about what was required of them. Her call went beyond biblical knowledge and pleaded for “qualifications” on “worldly matters,” consultation, and judgment among

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38. From 1853 to 1860, Adventists in Michigan had refused to comply with the requirements of oath-taking during legal procedures. In one instance J. P. Kellogg was fined \$25 for his refusal. This behavior was repeated by other early Adventists because they understood that taking any “oaths of whatever form” was contrary to the teachings of Jesus. James White had to challenge these ideas of radical separation in order to bring the organized structure to the church. The discussion can be traced in the following articles in the *Review and Herald*: Merritt E. Cornell, "Chapter VII," *Review and Herald*, May 29, 1855, 237; Roswell F. Cottrell, "Making Us a Name," *Review and Herald*, March 22, 1860, 140-141; John N. Loughborough, "Meetings in Parkville, Mich.," *Review and Herald*, May 29, 1860, 9; James White, "Making Us a Name," *Review and Herald*, March 29, 1860, 152.

39. E. G. White, *Spiritual Gifts*, 4b:43.

the brethren. The way she presented the topic indicated a need for someone with a clear understanding of legal issues and other impositions of government to share counsel among the brethren.<sup>40</sup>

A similar issue was raised during the debate regarding conforming to the laws governing medical practitioners.<sup>41</sup> White answered passionate arguments with a call for better understanding to “carefully consider” what government was requiring and to what extent it could be met. Rather than a direct affront against the work of God, she considered these laws to be a regulatory work with both good and bad aspects. The real issue E. G. White saw was finding ways to fulfill government requirements without sacrificing principles. In no instance did White consider church principles negotiable; instead, she concluded that the church was in position to secure the most talented teachers and bring its schools up to a required government standard. She called out for consideration of the government laws and within the framework of the great controversy “whenever we can comply with the law of the land without putting ourselves in a false position, we should do so.” The situation required caution and a “need to move understandingly, for the enemy would be pleased to hedge up our work so that our physicians would have only a limited influence.”<sup>42</sup>

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40. E. G. White, *Spiritual Gifts*, 4b:31-42; E. G. White, *Testimonies*, 1:201-202.

41. The Pacific Union Conference session in January 1910 sharply debated the idea of developing a medical college at Loma Linda, CA.

42. Ellen G. White, "A Statement Regarding the Training of Physicians," Ms 7, 1910, CAR; idem, *Counsels to Parents, Teachers, and Students Regarding Christian Education* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1913), 479; idem, *Medical Ministry: A Treatise on Medical Missionary Work in the Gospel* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1932), 57-58, 84-85.

## Contribution to the Maintenance of Peace and Order

Ellen White's acknowledgment of civil government's responsibility for protection and prosperity had implications for the church-state relationship. Her comments about Jesus' answer in Matt 22:15-17 established some clear principles. White argued that in Jesus' words, "Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's; and to God the things that are God's," a duty to government was explicit. She reasoned that Jesus said those words because the Jews, including Jesus and His disciples, "were [all] living under the protection of the Roman power." As such, they also had a duty to God.<sup>43</sup>

Like the disciples, White argued, Adventists should render to the power of government "the support it claimed," as long as it did not conflict with a moral law. In other words, White projected a duty to civil government that was clearly confirmed in Jesus' words. She further advised that to be "peaceably subject to the laws of the land" is a Christian obligation, and though not unconditional, it should be observed where morally possible.<sup>44</sup>

## Peaceful Conscientious Subjection

White proposed a conscientious subjection to the draft law: *neither* rebellion nor *voluntary enlistment*, but an absolute allegiance to God in *peaceful compliance* with government laws and authority.<sup>45</sup> She stated that when the law does not contradict a

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43. E. G. White, *Desire of Ages*, 602.

44. *Ibid.*, 601-603.

45. Ellen G. White, *The Spirit of Prophecy*, 3:43. Peaceful conscientious subjection is a term that better describes White's proposition for Adventists. The terms "conscientious objector" and "conscientious cooperator" were coined outside of Ellen White's frame of thought, and were not intended to systematize White's views of Adventists' response to the draft. Though both terms are often used to define Adventist positions in their struggles in time of war, they are not the best description of White's views. "Conscientious objector" was coined by an amendment of the conscription law of

moral statute of God, it should be obeyed, but that Christians should conscientiously refuse to obey laws that defy the law of God. Secular laws should be conscientiously obeyed, such as direct ordinances from the civil government demanding resources or manpower to uphold order and maintain society, such as fundraising for a national cause.<sup>46</sup> White said that it would not please God “for us to obstinately refuse to obey the law of our country when this law is not against our religious faith.”<sup>47</sup>

To place White’s ideas in an international context, when she was in Basel, Switzerland, in 1886, she commented positively about three Adventist young men leaving their work for the church to serve a mandatory term in the military. She expressed admiration for their character and their disposition to fulfill their duty. “We were glad to see that these men with their regimentals had tokens of honor for faithfulness in their work. They were trustworthy young men.”<sup>48</sup>

Peaceable subjection is an important highlight that White placed on Jesus’

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March 3, 1863, and it does not even appear in White’s published material; “conscientious cooperator” came in the late 1930s after White’s death, when the church started to prepare youth for military service. As such, although one can use those terms to describe the Adventist position during a draft, they are not a result of Ellen White’s perspective nor are they intended to describe her opinions. Richard W. Schwarz and Floyd Greenleaf, *Light Bearers: A History of the Seventh-day Adventist Church*, rev. ed. (Nampa, ID: Pacific Press, 2000), 97, 383.

46. James White was actively engaged in the mass meetings of Battle Creek citizens in order to raise the necessary resources required by the government during the Civil War. The many inquiries “as to whether it was right to contribute to raise local bounties for the purpose of encouraging enlistments,” the answer given was “We would say we think it is, and have done so in Battle Creek.” E. S. Walker, “[Notice],” *Review and Herald*, August 30, 1864, 112.

47. Ellen G. White to Sister Steward, August 19, 1862 (Lt 47, 1862), CAR.

48. Ellen G. White, “Required Drill,” Ms 33, 1886, CAR, in Ellen G. White, *Selected Messages*, 2:335.



comments about the duties to government and to God. She argued that in order to correctly accommodate both powers, one “should at all times render obedience to God, answering his claims, yet peaceably subject to the laws of the land.” The words “peaceably subject” were relevant to characterize what she saw as the commanded behavior and offer further indications of how Ellen White understood that things needed to be done.<sup>49</sup>

While she indicated that demands of government related to the second table of the law should be observed by Christians, she also showed how Christians should react appropriately to those demands. She considered a sensitive reaction to the circumstances of the country to be a practical demonstration of the faith held by the group. Instead of a rebellious reaction or a spirit of confrontation, White recommended a peaceful subjection that informed civil authorities of the extent of Adventist subjection and nonnegotiable loyalty.<sup>50</sup>

Ellen White’s writings about the laws of the land do not seem to have been partial or biased toward either confrontation or cooperation. Rather, her ideas were weighted toward subjection to government even when it demanded military power to protect the country and maintain order. Very likely she considered the military draft laws during the Civil War as demands for maintenance of peace and order in her day and believed them to be “things that are Caesar’s,” and therefore of secular nature. She argued that open objection to an secular law could misrepresent Christianity. Unnecessary opposition to government would not only be “madness,” but also turn Christians into declared enemies of the state. Even though White did not challenge the need of the state to maintain the

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49. E. G. White, *The Spirit of Prophecy*, 3:43.

50. E. G. White, *Testimonies*, 1:356-357.

Union, she was not “fully settled” on the issue of a Christian carrying a gun.<sup>51</sup>

It is clear that White did not favor civil disobedience in case of a draft; however she did not comment specifically on proper activities for Adventists after the draft. At the end of her life during the World War I, White was again concerned with the news that some Adventists would prefer to be shot than to be drafted into the military force. Regarding general resistance to the draft, she said, “I do not think they ought to do that,” but rather, “they ought to stand to their duty as long as time lasts,” indicating that Adventists should indeed be subject to the laws of the land.<sup>52</sup> However, White did not suggest unconditional obedience to government in the activities of military service following the draft. In summarizing White’s position concerning military service, Arthur White suggested that “it is clear that she had no special light that would pinpoint how drafted Seventh-day Adventists should relate to the demands of military service.”<sup>53</sup>

White’s comments on situations involving government laws, God’s precepts, and Adventist attitudes are often related to the three Hebrews story of Dan 3. Pointing to “the principle of the three Hebrews,” White proposed that God’s people should not give up their loyalty to God when compelled to surrender their conscience. However, she also pointed out that “[Adventists] are to make no railing accusation against the nations, for

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51. In E. G. White to Sister Steward, August 19, 1862 (Lt 7, 1862), CAR, Ellen White affirmed to Sister Steward that James White’s comments in “The Nation” were “consistent” and “expresse[d] my mind.” James White considered it “madness” to resist the laws, and Ellen White considered it a “cheap” attitude. They both agreed that defiant behavior would misrepresent Adventism, cause unnecessary loss, and please Satan. See James White, “The Nation,” *Review and Herald*, August 12, 1862, 84.

52. William C. White to Guy Dail, May 26, 1915, in Arthur L. White, *Ellen G. White*, 6 vols. (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1981-1986), 6:427. Clarence C. Crisler to William C. White, November 7, 1914, in A. L. White, *Ellen G. White*, 6:411.

53. A. L. White, *Ellen G. White*, 6:27.

this would close our way so that we could not set the light before the people.”<sup>54</sup>

There is a clear distinction between what White considered to be a legitimate demand of government and excitement for a government military cause. White agreed with other early Adventists that peaceful conscientious subjection to government laws does not require voluntary enlistment in military forces. Such volunteering for armed conflicts would place Adventists in a position of primary allegiance to government—a position that could force them to break the precepts of God.<sup>55</sup>

### Politics and the Process of Selecting Government Leaders

Ellen White’s writings about politics are within a context where participation in the process of selecting people or parties for governing positions was encouraged, but not mandatory. The principles explored in this section will work within this context, keeping also in mind that there are other countries with an Adventist presence where the process varies from mandatory participation to no public participation.

Ellen White’s most significant documents on the subject of political involvement are a fifteen-page letter dated February 20, 1898, addressed to the brethren in Battle Creek and a fourteen-page letter dated June 16, 1899, addressed to the teachers and managers of the Adventist schools. In those letters, White expressed specific concerns about different types of political engagement, such as party affiliation, campaigning, and voting. There were also other occasions when White expressed her thoughts about voting

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54. E. G. White, *Manuscript Releases*, 13:71-72.

55. Merritt E. Cornell, "Extremes," *Review and Herald*, October 21, 1862, 163; Uriah Smith, "Notice," *Review and Herald*, March 7, 1865, 112; William P. Squires, "From Bro. Squires," *Review and Herald*, December 30, 1862, 39; E. G. White to Sister Steward, August 19, 1862 (Lt 7, 1862), CAR; James White, "The Nation," *Review and Herald*, August 12, 1862, 84.

and politics that shed more light on her concerns.

Her opinions about voting can be divided mostly into two categories: voting for a cause and voting for a person. When White talked about voting for political causes such as the prohibition of alcohol or the coinage issue,<sup>56</sup> she addressed the situation by judging whether the cause placed on the ballot was either concerned with the Adventist faith or purely secular. When dealing with a secular question, she saw expressing opinions in the church environment as dangerous, even though she recognized that individuals in the church might have their private preferences. When dealing with questions concerning Adventist faith, she called for wise involvement. In both cases, moral and secular, she called for consideration of “individual responsibilities.”<sup>57</sup>

#### The Secular Cause

When secular debates entered the church, White adamantly reminded believers that the church as a body is to grow toward spiritual knowledge and each member shares responsibility for this growth. Thus, a debate within the church on a purely secular issue such as coinage was not in line with the church’s mission, and moreover, it could bring in Satan’s influence over people’s passion. Under those circumstances, White urged the

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56. In 1792 Congress adopted a bimetallic coinage where both silver and gold were to be minted at a rate of 15 units of silver to 1 unit of gold per coin. In 1834 Congress adopted a ratio of 16 to 1. During the Civil War, the government was forced to finance the war by issuing its own money and gold and silver were taken out of circulation. In 1873 there was a great agitation for the restoration of silver coinage that evolved politics, businessmen, and many different segments of society. Betty G. Fishman and Leo Fishman, *The American Economy* (Princeton: Van Nostrand, 1962), 327-337; Raymond P. Kent, "Money Standards in the United States," in *Money and Banking* (New York: Holt, 1972).

57. E. G. White, *Testimonies*, 3:14.

brethren to keep silent and spare the church from secular debates.<sup>58</sup>

White's call for silence was based on the influences that words penned or voiced would have on others. She argued that if thoughts were exposed, it would trigger a "train of circumstances" that would lead to negative results. In the face of such uncertainty, she beseeched the brethren to influence each other toward the work of God, in which there is promise and certainty.

The call for separation made by White was based on the dissimilarities of interest between common (secular) causes and the mission of the church. Any Adventist interest in a purely secular cause would merge the sacred with the common. White did not explicitly condemn individual involvement in secular causes, but rather focused on the priority and separation of the church. She emphasized that Christians working for a secular cause would inevitably become associated with unbelievers in circumstances that offered many temptations. This could lead them away from the call to separation and spiritual growth of the church and into a territory more susceptible to the traps of Satan.

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### Rallying for a Moral Cause

White took a different approach to voting for moral causes, such as temperance, that directly impacted the church's mission and its spiritual concerns. In this case, she recognized the social and political power of the church to bring "temperance and virtue" to society. White argued that Christians who understand the issues have a responsibility to promote these values by voting and influencing society. However, this did not mean

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58. E. G. White, *Testimonies to Ministers and Gospel Workers*, 337.

59. E. G. White, *Testimonies to Ministers and Gospel Workers*, 332.

that White considered Adventists wise enough “to become involved in political questions” that did not involve moral and spiritual issues. Instead, it meant that where moral and spiritual values were at stake, Adventists were expected to exert their influence “by precept and example—by voice and pen and vote.”<sup>60</sup>

During the campaign for the prohibition law, Ellen White saw that common ground could be reached between Adventists and other activists dealing with political issues of a moral and spiritual nature. Her propositions on this subject differed from her thoughts about campaigning for purely secular issues: She suggested calling out the “friends of the temperance cause to rally to the conflict” in which Adventists were also engaged.<sup>61</sup>

#### Rallying for a Person

White perceived two different aspects when voting for a person. On one hand, she discouraged voting for people for the sake of political causes, even when they had some common ideas with the church. She reasoned that it is not safe to join those who afterwards “will use their influence to repress religious liberty.” On the other hand, White recommended voting to prevent the election to office of men under Satan’s control. She also realized that Adventists did not want to see men of intemperance placed in positions of power. It is better to vote and prevent this, than not to vote and allow the misuse of

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60. Ellen G. White, "Voting Against the License Law," *Review and Herald*, October 15, 1914, 4; idem, *Temperance*, 253. “Sister White spoke upon the subject, and we brought all the pressure we could bear upon the people, to be sure that they voted on the prohibition side of the question. Now we are seeing a great movement for temperance in all the States.” "Reading Course for Sabbath School Teachers," *General Conference Bulletin*, May 24, 1909, 131.

61. E. G. White, "Temperance and the License Law," *Review and Herald*, November 8, 1881, 289-290.

power against the people.<sup>62</sup>

In her diary, White affirmed that men of intemperance holding office hoped for the endurance of the Adventist abstention from voting. They likely feared for their careers and preferred that Adventists stay away from the ballots. White believed Satan exerted control over men of intemperance, and she sincerely wished that Adventists would consider voting to avoid the election of what she saw as evil influences in government: “May Satan be disappointed, is my prayer.”<sup>63</sup>

### Political Parties

Involvement with political parties was strongly discouraged by Ellen White. She saw no coherence between the ultimate interests of political parties and the interests that Adventists should be working toward. White understood that Adventists could not join a political party and remain true to the church as well. She argued that if a true “commandment-keeper” is linked to a political party, “there is fraud on both sides.”<sup>64</sup>

Political party association becomes even more aggravating in the sphere of church leadership. Ellen White was adamantly against workers considering such association. “It is a mistake for you to link your interests with any political party, to cast your vote with them or for them. Those who stand as educators, as ministers, as laborers together with

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62. Ellen G. White, diary entry, March 6, 1859, Ellen G. White Estate, Washington, DC; idem, *Fundamentals of Christian Education*, 475.

63. Ellen G. White, diary entry, March 6, 1859, Ellen G. White Estate, Washington, DC; idem, "Necessity of Temperance," *Signs of the Times*, July 8, 1880, 301.

64. "Political Controversy," *General Conference Daily Bulletin*, February 17, 1897, 59.

God in any line, have no battles to fight in the political world.”<sup>65</sup> Her intolerance was even greater toward those in the educational fields; she recommended that those workers with distinct “zeal in politics, should be relieved of their work and responsibilities without delay; for the Lord will not co-operate with them.” White found grounds for moral disapproval in her reasoning on the issue of political party involvement.<sup>66</sup>

### Occupations in the Political Sphere

It is clear at this point that Ellen White did not approve of Seventh-day Adventist involvement in partisan political causes; however, she did not deny the possibility of Adventists working in areas that involved politics. “Have you thoughts that you dare not express, that you may one day stand upon the summit of intellectual greatness; that you may sit in deliberative and legislative councils, and help to enact laws for the nation? There is nothing wrong in these aspirations.”<sup>67</sup>

Though the two ideas may seem to contradict each other, there is an interesting dynamic to be applied when reconciling them. When Ellen White spoke of seeking a political career or “engaging in temporal pursuits,” she did not suggest that a person would do it with a passion that could compromise the moral standards of religion. Rather, she proposed the opposite: that the moral standards of religion be taken into one’s political career. While presenting the subject to young people, she did not even consider the idea of negotiating religious principles to achieve success; she proposed that “you should carry religion with you” in all activities, and “whatever the business” you may

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65. E. G. White, *Fundamentals of Christian Education*, 475.

66. E. G. White, *Fundamentals of Christian Education*, 447.

67. *Ibid.*, 83.



“engage in, never entertain the idea that you cannot make a success of it without sacrificing principle.”<sup>68</sup>

Uncompromised religious principle is the key to reconcile the Adventist faith with a career in the political arena. White affirmed that the upholding of this practice is the only safe way to secure salvation and a successful career. She detailed that religion could go uncompromised into the political arena through sound application of its principles. She believed that religious principles would determine how high one could safely go and be the central reference that would make the difference in one’s attitude and perception of the world.<sup>69</sup>

Departure from “true religion” is the greatest danger to Adventists who endeavor to make their career in the political field. White reinforced the idea that if any specific work needed to be done by “commandment-keeping people” in regard to politics, it should be done from a standpoint of uncompromised religious principle. She clearly warned that entering the political sphere otherwise would place one’s salvation at risk. She warned that “we have no more strength and grace given us than we can wisely appropriate. If God has a work for any of His commandment-keeping people to do in regard to politics, reach the position and do the work with your arm linked in the arm of Christ. The salvation of your souls should be your greatest study.” Although losing faith can be a serious challenge in any career, White indicated a magnified danger in the political field. According to White, there is an attraction in politics that appeals to men’s weaknesses and is exploited by Satan. Even if one enters into politics and does great

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68. E. G. White, *Fundamentals of Christian Education*, 82-83. Also in *idem*, "Importance of Education," *Review and Herald*, August 19, 1884, 529-530.

69. E. G. White, *Fundamentals of Christian Education*, 83-84.

things for the world, if the foundation is not set right, “all will be consumed by the fires of the last day.”<sup>70</sup>

The reconciliation of Adventism and a career in politics causes a shift on the plans one is pursuing. On one hand, when White said that “in no case are we to link ourselves with [politicians] in their plans or work,” she was very clear that those plans and works were not from an Adventist perspective, but from the political realm. On the other hand, when she said that “as disciples of Christ, you are not debarred from engaging in temporal pursuits; but you should carry your religion with you,” she indicated that the Adventist believers should engage the political realm with the plans and works based on religious principles.<sup>71</sup>

In White’s understanding the principles carried by the church should be reflected to the world, and not the other way around. She proposed that “from the beginning it has been God’s plan that through His church shall be reflected to the world His fullness and His sufficiency.” She used a metaphor of the church composed of living stones that are in different form and shapes. “Some are large, some are small; but each has its own place to fill. And the value of each stone is determined by the light that it reflects [to the world].” Furthermore, White warned that “no external arrangements in conformity with the world, to secure its friendship, can be made without positive danger of transgressing God’s holy precepts.”<sup>72</sup>

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70. Ellen G. White to Brethren, February 20, 1898 (Lt 4, 1898), CAR.

71. E. G. White, *Fundamentals of Christian Education*, 82-83, 482.

72. E. G. White, *Acts of the Apostles*, 9; idem, *Testimonies*, 8:173; Ellen G. White to S. N. Haskell and wife, August 13, 1900 (Lt 121, 1900), CAR.

## Summary

Sabbatarian Adventism began with an aversion to government requirements for its institutions. This disposition led to attitudes of resistance to regulation, based on a lack of wise management, understanding of requirements, and qualifications. White advised Adventists to seek counsel and obey the laws without compromising their principles. Recognizing a legitimate duty to government, she proposed a peaceful conscientious submission to government, discouraging unnecessary conflict that could mark Adventists as rebels.

White considered the church a place for moral/spiritual enrichment and rejected involvement of the church as an institution or corporate body in secular political issues; however, she encouraged wise participation when the issue debated was of a moral nature. Party and candidate support, as such, was heavily discouraged, but she reminded Adventists to quietly exert their political power to avoid electing “men of intemperance” to political office. White warned that partisan politics was an attractive and dangerous field that Adventists should not enter unless they brought nonnegotiable religious principles with them.

### **Adventists and Established Authorities**

In this section, I take a closer look at how White worked to transform the antipathy of early Adventists toward government requirements and how she based her notion of liberty on political issues. From those findings, I proceed to define what White considered to be appropriate relationships with civil authorities and when she believed they should be disobeyed.

### Shaping Adventists' Perceptions

The negative perception of organized religion and government embraced by the

Restoration movement, explored in chapter 1, led early Sabbatarian Adventists to embrace attitudes of resistance toward government. Ellen White contributed to shaping the Adventist attitude toward government in two ways: further eschatological understanding and balanced missiological purpose.

White's eschatological position further emphasized the drive for separation of church and state among Adventists. She affirmed that "when Protestant churches shall unite with the secular power to sustain a false religion, for opposing which their ancestors endured the fiercest persecution, then will the papal sabbath be enforced by the combined authority of church and state. There will be a national apostasy, which will end only in national ruin."<sup>73</sup> In the same topic she also wrote, "An apostate church will unite with the powers of earth and hell to place upon the forehead or in the hand, the mark of the beast."<sup>74</sup> Considering the implications around the world, she remarked that "as America, the land of religious liberty, shall unite with the papacy in forcing the conscience and compelling men to honor the false sabbath, the people of every country on the globe will be led to follow her example."<sup>75</sup> In her writings on this situation, White often added lines that evoked a sense of urgency and gravity, such as "with rapid steps we are approaching this period"<sup>76</sup> or "this national apostasy will speedily be followed by national ruin."<sup>77</sup>

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73. Ellen G. White, "The Seal of God," Ms 51, 1899, 7, CAR; quoted in idem, *Evangelism*, 234-235.

74. Ellen G. White, "Imperative Necessity of Searching for Truth," *Review and Herald*, November 8, 1892, 690-691.

75. E. G. White, *Testimonies*, 6:18.

76. Ellen G. White, "The Seal of God," *Signs of the Times*, November 8, 1899, 722-723.

77. E. G. White, *Evangelism*, 235. This same idea was also expressed by other early Adventist leaders such as J. N. Andrews. J. N. Andrews, *The Three Messages of*

This eschatological understanding has been part of Adventist teaching since as early as 1855. The idea that a union of church and state would culminate with the enforcement of the mark of the beast of Rev 13, which had the horns symbolizing republicanism and Protestantism, gained evidence over the years along with other Adventist doctrines. This pivotal understanding of Rev 13 brought forth an increasing interest among the Adventist brethren, and the intensified significance often required White to present warnings to keep events and interpretations in perspective.<sup>78</sup>

At the same time that Ellen White warned about the eschatological aspect of church-state separation, she also pleaded with the brethren for wisdom and discernment. She advised against Adventists being too “anxious” for radical recommendations from the church administration on situations involving Sabbath persecution. She cautioned that this subject should be handled with as “little notoriety given as possible” because “there are many things that require the wisest and most careful counsel.”<sup>79</sup>

White also noted that dealing with the national events associated with the eschatological understanding of Rev 13 was not suitable for all Adventists. Emphasizing the need for wisdom, she argued that in the church “some minds are so constituted that they can not treat these questions wisely.”<sup>80</sup>

White’s contribution to shaping the Adventist attitude toward government brought refinement to the church’s understanding of its mission. White argued for caution and

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*Revelation XIV, 6-12; Particularly the Third Angel's Message, and Two-Horned Beast* (Battle Creek, MI: SDA, 1864), 45.

78. J. N. Andrews, *The Three Angels of Revelation XIV, 6-12* (Rochester, NY: Advent Library Office, 1855), 95.

79. Ellen G. White, "Comments Regarding Matters at GC," Ms 6, 1889, CAR.

80. Ibid.

wisdom to be exercised in the church, but she did not advise more reserved conduct in the preaching of the Adventist message. She stated that “evangelists should be finding their way into all the places where the minds of men are agitated over the question of Sunday legislation and of the teaching of religion in the public schools.” White looked at those events beyond eschatological fulfillment and considered them as “providential opportunities to present the truth.”<sup>81</sup>

White’s plea for discretion was far from suggesting restraint in the preaching of the Adventist message. Though there was resistance among Adventists toward the state, White maintained the perspective that Adventists should be intentionally present in the nation’s capital. She argued that “those who act a prominent part in framing laws for the nation” in Washington, DC, should understand more about the “present truth” preached by Adventists. White made it a priority for the Seventh-day Adventist church to be established in the national capital in order to gain visibility and representation.<sup>82</sup>

For the entrance of the Adventist message in Washington, DC, White desired nothing but to put the best foot forward. It is clear that she had a greater understanding of the meaning of an Adventist presence in the nation’s capital. This was a great opportunity to show the Adventist face in the federal government’s backyard, but at the same time, it carried a risk of misrepresenting the views of Adventists. This concern is evident in

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81. Ellen G. White, "The Work for This Time," *Review and Herald*, April 20, 1905, 8-9.

82. White expressed an extreme sense of urgency for the establishment of the Seventh-day Adventist church in the District of Columbia. She used phrases like “our first interest just now,” “above all other places,” “we shall not be clear unless we at once do something,” “if there is any place in the world.” Ellen G. White to Brethren in America, July 5, 1903 (Lt 133, 1903), CAR; idem, "Our Work at the Nation's Capital," *Review and Herald*, July 28, 1903, 7-8; idem, "The Work in Washington," *Review and Herald*, July 14, 1904, 8-9; idem, *The Publishing Ministry as Set Forth in the Writings of Ellen G. White* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1983), 180.

White's warnings:

Be cautious as to whom you employ in the [evangelistic] work there [in Washington, DC]. Everything must be kept up to the Bible standard. In our work we are not to go onto a hilltop to shine. We are not told that we must make a special, wonderful display. The truth must be proclaimed in the highways and the byways, and thus work is to be done by sensible, rational methods.<sup>83</sup>

In response to White's concern, the Adventist work went strongly forward in DC with a headquarters, a printing house, a hospital, schools, and churches. This move was more than an evangelistic campaign; it signified an approach (physical and ideological) of the Adventist church to the state. In this venture, the church carefully pressed its mission, despite the eschatological understanding. Due to White's influence, the mission of the church did not lose balance in the face of its eschatological understanding.

The *Sentinel of Christian Liberty* also joined the Adventist influx to Washington, DC, and shortly thereafter became the celebrated *Liberty Magazine*, the oldest currently operating church-state journal in the United States.<sup>84</sup> When White defined the job of the *Sentinel* as a "watchman on the walls of Zion," she advised that the truth must be told without vacillation. "We are not to cringe and beg pardon of the world for telling them the truth: we should scorn concealment." White argued that Adventists should express their beliefs without "the least appearance of wavering," and they should not be hidden, exaggerated, or accommodated to the circumstances. She considered that "the world has a right to know what to expect of [Adventists]." As such, any misrepresentation would

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83. Ellen G. White, "An Onward Work," *Review and Herald*, September 22, 1904, 7; idem, "The Work in Washington, DC," *Review and Herald*, August 15, 1907, 21-22; idem, *Evangelism*, 396.

84. *Liberty* was first published in 1886 as *American Sentinel* and later *Sentinel of Christian Liberty* and finally becoming *Liberty* in 1906. This publication is an effort of the Adventist church to expose the concerns of religious liberty to the American public.

cause the world to “look upon [Adventists] as dishonest, as hiding [their] real sentiments, and principles out of policy.” White’s arguments placed the Adventist eschatology and mission in balance so that the church might have a voice proclaiming its beliefs to the federal government.<sup>85</sup>

### The Question of Liberty

There is a striking similarity between the concepts of liberty held by Ellen White and the pioneer restorationist Elias Smith. While White suggested that “perfect liberty is found in Christ,” Elias Smith proposed “that [Christ’s] rule is the perfect law of Liberty.” However, they took the same principle in different directions: Smith focused on the authority of Christ and its supremacy above all doctrines and religious teachings, while White emphasized that Christ the savior expressed God’s character, which was also transcribed in His law, and therefore liberty in Christ is obedience to the law.<sup>86</sup>

White believed that equality of civil rights among Christians was based on their relationship with God rather than being merely a creation of the civil laws. She argued that Jesus made clear that “all men are brothers, sons of one Father, and therefore equal before the [civil] law,—equal in civil rights.” To her, God was the source of civil power, given to the state and not given to the church. She believed that the state had the right to

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85. Ellen G. White, "The True Witness Speaks through John," Ms 16, 1890, CAR; idem, *Manuscript Releases*, 11:166.

86. Elias Smith, *Life, Conversion, Preaching, Travels, and Sufferings of Elias Smith* (Portsmouth, NH: Beck and Foster, 1816), 365; E. G. White, "Religious Liberty," *Watchman*, May 1, 1906, 237-238. Ellen White used the distinct term “the perfect law of liberty” which was stressed, emphasized, and frequently used by Elias Smith. Ellen White expanded and unpacked the term according to her understanding, which was similar to Smith’s. However, the application of the term took a completely different direction in the work of Smith and White. White supported an organized structure that would perform according to the will of God; Smith believed that an organized structure would deny the will of God.



use the sword to enforce its laws, but based on Jesus' words in John 18:36, she concluded that Jesus denied "the power of the sword" to the church. This included refraining from asking "the state for laws enforcing religious beliefs and observances." White fully agreed with Paul's statement in 2 Cor 10:4 that the church had no temporal warfare to fight.<sup>87</sup>

The liberty suggested by White upheld the laws and sword of the state to safeguard "every man's" freedom of conscience and "the right to worship God according to his own convictions." She proposed that God approved of government actions taken "to guard the rights of every individual, permitting no oppression to come upon any one because of religious belief."<sup>88</sup>

Upholding religious rights based on Jesus' teaching does not exempt an individual from the laws of government. White stated that Jesus instructed His disciples "to submit to the decisions of the court," and likewise, she indicated that believers should have an attitude of submission consistent with conscience. However, this submission to the laws is done not for the sake of the government or exclusively for the individual's benefit, but for the Lord's sake. Thus, the religious liberty granted by God to every person naturally bears fruit in obedience, and their works testify of freedom in Christ. As such, they will use their God-given liberty, not "for a cloak of maliciousness, but as the servants of God."<sup>89</sup>

White proposed that acting on issues of religious liberty is a result of

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87. E. G. White, "Religious Liberty," *Watchman*, May 1, 1906, 237-238.

88. Ellen G. White, "'We Ought to Obey God Rather Than Men,'" *Signs of the Times*, May 13, 1897, 291-292.

89. E. G. White, *Acts of the Apostles*, 522.

understanding the truth of that principle. She believed that this truth and understanding had been passed on throughout history, from the days of the disciples through the Reformation to the present day. She cited Peter and John's inquisition at the Sanhedrin, which is reported in Acts 4:13-19. White suggested that the principle established in Acts 4:19 of obeying God rather than man was repeated in 1529 at the Diet of Spires.<sup>90</sup> She further stated that in these last days, the principle of religious liberty and knowledge of truth has been "committed [to] our hands."<sup>91</sup>

In order to refine White's idea of inheritance of the cause of religious liberty, it is important to note that she referred to principles and not passionate actions. When White built the case for religious liberty, she based it on "great wisdom and discretion" in peaceful conscientious subjection. She argued the importance of "the question of religious liberty" being free from radical and passionate actions that would lead to unnecessary persecution: The "Brethren should be cautioned to make moves that will not stir up and provoke the powers that be." She also warned that "there is danger that by our own course of action we shall bring upon ourselves a crisis before we are prepared for it."<sup>92</sup>

The mistakes in early Adventists' pursuit of religious liberty were not always perceived as intentional; White implied that sometimes mistakes were made when the

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90. The Diet of Spires met in 1526 to consider pressures from Pope Clement VII and Ferdinand of Habsburg to enforce the Diet of Worms to which German princes were not inclined to comply. It became decided that each state should conduct its religious affairs "as it is hoped to answer to God and to the emperor." Mitchell B. Garrett, *European History, 1500-1815* (New York: American Book, 1940), 130.

91. The antecedent of "our hands" is not explicit, but very likely she meant the Seventh-day Adventists. E. G. White, *Acts of the Apostles*, 67-69.

92. E. G. White, *Testimonies to Ministers and Gospel Workers*, 219.

best was intended. Though White emphasized that religious liberty needed to be “clearly comprehended,” she did not encourage injudicious discussion of religious liberty issues with unbelievers, but rather a careful approach. She argued that such circumstances presented a “danger of reaping results” that were not anticipated. White pointed out that

in connecting with unbelieving students in discussion of religious liberty, there is danger of reaping results which you do not anticipate. Instead of creating an issue and bringing about division of feeling, unite with the students in their meetings in a judicious manner, not striving for the mastery but watching for an opportunity to flash bright rays of light before them. In advocating religious liberty sentiments you might be pressed in argument to take so decided a stand that you would build a wall between yourself and those whom you sought to enlighten, and failing to draw them toward the truth, you would fail to do them good.<sup>93</sup>

Even telling the truth and advocating the right cause does not ensure that the results will be acceptable before God. White referred to the episode of Uzzah touching the Ark of the Covenant, reported in 1 Chr 13:10-11, to indicate that well-intentioned Adventist leaders could not act outside the requirements of God and expect a blessing. She pointed out that leaders cannot be disconnected from Jesus and the word of God and yet make religious liberty claims.<sup>94</sup>

#### Dealing with Civil Authorities

The Adventist tendency toward radical separation of church and state based on the church’s eschatological views caused prejudice toward government. White fought this behavior, arguing that such behavior “against our rulers and laws” was not appropriate. She recognized that government is imperfect and that some “laws are good, others are bad,” but did not consider this an acceptable argument to deny government’s relevance. She remarked that the world situation could be a lot worse without the order that

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93. E. G. White, *Manuscript Releases*, 4:48.

94. *Ibid.*, 18:223.

government provided.<sup>95</sup>

The radical separation of church and state was fueled by criticism and arguments that led Adventists to antagonize government. White became concerned about attitudes that appeared to advocate treason, rebellion, and defiance among Adventists. She classified such attitudes as a mistake and remarked that “it is not wise to find fault continually with what is done by the rulers of government. It is not our work to attack individuals or institutions.”<sup>96</sup>

White used the behavior of Peter and John in Acts 4:13-19 to delineate the proper principles and attitudes for dealing with authorities. She suggested a principle that implied loyalty to God without requiring defiant or challenging behavior toward authority. White recognized “human government as an ordinance of divine appointment” and warned that Adventists “are not required to defy authorities.” Rebellion against government should not be expressed by words “spoken or written,” for this is inconsistent with the truths committed to the Adventists. Furthermore, it misrepresents the Adventist work and causes unnecessary problems for the church and the work being done.<sup>97</sup>

Unfortunately, not everything could be remedied. Many “unguarded” arguments were started by Adventists against civil authorities. White believed such incidents would aggravate future events; she predicted that in the future, Adventists would be called to stand for the truth and contradict civil authorities, and that the rebellious material already

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95. E. G. White, *Testimonies*, 1:201-203. For sharp comments against politicians and lawmakers see for example, Uriah Smith, "The Age of Theft," *Review and Herald*, June 19, 1860, 35.

96. Ellen G. White, "Paul Enters Upon His Ministry," *Review and Herald*, March 30, 1911, 3-4; idem, *Testimonies*, 6:394.

97. E. G. White, *Acts of the Apostles*, 69.

produced would be used to condemn the “whole body of Adventists.”<sup>98</sup>

For the present, White saw that the greatest danger of this attitude toward government was that it hindered the church’s mission. She reminded others that the Adventist mission “is not to make raid on the Government but to prepare a people to stand in the great day of the Lord.” She opposed those who were “always ready” to fight the government and argued that any work developed without peace and love represented “an irretrievable loss” to the church.<sup>99</sup>

The major point that White tried to convey to Seventh-day Adventists was the importance of not being marked as “lawless and disobedient.” She pleaded for Adventist witnesses to adopt an attitude of kindness and courtesy even when they had to speak about their understanding of civil government. She asked for more effort toward a consistent Christianity and a work that would reflect the light given “without words that will irritate or provoke.”<sup>100</sup>

### Civil Disobedience

There are many acts that can be legally characterized as civil disobedience, including opposition, violent actions, protest, and physical attacks; however, in broad terms, civil disobedience can be defined as rebellion against a civil norm or law.<sup>101</sup> I will use this general perspective to analyze White’s viewpoints that challenged norms

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98. E. G. White, *Testimonies*, 6:394-5.

99. Ellen G. White, "The Need of Aggressive Effort," Ms 117a, 1901, CAR. Portions were also published in *idem*, *Evangelism*, 173.

100. E. G. White, *Evangelism*, 173.

101. Orestes Augustus Brownson, *The American Republic: Its Constitution, Tendencies, and Destiny*, new ed. (Clifton, NJ: A. M. Kelley, 1972), 419-421; Elliot M. Zashin, *Civil Disobedience and Democracy* (New York: Free Press, 1972), 114.

considered binding in her days.

Norms are often based on social behavior, to which White did not give priority. Her primary objective was conformity to the word of God, not to human practices and customs. Obviously, there is the premise that God's teachings will fulfill all social norms:

[Adventists] are not to inquire, what is the practice of men? or, what is the custom of the world? We are not to ask, how shall I act in order to have the approval of men? or, What will the world tolerate? The question of intense interest to every soul is, What hath God said? We are to read His Word and obey it, not swerving one jot or tittle from its requirements, but acting irrespective of human traditions and jurisdiction.

In White's view, the requirements of the "Supreme Law of God" are above everything.<sup>102</sup>

White often expressed her convictions on the supremacy of God's laws. She said that "we ought to be obedient to all the laws of our country, except when those laws come in collision with the law of God, and then we must obey God, irrespective of everything else."<sup>103</sup> It is very likely that when White said "law of God," she was referring to the Decalogue. On another occasion, she was even more specific, affirming, "I saw that it is our duty in every case to obey the laws of our land, unless they conflict with the higher law which God spoke with an audible voice from Sinai, and afterward engraved on stone with His own finger." Thus it becomes clear that White treasured the words of the Decalogue above all binding rules of the land.<sup>104</sup>

White further developed the subject by presenting a situation of conflict between

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102. Ellen G. White, "Rule in the Fear of God," *Review and Herald*, October 1, 1895, 625-626.

103. Ellen G. White, "I Will Keep Thee from the Hour of Temptation," *Review and Herald*, April 22, 1890, 241-242.

104. E. G. White, *Testimonies*, 1:361.

God's law and men's laws. She suggested that David's ascension as king gave him no power to issue commands contrary to God's law. In fact, "it became sin to obey" David when his commands went against God's law.<sup>105</sup> The major issue for White in this conflict was loyalty to God and His laws; as such, she did not look at the issue from the perspective of civil disobedience, but as a matter of loyalty to God. She pointed out that when governments are tyrannical and overbearing, trampling God's law, and "try to control the minds and consciences of those whom Christ died to make free, God's children are to show their loyalty to him by refusing to disobey his commandments."<sup>106</sup>

The story reported in Acts 5:17-21 provided a good example for White's proposition. She argued that when God took the matter of the apostles' imprisonment into His own hands, He sent an angel to release the prisoners. The command given to the apostles was clear: "Go, stand and speak in the temple to the people all the words of this life." White drove her point home in the form of a question and answer: "Did the apostles say, We cannot do this until we have consulted the magistrates and received permission from them? No; God had said, 'Go,' and they obeyed." She clearly indicated that in the biblical example, whether they would obey God was never in doubt.<sup>107</sup>

During the antislavery movement, White had the opportunity to advocate what she believed. After the passing of the fugitive slave law, White concluded that the law was *not* merely governmental (secular). She pointed out that God was the slaves' rightful master and that "man has no right to take God's workmanship into his hands, and claim

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105. E. G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 719.

106. E. G. White, "We Ought to Obey God Rather Than Men," *Signs of the Times*, May 13, 1897, 291-292.

107. E. G. White, *Acts of the Apostles*, 79.

him as his own.” This was directly contrary to the fugitive slave law, which she advised Adventists to disobey: “The laws of our land requiring us to deliver a slave to his master, we are not to obey, and we must abide the consequences of the violation of this law. This slave is not the property of any man.”<sup>108</sup>

White’s reaction to the fugitive law is a good illustration of the applications of the principles she proposed. In her willingness to bear the consequences of civil disobedience, she clearly demonstrated peaceful conscientious objection. Other religious leaders of other denominations argued very similarly. The unique characteristic of White was her understanding of the requirements of God’s law and her determination to abide by it in the fullest sense.<sup>109</sup>

### Summary

The eschatological view that an imminent union of church and state would lead to persecution caused early Sabbatarian Adventist views of government to become permeated with radical expectations. White pleaded for discretion and wisdom among Adventists to keep the eschatological views and mission of the church in perspective. In response, the church’s establishment of operations in Washington, DC, was intended to display the Adventist church to the government.

White believed that the Adventist exercise of religious liberty was inherited from the disciples and reformers, who shared a clear understanding of biblical truths. Those

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108. E. G. White, *Spiritual Gifts*, 4b:42-42.

109. Other religious leaders openly resisted the Fugitive Slave Law with arguments of obedience similar to those proposed by E. G. White. Interestingly, Roman Catholic leaders joined other Christians who proposed civil disobedience. David R. Weber, *Civil Disobedience in America: A Documentary History* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University, 1978), 17-18.



who overcame their passions with the pursued biblical teaching understood that complete liberty comes from Christ and is acquired through the fulfilling of His laws. The sword, which protects liberty, was denied to the church but given to the state; thus, opposition to established authority is inconsistent and can only make the work of God more difficult. Though the state may institute good or bad laws, they must be obeyed unless they go against the supreme law of God.

### **Favors Extended**

In this section, I investigate White's opinions on more practical issues that affect the church's operation and also concern its relationship with the state. I start with the issue of government gifts to the church and work for society that overlaps the duty of government. In both cases White's propositions are carefully considered. I finalize this investigation by identifying White's feelings as an ordinary citizen.

### **Gifts and Benefits**

The idea of God as the supreme owner and ruler of the world with all its "riches and treasures" is imprinted in White's concept of benevolence. All contributions to the church are originated by God, who uses His Spirit to influence the contributors. The gifts that are given are de facto already His. While the church is doing God's work, it is in practice returning the benefit to God that is already His. Thus, White saw a cycle where God gives (or allows possession), the receiver favors the church (through the influence of the Holy Spirit), and then the church directs the favors to the work of God.<sup>110</sup>

Within the cycle of favors suggested by Ellen White, more responsibility is placed

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110. Ellen G. White, "Prudence and Forethought," *Southern Watchman*, March 15, 1904, 163-164; idem, *Testimonies to Ministers and Gospel Workers*, 202.

upon those in God's work who receive the favors extended. They are the ones who are accountable to the church, to the donor, and ultimately, to God. White not only approved of them receiving those gifts, but suggested a more active participation. She argued that it was entirely proper for Adventists to go to the recipients of "worldly advantages" to ask for help in God's work. The major problem with White's proposition is an undefined perspective on the proper conduct she referred to, since this is a field outside the church. In general terms, she proposed that believers should exercise "the wisdom of the serpent and the harmlessness of the dove" without sacrificing their principles.<sup>111</sup>

The powers of the state, represented by "kings and rulers," are included in the cycle of favors as reactive elements. White indicated that the church is the active element in the cycle. The ministry of the church, in spreading the "light of truth as presented in the Sacred Scriptures," creates the conditions for needs to be fulfilled. Closing the loop, God touches the hearts of "kings and rulers" to extend His favors toward His church, which does His work.<sup>112</sup>

It appears that deep concerns about religious liberty were manifested as an obstacle to the cycle of favors when those favors come from government agencies. White warned against a disposition from "those who are so deeply interested in the religious liberty question" to "cut off" the cycle of favors, or "withdraw themselves" from the cycle. She found biblical support for her line of thinking in the example of Ezra and Nehemiah, and expanded it with her recurrent insight that Adventists "might receive far more favors" if they "would approach men in wisdom, acquaint them with [their] work,

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111. Ellen G. White to Brethren in Position of Responsibility, January 6, 1908 (Lt 32a, 1908), CAR; idem, *Testimonies to Ministers and Gospel Workers*, 197-198; idem, *Manuscript Releases*, 20:99.

112. E. G. White, *Testimonies to Ministers and Gospel Workers*, 202.

and give them an opportunity” to extend their help.<sup>113</sup>

White also leaves the impression that it is as unnatural for the state to give favors to the church as it is uncommon for those concerned with religious liberty to receive them. On the one hand, she proposed that unbelievers, “even idolaters,” would be moved by God to contribute to God’s cause, but that they needed to be “induced.” On the other hand, she argued that those leading the religious liberty cause should be more sensitive against extreme positions that are not explicit in the Bible.<sup>114</sup>

The developments on the issues of gifts and benefits from government came mostly under circumstances where Adventists radically refused any involvement with government, including tax exemption and land donation. In the early 1890s, the British South African Company, headed by Cecil Rhodes, was offering several thousand acres of land grants for cultivation and education of the natives in Mashonaland. An offer of 6,000 acres was made to P. J. D. Wessels, a leader of Adventist work in South Africa, who considered it a great opportunity to establish a mission station and advance the work that was being carried with much difficulty. In 1893 Wessels attended the General Conference and reported on the availability of the land.<sup>115</sup>

Despite Wessels’s arguments that the land acquisition in South Africa would bring distinct advantages to the Adventist work, A. T. Jones raised sharp arguments for radical separation of church and state that found support among Adventist leaders. White diverged from the Adventist leadership that advocated such radical separation, affirming

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113. She introduced her insight with the words: “I have repeatedly been shown.”

114. E. G. White, *Testimonies to Ministers and Gospel Workers*, 202-203; idem, *Manuscript Releases*, 16:163.

115. A. L. White, *Ellen G. White*, 4:184-186.

that this attitude “in all respects is not wise nor correct.” She furthered her thoughts by suggesting that some ideas that were entering into the religious liberty arguments were not “from the Holy Spirit.”<sup>116</sup>

### Working for Society

White looked upon society as a big unit with interdependence among individuals in spite of their social level; every man and woman carried responsibility for their interconnections, which would reflect for better or worse on the big unit. She proposed that “we are all woven together in the great web of humanity, and whatever we can do to benefit and uplift others, will reflect in blessing upon ourselves.”<sup>117</sup>

This “web of humanity” is often damaged by the “love of property and power.” According to White, when those who are wealthy and powerful grow to extraordinary supremacy, the poor are “regarded and treated as inferior.” The realization of this oppressive situation would bring forth passions among the poorer classes that would culminate in “great evils,” “demoralize society,” and foster “crimes of every description.”<sup>118</sup>

White indicated that God’s social regulations for His people were intended to promote “social equality” and correct the problems “in the social and political economy

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116. There is a wealth of information to be explored in the episode of radical refusal of government gifts and benefits that emerged in the period of 1893-1895. The initial discussions of the Adventist leadership are reported in "Nineteenth Meeting," *General Conference Daily Bulletin*, March 6, 1893, 486; E. G. White, *Manuscript Releases*, 16:167; quoting Ellen G. White to Stephen N. Haskell, January 30, 1895 (Lt 11, 1895), CAR.

117. E. G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 534.

118. Ellen G. White, *A Call to Stand Apart: Challenging Young Adults to Make an Eternal Difference* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 2002), 61.

of the nation.” She meant that God intended to bless the rich and the poor, restrain avarice and “self-exaltation,” and promote benevolence. White considered that a relationship of good will and confidence between the different social classes would generate “social order and stability of government.”<sup>119</sup>

To White, it was not in accordance with God’s will that one social class enrich itself “by the oppression and suffering of another.” She argued that Adventists should be reminded to place themselves on different sides in business dealings. This would give them a better sense of equality among the parties and help them avoid taking advantage of others’ misfortunes or seeking benefit through others’ “weakness or incompetence.” She argued that in society there are those who live by preying upon their fellows, bringing poverty to God-fearing men and women.<sup>120</sup>

Adventists were expected not only to avoid and despise unjust social behavior, but also to work to correct it. White stated that “God requires that His people should not allow the poor and afflicted to be oppressed,” and openly rebuked Adventists who acted otherwise. She proposed that “if there are those in the church who would cause the blind to stumble, they should be brought to justice; for God has made us guardians of the blind, the afflicted, the widows, and the fatherless.”<sup>121</sup>

White’s understanding of Adventist social work overlapped with the responsibilities and interests of government. She gave indications that working for social equality is perhaps the area where the strongest link between church and state can occur, and argued that simultaneous efforts of church and government can avoid tragedy and

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119. E. G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 534.

120. E. G. White, *A Call to Stand Apart*, 61.

121. E. G. White, *Testimonies*, 3:519.

further advance society.<sup>122</sup> She believed that this could have been the case “if adequate efforts in behalf of the freedmen had been put forth by the Government and by the Christian churches immediately after the emancipation of the slaves.” White appeared to suggest that both church and state have roles to play in bringing beneficial work to society, mainly in the immediate relief of physical needs and education.<sup>123</sup>

To say that there is a common interest of church and state in social equality does not imply that the same methods are used by both. If we attribute to the state the title “guardians of the blind, the afflicted, the widows, and the fatherless,” we can arrive at political and practical methods that are not compatible with the church. When the question of equal civil rights affected the Adventist ministry, White proposed dealing with the issue in a different venue than those who later embraced this social cause more decisively. She suggested that Adventists should not become politicized by the issue, and should avoid “political speeches” and gatherings of “whites and blacks” to debate “social equality.” The segregation issue was very divisive in the southern states and in White’s understanding, politicized demonstration for social equality would have been harmful to the operations of the church. However, she also perceived that “in some places in the North” segregation issues could be dealt differently from the South.<sup>124</sup>

Ironically, White’s perception of equality can be considered radical; however, she

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122. White indicated the Boer War in South Africa could have been prevented or minimized had the Seventh-day Adventist church fulfilled its task towards society in the region. Ellen G. White, *Testimonies to Southern Africa* (Bloemfontein, South Africa: South African Union of SDA, 1977), 56.

123. E. G. White, *Testimonies*, 9:205.

124. E. G. White, *Testimonies*, 9:205, 213; idem, *Manuscript Releases*, 4:32.

was cautious about the means of achieving equality.<sup>125</sup> She was concerned that “inconsiderate or premature movements would bring no real satisfaction, and would make it far more difficult to carry forward any line of work for the colored people.” These are indications that White understood the question aside from the politicized debate. She did not waver on the severity of the problem, but decided to focus on the big picture instead of entering into arguments. She thought that there was “too much at stake for human judgment to be followed in this matter.” White was so assured of her beliefs that she affirmed, “From the light given me, I know” that any mistake in our actions “will mean more in retarding our work than any human mind can comprehend.”<sup>126</sup>

The broader and cautious position White embraced did not dissuade her from her proposed notion of Adventists being the “guardians of the blind.” Rather, she intended to keep the church capable of working among both Colored and White people. She saw a mutual dependence among all classes of society and proposed that Adventists should work in favor of the oppressed within that perspective. The ideal of guidance went beyond avoidance of “stumbling blocks”—she called Adventists to avoid “any course that may be pursued to injure the influence of their blind brother, to work against his interest, or to hinder his prosperity.”<sup>127</sup>

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125. White worked within the social and political setting but did not support segregation; she pointed out that “God has marked out no color line and men should move very guardedly, lest we offend God.” E. G. White, *Manuscript Releases*, 4:33; quoting Ellen G. White to “Our Churches in Washington D.C.,” October 19, 1908 (Lt 304, 1908), CAR.

126. E. G. White, *Manuscript Releases*, 4:31-32; quoting idem to Our Churches in Washington D.C., October 19, 1908 (Lt 304, 1908), CAR.

127. E. G. White, Duty to the Unfortunate, *Testimonies*, vol. 3. White called the dynamic relationships of interaction among different social levels of society, “the law of mutual dependence.” Idem, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 534.

## Appreciation for the Nation

The eschatological discernment of the church-state relationship in Ellen White's writings did not diminish her appreciation for the United States as a nation. Considering that any nation is led by some form of government body that at times pursues policies that are against Christ's teaching, one might expect a certain reservation toward patriotism. Apparently White did not associate the value of her country with the political system it represented, but rather focused on the blessings that God had brought to His people there. She pointed out that "the Lord has done more for the United States than for any other country upon which the sun shines. Here He provided an asylum for His people, where they could worship Him according to the dictates of conscience."<sup>128</sup>

This appreciation for America was also present in the cultural context of White's life. Like any citizen, White appreciated the American lifestyle and its cultural values and symbols. These characteristics were also part of her as a person, and obviously became apparent in her ministry. During her preaching in Europe, she remarked, "All knew that I was from America, and I did not try to appear English by imitating English customs and practices. Not being ashamed of my country, I still conformed to my simple American manners." White was aware of cultural differences and was sensitive that some countries had ways that were "not at all like our American style." On one occasion, she indicated that she resorted to the methods and customs of her country: "After I had finished speaking, we made a revival effort in the old American style."<sup>129</sup>

White also expressed appreciation and respect for the American flag. Though

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128. Ellen G. White, "First Visit to Sweden," Ms 26, 1885, CAR; idem, *Maranatha, the Lord Is Coming* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1976), 193.

129. Ellen G. White, "Notes of Travel," *Review and Herald*, October 6, 1885, 609-610; idem, *Manuscript Releases*, 12:357.



patriotism has little or nothing to do with public preaching, White reported that while she was in Norway preaching about temperance, “an American flag was placed as a canopy above the pulpit; this was an attention which I highly appreciated.” While she was in Europe, she considered the American flag in the pulpit an “honor” rather than an intrusion of the values of the state into the message of the church. She remarked that “the people did me the honor of draping above the pulpit the American flag.”<sup>130</sup>

When White advised Daniel T. Bourdeau on how to accommodate his American lifestyle to the conditions in Britain during his preaching of the Adventist message, she reminded him that he was not a British citizen. As an American, he was expected to be who he was and do his best under the circumstances. Rather than imitate the British lifestyle, White believed Bourdeau would be better off carrying his Americanism into the England Mission and letting people see that he was not embarrassed “to stand under the Stars and Stripes.” But she was sensitive enough to realize that it was not productive to bring that citizenship to the front and introduce himself as “an American and a missionary.”<sup>131</sup>

White’s appreciation for her country also came from the many trips she took across the country. Her writings reflect her amazement as she contemplated American landmarks, expressing “a thrill of joy” in beholding “these grand old mountains, beautiful hills, and the wild and rocky canyons.” In California, she declared that “a winter view of

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130. Ellen G. White, *Historical Sketches of the Foreign Missions of the Seventh-day Adventists* (Basel: Imprimerie Polyglotte, 1886), 207; Ellen G. White to Wood S. Lillis, September 5, 1907 (Lt 278, 1907), CAR.

131. Ellen White considered it an error for American missionaries to “exalt foreign national customs” above American habits. She believed that such an attitude would bring “no influence.” Ellen G. White to John N. Loughborough (Lt 40, 1879), CAR; Ellen G. White to D. T. Bourdeau, November 23, 1885 (Lt 24, 1885), CAR.

the Sierra Nevadas is indeed grand. Pen cannot describe it.”<sup>132</sup>

White was an American citizen who appreciated her country for the blessings it represented, and esteemed the values of her nation. She carried the customs of her people and treasured the beauty of the land where she lived. However, she did not allow these sentiments to hinder her work or her message. Though patriotism was expressed in her writings, it was not in a context that interfered with the perspectives of her ministry or outweighed her eschatological understanding of church and state.

### Summary

The cycle of gifts and benefits described by White was to benefit God’s work. White rebuked the obstruction of this cycle on grounds of religious liberty and validated a proper approach to induce even idolaters to give. The beneficial work of the church would be reflected in society as an interwoven web; the opposing elements of this web were greed and thirst for power, which would lead to the demoralization of society. White advised Adventists to interact with wisdom and nonnegotiable principles, work in the web toward social equality, and level the unequal situations caused by social and economic distress. As guardians of the unfortunate, Adventists were called to remove obstacles that would damage their influence, interest, and prosperity. While promoting goodness in society, White maintained an appreciation for American values and symbols. She understood the blessings of her nation, and naturally, carried the mannerisms of her culture. She was glad to stand by the flag of her country and appreciative of its landmarks, but she was sensitive to the ways that patriotism could interfere in God’s work.

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132. Ellen G. White, "Incidents by the Way," *Signs of the Times*, June 17, 1880, 385-386; idem, *Testimonies*, 4:296.

## Summary and Conclusion

According to Ellen White's propositions, government is neither entirely a friend nor a foe. She considered it a power above that of individual humans with a specific delegation of authority from God in the context of the great conflict between good and evil. On the one hand, White saw that civil power had positive characteristics, such as protecting citizens from evil and preserving freedom of conscience. Conditions of peace and prosperity result from upholding biblical principles, which also creates better conditions for the ministry of the church. On the other hand, government can also be influenced by evil, which disrupts ministry and leads to laws of persecution that deny the supremacy of God and enforce religion.

White's distinct perspective on government allowed her to contribute to shaping Adventist views of government in her time. Issues such as oath-taking, military service, voting, educational standards, and political involvement were dealt with under the premise that government is a rightful institution that makes demands in order to provide for its subjects. Speaking from a perspective of peaceful conscientious subjection, White advised Adventists to find ways to meet government requirements without compromising their principles. She considered some requirements to be secular and stated that the church should not dispute them or become involved except to exercise religious principles; others she considered moral and advised Adventists to support them as part of God's cause.

Despite the eschatological understanding of the state returning to persecution, White worked hard to bring a more balanced perspective to the ministry of the church. She emphasized that government was established by God and should be obeyed, although the primary loyalty should always be to God. In dealing with the established authority of the state, White advised Adventists to act with wisdom and discretion under qualified

counsel. Extreme positions were not in line with the clear understanding of religious liberty presented by Jesus' disciples. Furthermore, unconsidered statements would bring only unnecessary and premature confrontation, as well as provide a perspective of rebellion. At the same time, White considered obedience to evil laws of any government a sin against God, and proposed that Adventists should always defer to God even when it meant civil disobedience.

Government gifts to the church are results of the work of the Holy Spirit in the hearts of rulers and should be accepted. White considered these gifts as part of a cycle involving God, the rulers (holders of resources), the Spirit, and the church. Although it seemed unnatural for the church to receive direct benefits from government, White considered it perfectly fine as long as it did not compromise the church's faithfulness to religious principles.

The work for social equality suggested by Ellen White went beyond helping the less fortunate. She pointed out that social oppression interferes in the "web of humanity," inflames passions, and leads to crimes committed by those in need of justice. Adventists should interact in this web as guardians of the oppressed and with zeal for the welfare of the less fortunate. Although this work might cause Adventists to enter politicized situations, they were cautioned not to engage in irrelevant political discussions, because it would hurt the Adventist mission at large.

White's perspectives on church and state did not diminish her sense of citizenship. The eschatological understanding she held about the union of church and state leading to persecution did not interfere with her American identity. She appreciated the symbols and values of her country and practiced its customs like any other ordinary American citizen. However, she recommended that patriotism should be kept more as a

personal characteristic than a corporate one, lest it prove a hindrance to the Adventist mission or religious belief.

## CHAPTER IV

### E. G. WHITE'S PROPOSITIONS IN HISTORICAL CONTEXT

This chapter examines the historical development of issues in church-state relationships in the Adventist Church. It presents E. G. White's contributions within the framework of the cosmic controversy between good and evil in both church and state, separating them into four main periods: (1) the issues of church and state faced by Sabbatarian Adventists during the antebellum period; (2) the difficulties of adjusting the church to the reality of war without compromising the core beliefs during and immediately after the conflict; (3) the voluntary engagement with different associations in the temperance cause during the 1870s, looking at the boundaries and limitations of Adventist cooperation; and (4) the challenges faced during the campaign for enforcement of religious Sunday legislation of the 1880s and 1890s, and how the church reacted to the crisis. Special attention is given to E. G. White's counsels and how they are related to her perspective of the spiritual battle between good and evil, extended to the realms of church and state.

#### **The Antebellum Period**

This section analyzes the events preceding the American Civil War that affected the views of church and state of the Sabbatarian Adventist Movement. It begins by tracing the issue of Babylon and how it related to the organization process of the Adventist church; then it looks at what was expected of the organizing body with its

threats and opportunities. Later, it investigates how the Sabbatarians saw the Fugitive Slave Law and its proposition. Finally, it shows how the interpretation of the two-horned beast of Rev 13 became the most relevant aspect of church and state for the antebellum period. This section also shows how E. G. White's understanding of the cosmic controversy between good and evil began to shape her perspectives of church and state.

### Babylon and Antipathy to the State

One of the basic concepts of William Miller's prophetic interpretation was that the symbolic Babylon in the biblical book of Revelation applied primarily to the papacy. In 1843, Charles Fitch published a sermon expanding the scope of "Babylon" to also include the "fallen" Protestant churches that rejected the Millerite message of Christ's soon coming, but this idea was controversial and not all Millerites accepted it.<sup>1</sup> After the disappointment, some wanted to extend the label even further to apply to any church that was formally organized or legally incorporated.<sup>2</sup>

The Sabbatarian offspring of the Millerite Movement also feared any union of church and state. They had the understanding that "a great portion, at least, of the various denominations are of Mystic Babylon. [Those denominations] are daughters of the old mother, because of the family resemblance between them." Sabbatarian Adventists called

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1. C[harles] Fitch, *"Come Out of Her, My People"* (Rochester, NY: J. V. Himes, 1843), quoted in George R. Knight, comp. and rev. ed., *1844 and the Rise of Sabbatarian Adventism: Reproductions of Original Historical Documents* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 1994), 83-99.

2. George Storrs, *Midnight Cry*, February 15, 1844, quoted in David Arthur, "Millerism," in *The Rise of Adventism: Religion and Society in Mid-Nineteenth-Century America*, ed. Edwin S. Gaustad (New York: Harper and Row, 1974), 168; Arthur W. Spalding, *Origin and History of Seventh-Day Adventists*, 4 vols. (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1961-62), 1:291.

particular attention to two similarities between formal Protestant denominations and Babylon: “(1) A great portion of the Protestant sects follow a mystical principle of interpreting the Scriptures” and “(2) In being unlawfully connected with the kings of the earth. Some may say it is an unlawful connection with the governments to seek protection from them.”<sup>3</sup>

From the early issues faced by the Sabbatarian group it becomes clear that E. G. White did not share the same perspectives of church and state with other members such as James White, Uriah Smith, and Joseph Bates. As discussed in chapter 3, White perceived protection of a person, including conscience, as a duty of the state in accordance with the provisions of God. In 1859, when the *Testimony No. 5* was printed, White came forward to challenge the general view of government and its legal requirements. She questioned the attitude of early Sabbath keepers who were unwilling to cooperate with secular requirements like oath-taking and legal ecclesiastical organization.<sup>4</sup>

This vigorous opposition to church involvement with the state, which Sabbatarians inherited from the Millerism and Christian Connection, presented a dilemma for the Sabbatarian group: On the one hand, their doctrines could not be decisively proposed to believers because there was no formal membership structure or affiliation of churches; on the other hand, their inherited opposition regarding church and state rejected formation of denominational structures as inappropriate conformity to the state. The expectation of the contributors of the *Review* was that White’s advice would

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3. John N. Loughborough, "Reply," *Review and Herald*, May 17 1860, 20-205.

4. Ellen G. White, *Testimony No. 5*, *Review and Herald* (Battle Creek, MI: Review and Herald, 1859), 20-25.



help to address the inherited Millerite views and prepare the way for establishing a formal entity. A church government was becoming crucial to a definite course of action for the Sabbatarian Adventist group.

White's *Testimony No. 5* was widely supported by the Sabbath keepers in charge of the *Review and Herald*. They wanted "all the friends of the cause to have [*Testimony No. 5*], pay, or no pay. Those who choose, may send ten cts. a copy, others may send more or nothing, as they choose."<sup>5</sup> There was an expectation that "those who do receive it as the voice of God to erring mortals" could "see and feel" the bearing on the subject of church and state in debate.<sup>6</sup>

White's argument in *Testimony No. 5* in 1859 introduced a broader spiritual perspective of church and state, reflecting her insight from a vision in Lovett's Grove, Ohio, in the spring of 1858. She addressed the aversion to civil government and introduced a new perspective of spiritual warfare that extended the struggle between God and Satan into many aspects of this world, including the church and the state. This new perspective cleared laws and rulers from being declared enemies of the church and allies of Satan, and instead, cast the state as the subject of a battle between good and evil. She proposed that "many of our rulers are those whom Satan controls; but I saw that God has his agents, even among the rulers; and some of them will yet be converted to the truth."<sup>7</sup>

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5. Uriah Smith, "Testimony for the Church No. 5," *Review and Herald*, June 16, 1859, 32.

6. James White, "Making Us a Name," *Review and Herald*, April 26, 1860, 180-183. James White's article presented arguments and direct quotes extracted from *Testimony No. 5* in support of a different perspective of church and state that would be less radical and allow formal organization.

7. Ellen G. White, "Answer to Prayer," in *Testimony No. 5* (Battle Creek, MI: Review and Herald, 1859); Ellen G. White and James White, *Life Sketches*, 334.

The new ideas presented in *Testimony No. 5* were the first step in changing the understanding of Babylon, which was crucial to a proper view of church and state relationship. White's proposition of the duties and importance of government did not have a defensive tone; it was rather clarifying. It gave Adventists a fresh perspective on their duties to the laws of the land without denying the faith they had embraced.<sup>8</sup>

### Settling the Issue of Babylon

The fear of association with Babylon and conforming to the laws of the land was finally settled by E. G. White's vision of December 23, 1860. White indicated that most of the problems related to the issue of becoming Babylon resulted from a lack of unity and understanding.<sup>9</sup>

White's arguments for moving away from the Millerite Movement's attitude of

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8. James White used sharp words to demonstrate the uncomfortable situation of privately holding church property. "The Battle Creek meeting-house is the legal property of Bro. S. T. Belden. It was built on a lot owned by him, and he has given no deed of it, as no one, or ones, have appeared to receive it. Should he live, it would depend upon his integrity whether the church may have the use of the house. Hundreds of men and women have contributed to the Office until there is \$6000 worth of property without one legal owner." James White, "Making Us a Name," 180. To aggravate the situation, James White was accused of being "a scheming, money-grasping man who collected gifts, and printed and sold literature as a private business for his own profit." Lewis Harrison Christian, *The Fruitage of Spiritual Gifts: The Influence and Guidance of Ellen G. White in the Advent Movement* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1947), 121. This accusation was reflected in pamphlets, articles, and reports. Uriah Smith, "Business Meeting of the Church in Battle Creek," *Review and Herald*, March 31, 1863, 141; idem, "Another Call," *Review and Herald*, May 26, 1863, 206; John Byington and Uriah Smith, "Report of the General Conference," *Review and Herald*, May 26, 1863, 204-205; Battle Creek SDA Church Committee, *Vindication of the Business Career of Elder James White* (Battle Creek, MI: SDA Publishing Association, 1863).

9. Ellen G. White, *Testimony No. 6* (Battle Creek, MI: Review and Herald, 1861), 3-10; idem, "Organization," in *Testimony No. 7* (Battle Creek, MI: Review and Herald, 1862).

radical separation did not suggest that God's people (the church) make a compromise with the state in order to survive or prosper. Church organization, just like civil government, was not meant to be evil; White understood that order was a means to enhance the church's ability to accomplish its specific task for its time. The lack of unity generated by many misunderstandings was causing stagnation in the Sabbatarian Movement. White warned that "the people of God should move understandingly" with the same focus: "order must be observed, and there must be union in regard to order."<sup>10</sup>

The approach White took to order clearly suggested that organization is not merely a prerogative of the church and earthly governments. She proposed that organization is rather an integral characteristic of God's government: an attribute of God. When White wrote about order and system in the church, she implied a literal meaning of "orderliness," or something that is opposed to "chaos." On different occasions, she reinforced that the concept of order is a prerogative of God:

Has God changed from a God of order? No; He is the same in the present dispensation as in the former. Paul says: "God is not the author of confusion, but of peace." He is as particular now as then. And He designs that we should learn lessons of order and organization from the perfect order instituted in the days of Moses for the benefit of the children of Israel.<sup>11</sup>

Therefore the church (even more than the state), while working in alliance with God, should press for the same characteristic: "There is order in heaven, and God is well pleased with the efforts of His people in trying to move with system and order in His work on earth. I saw that there should be order in the church of God."<sup>12</sup>

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10. E. G. White, *Testimony No. 6*, 3-4.

11. Ellen G. White, *Testimonies*, 1:652.

12. *Ibid.*, 1:191.

White's arguments rebutted the Millerite concept of Babylon and moved Sabbatarian Adventists to reconsider their aversion to the state, which was now considered a subject of the conflict between good and evil. This shift caused Adventists to consider aspects of the church-state relationship that they had never considered before, such as voting; it also paved the way for the establishment of a church governing body.<sup>13</sup>

### The Governing Power of the Church

The creation of a church structure was a good indication of E. G. White's perspective on church and state relationships. She perceived that evil influences on powers in civil society would also influence powers within the church. As an institution, the Seventh-day Adventist church would establish a structure of power and governance that, in its own sphere, would parallel the state's functions of establishing order and enforcing authority.<sup>14</sup> White welcomed this new "power," which she perceived as a great

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13. One of the noticeable shifts in Adventist political thought was James White's article calling for church neutrality on (not opposition to) voting in the election of 1860. Even though the *Review* still carried some criticism of government activities, the article reflected a changing perspective of church and state relationships. His short article suggested that the early Seventh-day Adventist Church was already divided regarding the issue of political involvement. Some believed in a crusade to defeat the sin of slavery that justified voting, while others still considered it inappropriate for the children of God to associate with political candidates and their promises. In an apparent effort to reconcile both sides, James White surprisingly asked for reconsideration of the Millerite advocacy of radical separation: "The political excitement of 1860 will probably run as high as it has for many years, and we would warn our brethren not to be drawn into it. We are not prepared to prove from the Bible that it would be wrong for a believer in the third message to go in a manner becoming his profession and cast his vote. We do not recommend this, neither do we oppose [it]. If a brother chooses to vote we do not condemn him, and we want the same liberty if we do not." James White, "Politics," *Review and Herald*, August 21, 1860, 108.

14. Later in her life E. G. declared that "God has ordained that the representatives of His church from all parts of the earth, when assembled in a General Conference, shall have authority," and further, "the full measure of authority and influence that God has

necessity to fight the “chaos” from within Adventism. At a critical moment she stated that “unless the churches are so organized that they can carry out and enforce order, they have nothing to hope for in the future; they must scatter into fragments.”<sup>15</sup>

The establishment of a governing structure in the Sabbatarian Adventist movement brought many benefits, but at the same time raised concerns. In the early stages of organization, White warned against evil entering church leadership: “While God’s people are justified in a lawful manner to secure church property, they should be careful to maintain their peculiar and holy character.” White was concerned that the governing practices of unconsecrated leaders would disrupt the spiritual focus of the church business, overstepping the bounds and carrying matters to extremes.<sup>16</sup>

White feared that allowing room for the influence of Satan in the newly formed governing body would duplicate the environment of secular government. She called attention to the fact that a lack of wisdom in exercising church leadership would bring secular practices into church leadership, such as unnecessary litigation, alliances, and political games: “Some will move without wisdom or judgment, and engage in lawsuits that might be avoided, mingle with the world, partake of their spirit, and influence others to follow their example.”<sup>17</sup>

White’s acknowledgment that an organized church would have a government that

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vested in His church, [is] in the judgment and voice of the General Conference assembled to plan for the prosperity and advancement of His work.” E. G. White, *Testimonies*, 9:260-261.

15. Ibid., 1:270.

16. Ibid., 1:212.

17. E. G. White, *Testimonies*, 1: 212.

could emulate the practices of secular government may seem to conflict with her support for church organization. However, two aspects need to be carefully considered to understand White's position: First, White understood that organization and authority were necessary for survival and prosperity; she argued that without "order" there would be only extinction. Thus the lack of organization was an evil to be opposed. Second, the formation of a governing body was the solution to the evil of disorder—organization was a way to "carry out and enforce order."<sup>18</sup> But despite the benefits of organization, White also understood that evil could infiltrate the governing body of the church as much as it did civil government. She warned that evil practices of governing "take root much more readily than good."<sup>19</sup>

Just as in civil government, E. G. White saw two distinct groups with opposite positions about organizing the Adventist church: those who united with God in His work, and those who "united their forces with the combined influence of powers of darkness to distract and tear down that which God designs to build up."<sup>20</sup>

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18. E. G. White, "Organization," 1:270.

19. White lived to see the system she supported in full exercise; though in some situations she expressed sharp disapproval of leaders and their practices, she never rejected the idea of a governing body. White challenged the accumulation of authority, reasoning that "in the work of God no kingly authority is to be exercised by any human being, or by two or three." E. G. White, *Manuscript Releases*, 4:292.

20. In reference to conflict between good and evil, White gave further details about these two groups that opposed the process of organization: "Two classes were presented before me. One class embraced the great bodies of professed Christians. They were trampling upon God's law and bowing to a Papal institution. They were keeping the first day of the week as the Sabbath of the Lord. The other class were but few in number, and were bowing to the great Law-giver." The two groups mentioned are distinguished from each other by being on opposite sides of the Great Controversy. E. G. White, *Testimonies*, 1:223.

## Early Slavery Position and Civil Disobedience

A gradual evolution of White's abolitionist views can be seen from her years as a Methodist until 1859, when she openly supported civil disobedience to the Fugitive Slave Law. Her ultimate reaction to the laws passed in 1850 can hardly be attributed to her Methodist heritage, for several reasons: First, White's father, Robert Harmon, was very committed to the Methodist church, although he was eventually excluded from the church after an extraordinary effort from the Methodist leadership.<sup>21</sup> Second, abolition advocacy was consistent in Methodism only after 1837. In fact, until 1832, Methodists did not see slavery as a central moral and institutional concern. Their interest in the American Colonization Society and dedication to the missions to the slaves discouraged Methodist leaders from openly challenging the established government. There were some voices raised within the Methodist church, but until 1836 the Methodist General Conference was in no mood to condemn slavery; furthermore, the Methodist General Conference considered the Negroes mostly as subjects for charity and not an integral part of American society. Third, the Harmon family had already been expelled from the Methodist church in May 1840, when the Methodist General Conference was still fighting to keep the slavery issue in the political sphere and maintain the church in unity

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21. According to the *Records of the Leaders' Meetings of the Chestnut Street M. E. Church, Portland, Maine, Sept. 2, 1836 – July 14, 1845*, the process of the Harmon family was unusual. The process dragged on for more than 6 months and the records indicated that the church waited to hear Robert's arguments about his faith, before considering any action. The first report of Robert Harmon's irregularities in April 23, 1843, was not accepted, not even laid on the table. His exclusion on September 1843 was not based on conduct but rather his acceptance of the Millerite preaching. A special note on Robert and Eunice Harmon's record of dismissal says: "Under Peculiar Circumstances." Chestnut Street M. E. Church, record entry, *Records of the Leaders' Meetings of the Chestnut Street M. E. Church, Portland, Maine, Sept. 2, 1836 – July 14, 1845*, September 1843, CAR, Berrien Springs, MI.

while observing the “the rights of Caesar.”<sup>22</sup>

From the arguments above, it is fair to reach at least three conclusions. First, Ellen Harmon was raised in a family that was extraordinarily faithful to the Methodist church; second, the Methodist church as an institution did not consistently challenge slavery because of its concern with its missionary program; and third, though one can assume by default that the Harmons were abolitionist, there are relevant arguments that suggest their absence from the slavery debate, or at the most, place them in a relative moderate abolitionist position.

The arguments of Joshua Himes and James White are valuable to give anti-slavery perspectives that contrast with the Harmons’ background. Himes, who was a pastor for the Boston Chardon Street Chapel Christian Church, held both anti-slavery and Millerite positions. During the preaching of the Millerite Adventism in October 1842, Himes confirmed the sentiment that the anti-slavery movement and Millerism carried a similar stigma in society. Himes argued that this had “driven the conductors of the reformation press to the defence of slavery,” and concluded, “It is a horrid affair to be called a Millerite, or an Abolitionist.”<sup>23</sup>

James White also brought his anti-slavery perspective into his publishing ministry. In his early printing ministry in 1849, he published the adamant declaration that

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22. Donald G. Mathews, *Slavery and Methodism: A Chapter in American Morality 1780-1845* (Princeton: NJ, Princeton University Press, 1965), 88, 198-199; H. B. Bascom, Richard Sutton, and George Lane, *The Methodist Church Property Case* (New York: Lane and Scott, 1851), 53-54; William A. Bowen, "Calm before the Storm," in *Why Two Episcopal Methodist Churches in the United States?* (Nashville: M. E. Church, 1901); Holland Nimmons McTyeire, *A History of Methodism* (Nashville: J. D. Barbee, 1888), 609-611.

23. Joshua V. Himes, "Genius of Christianity," *Signs of the Times and Expositor of Prophecy*, October 5, 1842, 18.



“on this [American] nation rests the cruel and damning sin of slavery.” Then he proposed: “Let them break the yoke that binds the poor slave, and undo his unjust and heavy burden, and thus let the oppressed go free, and then they have begun to fast in God’s appointed way.”<sup>24</sup> Clearly, Joshua Himes and James White were far more concerned with the slavery issue than the Harmon family was.

Shortly after the Fugitive Slave Law was passed in 1850, early Sabbatarian leaders and collaborators protested with heavy words. In 1854, Loughborough harshly criticized the American government and Constitution for supporting this law; a year later, J. N. Andrews also wrote against such governmental actions. Nevertheless, none of them reached the point of open acclamation of civil disobedience.<sup>25</sup>

It is clear that White was against slavery and expected the Northern people to be inclined to the same opinion; however, her concerns were distinguished from those of other Adventist pioneers who had previously embraced the Millerite message. Her propositions of civil disobedience do not bear the concerns of an anti-slavery activist or result in social-Gospel inclinations.<sup>26</sup>

E. G. White exhorted the Adventists, “We are not to obey [the Fugitive Slave Law], and we must abide the consequences of the violation of this law.” White’s

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24. James White, "Repairing the Breach in the Law of God," *Present Truth*, September 1849, 25.

25. For comments of Adventist pioneers on the Fugitive Slave law see John N. Loughborough, "The Two-Horned Beast," *Review and Herald*, March 21, 1854, 65-68; J. N. Andrews, "The Fall of Babylon," *Review and Herald*, March 6, 1855, 185; M. E. Cornell, "Letter from M. E. Cornell," *Review and Herald*, May 10, 1860, 193.

26. White expressed the opinion, “It is so strange that Northern men can sympathize with this terrible rebellion and the institution of slavery.” Ellen G. White, "An Extract from a Letter Written to a Distant Female Friend," *Present Truth*, September 16, 1862, 126.

proposition of civil disobedience, which was first printed in 1859, could be considered radical among early Sabbatarian leaders, but it was also within the context of good and evil in government. Presenting a different reasoning from other leaders, White validated the relevance of the “rulers, and laws to govern the people.” However White understood that evil was also present in government, in that government produced both good laws and evil laws. She argued that the Fugitive Slave Law in particular demanded that Adventists prioritize their obedience to government over their allegiance to God. White affirmed the authority of the state, but denied the right of men to legislate against God. She placed the burden on loyalty to God while recognizing the Christian duty of submitting to governmental authority by accepting their lawful punishment: “We are to obey the word and law of God, whatever the consequences may be.”<sup>27</sup>

### Aversion to the Beast of Revelation 13

The understanding of Babylon inherited from the Millerite Movement changed in the early 1860s, and in the process, a new interpretation of the two-horned beast of Rev 13:11 reignited the Adventist aversion to the state. Though E. G. White affirmed the new discovery, she developed an attitude that differed from those of other early leaders.

In February 1844, the Millerite Movement assumed the two-horned beast to be Napoleon and the horns to be France and Italy. Himes proposed that the “beast is the symbol of ‘the European system’ under Napoleon, who at the same time wielded the

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27. Two times in the same declaration E. G. White recognized the power of the state to punish civil disobedience. In the first portion she says, “whatever the consequences may be,” then she reaffirmed, “we must abide the consequences [of civil disobedience].” This indicated that even though White was opposing a law, she still recognized the government authority to inflict punishment for disobedience. E. G. White, *Testimony No. 5*, 23.

sceptre of France and Italy.”<sup>28</sup> In September 1850 came the earliest rejection of this assumption: Sabbatarian Adventists studying the issue of Babylon in prophecy arrived at a new theory that suggested a combination of power between the church and state. Hiram Edson declared that “it is certain that this two-horned beast does not apply to the reign of Bonaparte,” and proposed that “the two-horned beast is Protestant Rome, and is the seventh head. The two horns are civil and ecclesiastical power.”<sup>29</sup> In May 1851, J. N. Andrews gave further support to Edson’s argument: “We regard this two-horned beast, then, as the symbol of a civil and religious power, differing in many respects from those which have preceded it.” Andrews went so far as to give strong indications that the United States could be such a beast.<sup>30</sup>

In the same year of 1851, Joseph Bates and Otis Nichols continued the debate by openly proposing that the United States was the beast.<sup>31</sup> Loughborough further studied the arguments for the U.S. being the two-horned beast and made additional propositions that raised awareness and lit up the debate in the *Review*. Later, in April 1854, Loughborough released a fifty-two-page tract on the subject, refining the understanding

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28. Joshua V. Himes, "Watchmen! Give Them Warning from Me!" *Signs of the Times*, February 21, 1844, 15. See also Le Roy Edwin Froom, *The Prophetic Faith of Our Father: The Historical Development of Prophetic Interpretation*, 4 vols. (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1946-54), 4:850.

29. Hiram Edison, "The Third Angel's Message," *Review and Herald*, September 1850, 9.

30. J. N. Andrews, "Thoughts on Revelation 13 and 14," *Review and Herald*, May 19, 1851, 84.

31. Joseph Bates, "The Beast with Seven Heads," *Review and Herald*, August 5, 1851, 4; O. Nichols, "From Bro. Nichols," *Review and Herald*, September 2, 1851, 22.

of the two-horned beast as the United States.<sup>32</sup> In April 1855, J. N. Andrews revised and expanded his article and reached a definite conclusion: "The only civil government that has ever existed, exhibiting the lamb-like appearance of this symbol is the United States."<sup>33</sup>

The following editorial note gives an idea of the relevance and impact of this new finding: "To those who have recently ordered Bro. Loughborough's Tract treating upon the Two-horned Beast, we are sorry to say that the edition is exhausted; but Bro. J. N. Andrews is preparing a work on Rev. xiii and xiv, which we hope will be completed, printed, and ready for delivery in six or eight weeks. If another edition of Bro. Loughborough's work is called for, we will furnish it immediately."<sup>34</sup>

The rush continued throughout the year. "SEVENTY-THREE copies of 'The Two-horned Beast,' by J. N. Loughborough, have just fallen into our hands from one of our agents in this State. Many brethren have sent in for this work when we could not supply them. If any wish to obtain a few copies now they can do so by ordering immediately."<sup>35</sup>

The propagation of this understanding continued to be sharply emphasized by

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32. H. C. S. Caurus, "From Bro. Caurus," *Review and Herald*, October 18, 1853, 120; J. B. Frisbie, "From Bro. Frisbie," *Review and Herald*, November 8, 1853, 142; John N. Loughborough, *The Two-Horned Beast, the United States* (Rochester, NY: Review and Herald, 1854); T. M. Steward, "From Bro. Steward," *Review and Herald*, August 15, 1854, 6. Cf. James White, "New Tracts," *Review and Herald*, April 4, 1854, 88.

33. J. N. Andrews, "Three Angels of Revelation," *Review and Herald*, April 3, 1855, 202. Roswell F. Cottrell had also added his opinions to the discussion. R. F. Cottrell, "Speaking of the Image," *Review and Herald*, December 12, 1854, 134.

34. James White, "Business," *Review and Herald*, December 5, 1854, 128.

35. James White, "Editorial," *Review and Herald*, December 11, 1855, 88.

writing and preaching. Uriah Smith, who in December 1856 considered the two-horned beast to be at “full maturity,” consistently wrote about the implications of the new prophetic understanding and the developments of the two-horned beast.<sup>36</sup> Adventist preachers such as C. W. Sperry and H. G. Buck reported that, in their campaigns, “the congregation sat with apparent ease from 10 o’clock A. M., until about 5 P. M., while our haggled tent told all day of the perils of the last days, and the patience of the saints. We gave two long discourses on the Three Messages of Rev. xiv, and the Two-horned Beast of Rev. xiii.”<sup>37</sup>

E. G. White had a different reaction from the other leaders. She connected her comments on the two-horned beast with the establishment of the SDA church. White gave emphasis to the spiritual relevance of the new denominational name and left the historical arguments aside; she was more focused on the implications for the spiritual work to be carried on by the Adventist church, than on merely historical developments.

White’s concerns in regard to the beast were centered on religious legislation. She framed the emergence of the beast within the context of the battle between good and evil that involved both church and state. White considered the Sabbath legislation to be more a spiritual demonstration than an act of the republicanism of the United States: “I saw that the two-horned beast had a dragon’s mouth, and that his power was in his head, and

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36. Uriah Smith, "One Year Ago," *Review and Herald*, December 11, 1856, 44; idem, "The Two-Horned Beast, and How He Has 'Come up'," *Review and Herald*, August 28, 1856, 136; idem, "The Two Horned Beast," *Review and Herald*, March 12, 1857, 148.

37. C. W. Sperry and H. G. Buck, "Tent Meetings in Jamaica, Vt.," *Review and Herald*, September 25, 1856, 165. Another report indicated the intensity of the preaching that followed throughout the years: “Last night the house was crowded with attentive hearers while I gave a discourse of near two hours length on the two-horned beast.” Moses Hull, "Extract from Letters," *Review and Herald*, September 25, 1860, 15.

that the [Sunday] decree would go out of his mouth.”<sup>38</sup>

E. G. White indicated that the power of the beast came from the parallel existence of both institutions. In her thought, neither the church nor the state by itself could exert the power of the beast; therefore, both institutions needed to be captured by Satan in order to enforce evil. Though White understood that evil was working in government (just as in the church), she did not see the existing American government as legislating spiritual/religious practices. Such legislations, she argued, “would be directly contrary to the principles of this government, to the genius of its free institutions, to the direct and solemn avowals of the Declaration of Independence, and to the Constitution.”<sup>39</sup> White’s argument differed from those of Adventists, such as Uriah Smith, who saw the beast as already fully developed. This difference was significant for the development of Adventist attitudes toward government at the beginning of the American Civil War and immediately after.

### Summary

Many Sabbatarian Adventists brought their fears of a church-state union from the Millerite movement, associating church-state union with the biblical “Babylon” which included the fallen Protestant churches. Some of them even feared that any legal organization would make the movement another Babylon. After 1858, E. G. White’s cosmic perspective clarified the concept of Babylon as denoting religious or theological

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38. Ellen G. White, *Unpublished Manuscript Testimonies of Mrs. E. G. White: Taken from the Private Collection of E. A. Sutherland, P. T. Magan, David Paulson, J. O. Johnston, and A. W. Spalding*, ed. Percy T. Magan and Arthur W. Spalding (Washington, DC: Ellen G. White Estate, 1916), 1.

39. E. G. White, *Great Controversy*, 442.

alliance with the state, but not including amoral interactions with government, such as legal incorporation of religious organizations. This new perspective on the conflict between good and evil helped clarify some issues of obedience to the state, such as oaths, laws, Babylon, and church organization. Though White often preached wisdom and discretion, she stood boldly for civil disobedience of the Fugitive Slave Law. This position can hardly be attributed to her Methodist past or any spark of social-gospel preaching; it was a confirmation of her expanded cosmic controversy perspective that was also reflected in her understanding of the two-horned beast of Rev 13. To White, both church and state were arenas in which the conflict was being fought and Satan's power and influence needed to be resisted in both arenas.

### **The Civil War and Its Issues for Adventists**

This section studies issues related to the Civil War as they faced the nascent Adventist church. First, it looks at the approach Sabbatarian Adventists took to address the excitement of war. Following that, it presents the delicate situation Adventists were in during the war and how they managed the issue of the draft. Then it shows how circumstances influenced Adventists to establish their position on military service. Finally, it investigates the consequences of the Civil War and how Adventists managed to work with sociopolitical difficulties. This section also shows how E. G. White applied her views of a cosmic controversy in the face of the practical difficulties caused by the war.

#### **Commenting on the "Excitement" of National Politics**

In January 12, 1861, three months before the first shots of the civil war were fired at Fort Sumter, South Carolina, E. G. White warned the Adventist congregation in Parkville, Michigan, about the difficult times ahead. "There is not a person in this house who has even dreamed of the trouble that is coming upon this land. People are making

sport of the secession ordinance of South Carolina, but I have just been shown that a large number of States are going to join that State, and there will be a most terrible war.”<sup>40</sup>

In August 3, 1861, White proposed that God’s judgment was being carried out upon the American civil government. She implied that the losses and the duration of the struggle between North and South were dependent upon God’s will and how “in His wisdom He saw fit, to punish [both sides of the Union] for their sins.”<sup>41</sup> Through the events of the Civil War, White gave illustrations of what she meant by civil government being subject to God. She indicated that God had brought judgment and punishment to the nation for having laws that allowed and promoted evil, especially slavery. In the case of the Battle of Manassas, White saw in vision that God “sent an angel to interfere” with the battle, to prevent the North from bringing the war to a rapid conclusion.<sup>42</sup>

The questionable nature of President James Buchanan’s administration was noted by early Adventists. E. G. White argued that James Buchanan had worked illicitly in favor of the South in preparation for war, and charged that “the [Buchanan] administration planned and managed for the South to rob the North of their implements of war.”<sup>43</sup> Uriah Smith also presented other opinions about Buchanan’s behavior and other instances of national instability; however, Smith used articles with far more

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40. Ellen G. White, "Remarks at Parkville, Michigan," *General Conference Daily Bulletin*, January 31, 1893, 37.

41. E. G. White, *Testimonies*, 1:267.

42. Ellen G. White, "Communication from Sister White," *Review and Herald*, April 26, 1861, 101.

43. E. G. White, *Testimonies*, 1:253.



adjectives than White. Smith allowed words such as treachery, villainy, vulgar, knavery, and falsehood to describe the government and the political situation.

The president [Buchanan] authorizes the use of money, paid out professedly for public service, to be used to influence elections; members of congress are bribed directly with money thus obtained to carry or defeat a party measure; legislatures and State governments are bought at wholesale or by retail, at wholesale prices, as in Wisconsin, or at retail as in New York; cities are burdened with taxes which go not for the service of tax-payers to clean their streets, to preserve their lives from pestilence or fire, but to fill the flaccid pockets of hungry officials.<sup>44</sup>

Uriah Smith often used an aggressive style of exposing national politics through strong words and opinions. Perhaps Smith expressed more of his own feelings while reporting the “excitement” caused by government and political decisions. This characterized the early Adventist perception of government in light of the two-horned beast understanding.<sup>45</sup>

Smith’s observations and style did not go unnoticed by other Adventists who also

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44. Uriah Smith, "The Age of Theft," *Review and Herald*, June 19, 1860, 35.

45. In 1854 Smith challenged sabbatarian Adventists to take a clear position: “The great antagonistic principles of Temperance and Intemperance, Protestantism and Catholicism, Freedom and Slavery, Republicanism, and Tyranny, are all at work. Now whenever and wherever these principles appear, every Christian knows or should know which side he is on.” In July of 1856, during the presidential campaigns he argued again: “Political parties are raging, the public mind is in a state of feverish excitement, and political demagogues are stretching every nerve, each to secure the success of his own party.” Uriah Smith, "Ye Are Not of This World," *Review and Herald*, July 10, 1856, 84. In August 1856 Smith reinforced his views: “Do you think that you, as a Christian living under the gospel, have a Bible permission to mingle in political strife in any way whatever? either in legislating or executing the laws of human government? If so, I think you are greatly mistaken!” Uriah Smith, "Follow Me," *Review and Herald*, August 14, 1856, 118. In 1861 Smith commented on the situation of the civil war: “The American leaders seem to be seized with infatuation on the subject of slavery, the ‘primal cause’ of this disastrous war; and an imbecility, as unaccountable as it is aggravating, to the masses in the North, has been the characteristic of most of the movements thus far in behalf of the Union.” idem, "The North Responsible for Slavery-Compromises and Union Worship," *Review and Herald*, November 12, 1861, 189.

felt deeply interested in the subject and wanted to engage in debate with the opposition. A. Byington challenged U. Smith's radical views: "[In spite of your doctrines, discourse, and benevolence,] if we would ever see the laws of our land protect all its inhabitants, our moral suasion must be brought to bear on those who make them, on law-makers, and on makers of law-makers."<sup>46</sup>

J. H. Waggoner also identified himself as one with great interest in national politics, and he supported Uriah Smith in the debate with Byington. Waggoner declared: "I also feel deeply interested in this subject, and am sorry to lose the co-operation of one so decided in his advocacy of correct principles. Some years ago I was engaged in the field of politics, but left it for, as I supposed, good reasons. Circumstances forbid my showing my opinion at present; but I hope to be able to do so in the future."<sup>47</sup>

Others, who were more moderate, recognized the motive of excitement and cautioned fellow Adventists that "the spirit of politics and war are so exciting at this time that we need to be on our guard. We may indeed pity the suffering people in Kansas; but we cannot fight with them, nor for them. We must put away 'all anger, wrath, malice and bitterness with all evil speaking.'"<sup>48</sup>

The perspective gained by the new interpretation of the two-horned beast brought another wave of antipathy towards the state. This perspective was slightly different for E. G. White; she perceived that these issues were part of the spiritual struggle, while the

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46. Auson Byington, "Communication from Bro. A. Byington," *Review and Herald*, April 21, 1859, 174.

47. J. H. Waggoner, "Note to Bro. Auson Byington," *Review and Herald*, April 28, 1859, 181.

48. Samuel Everett, "From Bro. Everett," *Review and Herald*, September 4, 1856, 143.

others were focused mostly on the contemporary political developments. Though White also criticized politicians for their acts, she saw them as acts of sin and led by Satan; others, such as Uriah Smith, noted the events but did not see beyond the evil declared in the prophecies.

#### Cautious “Republican” Adventists

E. G. White was very concerned with Adventist comments about the issues leading to the Civil War. She feared that Adventists would be “branded as Secessionists . . . in this excited state of the people,” which would place Adventists’ safety at risk. She pointed out that some doctrines among Adventists were not taught correctly, which left some believers unclear about their positions on the issues of slavery and civil war.<sup>49</sup>

In line with White’s argument, Uriah Smith and J. H. Waggoner took up the issue with A. Byington to explain the republican “politically distanced” Adventist position.<sup>50</sup> Smith accurately described the uncomfortable position in which Adventists had placed themselves because of their eschatology and mission. He argued that it was the Adventist duty to work for the benefit of the country according to the requirements of God’s commandments. Consequently, slavery was abhorred because it was identified as evil and an opposition to the will of God. However, Smith warned that the hope of the slaves was not in the “dragon-hearted power” to wage war and release them, but in the coming of the Messiah.<sup>51</sup>

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49. E. G. White, *Manuscript Releases*, 5:60-61; extract from idem to Church in Roosevelt, NY, and Vicinity [n. d.], 1861 (Lt 16, 1861), CAR.

50. The term “republican” means pertaining to a republic, the form of the political system of the United States. It is not intended to refer to the Republican political party.

51. Uriah Smith, "Remarks," *Review and Herald*, March 10, 1859, 116.

The discourse of E. G. White carried strong republican affirmation, but unlike Smith and the *RH* authors, she focused more on the spiritual side of the problem and its implications for Adventists. White complained that “many professed Sabbathkeepers” who were recklessly raising political arguments were damaging the delicate situation. White argued that comments perceived as sympathetic to the Southerners came from those who “are not in harmony with God’s word or in union with the body of Sabbathkeeping believers.” She reasoned that such arguments were foreign to Adventists because “they lack sympathy for the oppressed colored race and are at variance with the pure, republican principles of our Government.”<sup>52</sup>

Consistently with her position, White rebuked the Southern decision to separate from the union. She compared the Civil War to the war in heaven and argued that God disliked both likewise: “God has no more sympathy with rebellion upon earth than with the rebellion in heaven.”<sup>53</sup> This explains why White used the term “Southern rebellion” to refer to the Civil War; this phrase was also from a spiritual perspective.<sup>54</sup>

E. G. White’s warnings regarding slavery and the war reflected the concerns of her day, but also highlighted the spiritual clash between good and evil. She advised that “as a people we [Adventists] must use great caution. As we do not engage in the war and

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52. The lack of a recognized structure and leadership allowed the scattered congregations to embrace positions at variance with each other. Though White’s warnings could be applied to many of the churches at the time, it is very likely that her comments were also directed to Alexander Ross in Roosevelt, NY. E. G. White, *Testimonies*, 1:534. For her extensive exhortation of the Ross family, see Ellen G. White, *Testimony to the Church* (Battle Creek, MI: Review and Herald, 1872), 78-89; idem, *Manuscript Releases*, 5:60.

53. E. G. White, *Testimonies*, 1:534.

54. Ibid., 253.

pray for union and preach in regard to union, suspicions are aroused.” White had a clear perspective that the Adventist position was a cause of concern to the republic, and again, she proposed two different groups involved in the situation: (1) Some Sabbathkeepers would “unite their forces with the combined influences of the powers of darkness to distract and hinder or tear down” the works determined by God, and (2) others would be God’s “chosen instruments to build up” the works that God had determined for the church and for the state.<sup>55</sup>

### The Issue of Military Involvement

Though the arguments of Byington and Ross were carefully addressed, Adventists were still concerned about being perceived as traitors to the Union. To prevent the development of a critical situation, James White put forth further propositions to Adventists regarding an upcoming military draft.

James White’s editorial “The Nation” was much in line with E. G. White’s belief that the civil and religious liberty enjoyed in the republic was sustained “by the best government under heaven.” J. White also called the Southern “hellish rebellion” the greatest “since that of Satan and his angels.” His article was intended to affirm Adventist support of the Northern cause and obedience to civil government in case of a military draft. James White proposed that it was better for Adventists to respect government and be drafted than to irresponsibly resist to the point of self-inflicted death.<sup>56</sup>

James White’s arguments did not please Adventists who were more inclined to either military activism or pacifism. The few military activists, such as Joseph Clark,

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55. E. G. White, *Manuscript Releases*, 5:60-62.

56. James White, "The Nation," *Review and Herald*, August 12, 1862, 84.

proposed that Adventists ought to take matters into their own hands and “strike this rebellion with a staggering blow.”<sup>57</sup> Pacifists such as Henry Clarke from Iowa argued that to give obedience to government on the issue of war, which obviously involves killing, would be the same as giving government the “responsibility for violating the Sabbath law.”<sup>58</sup> Despite both extremes of the debate, the majority of the correspondents agreed with J. White that the best policy for Adventists would be obedience to government but avoiding combatancy.<sup>59</sup>

Despite the sharp discussion that was exposed in the pages of the *Review*, E. G. White saw consistency in the arguments of J. White and agreed to what he had concluded. However, she was “not fully settled in regard to taking up arms.” She indicated that pacifists and military activists failed to recognize that the laws of this country were not against the Adventist faith. She rather believed that the country was in peril and needed the help of all its citizens, including the Adventists.<sup>60</sup>

E. G. White considered the attitudes of both extremes inappropriate. She condemned the pacifists who persevered in resistance to government, even at the cost of their lives. White pointed out that “Satan would exult to see us shot down so cheaply, for

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57. Joseph Clarke, "The Sword Vs. Fanaticism," *Review and Herald*, September 23, 1862, 135; Joseph Clarke, "The War! The War!!," *Review and Herald*, September 23, 1862, 134.

58. Henry E. Carver, "The War," *Review and Herald*, October 21, 1862, 166.

59. D. T. Bourdeau, "The Present War," *Review and Herald*, October 14, 1862, 154-155; B. F. Snook, "The War and Our Duty," *Review and Herald*, October 14, 1862, 159; James White, "The War Question," *Review and Herald*, October 14, 1862, 159. The comments and responses of the articles give an indication of the trend of Adventist opinions of noncombatancy which were adopted later.

60. Ellen G. White to Sister Steward, August 19, 1862, Lt 7, 1862, CAR; cf. E. G. White, *Testimonies*, 1:356.

our influence, could not have a salutary influence upon the beholders.” To her, resistance would serve only to confirm the suspicions of many toward Adventists.<sup>61</sup>

Those prone to take arms were equally rebuked. In her arguments prior to the military draft, White warned that Sabbathkeepers could not expect that God would be on the battlefield fighting along with them and therefore they “should not, upon any consideration, engage in this terrible war.”<sup>62</sup> She believed that many in the North were not fighting the war primarily in defense of moral values. She exposed many hidden motivations on both sides, such as jealousy, envy, and conflict of interest among those who led the troops. This war was initially not an honorable cause, indicating that Satan and his workers were busy at work: “Leading men in the [American] Revolution [1776] acted unitedly, with zeal, and by that means they gained their independence. But men now [1863] act like demons instead of human beings.”<sup>63</sup>

### Threats and Opportunities for Adventism

The Civil War and the delicate situation it brought for Adventists caused many

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61. Ellen G. White to Sister Steward, August 19, 1862, Lt 7, 1862, CAR; cf. E. G. White, *Testimonies*, 1:356-357.

62. E. G. White, *Manuscript Releases*, 7:112. R. W. Olson argues that this and similar statements were presented during a time when military service was by voluntary enlistment only. A further analysis of the word “engage” gives another indication of the voluntary meaning of the text. Noah Webster’s 1828 dictionary showed that all nine applications listed for the word “engage” imply a voluntary action such as: (a) To make liable for a debt to a creditor; to bind one’s self as surety; (b) To pawn; to stake as a pledge; (c) To unite and bind by contract or promise; (d) To embark in an affair; etc. Thus it becomes evident that the center of the issue is the voluntary bearing of arms. See Noah Webster, *Dictionary of the English Language* (New Haven, MA: S. Converse, 1828), s.v. “Engage”; White, *Testimonies*, 1:716-718.

63. E. G. White, *Testimonies*, 1:366; cf. *ibid.*, 365; Appendix, 716, 717; E. G. White, *Manuscript Releases*, 7:111-712.

difficulties to the body of believers, but at the same time it helped to solidify their views. When Congress passed the first conscription law in March 1863, the Adventist position was already leaning toward noncombatancy, and efforts were made to purchase exemptions. As the extremists from both ends entered the debate, other prominent leaders such as J. H. Waggoner and J. N. Loughborough helped to solidify the views presented by J. White and endorsed by E. G. White.<sup>64</sup>

Despite the scarcity of money, all efforts were made to provide the exemption money for those who did not want to fight. Through the efforts of Quakers, the conscription laws were amended in February 1864, allowing “conscientious objectors” to serve in noncombatant duty. Later, in July 1864, it became necessary for Adventists to be recognized as such. The effort made by the General Conference and J. N. Andrews to work with state and federal authorities proved to be courteous and fruitful. Despite the fear that conscientious objectors would be hated on the battlefield, this was the first significant interaction of church and state in Sabbatarian Adventism.<sup>65</sup>

E. G. White’s later reflections on the challenges faced during the Civil War demonstrated that she was equally concerned with the eschatological understanding and the mission of the church. White saw republicanism as established in the United States as a key to power and prosperity. She pointed out that “the Declaration of Independence sets forth the great truth” about men’s creation and aspirations. White also recognized the

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64. Richard W. Schwarz and Floyd Greenleaf, *Light Bearers: A History of the Seventh-day Adventist Church*, rev. ed. (Nampa, ID: Pacific Press, 2000), 97.

65. E. G. White understood that draftees who refused to fight were subject to “imprisonment, torture, or death.” E. G. White, *Testimonies*, 1:357. One Sabbathkeeper drafted as a non-combatant reported that during his ordeal “[he] felt but little desire to live any longer.” P. H. Cady, “Experience of a Drafted Non-Combatant,” *Review and Herald*, January 24, 1865, 70.



freedom of religious faith allowed by republicanism, and she praised the fundamental principles that brought many to American shores. The problem she had was not with the two-horned beast's horn of republicanism, for it was "lamb like" in its suggestion of peaceful principles. White saw the problem as the entire two-horned beast acting against its own principles. She argued that republicanism, compared to future actions, "point[s] to a striking contradiction between the professions and the practice of the nation thus represented."<sup>66</sup>

In short, E. G. White never condemned what republicanism stood for. She believed that it would be beneficial to Adventists to seek legal ways to prevent pressures that arose because of their beliefs. When asked about the course that should be taken to secure Adventist beliefs before the nation, she reminded them of the draft and the Civil War. She proposed, "I can speak in the fear of God, it is right we should use every power we can to avert pressure that is being brought to bear upon our people."<sup>67</sup>

The first organized effort regarding the church-state relationship in Adventism also dismissed the earlier issue of oaths. In the mobilization for Adventist recognition of conscientious objector status, as provided by the draft amendment of 1864, Adventists entered a relationship with the state with hopes and fears. Despite the reservations about the eschatological understanding of the United States and the Sabbatarian faith, there was also an expectation of the fairness represented by republicanism. Ironically, although Adventists were recognized as noncombatants, they were required to take an "oath of affirmation" before authorities in order to be included in the status. Had the issue not

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66. E. G. White, *Great Controversy*, 441.

67. Ellen G. White, *Selected Messages*, 3 vols. (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1958), 3:384.

been dismissed at the time, it would have represented another obstacle.<sup>68</sup>

### Adventist Work and Racial Conflict

The enthusiasm after the end of the war in 1865 did not last long. Soon, Adventists started to worry about what would become of the emancipated slaves. The war had ended the moral issue of slavery that affected the church in many ways, but after the struggle, emancipation transferred the problem into the sociopolitical arena. The *Review* asked valid questions about the legal status of the newly freed: "Can he hold a title to land? Nobody knows. Can he protect his wife? Nobody knows. Can he testify in a Court of justice? Nobody knows. None of his rights, natural or civil, are assured to him." Besides these legal uncertainties, there was also the "anti-negro" feeling already being propagated in the southern states.<sup>69</sup>

In May 1865, the General Conference recognized the opening of the field and resolved that it "should be entered upon according to our ability." Unfortunately, the conditions were limiting, and individual efforts among the freedmen started only in the late 1870s.<sup>70</sup> This delay indicated that Adventist abolitionists did not have the same interest in the condition of the freedmen as they had in the issue of slavery. To further complicate matters, segregation was running parallel to the scarcity of resources even inside the church.<sup>71</sup>

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68. J. N. Andrews, "Seventh-day Adventists Recognized as Non-Combatants," *Review and Herald*, September 13, 1864, 124-125.

69. Uriah Smith, "Is Slavery Dead?," *Review and Herald*, June 20, 1865, 20.

70. Uriah Smith, "The South," *Review and Herald*, May 23, 1865, 197.

71. Schwarz and Greenleaf, 225-227.

The sociopolitical problem of African American segregation was sharply challenged among Adventists during the General Conference meetings of 1887. A. T. Jones “took the position that no color line should be recognized.” Despite all intentions, J. M. Rees made the remark that in practical terms, “if a minister should go into a place and have the colored people mingle in the congregation with the whites, he would have no white people to talk to.” The report pointed out that “an animated discussion followed.” A later report was made indicating that it would be wise not to legislate on the issue “and that all reference to this question be omitted from the minutes.”<sup>72</sup>

When these discussions took place, the Adventist church had operated one Health Reform Institute for over twenty years, Battle Creek College had been open for thirteen years, and Healdsburg College had been open for more than five years. The work in the Pacific Northwest was flourishing, and there were missionaries in Europe, Scandinavia, Australia, and entering the African continent. All things considered, the work in the South was falling very short of its original interest.

The social and political implications of the color line for Adventism stretch far beyond the scope of this dissertation, and continue to the present day. But still, during her time, E. G. White pointed out ways in which the work with the freedmen was handled poorly, such as timing, lack of cooperation, and political involvement.

E. G. White believed that immediately after the emancipation was the best moment for both church and state to work and invest in behalf of the freedmen. Surprisingly, she indicated that a simultaneous effort between church and state would

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72. "The First Day's Proceedings," *General Conference Bulletin*, November 14, 1887, 2-3; "Forenoon Proceedings," *General Conference Bulletin*, November 21, 1887, 22.

have been most effective. “Much might have been accomplished by the people of America if adequate efforts in behalf of the freedmen had been put forth by the Government and by the Christian churches immediately after the emancipation of the slaves.” Though we cannot say that White is affirming the combination of church and state effort, the word “adequate efforts” indicated some sort of planning or coordination. White concluded that unfortunately both entities had “failed” in their tasks, especially the Adventists. She argued that “government, after a little effort, left the Negro to struggle, unaided, with his burden of difficulties. Some of the strong Christian churches began a good work, but sadly failed to reach more than a comparatively few; and the Seventh-day Adventist Church has failed to act its part.”<sup>73</sup>

The lack of interest and unwise movements of Adventists complicated the situation. E. G. White recognized that the few Adventists who engaged in the work among the freed slaves endured the difficulty of the field and the lack of cooperation. White believed the unwise political movements and speeches were very damaging to the small work that had been done. She reminded them that during the 1890s, “from Australia, across the broad waters of the Pacific, cautions were sent that every movement must be guarded, that the workers were to make no political speeches, and that the mingling of whites and blacks in social equality was by no means to be encouraged.”<sup>74</sup>

It is clear that White was not in favor of segregation as a moral principle. She pointed out that “God has marked out no color line” and neither are there two heavens, “one for white people and one for colored people.” Her comments clearly endorsed racial

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73. E. G. White, *Testimonies*, 9:205.

74. *Ibid.*

equality before God: “Both white and colored people have the same Creator, and are saved by the redeeming grace of the same Saviour.” Though White did not believe in segregation as a moral principle, she recognized that conflict over this circumstantial problem could hinder the Adventist mission. To better understand White’s perspective, it is necessary to make a distinction between a sociopolitical issue and the mission of the church, and how they relate to each other.<sup>75</sup>

In this case of racial segregation, White believed that the work of the church could be carried on in spite of the issue and Adventist faith could be upheld without immediately challenging the social order. In the emotionally charged atmosphere of the South in the 1890s and early 1900s that was “imperiling lives,” she thought it would be a mistake to enter a sociopolitical debate over an issue that was not conflicting with or prohibitive of Adventist work. “We are not to agitate the color line question, and thus arouse prejudice and bring about a crisis.” Adventists needed to work among all people involved in this social conflict, and to agitate the issue would not help solve the social inequality. White called for more work and less talk: “The light of the third angel’s message is to be given to those who need light. We are to labor calmly, quietly, faithfully, trusting in our Elder Brother.”<sup>76</sup>

The mission of the church, either by preaching or action, needed to be adjusted to fit the situation it faced. White suggested that “the colored ministers should make every effort possible to help their own people to understand the truth for this time.” To enhance

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75. E. G. White, *Manuscript Releases*, 4:33; extract from Ellen G. White to Our Churches in Washington, D.C., October 19, 1908 (Lt 304, 1908), CAR.

76. E. G. White, *Testimonies*, 9:206, 209. E. G. White asserted that this was a temporary expedient because of the circumstances, and not an unchanging principle, as shown by her qualifier, “until the Lord show us a better way.” *Ibid.*, 207.

their conditions, she added, “schools and sanitariums for colored people should be established, and in these the colored youth should be taught and trained for service by the very best teachers that can be employed.”<sup>77</sup> Overall, she intended that the colored people would be “missionaries among their own people.” However, she realized that the “color line question” could be dealt with differently “in some places in the North.”<sup>78</sup>

### Summary

The Civil War brought Adventists an opportunity for contemplation of the power of the two-horned beast. While many Adventists looked on the unfolding developments with exceeding excitement, E. G. White had a greater focus on the spiritual battle between good and evil. Though Adventists had declared their antislavery position and their support for republicanism, they were still in danger of being seen as traitors, mostly because of their eschatological perceptions of America. The ideas expressed by some could make it appear that their opposition to the war was rooted not in moral principles, but antipathy for the state.<sup>79</sup> E. G. White worried that this diversity of opinions within Adventism would raise suspicion against them and harm the mission of the young church. The different opinions on how to respond to the draft led to sharp discussion that helped solidify Adventists’ position as noncombatants. E. G. White agreed with her husband that Adventists should conscientiously help the country in times of peril; she also rebuffed

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77. E. G. White, *Testimonies*, 9:207.

78. *Ibid.*, 9:213.

79. A. Byington raised the argument of the discrepancy between what Adventists publicly advocated and their lack of effort “to give the slave the protection of human law” and considered them “impracticable” in their interests. Auson Byington, “Communication from Bro. A. Byington,” *Review and Herald*, April 21, 1859, 174.

extreme pacifists and voluntary enlistment. The war also helped Adventists to establish an official relationship with government and to reflect upon a more careful and discreet position on important issues. Following the war, White fought to keep Adventists more focused on the preaching of the message than on the sociopolitical discussion of racial segregation in the South, although she realized that in some places in the North, the issue could be dealt with differently than in the South.

### **Adventist Engagement in Sociopolitical Causes**

This section investigates the first voluntary engagement of the Adventist church with a sociopolitical cause: temperance. The study begins by looking at the incorporation of temperance into the Adventist message and the rise of the temperance cause in America. Next, it shows that the Adventist church, in spite of its different focus on pursuing temperance, entered into cooperation with other groups. Finally, it considers how far Adventists should proceed politically in support of a moral cause, and shows how the idea of controversy between good and evil in society influenced E. G. White and her counsels.

#### **Emergence of Temperance in Adventism**

Concerns with health and temperance already existed among Sabbatarian Adventists in the years following the Great Disappointment. Joseph Bates's concern for temperance preceded his crusade for the seventh-day Sabbath. In December 1851, E. G. White was already arguing that "tobacco was a filthy weed, and that it must be laid aside

or given up.”<sup>80</sup> A few months later James White wrote effectively on the issue of tea, coffee, and tobacco from a spiritual perspective in the pages of the *Review*.<sup>81</sup>

The increasing importance of health reform reached a pivotal point in June 1863, when E. G. White gained a deeper understanding of health reform.<sup>82</sup> She realized that the health message was associated with the message of the imminent coming of Jesus. She proposed that it was “a sacred duty to attend to our health, and arouse others to their duty, and yet not take the burden of their case upon us. Yet we have a duty to speak, to come out against intemperance of every kind, —intemperance in working, in eating, in drinking and in drugging.”<sup>83</sup>

The concern for health reform had a major impact on the Adventist lifestyle and mission. The health work became integral to Adventism, which led to hospitals, medical schools, clinics, medical launches, and much literature on natural treatments. The health

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80. Ellen G. White to Brother Barnes, December 14, 1851 (Lt 5, 1851), CAR; Ellen G. White, *Counsels on Diet and Foods: A Compilation from the Writings of Ellen G. White* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1938), 495.

81. James White, "Editorial," *Review and Herald*, June 24, 1852, 32. James White's results were recorded in James White, "Go Thou and Do Likewise," *Review and Herald*, May 2, 1854, 116. See also J. N. Andrews, "The Use of Tobacco; a Sin against God," *Review and Herald*, April 10, 1856, 5; James White, "How This Looks!," *Review and Herald*, June 12, 1856, 53.

82. The vision Ellen White received in June 6, 1863, in Otsego, MI, has been labeled the “comprehensive health reform” vision and caused a major impact on Adventists’ lifestyle. White proposed a vast health reform that implicated many aspects of life such as appetite, meats, use of pure water, natural remedies, physical activities, and well-being of mind and spirit. White wrote extensively from her vision at Otsego, including the basic principles for a healthier life which include “pure air, sunlight, abstemiousness, rest, exercise, proper diet, the use of water, trust in divine power.” E. G. White, *Ministry of Healing*, 127.

83. E. G. White, *Manuscript Releases*, 5:105.



work became intertwined with missionary work and was deemed the “right arm of the gospel.” Their interest in temperance and health reform also brought Adventists closer to civil political movements and reshaped their ideas of church-state separation.<sup>84</sup>

### The Cause of Temperance in America

The definite start of the temperance movement in America was the founding of the American Temperance Society in 1826. Though it influenced many states to become legally dry, the American Temperance Society lost its influence during the Civil War. In the 1870s and 1880s, the cause was resumed after the founding of the National Prohibition Party in 1869. The Prohibition Party tried to gain political power from a moral agenda.

The Woman’s Christian Temperance Union was formed in 1874 and rapidly grew influential in the political, social, and legal arenas, as well as in evangelism, education, and prevention. The WCTU’s ideas were radically spread by its members, who would boldly enter a liquor establishment and perform a service with hymns, prayer, and preaching for many hours. The WCTU’s mix of religious, political, and civil action became widely recognized by politicians and religious and social figures, who also joined the venture. Their major objective was legal prohibition of alcoholic beverages by the state and complete abstinence for individuals.<sup>85</sup>

In order to leverage its influence against the liquor problem, the WCTU embraced

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84. Ellen G. White, *Instruction for Effective Christian Service: A Compilation from the Writings of Ellen G. White* (Washington, DC: Home Missionary Department of the General Conference of the Seventh-day Adventists, 1925), 134.

85. Details about the beginning of the WCTU are given in Ruth Bordin, "Maternal Struggle," in *Women and Temperance* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1981).

the feminist cause. It was considered appropriate for women, who suffered the most from liquor problems, to have their say in the ballots. Later, the WCTU also embraced the cause of Sunday legislation, in support of a special day dedicated to religious values.<sup>86</sup>

The more definite joining of religious denominations to the temperance cause led to the formation of the Anti-Saloon League in 1893. Politicians recognized that Christian denominations were pushing government. "The position of all the leading Protestant denominations of our country upon the temperance question is almost unanimous for total abstinence of the individual and prohibition of the law of the land."<sup>87</sup>

The combined activities of the Prohibition Party, the Women's Christian Temperance Union, and the Anti-Saloon League were a convergence of religious and political interests. Temperance activism supported the imposition of laws in ways that religion believed to be appropriate. The Seventh-day Adventist church had common ground with the temperance movement to the point of cooperation; however, there were some difficulties with other social causes that were aggregated in the process.<sup>88</sup>

### Distinct Temperance Activism

Despite their concern for temperance, Adventists became active in this cause only in January 1879 with the formation of the American Health and Temperance Association.

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86. Ruth Bordin, *Women and Temperance* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1981), 5-6.

87. Henry William Blair, *The Temperance Movement: Or, the Conflict between Man and Alcohol* (Boston: William E. Smythe, 1888), 471.

88. The convergence of political and social interests is detailed in Richard F. Hamm, "Pragmatists and the Polity," in *Shaping the Eighteenth Amendment: Temperance Reform, Legal Culture, and the Polity 1880-1920* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina, 1995).

Dr. J. H. Kellogg was the president and proposed a two-part objective: “to promote the health of the members and to advance the cause of temperance in its truest, broadest sense, by the circulation of health and temperance literature, by lectures, by the circulation of pledges.” Three pledges were proposed that recognized the need for the “help of God” to accomplish abstinence not only from liquor, but also from tobacco in all forms, and from tea, coffee, and all opiates and narcotics.<sup>89</sup>

The American Health and Temperance Association was the Adventists’ tentative attempt to be socially active in the temperance cause without compromising their faith. To become members of other temperance societies could mean an involvement with other causes that were outside Adventism. Although other temperance societies condemned the use of liquor, they said nothing about tobacco, tea, coffee, and other substances. In some societies, secrecy and oaths of allegiance were required, which were also against the Adventist understanding.<sup>90</sup>

It became evident that the American Health and Temperance Association was a front entity of the Adventist church that, based on the church’s mission, took a stand specially on temperance issues. Such an entity would work as a tool for evangelism, spread Adventist doctrines, and interact with other organizations sympathetic to the same cause.

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89. Extracted from *Yearbook of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventist Church, International Missionary and Benevolent Association 1897* (Battle Creek, MI: International Missionary and Benevolent Association, 1897), 54-55.

90. M. E. Olsen, *A History of the Origin and Progress of Seventh-day Adventists* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1925), 585-586.

## A Cause for Cooperation

E. G. White embraced the cause of temperance and became a lecturer in meetings outside the Adventist denomination. In 1905, White reflected on her past ministry, saying, “for many years I was known as a speaker on temperance.” In 1877 she took part in a large gathering promoted by the local chapter of the WCTU and the Battle Creek Reform Club. The mammoth tent of the Michigan Conference was used to accommodate the crowd, and White spoke for ninety minutes. The 5,000 present “listened in almost breathless silence.”<sup>91</sup>

Another of White’s temperance speeches was given in Christiana, Norway, November 8, 1885. From White’s description of her speech, it is clear that it was not argued from political or social premises, but on moral and religious ones. Though the event itself could seem like a campaign, her participation cannot be taken as such. She described that “when they saw that the subject was to be argued from a Bible stand-point, they were at first astonished, then interested, and finally deeply moved. There was no smiling, no noisy applause. All seemed to feel that the subject presented was too solemn to excite merriment.”<sup>92</sup> Despite the audience’s great appreciation and invitations for further engagements, White preferred to prioritize her ministry among Adventists.<sup>93</sup>

When E. G. White talks about cooperation in the temperance cause, there are two important aspects that need to be noticed. First, she is referring to combining efforts on common ground, as opposed to ideological/philosophical association or affiliation. “The

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91. E. G. White, *Temperance*, 221.

92. Ellen G. White, *Historical Sketches of the Foreign Missions of the Seventh-day Adventists* (Basel: Imprimerie Polyglotte, 1886), 207.

93. *Ibid.*, 211.

Woman's Christian Temperance Union is an organization with whose *efforts for the spread of temperance principles* we can heartily unite." But even as she suggested joining forces, White established limits for this partnership: "We cannot do a better work than to unite, so far as we can do so without compromise, with the W. C. T. U. workers."<sup>94</sup>

Second, Adventists participated in ways that promoted temperance in the context of their complete theological understanding, which also allowed representation to civil organizations and evangelistic outreach. White warned Adventists, "We need at this time to show a decided interest in the work of the Woman's Christian Temperance Union." Then she reasoned, "It would be a good thing if at our camp meetings we should invite the members of the WCTU to take part in our exercises. This would help them to become acquainted with the reasons of our faith, and open the way for us to unite with them in the temperance work." One point supporting her argument was the conversion of S. M. I. Henry, a preeminent leader of the WCTU, who became an Adventist.<sup>95</sup>

#### Yes, We Shall Vote for a Moral Cause!

Endorsement of voting in the temperance cause marked a major shift in the Adventist church-state relationship. White considered the problem of intemperance to be morally damaging, and voting was the tool that could mend the problem. White reflected upon intemperance: "How can Christian men and women tolerate this evil? . . . There is a cause for the moral paralysis upon society." Then she proposed, "In our favored land, every voter has some voice in determining what laws shall control the nation. Should not

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94. E. G. White, *Temperance*, 222, 224.

95. E. G. White, *Temperance*, 223. See also Margaret R. Thiele, *The Whirlwind of the Lord: The Fascinating True Story of Sarepta Myrenda Irish Henry* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 1998).

that influence and that vote be cast on the side of temperance and virtue?" White's question had an obvious answer; however, Adventists were not entirely sure about it.<sup>96</sup>

Due to concerns with temperance during the Iowa camp meeting, the following resolution was offered: "Resolved, that we express our deep interest in the temperance movement now going forward in this state; and that we instruct all our ministers to use their influence among our churches and with the people at large to induce them to put forth every consistent effort, by personal labor, and at the ballot box, in favor of the prohibitory amendment of the constitution, which the friends of temperance are seeking to secure."<sup>97</sup>

Objections were made to the clause which requested action at "the ballot box," and some pressed for its deletion. E. G. White, who was present at the camp meeting, was called to give her counsel. White reported, "I dressed and found I was to speak to the point of whether our people should vote for prohibition." "Shall we vote for prohibition?" she asked. "Yes, to a man, everywhere," she replied, "and perhaps I shall shock some of you if I say, if necessary, vote on the Sabbath day for prohibition if you cannot at any other time."<sup>98</sup>

White's concerns about temperance and prohibition were not rooted merely in social issues, but in her theology. She believed that Satan was behind the distribution of alcoholic beverages, using them as a strategy to control and destroy God's creation. In

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96. Ellen G. White, "Temperance and the License Law," *Review and Herald*, November 8, 1881, 19-20.

97. G. I. Butler, "Iowa Conference," *Review and Herald*, July 5, 1881, 27.

98. George B. Starr, "The Des Moines, Iowa, Temperance Experience, 1881," File 13-E-1, CAR; Ellen G. White to Edson and Emma White, June 16, 1881 (Lt 6, 1881), CAR.

fact, White argued that alcoholic beverages were Satan's invention: "[Satan] would take the fruit of the vine, also wheat, and other things given by God as food, and would convert them into poisons, which would ruin man's physical, mental, and moral powers, and so overcome the senses that Satan should have full control."<sup>99</sup> Though White believed that the situation in America would get worse according to prophecy, she still believed in using the lawful political process to stamp out evil in society.

In summary, Ellen White's views on active participation on social-political movements were not in conflict with separation of church and state. She raised her voice to place the issues of temperance in moral perspective and therefore saw participation as a moral duty to the church. As such, White proposed that all means should be used (including voting) without entanglement of the church with the state or secular organizations.

### Summary

Temperance had been a concern among Sabbatarian Adventists from the very beginning, but it became more prominent and recognized as an integral part of the Adventist message through visions of E. G. White in 1848 and 1863. In America, the temperance movement made a distinctive impact in the late 1870s, propelled by the work of the WCTU. The major difference between the Adventists and the WCTU was the focus of activism: While Adventists saw temperance as an opportunity to reach people with the gospel, the WCTU saw it as a tool to achieve their sociopolitical agenda. E. G. White saw that temperance was a cause worthy of Adventist support and encouraged the church to combine efforts with other entities. She reasoned that alcohol as a drink had

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99. E. G. White, *Temperance*, 12.

been invented by Satan and that the success of the temperance cause in society would ultimately mean the containment of evil. E. G. White went so far as to encourage Adventists to vote, even on the Sabbath, to spare society from evil; however, she did not encourage affiliation with political parties or partisan activism. Besides temperance, non-Adventist societies and political parties also supported other causes that were against Adventist beliefs, and a commitment to those institutions was not in the scope of the Adventist message. White encouraged participation and/or cooperation as long as it involved common ground and would not compromise the Adventist beliefs. It is clear that her highest priority was not the social movement or the voting, but the preaching of the Adventist message.

### **Adventists and the Sunday Laws**

This section analyzes the issues the Adventists faced in the religious/political movement to enforce the religious observance of Sunday. First, it investigates the rise of the Sabbath (Sunday) cause. Then, it explores how Adventists realigned their political alliances and how they were perceived, and investigates how Adventists responded to challenges they faced with the Sunday laws. Finally, it presents how the Sunday predicament changed Adventists' attitudes toward church and state. This section also presents in practical terms what E. G. White considered the appropriate attitude for a church facing persecution or favors, in light of the spiritual battle between good and evil.

#### **Support for a (Sunday) "Sabbath"**

The agitations for Sunday laws and temperance were mostly a reaction of Protestant Americans to the secularizing of America in the beginning of the post-Civil-War period. The influx of immigrants brought a more liberal lifestyle that was alien to the Puritan mind. Proposals for the enforcement of Sunday observance grew out of the desire



to restore the Christian customs of America and protect the sacred values of the nation.

The National Reform Association was formed in 1863 in support of the old European model of church and state. They protested for the inclusion of God in the Constitution to promote a better society and to appease God, for they believed the Civil War was a punishment from God. The NRA declared that “the object of this Society shall be to maintain existing Christian features in the American Government.”<sup>100</sup>

Political support for the NRA and the preservation of Sabbath values grew quickly. By 1871, the NRA’s membership included governors, bishops, chaplains, and significant private citizens, and the association had raised enough interest to enter a petition for Sunday observance before Congress. However, on February 4, 1874, Congress rejected the petition, reaffirming the founding fathers’ intent to leave God out of the Constitution.

Despite the failure to amend the Constitution, the NRA continued to press for state-level legislation on Sunday-keeping. By the 1890s, seventeen states were prosecuting Sunday-breakers—some states with more intensity than others, including Arkansas, Tennessee, Maryland, Georgia, Missouri, and Virginia. Adventists were an easy target for Sunday laws, and became the vast majority of those prosecuted for breaking the legal Sabbath (Sunday). More than one hundred Adventists were prosecuted between 1885 and 1896.<sup>101</sup>

The Sunday-rest cause gained a higher level of organization in the 1880s, which

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100. Robert Michael, *A Concise History of American Antisemitism* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2005), 95-96.

101. W. F. Crafts, *The Sabbath for Man: A Study of the Origin, Obligation, History, Advantage and Present State of Sabbath Observance*, 7th ed. (Baltimore: Authors' Union, 1894), 571.

propelled them once again toward federal legislation. In 1877, they benefited from their partnership with the WCTU's Department for Sabbath Observance and many other Christian associations. They requested federal legislation against what they called the evil trinity of (Sunday) Sabbath sins: Sunday mail, Sunday trains, and Sunday newspapers.<sup>102</sup>

In April 1888, the American Sabbath Union was founded and joined the NRA and WCTU to press for federal laws. A petition signed by two million people was presented to Congress on April 6, and a petition signed by ten million was presented on December 4; these were the results of combined efforts led by Wilbur F. Craft and Josephine C. Bateham. Considering the impressive numbers of petitioners and their representation, Senator Blair promoted the "Blair Sunday-Rest Bill."<sup>103</sup>

Despite the agitation from all sides of the Sunday question, the Blair Sunday-Rest Bill expired in committee in March 1889. All the parties involved continued to advocate their ideas until the animosity settled down. In the aftermath, different developments appeared in different areas of the religious/social arena, but no national legislation had been secured to enforce religious observance of Sunday. Perhaps the most noticeable development was the characterization of Sunday as a holiday, which varied from place to place according to general culture.<sup>104</sup>

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102. Wayne E. Fuller, *Morality in the Mail* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2003), 91-91.

103. Crafts, 567. For Adventist views of the Blair Sunday-Rest Bill see E. J. Waggoner, *The Blair Sunday-Rest Bill: Its Nature and History* (Oakland: Pacific Press, 1889).

104. *Appleton's Annual Cyclopædia and Register of Important Events of the Year 1888, 1889 ed.* (New York: Appleton, 1889), s.v. "Sunday Legislation."

## New Political Allies

Their opposition to Sunday laws in Senate committee hearings placed Adventists with unusual political allies. The Adventists' fight for religious liberty had placed them at odds with the "friends of the temperance cause."<sup>105</sup> In order to interact with the public opinion, in 1886 Adventists began publishing the *American Sentinel*, later renamed the *Sentinel of Liberty*. The periodical defined itself as "devoted to the defense of American Institutions, the preservation of the United States Constitutions as it is, as regards religion or religious tests." In essence, the purpose of the *American Sentinel* came very close to the ideals of Elias Smith's periodical, the *Herald of Gospel Liberty*.<sup>106</sup>

The issue of the Sunday law was a defining one for the Seventh-day Adventist church. On the one hand, the Adventists made it clear that their thinking was independent from that of evangelicals, though they could combine efforts toward certain common causes. On the other hand, they also made it clear to government that they stood by the republican principles established in the Constitution. In the eschatological figure of speech of Rev 13:11-14, Adventists were fighting the beast to preserve the republican horn, so no "image of the beast" would be created yet. Or, in other words, "the heritage of civil and religious liberty received from the founders of the republic will not be surrendered without a struggle." Jonathan M. Butler summarized the irony: "They wished to delay the end in order to preach that the end was near."<sup>107</sup>

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105. Words used by Ellen White referring to the activists of the WCTU. E. G. White, *Gospel Workers*, 384.

106. J. H. Waggoner, "Editorial," *American Sentinel*, January 1886, 8.

107. Jonathan M. Butler, "Adventism and the American Experience," in *The Rise of Adventism: Religion and Society in Mid-Nineteenth-Century America*, ed. Edwin S. Gaustad (New York: Harper and Row, 1974), 194.

In the Adventist struggle for the survival of the republic and also their own, friends and foes from the temperance cause changed places. Ironically, in the Sunday-law episode, Adventists had on their side the National Secular League and the liquor dealers—exactly those whom they had opposed during the temperance movement. Along with them came the Seventh Day Baptists, Jews, and “infidels,” who were also enemies of the American (Sunday) Sabbath.<sup>108</sup>

### Challenges and Responses

The Sunday issue was too critical to go unchallenged by Adventists. The motion for a constitutional amendment supporting Sunday rest had been high on Adventist awareness since its early stages. Adventists’ eschatological understanding positioned their hopes and fears as so intimately associated with America that they had a special interest in national developments. Early Adventist leaders also inherited Elias Smith’s concern for the republic and for keeping the church separate from the state. In February 1873 the *Review* made an analysis of the country. The editors report their sense that something serious was in the making and it soon became clear that they had forecasted correctly. “It is over the issues involved in the Religious Amendment of the Constitution that the conflict is doubtless to be.”<sup>109</sup> During the 1874 attempt to pass Sunday laws in Congress, Uriah Smith identified the issue as part of the Adventist message. He argued that such an attempt had been predicted in the Bible, in “a prophecy which constitutes the

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108. Crafts, 568.

109. Uriah Smith, "Is Ours a Christian Nation?" *Review and Herald*, February 25, 1873, 84.

very burden of our message.”<sup>110</sup>

A most definite wake-up call for Adventists came from California in 1882. W. C. White, vice-president of Pacific Press and son of Ellen G. White, was arrested in Oakland along with J. H. Waggoner, editor of *Signs of the Times*, for working in the office of the *Signs* on Sunday. In this case, Adventists were caught between the Home Protection Society, who fought liquor sales and wanted the enforcement of Sunday laws, and the League of Freedom, an organization of liquor dealers that was in opposition to both temperance and Sunday laws. Both organizations had reasons to be connected with the arrests, for Adventists were known to oppose both liquor sales and Sunday laws; nevertheless, both parties disclaimed any involvement in the arrests. Adventists learned the valuable lesson that no one could be trusted.<sup>111</sup>

State politics and party propositions gave Adventists even more reasons to be suspicious of a religion-driven agenda. Supporters of Sunday laws were advocating for the issue among Republicans and Democrats alike, and Adventists had little choice of political support. In the case of California, after failing to arouse religious liberty concerns in the Republican Party, Adventists aligned with the Democrats who promised to repeal the Sunday law.<sup>112</sup> Despite the link between liquor and Sunday laws, Adventists preferred to be perceived as associated with liquor interests in the elections of 1882 than

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110. Uriah Smith, "The Religious Amendment," *Review and Herald*, March 10, 1874, 100.

111. Uriah Smith, "The California Dilemma," *Review and Herald*, March 21, 1882, 184.

112. J. H. Waggoner, "Not a Politician," *Signs of the Times*, Weekly Supplement, Sept. 14, 1882, 3.

to sacrifice their conscience.<sup>113</sup>

Just as they had during the Civil War, Adventists once again found themselves in a delicate situation. They were accused by some Christians of supporting the anti-temperance cause, and at the same time were persecuted in some states for breaking the Sabbath (Sunday) laws. The situation became aggravated when more Adventists were arrested in states enforcing Sunday laws such as Arkansas, Georgia, and Tennessee. To remedy the situation, in 1886 Adventists decided to publish the *American Sentinel*, a magazine dedicated to spreading Adventist beliefs in regard to church and state. Later, in 1887, a five-member committee was appointed to help local groups in their struggle with pending Sunday legislations.

The formation of press committees prepared the church for the establishment of the National Religious Liberty Association in July 1889. The organization was a critical help to Adventists in their struggles over church and state issues. It was created to uphold the liberties created by republicanism, which Adventists perceived as positive for their survival and mission. Despite its affiliation with the Adventist church, the National Religious Liberty Association worked from the perspective of the United States Constitution, which granted religious freedom. This was in direct opposition to the Sunday organizations, which worked from a religious perspective to achieve legislative support. The degree of opposition was verified by the disproportionate number of Adventists arrested for breaking Sunday-rest laws.<sup>114</sup>

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113. Uriah Smith, "Sunday Demolishing Party Lines," *Review and Herald*, September 26, 1882, 616.

114. *Seventh-day Adventist Encyclopedia*, 1996 ed., s.v. "Public Affairs and Religious Liberty, Department of." In fact, the formation of the National Religious

In 1886, the *American Sentinel* called attention to the fact that “almost every kind of business is freely transacted, and people openly hunt and fish on Sunday and none are prosecuted except those who conscientiously observe the seventh day.” Some locals also acknowledged selective enforcement of the law: “To my knowledge others have worked on Sunday who did not observe the seventh day, and no bills were found against them. I believe the prosecution to be far more religious than for the purpose of guarding the Sunday from desecration.”<sup>115</sup>

The National Religious Liberty Association was able to raise questions and arguments to balance the influence of the American Sabbath (Sunday) Union. The case of R. M. King in Tennessee was one of the worst incidents of Adventist involvement with Sunday law enforcement. King was arrested in 1889, charged with the offense of plowing on Sunday. Newspapers such as the *New York Sun*, *Chicago Inter Ocean*, and *Sacramento Record-Union* gave exposure to the case, denouncing religious persecution of Adventists, which produced a sudden extraordinary exposure of Adventism across the country. King’s case went to a federal court, which determined that King was “wrongfully convicted” under a “due process of law”—in other words, that injustice was done in a proper legal way. King was returned to custody to serve his sentence and died

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Liberty Association was a direct recommendation from the press committee. "Press Committee," *General Conference Daily Bulletin*, October 18, 1889, 6.

115. E. Stinson, “E. Stinson to Dan T. Jones in Malcolm, Ark., March 27, 1887,” in *American State Papers Bearing on Sunday Legislation*, ed. William A. Blakely, rev. ed. (Washington, DC: Religious Liberty Association, 1911), 670-671; United States Circuit Court of Appeals, *The Federal Reporter*, 1911, June-September 1891, vol. 46:906.

in November 1890, before his appeal could be heard by the Supreme Court.<sup>116</sup>

The outbreak of arrests of Adventists was not surprising to E. G. White. She pointed back to the warnings issued long before: “Events which for more than forty years we have upon the authority of the prophetic word declared to be impending are now taking place before our eyes.” She also suggested that Adventists should “well know what the result of this movement will be.”<sup>117</sup> It was during the Sunday laws debates in the late 1880s that White released her *Great Controversy between Christ and Satan*, pointing to the seventh-day Sabbath as a central issue in the battle between good and evil in the closing days of history. However, White did not believe that the end was there yet; she proposed the final persecution as “the impending conflict” for which the church was not yet ready.<sup>118</sup>

White invited Adventists to intensively but peacefully work with government, demonstrating “kindness and true courtesy.” She believed that “we may have to plead most earnestly before legislative councils for the right to worship God according to the dictates of conscience.”<sup>119</sup> Although Adventists could base their position on biblical and

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116. See John N. Loughborough, *The Great Second Advent Movement: Its Rise and Progress* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1905), 162; Editorial, “For Working on Sunday,” *New York Times*, January 15, 1891, 1; United States Circuit Court of Appeals, *The Federal Reporter*, 1911, June-September 1891, vol. 46:906, 916; B. O. Flower, “Religious Intolerance To-Day: Persecuted for Conscience Sake,” in *The Arena* (Charleston, SC: BiblioLife, 2009), 149-152; E. B. Willis, “He Plowed on Sunday,” *Sacramento Daily Record-Union*, January 16, 1891, 6. The vast majority of the comments regarded Mr. King’s struggle as religious persecution.

117. E. G. White, *Testimonies*, 5:711.

118. E. G. White, *Great Controversy*, 582-592.

119. Ellen G. White to G. I. Butler and S. N. Haskell, December 8, 1886 (Lt 55, 1886), CAR.



legal grounds, White cautioned that “great care should be exercised to give no provocation” to Sunday keepers.<sup>120</sup> For places where the laws were prohibitive to Adventist faith, White warned that “it may become necessary for God’s people to move from those places to places where they will not be so bitterly opposed.”<sup>121</sup>

White also pleaded with the Adventist leadership to exercise wisdom and discretion. Periodicals such as the *Sentinel* and meetings with the leadership were necessary to solidify the Adventist position, but she rebuked passionate, impulsive decisions. She considered such to have been made without consideration, due to the misjudgment of young, inexperienced men.<sup>122</sup>

#### Extrapolating Zeal and Interests

The decisions on the Sabbath question helped to empower the National Religious Liberty Association as an important protector of Adventist liberties. However, their concern for keeping church and state isolated from each other led some to a more radical position that could hinder the Adventist mission at home and abroad. A. T. Jones, the young director of the National Religious Liberty Association, believed in extreme separation of church and state. Perhaps based on Adventists’ past challenges, Jones considered favors from the state, such as taxes and land gifts, to be inappropriate for Adventists.

In February 1893, there was a sharp debate at the General Conference Council

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120. E. G. White, *Manuscript Releases*, 12:322.

121. Ellen G. White, "Persecution Not to Be Needlessly Encountered," Ms 26, 1904, CAR.

122. E. G. White, *Manuscript Releases*, 17:167.

about a farm of 6,000 acres that was offered for free to Adventists by the South African government. Peter Wessels, a resident of South Africa and delegate to the meeting, argued that acquiring the farm would bring definite advantages to the work in South Africa.<sup>123</sup> But, the arguments for complete separation of church and state led the council to decide differently on March 3, 1893:

Whereas, In view of the separation which we believe should exist between the Church and the State, it is inconsistent for the Church to receive from the State pecuniary gifts, favors, or exemptions, on religious grounds; therefore,

36. Resolved, that we repudiate the doctrine that Church, or other ecclesiastical property should be exempt from taxation; and, therefore, further,

37. Resolved, That henceforth we decline to accept such exemption on our own behalf.<sup>124</sup>

The General Conference decision went beyond rejection of the land offered and left the church contemplating tax payments on the property of the sanitarium and tabernacle. Jones saw the tax exemption as a source of entanglement of church and state, and a valid argument for the cause he was fighting against. He believed that the exemption of church property from taxation was “another practice, evil in itself and fraught with additional danger in that it made a precedent and basis for urging the National Reform claims.”<sup>125</sup>

E. G. White believed differently from Jones and his supporters. She confessed to being “greatly distressed when I see our leading men taking extreme positions” that

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123. For detailed analysis of the issues involved in the land gift, see Roger W. Coon, *Ellen White and the Issue of the Reception of State Aid* (Silver Spring, MD: Ellen G. White Estate, 1990).

124. "Thirteenth Meeting," *General Conference Daily Bulletin*, March 1, 1893, 437.

125. Jones's perspectives on the issues are clearly exposed in A. T. Jones, *The Two Republics, or Rome and the United States of America* (Battle Creek, MI: Review and Herald, 1891), 810-812.

would bring more difficulties than benefits to the Adventist cause. She condemned the radical rejection of favors, arguing that God “still moves upon the hearts of kings and rulers in behalf of his people, and it becomes those who are so deeply interested in the religious liberty question not to cut off any favors.” She also believed that to refuse tax exemption “in all respects is not wise, nor correct.”<sup>126</sup>

Unlike Jones, E. G. White did not perceive government and its leaders as enemies of Christianity and opponents of religion. She believed that God through the Holy Spirit worked in the hearts of leaders to help His people accomplish His will. She also suggested that those who advocated the cause of religious liberty should not lose sight of the fact that God is the ruler of both church and state, and that radical practices of separation were not beneficial to the church and were not in accordance with the spirit of God.<sup>127</sup>

White also condemned the other extreme of church politics mingling with the politics of the state. She warned that secular causes should not enter the church and should never be declared among the brethren. Though she recognized the relevance of some political and social causes, she did not encourage church participation in political activism for purely political purposes. According to White, the Adventist church was to concern itself with the preaching of the gospel in peaceful ways: morally engaged but not politically associated.<sup>128</sup>

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126. Ellen G. White, *Testimonies to Ministers and Gospel Workers*, 202-203; idem, *Manuscript Releases*, 16:163, 167; extracted from Ellen G. White to Stephen N. Haskell, January 30, 1895 (Lt 11, 1895), CAR.

127. E. G. White, *Testimonies to Ministers and Gospel Workers*, 202.

128. E. G. White, *Gospel Workers: Instruction for All Who Are "Laborers Together with God,"* 395-396. Ellen White argued from the perspective that Jesus's

## Summary

During the 1880s and 1890s there was a perception that America had become secularized and needed to return to its Christian Puritan values. This also meant the revival of the problems of freedom of conscience that had been fought by Elias Smith and the Millerite pioneers. Religious denominations and institutions pressured government for Sunday laws that enforced religious observance, and Adventists joined forces with secular entities in order to preserve the freedoms established by the fathers of the republic. Ultimately, the survival of republican values favored the survival of the Adventist church. During the outbreak of arrests of Adventists, the church articulated its position more clearly and took measures such as founding the *American Sentinel* and National Religious Liberty Association in order to preserve the Constitution as it was. During those days, E. G. White emphasized that the Sabbath question was the central issue of the impending crisis preceding the Second Coming of Jesus. Recognizing the seriousness of the moment, she cautioned Adventists to once again act with wisdom and discretion. She also stood against excessive zeal for radical separation between church and state. E. G. White recognized that God was involved in both church and state. Though the devil wanted to take over the power of government, God was still influencing rulers to help His people.

## Summary and Conclusion

The concept of Babylon developed in 1844 by the Millerite Movement was the starting point for ideas about church-state relationships among Sabbatarian Adventists. The feeling of antipathy and distrust toward the state was demonstrated in the refusal of

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ministry was directed to the spiritual benefit of people without mingling with legal and political causes. Idem, *Testimonies*, 218.

oaths and in other discussions in the *Review*. The supporting arguments for resistant behavior towards government were based mostly on the Bible and early American history. However, in 1858, E. G. White gained a cosmic perception of a spiritual conflict between good and evil that was at variance with the inherited views. White credited the government as an agent of good under the influence of both good and evil, and expanded the Millerite perspective of government obedience. Thus, White's arguments helped to settle the issues of Babylon, oath-taking, and church organization.

White's perspective of spiritual warfare between good and evil also ranked allegiance to God above obedience to the state. This perspective led her to stand boldly against the Fugitive Slave Law, appealing for civil disobedience. Her attitudes cannot be attributed to her Methodist background, nor to extreme anti-slavery activism, but to her view of church and state as engaged in a spiritual struggle. This was affirmed in the expanded understanding of the two-horned beast of Rev 13, when White perceived that both church and state were under attack and eventually Satan would capture both.

The Civil War forced the young Adventist denomination to deal with issues of church and state that went beyond their theological development to their implications for politics and society. Adventist leaders such as Uriah Smith and Loughborough looked at the development of the war through a lens of eschatological analysis. They looked at this national moment as evidence of its identity as the two-horned beast, while E. G. White approached it in terms of a spiritual struggle of good and evil. The historical and eschatological analysis fell short of fully convincing Adventists to commit to the Northern cause, and White warned that Adventists had a delicate situation to face. When the draft became imminent, James White proposed obedience to government in response to the crisis. E. G. White supported James's ideas, leaning toward reinforcing a

noncombatant position and rejecting the extreme ideas of both pacifists and military activists. Reflecting on the episode, E. G. White concluded that a peaceful attitude with wisdom and discretion is more effective than either extreme.

The American Civil War prompted Adventists to petition government for recognition of its rights and to define the position of the church toward the military in line with what E. G. and James White had in mind. E. G. White's ideas of peaceful conscientious objection were also exercised in the years following the war. While some wanted to engage in sociopolitical activism on behalf of the freedmen, White warned that Adventism was not being challenged and their efforts should be directed toward spreading the message. However, she admitted that in some places in the North, the racial issues could be handled differently.

For some early Adventists, such as Joseph Bates, concerns about slavery and temperance had preceded his involvement in Adventism, but for most Adventists temperance had a different connotation. In 1863, E. G. White expanded the understanding of temperance and incorporated it into the Adventist health message, and consequently into the spiritual struggle between good and evil. This gave temperance a broader meaning in Adventist usages including not only abstinence from alcoholic beverages, but temperance in eating, dressing, working, and studying. Later, in the 1870s, the temperance cause gained prominence in American society through the efforts of the WCTU and its crusade against liquor sales. While Adventists saw temperance activism as an opportunity to reach people with the Advent message, the WCTU saw it as a means of spiritual/social/political reform. In spite of the difference in focus, White considered the cause worthy of cooperation between Adventists and temperance unions as long as Adventists did not compromise their message or enter into direct institutional affiliation.

White saw it as a joint effort to make people aware of the Adventist message and labor for the moral good in society.

The Adventists' public work and cooperation with the temperance cause led to the first voluntary engagement of the Adventist church with the state. For the sake of moral good, E. G. White went so far as to encourage Adventists to vote, even on the Sabbath if necessary. Unfortunately, the temperance unions had other religious/political agendas, such as supporting religious Sunday laws, which conflicted with Adventist beliefs and limited the extent of possible cooperation.

The religious Sunday legislation of the 1880s and 1890s was part of a reformation movement in America that challenged Adventist views of church and state as articulated through Ellen White's concept of a cosmic warfare. The Sunday-rest movement and the renewal of American Puritanism also revived the church-and-state arguments of Roger Williams and the battles fought by Elias Smith and the early Millerite Adventists. In the matter of religious liberty, Adventists sided with secular and liquor unions, challenging the intentions of temperance and Sunday unions to gain legal enforcement of Sunday rest. The Adventists' major political and eschatological concern was to keep the powers of the church and state separate, in order to delay the formation of the image of the beast of Rev 13 and to allow Adventists more time to preach the message of the Second Coming.

The state laws enforcing Sunday observance caused an outbreak of arrests that led many to believe that Adventists were being persecuted. During those days, the church became more articulate in spreading its ideas through the *American Sentinel* and the National Religious Liberty Association. During the climax of the crisis in the late 1880s, E. G. White placed the Sunday issue at the center of the conflict between good and evil and identified it as an impending crisis preceding Jesus' Second Coming. Believing it

was not the moment yet, White reinforced her warnings that Adventists should exercise wisdom and discretion, and, if necessary, flee from one state to another. She also condemned radical positions on church and state relationships. For those who wanted extreme separation, she cautioned that God moves equally upon the hearts of rulers and governments; for those who perceived politics as a way to solve problems, she rebuked the mingling of the Adventist cause with secular causes. White indicated that God still operates in the church and in the state, though the devil works to take over both powers.



## CONCLUSION

The purpose of this dissertation has been to discover how Ellen White reconciled the apparent conflict between two aspects of Adventist views on church-state relationships—the eschatological motif which anticipated state persecution of the church in the end time, and the temporal motif which emphasized the church’s need for a non-conflictual relationship with the state to advance the mission of the church in the present.

The dissertation has set forth Ellen White's Great Controversy theme as a controlling principle that reconciles the eschatological and temporal perspectives on church-state relationships. It does this, not by placing the two perspectives in linear sequence, as if the temporal perspective has meaning only in the present and the eschatological perspective has meaning only in the end-time; but rather, the two aspects are constants that operate simultaneously. The eschatological principle emphasizes that the believer and the church owe their supreme allegiance to God, and no human or human organization can be allowed to usurp that place of supreme allegiance. The temporal perspective emphasizes the obligation of both individual believers and the church as a whole, to give loyalty, obedience, service, taxes, and respect to the state insofar as the requirements of the state do not conflict with obedience to God. Even when persecuted, Christians are to be respectful of government authority, obey legitimate laws, and continue in peaceful subjection to the state. Thus these two perspectives, derived from the Great Controversy theme, provide basic principles for every situation of church-state

relationships.

The primary contribution of the dissertation is the evidence that Ellen White, in her diverse writings on church-state relationships, was not merely a pragmatist, approaching each new situation opportunistically. Instead, this study shows that she held core principles to which she remained true, and which guided her in diverse situations.

Her Great Controversy theme was pivotal to change the perspectives of church-state relationships in the Sabbatarian Adventist Movement. The dominant views of church and state in Adventism after October 1844 were mostly inherited from the Christian Connection and the American republican ideals of Elias Smith and James O'Kelly. Ellen joined the group from her Methodist background of a more traditional (magisterial) Protestant position on church-state relationships, which viewed the issues from a largely temporal perspective. But the message she began to advocate after *Testimony No. 5* (1859) was different from both the Methodist and the Christian Connection propositions. This suggests that Ellen White was more indebted to her visions for her positions than to her Methodism or to any bias towards the state. This new insight enabled her to balance the eschatological and temporal aspects of church and state through an overarching world view that she came to call the "Great Controversy."

Ellen White proposed that God is the supreme authority above church and state despite the ongoing spiritual struggle. He delegates His authority to both church and state to act on His behalf against evil. Rulers of the state receive authority to benefit society and protect it from evil by using force and applying punishment. The church receives authority to lead and restore mankind according to Jesus' teachings. Though they work separately, in the context of the Great Controversy their proper duties are

complementary and simultaneously beneficial. While governmental force may restrain evil, it cannot change the human heart. It is the work of the church to bring a transforming message that will save the individual from sin and benefit the state with a conscientious citizen. While the work of the church implies the voluntary love of God, the work of the state uses methods such as force and punishment to enforce the laws of the land. Yet, both are directed toward the good of mankind and against evil.

Because the church exists under the laws of the land, its members have a double responsibility—toward God and toward government. The dual duty of obedience to the king and loyalty to God became clear in White's comments about biblical leaders who served in government. When church and state competed, she emphasized loyalty to God above obedience to the state and indicated that Bible leaders perceived all their actions from a religious perspective. Even the tax exemption Joseph gave to his people was looked at from a spiritual perspective. To Adventists interested in engaging in government and political arenas, White urged this perspective of complete spiritual commitment. She indicated that for Christians in government and political careers, all actions should be grounded on spiritual foundations, but she did not expect to find this as a universal in the state. Though she realized that there were leaders in the state who did not fear God, she nonetheless believed that God was still working with both church and state through faithful humans, through His angels, and through His Spirit. Above all, White believed that temporal leaders should legislate with common sense, govern with justice according to the established laws, and maintain habits of temperance in order to perform all their duties with sobriety.

White's expectations of the republican form of government are pivotal to

understand subsequent developments in Adventism. Her “faith” in the republican form of government brought balance to the fears and distrust of government which some Adventists associated with their interpretation of the two-horned beast of Rev 13. Through her comments, White demonstrated that the problem in the prophecy does not lie in the symbolic “horn” of government, but in the “beast” that acts contrary to what the horn stands for. In other words, the potential future problem was not due to any inherent evil in the state, but to the misuse of the state’s legitimate and divinely ordained authority. This helps to explain why she was not radically opposed to meeting government requirements in church organization and education. It also explains her commitment to support government in its needs, as long as faith is not compromised.

White foretold that evil would eventually degrade the principles of government. She meant that the divinely established functions of government for protection and social prosperity would be perverted to violate personal rights and undermine prosperity. This perversion would occur through the enactment of laws that would violate the conscience and lead to persecution. The tools of enforcement, she argued, would be misused by agents of evil in both the church and the state in an attempt to exterminate God’s people.

Interestingly, White indicated that, in the meantime, the proper use of governmental authority still defends the state against the entry of evil into government. To protect the American government from moral assaults on its established principles, White considered it appropriate to use means that display a peaceful conscientious subjection, through speaking or writing. On moral issues, White also considered voting as appropriate action.

Peaceful conscientious subjection is the best term to describe White’s concept of

obedience within the dualism of obedience and loyalty. The terminology, “peaceful conscientious subjection,” encapsulates the essence of obedience rightfully required by government which is proposed in White’s writing. It implies a method of subjection, as opposed to merely a way to find peace in this world, or to radically opposing conscience. It also gives a moderate dimension to Adventist behavior that avoids extreme comments or attitudes.

White’s writings on the issues of military service and of voting stand apart because they were written under different circumstances. Military service was initially voluntary, but later became required. Under the laws of voluntary service, White advised Adventists for the sake of conscience not to volunteer, because they would be placing loyalty to the state above obedience to God. Later, when military service became mandatory, she acknowledged the duty of Christians to obey government even in case of a draft; however beyond this point it would become a matter of conscience to maintain their loyalty to God. Voting also had two aspects. On the one hand, she was opposed to it when it was done for the sake of politics and selfish use of power; on the other hand, voting was encouraged when it was done to promote good and contain social evil.

The church’s promotion of good towards society, which, in part, overlaps the role of government in the Great Controversy framework, takes a different dynamic from other issues, such as voting, military service, and political involvement. In voting, politics, and the military the church is primarily reactive, but White indicated that Adventists should be proactive in promoting social good. That proactivity could even involve receiving gifts from the government, provided no spiritual compromise was required in return. The social good done by the church has the uniqueness of a work done against evil in the

realms of both the church and the state—in the state, because of the direct benefits that it brings to society by preventing the evils that arise from injustice; and in the church, because the containment of evil in society allows the church to flourish.

The framework of the Great Controversy that Ellen White proposed placed church and state in different realms, but with similar circumstances. Both are under the authority of God, both are working in society against the influences of evil, and both are the target of Satan's domination. According to White, the state is neither friend nor foe to the church; it is rather an institution under God whose powers, if in the hands of Satan, can severely harm mankind. In addition, White made it clear that laws regulating the conscience and establishing persecution against the church will not be an initiative of the state. Such action will be rather demanded by a corrupted church from politicians who are willing to sacrifice their integrity.

The issues analyzed and propositions made in this research leave questions for further study, such as how to determine whether a given issue is moral and spiritual vs. secular, and how to conduct proper negotiation for peaceful conscientious subjection. Certainly, the issue of moral and spiritual vs. secular lies primarily in biblical theology; however, a deeper analysis of E. G. White's concepts of morality would provide more light for church leadership.

The methods of "peaceful conscientious subjection" also need to be further explored. In a fast-changing society, the church needs to be alert to the ways of our past struggles with government and adapt itself to the present. The Press Committee, the *American Sentinel*, and the National Religious Liberty Association were successful measures in their time. Though we can learn from their experience and grasp principles,

we need to be aware of future difficulties. The challenge for the present Adventist church is to find and secure *meaningful* channels that will enable Adventists to defend their right to worship according to their conscience to a secularized, postmodern society.

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