

Rise of the Remnant:
The Formation of the Seventh-day Adventist
Church from the Era of Slavery and the Civil War

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

OVERVIEW

In the mid-nineteenth century, a small band from New England, with the majority in their teens and early twenties, fervently studied the Bible to find an explanation on why Jesus Christ's apocalyptic second coming did not occur. As part of William Miller's inter-faith movement, these individuals subscribed to Miller's prediction that on 22 October 1844, a literal second coming of a divinely glorified Jesus Christ with His Angelic hosts would occur. It is from this context that the Seventh-Day Adventist Church arose. The church came with the name "Seventh-Day Adventist" in 1860 and became formally organized on 21 May 1863, comprising of 125 churches and 3,500 members.¹ During this time, the United States was engaged in the bloodiest war in her history. Today, the Seventh-Day Adventist Church has expanded into a vast international movement comprising of over thirteen million members with churches in 203 nations around the globe.² As a movement that believed in the strict separation of church and state, and ambivalence towards partisan politics, the Civil War brought profound dilemmas to the fledgling church. Tensions between the civic responsibilities expected by everyday citizens colliding with a sectarian worldview posed unique challenges upon Adventist believers. This paper will explore the role of the Seventh-Day Adventist Church from its inception from the Millerite movement to the Civil War, and how its apocalyptic theology influenced its positions

¹ "Seventh-Day Adventists: The Heritage Continues," Seventh-Day Adventist Church Official Web Site, [http://www.adventist.org/world_church/facts_and_figures/history/index.html.en,] 25 May 2005.

² "Did You Know That," Seventh-Day Adventist Church Official Web Site, [http://www.adventist.org/world_church/facts_and_figures/did_you_know.html.en,] 25 May 2005.

on issues such as involving itself in slavery, politics, and military conscription, and what legacy it has to the Adventist Church in the twenty-first century

CRITICAL ASSESSMENT

The Seventh-Day Adventist Church has long advocated for the separation of church and state and been traditionally aloof in declaring official political positions dealing with popular issues arising from the American political dialogue. Arising from a fiercely sectarian background, the Adventist Church has prided itself on its peculiarity from mainstream society. With the recent war on terrorism, issues on school vouchers, and a call by the current administration to be a more Christian nation, this paper analyzes the positions of the early Adventist Church and how it dealt with issues such as abolitionism and military involvement during the Civil War, and how this era impacts the church in the twenty-first century.

A literary search on the Adventist Church and the Civil War was conducted to determine the extent of how this topic has been covered. Specific issues that rose upon the Adventist Church during its inception during the Civil War; have been explored such as the debate over conscription and the visions of Ellen White during this era. In fact, Gary W. Shearer, curator of the Seventh-Day Adventist Heritage Library at Pacific Union College and a Civil War historian, compiled a bibliography guide of all sources that pertained to this topic that was contained in that library. The bibliography revealed that there was no comprehensive work dealing with the Adventist Church and the Civil War era. In fact, Dr. Eric Anderson, a Civil War historian from Pacific Union College stated that no extensive all encompassing work exploring the Adventist Church from the Millerite Movement to the Civil War exists, a scholastic void that this thesis attempts to fill.

THEORIES AND METHODS

The primary theory utilized for this thesis is the organizational theory, an analysis that can be explored from multiple angles. First, the church's assertion of having a female prophet can be analyzed as a charismatic authority. Second, the early Seventh-Day Adventist church was governed by a code or set of rules derived from the Christian Bible, falls under the premise of utilizing a rational legal authority.

The fundamental doctrines of the Adventist Church were not formulated by the church's prophet but by a collective effort from the original founders provides for an interesting tension between the charismatic authority and the rational legal authority that the early church may fall under.

Also, this paper would delve deeply on how the social conditions and historical settings influenced the developments of the standards and doctrines of the early Adventist Church. The Second Great Awakening, the Millerite Movement, various reform movements, the slavery debate and the proliferations of religious diversity all had a role in allowing sectarian religions to thrive in the mid-nineteenth century, a contemporary time period of the church's founders.

The Millerite Movement and its emphasis to detach from the temporal affairs of life to focus on the imminent return of Jesus Christ, was carried over to the Seventh-Day Adventist Church. For a religious movement that focused on separating itself from temporal concerns, the reality of the Civil War and brought profound challenges to the moral codes of the church organization. How does a movement that seeks to separate itself completely from the "world" survive in an era where the climate of war forced every citizen of that nation to have some sort of

participation? This paper will explore how the Church attempted to resolve this collision of idealism and reality.

The methods utilized involve both the integration of both primary and secondary sources. Research for the thesis included a collection of over seventy-six primary sources from the official Adventist newsletter, *The Adventist Review and Sabbath Herald* dated between the early 1850s to the mid-1860s. This encompasses articles written by the pioneers of the Seventh-Day Adventist Church, in addition to the biographies and books written by these founders.

The secondary sources utilized were books and articles written by the leading historians of this subject matter. This includes Jonathan Butler and Douglas Morgan who both done extensive studies on the formative years of the church. Both Butler and Morgan focuses on the development of the church organization and how the historical climate of that time played a part in aiding the church's development from a small band of believers to an established incorporated organization. These two authors have been indispensable in providing historiographical context for this research.

Schwartz and Greenleaf, Seventh-Day Adventist historians who wrote the official history of the Seventh-Day Adventist Church also provided important linear developments of the organization, albeit the history is written for a Seventh-Day Adventist audience. Various journals and articles from Adventist publications of recent scholarship helped to contrast the church in the twenty-first century and the church in the mid-nineteenth century. In all, by integrating the primary and secondary sources, it is the hope of the author to provide a comprehensive analysis of the development of the Adventist church from the historical backdrop of the Civil War era.

ORGANIZATION

This paper explores the formative years of the early Seventh-Day Adventist Church chronicling its inception from the Millerite movement to the Civil War, and how its apocalyptic theology influenced its positions on issues such as involving itself in slavery, politics, and military conscription, and what legacy it has to the Adventist Church in the twenty-first century.

Chapter one will provide contextual background to the rise and fall of the Millerite Movement, the forerunner to the Seventh-Day Adventist Church. Covering from 1812 to 1844, the chapter explores the biography of William Miller, his associates, and how the Millerites arrived to their prophetic interpretations. This section will also examine the profound influence the Millerite Movement had upon the early Seventh-Day Adventist Church's eschatological worldview, and gives the back story of how the Seventh-Day Adventist Church was formed. The Second Chapter analyzes how the founders of the Seventh-Day Adventist church consolidated themselves after the dissolution of the Millerite movement. Chronicling from the year 1844 to 1863, doctrinal formulation, the rise of the church's prophet Ellen White, and the incorporation of the church's infrastructure is discussed under the backdrop of the tense climate of the United States as it headed towards civil war.

Chapter three encompasses the early 1850s to 1863, tracing the Adventist paradigm towards slavery and the influence abolitionism had in developing their worldview on race relations. Also explored is the theological rationale Adventists declared in asserting their opposition to the institution of slavery. Chapter four encompasses the early 1850s to the early 1860s, detailing the in-depth exposition of why the Adventist Church in the midst of a strong abolitionist background avoided political involvement. Included in this chapter is an outline of

the Adventist eschatological worldview of the United States and how the church's perception that this nation would be a persecuting power of God's people played a profound role in Adventist aversion towards political involvement, and also the belief that the ultimate panacea for the evils of society was the imminent second coming of Jesus Christ.

Chapter five traces the early 1860s, where Ellen White, considered the church's prophet, asserted to have visions of the imminent war, and how this shaped Adventist perception that the Civil War was divine punishment upon the United States for its toleration for slavery. It also explores the fierce criticism the Adventist leaders hurled upon the federal government for its hypocritical stance on the issue of slavery. In addition, the chapter will study how the church's belief of Ellen White as a prophet aided in the church being consolidated and unified in the midst of national turmoil.

The sixth chapter covers the early 1850s to 1865, encompassing the church's stance on military conscription and martial combat for its members. This chapter also analyzes how skillful lobbying of the government allowed for the church to attain conscientious objection status, which in turn marked a profound paradigm shift, from total separation towards political engagement to acquiescing to the practical necessity to cooperate and lobby the government when the church's interests were threatened.

The thesis concludes with an epilogue, comparing the Adventist Church of the Civil War era with the current state of the church in the twenty-first century. This chapter navigates through the tumultuous ideological shifts the church experienced in the issues such as eschatology, social activism, and political and military involvement, and how far the modern church has turned away from the sectarian inclinations of the church's founder.

CHAPTER II

THE RISE AND FALL OF THE MILLERITE MOVEMENT, 1812-1844

THE MOST UNLIKELY BELIEVER

The founders of the Seventh-Day Adventist Church came from the Millerite Movement, a coalition of Protestant believers who believed in the imminent advent of Jesus Christ. Because the term Advent refers to the literal second coming of Jesus Christ, Millerites were also called Adventists. Like a child assuming the family name, the carryover of the term Adventist was one example of the profound influence the Millerites had in shaping the sectarian characteristics of the early Seventh-Day Adventists. Indeed, the Millerite movement foreshadowed key theological pillars that helped shaped the theological paradigm of the fledgling Seventh-Day Adventist Church.

The movement was founded by William Miller, a farmer from Low Hampton, New York. Miller descended from a fervent Baptist lineage, with both his grandfather and brother serving as Baptist ministers. Although not able to afford college, Miller was an avid reader who possessed strong scholarly interest. When Miller married at the age of twenty-one, Miller moved to his bride's community in Poultney, Vermont, where he began to study with the town's deist

intellectuals. Becoming a deist, Miller believed in a divine being who after setting the world in motion, did not intervene in the affairs of human existence.¹

Miller's deist beliefs began to erode when he fought in the War of 1812, where he served as a Captain for the United States Army. Miller fought in the Battle of Plattsburg, an engagement near Lake Champlain, New York, on 11 September 1814, where a rag tag band of American troops, outnumbered three to one, by superior British forces, somehow was victorious.² In reaction to the outcome, Miller wrote, "Many occurrences served to weaken my confidence in the correctness of deistical principles.... It seemed to me that the Supreme Being must have watched over the interests of this country in an especial manner, and delivered us from the hands of our enemies,"³ This realization of a possible existence of a Supreme Being who displays keen interest in human affairs would be a catalyst for William Miller's path to spiritual discovery.

After the war, Miller moved back to Low Hampton, where he would intermittently attend a local Baptist congregation. But on one Sunday, while reading a sermon, he was overcome with emotion and saw Jesus Christ as his divine God.⁴ Of this spiritual epiphany Miller wrote, "Suddenly the character of a Saviour was vividly impressed upon my mind. It seemed that there might be a being so good and compassionate as to himself atone of our transgressions, and thereby save us from suffering the penalty of sin. I immediately felt how lovely such a being

¹Richard W. Schwartz and Floyd Greenleaf, *Light Bearers: A History of the Seventh-day Adventist Church*, (Nampa: Pacific Press Publishing, 2000), 29.

²Ibid., 30.

³Ronald L. Numbers and Jonathan M. Butler, ed., *The Disappointed: Millerism and Millenarianism in the Nineteenth Century*, (Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 1993), 18.

⁴Schwartz and Greenleaf, 20.

must be, and imagined that I could cast myself into the arms of, and trust in the mercy of, such ... One.”⁵ Subsequently, he abandoned deistic rationalism for his new found faith.

UNOLOCKING THE PROPHECIES

Miller began to formulate a systematic style of Biblical interpretation utilizing a King James Version Bible and a *Cruden’s Concordance*, developed the proof-text method. The proof-text method consists of the premise that the Bible is its own interpreter. For example, Revelation 12:17 states, “And the dragon was wroth with the woman, and went to make war with the remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ.”⁶ The term “testimony of Jesus Christ” on the end of this verse can be defined in Revelation 19:10, where it states, “And I fell at his feet to worship him. And he said unto me, see thou do it not: I am thy fellow servant, and of thy brethren that have the testimony of Jesus: worship: for the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.”⁷ In accordance to this method, the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.

Miller arrived at this methodology of Biblical interpretation without the aid of clergy, denominational doctrines, or commentaries. In fact, Miller sought to establish a set of beliefs through his own study, attempting to forego the influence of the denominational doctrines prevalent in that era. As Miller furthered his studies, he realized a sense of alienation from the rest of the Protestant Christian community. He wrote, “I was alone, the prepossessions and prejudices of the entire Christian community; the systems, talents, as also the superior education of the clergy; the religious press ... the institutions of learning both literally and theological; ...

⁵Numbers and Butler, 19.

⁶Rev. 12.17 KJV.

⁷Ibid., 19.10 KJV.

in short, the whole world were against me.”⁸ In all, Miller strongly believed that all people could comprehend the mysteries of the Bible through diligent self-study, echoing the Jacksonian populist archetype of the virtues of the self-educated common man.

Through his personal Bible study, Miller concluded “that the Bible contained a system of revealed truths, so clearly and simply given that the wayfaring man, though a fool, need not err therein.”⁹ He formulated fourteen rules of Biblical proof text interpretation. The overarching theme of this interpretation was that verses throughout the Bible were like an interlocking chain, where verses from different books are connected in coherency and theme. Another premise of this interpretation was that the Bible should be interpreted literally unless the context denotes that the specific writer is using figurative language. And through this study, Miller concluded that Bible prophecies were always fulfilled literally.¹⁰ But the key rule of Miller’s interpretative method was number fourteen, where he wrote, “The most important rule of all is, that you must have faith. It must be a faith that requires a sacrifice, and if tried would give up the dearest object on earth...”¹¹ Thus, Miller, the former deist believed that faith in a Supreme Divine Being was the equalizing factor, allowing anyone to understand the Bible without going through formal theological training to reach such comprehension.

In 1816, Miller began to pay special attention to the prophecies of the book of Daniel.¹² It is through this method of study that he first arrived at a date in 1843, and later, with the help of

⁸Douglas Morgan, *Adventism and the Republic: The Public Involvement of a Major Apocalyptic Movement*, (Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 2001), 21.

⁹Numbers and Butler, 20.

¹⁰Ibid.

¹¹Ibid., 21.

¹²Schwarz and Greenleaf, 31.

his associates, revised it on Yom Kippur, 22 October 1844, as the appointed time of Jesus Christ returning to the earth.¹³

An 1843-1844 date range was arrived at by focusing specifically on the eighth and ninth chapters of the book of Daniel. He keyed on Daniel 8 verse 14, where it states, “And he said unto me, unto two thousand and three hundred days; then shall the sanctuary be cleansed.”¹⁴ Miller believed that the term “sanctuary” referred to the Earth while the term “cleansed” inferred to the fire associated with the judgment connected with Christ’s second coming.¹⁵ He also argued that a day in Bible prophecy equals a year, using Numbers 14:34 and Ezekiel 4:6 as his textual support. The book of Numbers reads, “After the number of the days in which ye searched the land, *even* forty days, each day for a year, shall ye bear your iniquities, *even* forty years, and ye shall know my breach of promise.”¹⁶ Ezekiel reads, “And when thou hast accomplished them, lie again on thy right side, and thou shalt bear the iniquity of the house of Judah forty days: I have appointed thee each day for a year.”¹⁷ By applying the day-year prophetic principle, Miller deduced that the 2300 days were indeed 2300 years.

Miller arrived at the 1843-1844 time range by connecting the “2300 day” text of Daniel 8:14, with Daniel 9:24-27 that dealt with a prophecy dealing with seventy weeks. To explain, the book of Daniel chapter 9, verse 24 states, “Seventy weeks are determined upon thy people and upon thy holy city, to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal up the vision and

¹³Uriah Smith, *Daniel and the Revelation*, (Hagerstown: Review and Herald Publishing, 1972), 636.

¹⁴Daniel. 8.14 KJV.

¹⁵Schwarz and Greenleaf, 41.

¹⁶Numbers. 14.34 KJV.

¹⁷Ezekiel. 4.6 KJV.

prophecy, and to anoint the most Holy.”¹⁸ Utilizing Miller’s interpretation of a day equaling a year in Biblical prophecy, Seventy weeks would come out to 490 years. He argued that the seventy weeks was part of the 2300 days, on the basis of the word “determined” in verse 24, which in the original Hebrew means cut off.¹⁹ Miler asserted that the 490 years is cut off or derived from the 2300 days.

On verse 25 of Daniel chapter 9, it reads, “Know therefore and understand, *that* from the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem unto the Messiah the Prince *shall be* seven weeks, and threescore and two weeks: the street shall be built again, and the wall, even in troublous times.”²⁰ With the text reading for a command to restore and build Jerusalem, Miler postulated that the start of the 2300 year prophecy began on 457 B.C., where Persian emperor Artaxerxes Longimanus decreed to give the Jewish people the autonomy to establish their own laws and magistrates, thus restoring the Jewish state after decades, of being exiled by Assyrian, Babylonian and Persian powers.²¹

The “seven weeks” (or in Miller’s view 49 years) within the Seventy weeks, arrives at 408 B.C. where Jerusalem was rebuilt from its destruction in the hands of the Babylonian King Nebuchadnezzar.²² From that point, the text goes on to threescore and two weeks, or employing Miller’s day/year principle, 434 years from the 408 B.C. date, arriving at 27 A.D.²³ Miller argued that 27 A.D. was significant because it was the year that Jesus Christ was baptized and began his public ministry. Miller asserted this date by cross referencing Luke chapter 3, verse 1

¹⁸Daniel. 8.14 KJV.

¹⁹James Strong, *The New Strong’s Concordance*, (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1984), 45.

²⁰Daniel. 9.25 KJV.

²¹Smith, 209.

²²Ibid., 211.

²³Ibid., 213.

where it states that it was during the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar when Jesus was baptized.²⁴

From there, Miller asserted that Christ was crucified on A.D. 31, based on his analysis of verses 26 and 27 in the book of Daniel. Daniel 9:26 states that the Messiah would be “cut off” which a definition of the word in the original Hebrew, meant to perish.²⁵ In addition, on verse 27, the book of Daniel states, “And he shall confirm the covenant with many for one week: and in the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease, and for the overspreading of abominations he shall make *it* desolate, even until the consummation, and that determined shall be poured upon the desolate.”²⁶ Based on this text, utilizing his day/year prophetic principle, Miller asserted that this prophetic week began on 27 A.D., and the middle of this prophetic week or chronologically, the middle of these seven years fell on 14 Nisan 31 A.D., the time of the Jewish calendar where the Passover fell; and by cross referencing John 13. 1: Miller correlated that the time of the Passover as the date Christ was killed.²⁷

Further support given for this date was based on verse 25 where the book of Daniel states that sacrifices and oblations will be stopped by the Messiah, which Christians readily point out that the cessation of the Jewish sacrificial ordinances occurred after the death of Jesus Christ. The end of this prophetic week fell on 34 A.D., the date where the deacon Stephen was stoned by the Jewish political hierarchy, becoming the first Christian martyr, thereby signifying that the Christian Church would take the place of the Jewish nation as the chosen people of God.²⁸

²⁴Luke. 3.1. KJV.

²⁵Strong's, 57.

²⁶Daniel. 9.27. KJV.

²⁷Smith, 214.

²⁸Ibid., 217.

In 1818, after two years of extensive study, specifically on the 2,300 day prophecy, Miller concluded that Christ will make his return at around the time of the year 1843.²⁹ Ironically, Miller, who sought so hard not to be tainted by denominational influences, independently arrived at applying the historicist interpretation of Bible prophecy. The historicist school of Biblical interpretation was utilized by prominent Protestant reformers from Martin Luther to John Knox, to the famed British scientist Sir Isaac Newton. The Historicist interpretation saw the prophecies of Daniel and Revelation as a symbolic chronology of key events of the history of the people of God from the time of the Biblical writer to the second coming of Jesus Christ.³⁰ In fact, Historicism asserts a sequence of ancient world empires beginning with Babylon, succeeded by the Medes and Persians, then the Macedonian Greeks led by Alexander, and Pagan Rome, along with the breakup of Rome by the barbarian invasions, and the rise of the Papacy as the Antichrist, and the persecuting power of the true faithful before the apocalyptic coming of Jesus Christ.

When Miller deduced that the end of the 2,300 days was somewhere around 1843, he joyously exclaimed “that in about twenty-five years ... all the affairs of our present state would be wound up.”³¹ But others also arrived at a similar conclusion that something significant would happen in the early 1840s. In fact, Alexander Campbell in the United States and Edward Irving in England were among scores of authors in the 1810s, 1820s, and 1830s that postulated that the 2,300 day prophecy of Daniel 8:14 concluded in 1843, 1844, or 1847, though there were a

²⁹Schwartz and Greenleaf, 31.

³⁰Morgan, 6.

³¹Ibid.

plethora of assertions of what actually would occur that fulfilled this prophecy.³² But the catalyst that would later make Miller's interpretation a national sensation was the specificity of the time and event that predicted Jesus Christ's return to Earth in about 1843, who would subsequently usher in a apocalyptic fiery end to sinners and sin.³³

THE FLEDGLING EVANGELIST

Initially, Miller shared his conclusions with his neighbors, but found many uninterested in his findings.³⁴ Undaunted with the initial indifference, Miller remained convinced in publicizing his prophetic interpretations. On the need to openly declare the findings of his studies, Miller wrote, "I believed; and immediately the duty to publish this doctrine, that the world might believe and get ready to meet the Judge and Bridegroom at his coming, was impressed upon my mind."³⁵

However, Miller was terribly shy when it came to public speaking. On a Saturday morning in 1831, Miller promised to his God that if he should be invited to have a public speaking engagement at any place, then he would verbally declare his findings of the soon coming of Jesus Christ.³⁶ Within an hour of making this promise, Miller's brother-in-law invited him to nearby Dresden, New York, to preach, since no preacher was available at that church.³⁷

Miller's speaking engagement was such a success that he was invited to stay on for a week to hold revival services.³⁸ Miller somehow overcame his shyness and presented his views with confidence. Organizing his sermons carefully, with heavy reliance on Biblical textual

³²Ibid.

³³Ibid.

³⁴Schwartz and Greenleaf, 32.

³⁵Numbers and Butler, 21.

³⁶Schwartz and Greenleaf, 32.

³⁷Ibid.

³⁸Ibid.

references, Miller spoke in a forceful but not bombastic tone, utilizing language easily digestible for a mass audience. Miller became highly sought as a speaker, being invited to Methodist, Baptist, and Congregational Churches in the North Eastern United States and even across the border in Eastern Canada.³⁹ In September of 1833, Miller's home church, a Baptist congregation, voted him a license to preach.⁴⁰ Little did Miller know that he was to begin a religious movement that would evolve to a prominent Protestant sect called the Seventh-Day Adventist Church.

AT A MOST OPPORTUNE TIME

Miller's preaching career began at a most opportune time, during an era of religious diversity that spawned a plethora of sects and offshoots. Shakerism, Mormonism, and various off-shoot Christian groups proliferated across the American social landscape. Spiritualism, a belief in communicating with paranormal entities, analogous to aspects of the current new age movement, made their presence known. Social movements such as abolitionism, temperance, feminism, and dietary reform also developed during this time.

Religious interest, particularly Protestant Christianity, experienced a significant revival in both the United States and Great Britain during this time. From between the 1790s to 1860, a Protestant reform movement called "The Second Great Awakening," spearheaded by charismatic evangelist Charles Finney ignited a renewed interest in Christianity in the United States.⁴¹

³⁹Ibid.

⁴⁰Ibid.

⁴¹Jonathan Butler, "From Millerism to Seventh-Day Adventism: Boundlessness to Consolidation," *Church History*, vol. 55, no. 1 (March 1986), 50.

Finney's ministry "preached not only salvation but reform."⁴² Finney believed in a theological premise called postmillennialism where a dawning of a thousand-year utopian paradise on earth would transpire, beginning in America, as Christians united in asserting the divine power of conversion through social reforms, would usher in this era.⁴³

In marked contrast, Millerites subscribed to pre-millennialism where Jesus Christ will return and gather His believers to Heaven, and scorch the earth with fire, destroying the wicked, and the faithful will reside in Heaven for a thousand years, and return to a newly created idyllic Earth. Later, Seventh-Day Adventists would keep this doctrine, and based on Revelation 20, assert that during the thousand years that the saints reside in Heaven, the devil and his angels would be bound on a desolate earth, and at the end of the millennium, Jesus Christ and the saints will return to the earth where the devil and his angels would be destroyed and a new earthly paradise established.⁴⁴

Among Protestant Christians, especially those subscribing to the pre-millennialism historicist view, events that transpired in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century sparked a renewed interest in Bible prophecy, particularly the study of Daniel and Revelation. The arrest of Pope Pius VI by Napoleon's army was seen as a fulfillment of Bible prophecy. The ominous dark day of 19 May 1780, where the day inexplicably went dark as night in the northeast and the great star shower of 13 November 1833 were seen as fulfillment of the prophecy of Jesus Christ in the gospel books where He predicts that the sun will turn dark and the stars will fall before the

⁴²Schwartz and Greenleaf, 18.

⁴³Morgan, 5.

⁴⁴Based on Rev. 20 and Rev. 21, Seventh-Day Adventist doctrines assert that all the wicked throughout history would be resurrected when Jesus Christ and the saints return. The wicked led by the devil will attempt when final charge against God's people who have returned and resided in the New Jerusalem, and will be consumed by fire and destroyed. Then the desolate earth will be created anew. Thus, Adventists do not believe in a eternal hell where the wicked burn forever.

end of the world.⁴⁵ By correlating these natural wonders with Biblical prophecy, historicist Protestants aroused an atmosphere of apocalyptic anticipation.

Indeed, Miller's message of the imminent coming of Jesus Christ arrived at an ideal time where ears and minds were open. Print media helped Miller spread the message to the masses. In 1832, the Baptist paper *The Vermont Telegraph* was the first to print Miller's declaration of the soon apocalyptic return of Jesus Christ.⁴⁶ Two years later, a sixty-four page pamphlet on Millerite theology was published. And in 1836, Miller published a detailed sixteen lecture compilation in book form of his views. This compilation found its way to the *Boston Daily Times*, who republished most of the lectures, thereby exposing Miller's views to a wider audience.⁴⁷

Miller's views drew the attention of abolitionist and temperance reformers. In fact, Miller himself possessed abolitionist inclinations and believed that benevolent reform groups were forerunners to his movement.⁴⁸ Miller also attracted members of the temperance movement for his strong stance against alcohol. Of this Miller admonished, "For your soul's sake drink not another draught, lest he [Christ] come and find you drunken."⁴⁹ Like their reformer brethren, the Millerites believed in a coalition of different Protestant denominations mainly comprised of Methodists, Baptists, and Presbyterians and other Christians unified in a cause or belief, in this case being the Advent of Jesus Christ.⁵⁰ Reformers along with the Millerites sought for a

⁴⁵Biblical references of this prophecy can be found in Mt. 24.29, Mk. 13, 24-25, Lk, 21.25, and Rev 6. 12-13.

⁴⁶Ibid.

⁴⁷Ibid., 33.

⁴⁸Butler, 54.

⁴⁹Schwartz and Greenleaf, 18.

⁵⁰Butler, 54.

significant change in the status quo, thus linking in anticipation of change in the human condition.

The Millerites aggressively sought to recruit antislavery, temperance, and education advocates to their movement.⁵¹ Indeed, abolitionists were prominently present in the Millerite hierarchy. Famed abolitionist William Lloyd Garrison, who disagreed with Miller's interpretations of Biblical prophecy, nevertheless saw him sincere in his convictions.⁵² In fact, Garrison cited William Miller as an "outspoken friend" in "the cause of temperance, of anti-slavery, of moral reform, of non-resistance."⁵³

Curiously, Miller possessed an ironic perception towards African Americans. In one hand, he could not assert African Americans as human, yet he stated that "they have skulls but dare you think they have brains my brother as we have? If I ... begin to think God designed we should love them as ourselves."⁵⁴ But Miller also rhetorically exclaimed, "God knew what a dilemma we should be placed in, and therefore made [the slaves] black, and so we may beat them, bruise them, sell them, buy them, not teach them, not give them Bibles, not preach to them, hang them, burn them, shoot them, and cut their throats if they should try to get free?"⁵⁵ Although there was no record of Miller actively participating in anti-slavery societies, Miller had a reputation of being a grassroots abolitionist, where he aided fugitive slaves in their escape to Canada.⁵⁶

⁵¹Ibid.

⁵²Schwartz and Greenleaf, 33.

⁵³Numbers and Butler, 140.

⁵⁴Ibid.

⁵⁵Ibid.

⁵⁶Ibid.

The magnetism that drew many abolitionists to the Millerite movement involved the antagonism both groups shared with established denominations.⁵⁷ Antislavery was a divisive issue among Christian congregations and the assertion of a definite date of Christ's return also caused widespread debate. Thus, both camps drew their share of controversial hostility. The abolitionist movement also suffered from factionalism and infighting within their ranks. After attending an antislavery meeting in New York City in 1840, William Miller lamented, "The poor slave, has but little chance to be liberated by these two parties.... The slaveholder ... may need no additional guards, his citadel is safe."⁵⁸ This factionalism was a great boon to the Millerite movement as disillusioned abolitionists saw that the Millerite movement presented the ultimate cure for slavery in the form of the apocalyptic return of Jesus Christ.

In spring 1838, prominent Congregationalist minister and abolitionist, Charles Fitch, of Boston accepted the Millerite message. In a letter to Miller, Fitch wrote, "I find nothing on which to rest a single doubt respecting the correctness of your views."⁵⁹ Fitch was a close associate with evangelist Charles Finney, who like Fitch, was a strong advocate for abolition and temperance.⁶⁰ When Fitch shared the Millerite message to his fellow Congregational ministers, he was severely ridiculed. Indeed, Fitch's declaration of Millerite pre-millennialism beliefs with the postmillennialism Congregationalists was like a colliding explosion of matter and anti-matter

⁵⁷Ibid., 146.

⁵⁸Ibid., 149.

⁵⁹Schwarz and Greenleaf, 33.

⁶⁰Ibid.

of theological ideas.⁶¹ Although naturally shaken by the negative response from his Congregational brethren, Fitch would become a passionate Millerite evangelist.⁶²

Garrison recognized Fitch as “well known to the abolitionists of the United States.”⁶³ In fact, Fitch was well in abolitionist circles for writing a tract asserting slavery to be one of the supreme vices. Called *Slaveholding Weighed in the Balance of Truth, and its Comparative Guilt Illustrated*, Fitch wrote, “Up my friends, and do your duty, to deliver the spoils out of the hands of the oppressor, lest the fire of God’s fury kindle ere long upon you.”⁶⁴ Fitch made it clear that slavery was a moral evil, a view later shared by the early Seventh-Day Adventist pioneers.

Josiah V. Himes, who helped Garrison organize the New England Antislavery Society in his church, was a key figure in starting Millerite newspapers that propelled the publication of Miller’s views to even a greater audience.⁶⁵ According to Garrison, Himes was an individual who “avowed himself an abolitionist, and has been a faithful supporter of the anti-slavery movement.”⁶⁶ Himes was also a pacifist, and helped organize the Non-Resistance Society and served as its first director.⁶⁷

Other Millerite preachers who were abolitionists included George Storrs, along with Orange Scott, and Leroy Sunderland. The three admonished the Methodist Church to be part of the antislavery cause. Storr himself became known among abolitionists when he was arrested

⁶¹Ibid.

⁶²Ibid., 34.

⁶³Numbers and Butler, 141.

⁶⁴Ibid.

⁶⁵Schwartz and Greenleaf, 34-36.

⁶⁶Numbers and Butler, 141.

⁶⁷Ibid.

and dragged to his knees in a Northfield, New Hampshire, church while preparing an antislavery presentation.⁶⁸

John W. Lewis was an African American Millerite minister who was anxious to evangelize African Americans with the Millerite Advent message.⁶⁹ However, most Millerite lecturers held abolitionist beliefs, and the fact that most African Americans lived in the South prevented any large scale evangelism to the African American population and to the South in general.⁷⁰

Joseph Bates, who amassed a modest fortune as a sea captain, was also active in both temperance and antislavery causes. Bates accepted the Millerite Advent message in 1839, and thereafter was active organizer of Millerite meetings.⁷¹ When the movement dissolved in the fall of 1844, Bates became a key figure in forming the Seventh-day Adventist Church. In all, Bates embodied the involvement of temperance and antislavery reformers in the Millerite movement that would later establish the Seventh-Day Adventist Church and formulate its doctrines.

A MOVEMENT ON THE RISE

Dr. Josiah Litch was a well-known Methodist Episcopal minister in New England, who was initially skeptical of William Miller's predictions. Upon reading Miller's writings, he became enamored and ultimately convinced of Miller's positions. In the summer of 1838, he released a book titled *The Probability of the Second Coming of Christ About A.D. 1843*.⁷² Applying Miller's day-year principle in prophetic interpretation upon Revelation 9, Litch

⁶⁸Ibid., 141, 142.

⁶⁹Schwartz and Greenleaf, 43.

⁷⁰Ibid.

⁷¹Ibid., 58.

⁷²Ibid., 33.

predicted Turkey's loss of power to come in 1840. In 11 August 1840, the Ottoman's Empire's acceptance of Great Power guarantees was seen as a validation of Litch's position and increased interest both in historicist interpretation of Bible prophecy and the Millerite message.⁷³

By 1840, Millerite Adventism gathered steam like a locomotive. Conjectural estimates of the number of Millerites range from 10,000 to 1,000,000 across the nation.⁷⁴ With Miller's tract publications, and the help of a cadre of associate ministers and workers, the Millerites organized what was called a general conference of advent believers in Chardon Street Chapel, Boston on 14 October 1840.⁷⁵ The conference's purpose was to gather Advent believers as sort of a rally. Miller was scheduled to be the keynote speaker but fell ill. Nonetheless, about two hundred clergy and laymen attended.⁷⁶ Deemed a success, fifteen additional conferences were held during the next three years.⁷⁷ Held at locations ranging from Maine to Philadelphia, the Philadelphia conference surpassed the building's 5,000 person capacity.⁷⁸ In addition, 120 smaller local conferences of Advent believers were organized, with several occurring as far west as Michigan and Indiana.⁷⁹

In the early 1840s, Miller maintained a torrid pace of preaching. One significant engagement came during March of 1840 in Portland, Maine, where Miller preached to a local church congregation.⁸⁰ Here a physically frail teenager named Ellen Harmon sat with rapt attention to Miller's sermon. Harmon's frailness was attributed to an accident when she was

⁷³Ibid.

⁷⁴David L. Rowe, *Thunders and Trumpets: Millerites and Dissenting Religion in Upstate New York, 1800-1850*, (Chico: Scholars Press, 1985), 47.

⁷⁵Schwartz and Greenleaf, 37.

⁷⁶Ibid.

⁷⁷Ibid.

⁷⁸Ibid.

⁷⁹Ibid.

⁸⁰Ellen White, *Life Sketches of Ellen G. White*, (Mountain View: Pacific Press Publishing, 1943), 20.

nine years old, where a schoolmate threw a rock that hit Harmon on the nose.⁸¹ The accident caused her to be unconscious for three weeks and near death and thereafter limited her to only three years of formal schooling.⁸² In hearing Miller preach, she recalled, “Mr. Miller traced down the prophecies with an exactness that struck conviction to the hearts of his hearers. He dwelt upon the prophetic periods, and brought many proofs to strengthen his position. Then his solemn and powerful appeals and admonitions to those who were unprepared, held the crowds as if spellbound.”⁸³ Harmon, convinced of Miller’s message, chose to be baptized to a local Methodist congregation at the age of fourteen, but was stripped of her membership a year later because of her Advent beliefs.⁸⁴ Little did this frail teenage girl know that she would later be a co-founder of the Seventh-Day Adventist Church and become the most published female author in history.⁸⁵

In 1842, at a Millerite meeting in Exter, Maine, James White, a twenty-one-year-old school teacher and future husband of Ellen Harmon, accepted the Millerite message. White left teaching to be a Millerite lecturer.⁸⁶ Confronted with hostile mobs that hurled snowballs and other dangerous objects towards him, White persisted to report a thousand conversions to the Millerite Advent message through his lectures in a six-month period.⁸⁷ It is this persistence that would aid James White as he, too, would be a co-founder of the Seventh-Day Adventist Church.

⁸¹Phyllis C. Bailey, ed., *Fascinating Facts about the Spirit of Prophecy*, (Hagerstown: Review and Herald Publishing, 1983), 5.

⁸²White., 20.

⁸³Ibid.

⁸⁴Bailey, 5.

⁸⁵Ibid., 13.

⁸⁶Ibid., 43.

⁸⁷Ibid.

Evangelistic camp meetings were another successful means for Miller to gain converts. Centralized in the Northeastern portion of the United States, these meetings were held in large tents in open spaces. In fact, the so-called “Millerite Great Tent” had a seating capacity for up to three to four thousand.⁸⁸ Attracting a wide array of individuals from believers, to the curious, to the skeptical, to drunken revelers seeking to disrupt the meetings, these camp meetings were a success in terms of attention. Another crowd drawer to these tent meetings were the visually mesmerizing lithographic charts of apocalyptic symbolism, which were used in a similar fashion to the power-point presentations in the twenty-first century.⁸⁹ John Greenleaf Whittier, who came as a spectator to these large-scale meetings described these charts as “oriental types, figures, and mystic symbols, translated into staring Yankee realities, and exhibited like beasts of a traveling menagerie.”⁹⁰ Initially, only three meetings were planned in the summer of 1842, but the popularity of these meetings led to 125 additional meetings organized in a three year span, where as many as half a million persons attended.⁹¹

ENCOUNTERING RESISTANCE

As the Millerites aggressively evangelized their doctrines, those who disagreed with Miller’s prophetic interpretations castigated the Millerites for rigidity in their theological positions. Many mainline Protestant sects once open to the Miller’s message closed their pulpits to Millerite evangelists. One such example was found in July of 1843, where the Methodist Maine Conference condemned Millerite theology and ordered their pastors not to preach

⁸⁸Butler, 55.

⁸⁹Ibid.

⁹⁰Ibid.

⁹¹Schwartz and Greenleaf, 39.

Millerite doctrines.⁹² By the summer of 1843, tensions reached a boiling point when Charles Fitch, considered one of the most beloved preachers among Millerite believers, preached a passionate sermon identifying the prophetic Babylon of Revelation 18 to a congregation in Cleveland, Ohio.⁹³ Millerites along with most Protestants in this era believed that Babylon was the Roman Papacy. However, Fitch took it a step further in identifying Babylon to include all evangelical Protestants. Fitch wrote a pamphlet titled “Come out of Her, My People,” where it stated, “If you are a Christian, come out of Babylon. If you intend to be found a Christian when Christ appears, come out of Babylon, and come out now.”⁹⁴ In “Babylon,” Fitch saw both the religious and material foundations of society corrupt including mainstream Protestantism, an eschatological concept that Seventh-Day Adventists would later co-opt in their prophetic interpretations.

Fitch’s pamphlet incited controversy between Millerite believers and their home denominations, with many Millerites contemplating if they should leave their churches.⁹⁵ Millerite publications sought to distance themselves from Fitch’s assertions, providing a moderate view that strongly discouraged individual Millerites from separating from their home denominations. Miller himself stated that he had “never designed to make a new sect, or to give ... a nickname.”⁹⁶ Millerite believers were counseled to remain in their home congregations, to share their faith, until forcefully expelled from church membership. With clear conviction,

⁹²Ibid., 45.

⁹³Ibid.

⁹⁴Butler, 56.

⁹⁵Ibid.

⁹⁶Ibid.

Miller himself had no interest in starting his own denomination, rather wanting believers to remain in their own congregations, but united in their belief of the imminent Advent.

Ironically, William Miller was hesitant to establish a specific date on Christ's return, but believed strongly that around 1843 the event will come. Miller was caught between a circumstantial rock and a hard place. On one hand, he did not want believers to procrastinate in preparing for this great event, while on the other hand, Miller did not want believers to be discouraged if Christ did not come on the day predicted.⁹⁷ Miller's lieutenants were vigorous in establishing a date. Millerite lecturer Samuel Sheffield Snow asserted categorically that 22 October 1844 was the date of prophetic destiny. Snow meticulously studied the Jewish festivals and Mosiac religious ceremonies outlined in the book of Leviticus. Because language used on the text for the 2300 day prophecy mentioned a sanctuary being cleansed, Snow believed the date would fall on Yom Kippur, where according to the law of Moses, a curtain dividing the two apartments within the Hebrew tabernacle would be cleansed of the sacrificial blood that accumulated on this curtain signifying that the sins of the people were forgiven and blotted out.⁹⁸ Utilizing the Karaite Jewish chronology, Yom Kippur fell on 22 October 1844. Being aloof to the time-setting debate, Miller finally gave his endorsement to Snow's position. Miller exclaimed, "I see a glory in the seventh month which I never saw before.... I am almost home. Glory! Glory!! Glory!!!"⁹⁹ With this exclamation, Miller's validation of this date swept believers with conviction as they now received a glorious day to look forward for.

⁹⁷Ibid., 47.

⁹⁸Ibid.

⁹⁹Butler, 56.

With a date set, believers fervently waited for that day. Scoffers also increased their efforts as they forced the cancellation of Millerite meetings in Boston, New York, and Philadelphia.¹⁰⁰ Millerite believers saw this persecution as a fulfillment of prophecy that only strengthened their resolve. In the weeks preceding this date, workers resigned from their jobs, shops closed, crops were not harvested, and individuals sought to right wrongs with one another and to their God.¹⁰¹ Ellen White recalled, “Every morning we felt that it was our first work to secure the evidence that our lives were right before God. We realized that if we were not advancing in holiness, we were sure to retrograde. Our interest for one another increased; we prayed much with and for one another. We assembled in the orchards and groves to commune with God and to offer up our petitions to Him, feeling more fully in His presence when surrounded by His natural works. The joys of salvation were more necessary to us than our food and drink. If clouds obscured our minds, we dared not rest or sleep till they were swept away by the consciousness of our acceptance with the Lord.”¹⁰² With this fervor, continuous religious services were organized by the Millerites, as believers waited with vast anticipation for 22 October 1844.

THE DISAPPOINTMENT AND AFTERMATH

When 22 October 1844 finally arrived, there was an estimated one hundred thousand believers congregated in groups either in their homes or at meeting houses awaiting the last hours of Earth’s history.¹⁰³ But as the seconds, then minutes, and finally hours went by, the great event that was passionately predicted did not occur. Most believers anxiously waited till the

¹⁰⁰Ibid., 49.

¹⁰¹Ibid.

¹⁰²White, 60.

¹⁰³Schwartz and Greenleaf, 49.

clocks hit midnight, and when the clocks rang its bitter verdict, “The Great Disappointment” seared the consciousness of the Millerite movement.

The bitterness was extreme. Believers endured the wrath of their detractors, causing many Millerites to renounce their convictions. Hiram Edson recalled, “Our fondest hopes and expectations were blasted, and such a spirit of weeping came over us as I never experienced before. It seemed that the loss of all earthly friends could have been no comparison. We wept, and wept, till the day dawn.”¹⁰⁴ Yet other Millerites, although disappointed, remained loyal to the doctrine of Christ’s soon coming. Ellen White stated, “We were disappointed, but not disheartened. We resolved to refrain from murmuring at the trying ordeal . . . to submit patiently to the process of purifying that God deemed needful for us; and to wait with patient hope for the Saviour to redeem His tried and faithful ones. We were firm in the belief that the preaching of definite time was of God. It was this that led men to search the Bible diligently, discovering truths they had not before perceived.”¹⁰⁵ But in all, most Millerites endured a severe shaking of their faith.

Like Ellen White, some in the Millerite leadership remained optimistic. Josiah Himes, the catalyst for establishing Millerite publications wrote, “I never felt more happy and reconciled to His [God’s] will; the late work has saved me—it has been a blessing to us all. Now let us hold on.”¹⁰⁶ William Miller himself exclaimed, “I am not yet cast down or discouraged, surrounded with enemies and scoffers, yet my mind is perfectly calm, and my hope in the coming of Christ is

¹⁰⁴Ibid.

¹⁰⁵White, 61-62.

¹⁰⁶Schwartz and Greenleaf, 51.

as strong as ever.”¹⁰⁷ Miller added, “I was misled in my calculations, not by the words of God, nor by the established principles of interpretation I adopted, but by the authorities which I followed in history and chronology.”¹⁰⁸ No longer resorting to predict an actual date, and taking solace to the fact that respected chronologists frequently disagreed, Miller and Himes maintained belief that Christ would return.

Miller and Himes desperately attempted to keep the movement unified. The two men organized additional conferences for Millerite believers, but to no avail, so that by the time of Miller’s death in 1849, the movement splintered to various factions. Several offshoots delved into fanaticism. One faction believed that Christ had indeed come, that they were in Heaven and that no more marriages should occur. Led by Enoch Jacobs, this offshoot assimilated into a Shaker colony.¹⁰⁹ Still others believed that they passed into a great thousand-year Sabbath where no more secular work was permitted.¹¹⁰ Indeed, the disillusionment from the “Great Disappointment” dismembered the unity of the movement, as fanaticism and factionalism steered the Millerites to oblivion.

By 1852, there were four established factions. One of these factions was based in Boston, and deviated on a key doctrine from mainline Millerites. Most Millerites believed the soul was not immortal, meaning that when a person dies, the soul does not immediately go to heaven, but rather both body and soul are at rest until resurrected during Christ’s advent. This faction believed in the immortality of the soul and found more and more in common with the

¹⁰⁷Ibid.

¹⁰⁸Numbers and Butler, 20.

¹⁰⁹Ibid., 54.

¹¹⁰Ibid.

mainline denominations. Ultimately, the faction dissolved as they returned back to the doctrines of mainstream protestant churches.

A second group was based in Rochester, New York. This group was militantly opposed to any form of church organization. This group developed a distinctive belief where during the prophetic millennium, the Jews would return to Palestine, a foreshadowed paradigm to the twenty-first century where many evangelical Christians share a belief in the prophetic importance of the nation of Israel in the apocalypse. But the strong aversion towards organization caused this faction to dissolve.¹¹¹

A third faction was based in the Hartford Connecticut-New York City area. This faction believed in the mortality of the soul but held conflicting views with regard to church discipline and organization. Himes would join this faction and help form it into the Advent Christian Church, one of the largest stable remnants of the Millerite Movement.¹¹²

The fourth faction, based in Maine, was called the Sabbatarian faction. This faction believed that Saturday, not Sunday, was God's holy day of worship, observing the day that many Jews reserved for worship. Basing their stance on the Ten Commandments found in the book of Exodus Chapter twenty, these Sabbatarians remained steadfast in the belief that Christ's coming was imminent but that the Millerite interpretation of the 2300 Day Prophecy was flawed, and deserved reexamination to comprehend the proper meaning of that prophecy.

Considered a radical faction, Sabbatarians were not invited to an 1845 Millerite conference in Albany, New York, where the remaining Millerites unsuccessfully attempted to

¹¹¹Ibid., 55.

¹¹²Ibid.

reunify their splintering movement.¹¹³ Indeed, this faction was not only rejected by mainline Protestants but their Millerite brethren as well. It is this faction, however, that would ultimately become the Seventh-Day Adventist Church, and declare itself God's true final movement that will warn a world of the imminent coming of Jesus Christ.

¹¹³Morgan, 12-13.

CHAPTER III

A REMNANT RISES IN THE MIDST: THE FORMATION AND ORGANIZATION OF THE SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH, 1844-1863

SEEDS TAKING ROOT

The seeds that resulted in the birth of the Seventh-Day Adventist Church began before the “Great Disappointment.” In the spring of 1844 Frederick Wheeler, a New Hampshire Millerite and Methodist minister studied with a Seventh-Day Baptist woman, Rachel Oaks. Through these Bible studies, Wheeler became convinced that the Sabbath was not only for the Jews but for Christians as well.¹ At the same time, several Millerite members of a Washington, New Hampshire congregation began to observe the Sabbath. Near the end of that summer, prominent Millerite minister T.B. Preble, who traveled personally with William Miller, also accepted the Sabbath.² After the Great Disappointment, Preble and Wheeler remained firm in their belief of the Advent of Jesus Christ. Thus, Sabbath keeping rose between the twilight and nightfall of the Millerite movement.

In March 1845, Preble published a tract promoting Sabbath worship with significant implication for the formation of the Seventh-Day Adventist Church. Preble’s tract was read by Joseph Bates a Millerite financier in his early fifties who still believed in the Advent and further, that on 22 October 1844 something significant in Bible prophecy actually did occur. In early May of 1845, Bates learned of Sabbath-keeping Adventists in New Hampshire, and somehow

¹Ibid., 56.

²Ibid.

made his way to the home of Frederick Wheeler. Arriving unannounced at ten in the evening, Bates and Wheeler were involved in an all-night Bible study on this issue.³ Upon arriving back to his home, Bates told a neighbor, “The news is that the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord our God.”⁴ Bates studied with his neighbor and, in turn, became a Sabbath keeper, thereby beginning Bates new career as an evangelist for Sabbath keeping.

Seventeen-year-old J. N. Andrews, who also agreed on the Sabbath issue, joined Bates in evangelizing on the Sabbath being the true day of worship. The two fervently shared their newfound convictions and hundreds became convinced of Saturday being the true day of worship.⁵ Meanwhile, Millerites Hiram Edson, along with his friend, O.R.L. Crosier, restudied the 2300 day prophecy and arrived at a profound conclusion.⁶ Destiny would have it that Bates and Andrews would cross paths with Edson and Crosier, thus providing the theological foundations of what would turn into a fledgling movement.

Edson and Crosier postulated a theological paradigm ultimately called the Sanctuary Doctrine. In this, the sanctuary referred to in the 2300 day prophecy of Daniel Chapter 8 verse 14, was a literal sanctuary that existed in Heaven. Further, the Hebrew sanctuary system stipulated in the Old Testament books of Exodus and Leviticus served as a symbolic representation of Jesus Christ’s role in instituting a plan of salvation to redeem humanity from sin. Remaining faithful to William Miller’s method of studying the Bible, Edson and Crosier applied both historicism and typology in their formulation of this doctrine. Organically present in Miller’s proof text method, Typology stems from the Calvinist-Puritan tradition where

³Ibid., 58.

⁴Ibid., 59.

⁵Ibid., 56.

⁶Ibid., 60.

connections are made between Biblical types and fulfilled in antitypes during the Christian era.⁷

With this in mind, the literal Hebrew sanctuary was a mere facsimile of the one that was in Heaven. A text used to prove this concept is found in the book of Hebrews, chapter 8 verses one and two, where the Bible states, “Now of the things which we have spoken *this is* the sum: We have such an high priest, who is set on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens; A minister of the sanctuary, and of the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, and not man.”⁸ Therefore, Jesus Christ served in the role of high priest, interceding in behalf of humanity, inside a literal Heavenly Sanctuary.

Through the theological lens of the ancient Jewish sanctuary system, 22 October 1844 fell on the date of Yom Kippur, the Jewish Day of Atonement. According to Hebrew Levitical protocol, parts of which is stipulated in Leviticus 16, Yom Kippur was the only day where the High Priest would move from the first apartment called “The Holy Place” to the second apartment termed “The Most Holy Place” to confess and make intercession for the sins of the Hebrew people in front of the Ark of the Covenant, whom the Hebrews believed was a representation of the throne of God. Also, the curtain dividing the two apartments was cleansed of the sacrificial blood representing the sins of the people that were applied and accumulated on the curtain.

Likewise, Edson and Crosier argued that on 22 October 1844, Jesus Christ moved from the first to the second apartment in the literal Heavenly Sanctuary; where Christ was now preparing to cleanse those that confess their sins and profess His name as their Savior from their sins in preparation for his return to this earth to gather His believers to Heaven. Or in laymen

⁷Morgan, 22.

⁸Hebrews. 8.1-2. KJV.

terms, Christ was investigating the sins of God's people to determine their fitness to be translated to his Heavenly kingdom as believers of this doctrine prepared for the end of the world. Thus, Edson and Crosier believed that Miller and his associates arrived at the correct date but wrong event, where instead of the advent, the people of earth had entered into a spiritual Yom Kippur, a period of probationary judgment before the time of the end.

In around the fall of 1845 to early 1846, Bates ran into an article published by Crosier in regards to the Sanctuary Doctrine.⁹ He somehow managed to begin a correspondence with Edson and latter accepted an invitation to meet both Crosier and Edson.¹⁰ This fateful meeting resulted in both Edson and Crosier accepting the Seventh-day Sabbath, while Bates agreed that Edson and Crosier's position on the sanctuary was correct. With this marriage of doctrines, the catalyst for the theological foundation of the merging Seventh-Day Adventist faith was initiated.

THE CALL OF THE PROPHETS

On 30 August 1846, former Millerite lecturer James White married Ellen Harmon in Portland, Maine.¹¹ She was seen by her close companions to possess a prophetic gift of divinely inspired visions and dreams. White's first purported vision came when she was seventeen years old, on a December day of 1844, while praying with four fellow Adventist women seeking solace from the "Great Disappointment." She described seeing the Advent people walking a straight and narrow path to a golden city, being encouraged by Christ to remain faithful to their

⁹Schwartz and Greenleaf., 61.

¹⁰Ibid.

¹¹Bailey, 5.

destination, and ultimately seeing these pilgrims enjoying the paradise of Heaven with their God.¹²

A week later, White asserted to have another vision, this time a call to God to publicize her visions to others. Of this, she states, “In my second vision, about a week after the first, the Lord gave me a view of the trials through which I must pass, and told me that I must go and relate to others what He had revealed to me. It was shown me that my labors would meet with great opposition, and that my heart would be rent with anguish; but that the grace of God would be sufficient to sustain me through all.”¹³ Although initially reluctant to share her visions due to her poor health and youth, she would press forward in both speaking and writing of these dreams and visions that she asserted to have received.

Other Millerites also claimed to receive visions from God similar to what Ellen White experienced. One was William Foy, a Mulatto from Boston who was studying to become a minister. But fear that his racial heritage would not allow people to take him seriously, along with financial burdens and his inability to decipher a third vision that he received caused him to stop sharing his “prophetic” experiences.¹⁴ Another was Hazen Foss, of Portland, Maine, who feared that openly discussing this vision would lead him to public ridicule. But fearing he grieved the Holy Spirit, he sought to reconsider but could not recall the vision he claimed to have received. Weeks later, Foss had a chance meeting with Ellen White, whose older sister married

¹²White., 64.

¹³Ibid., 69.

¹⁴Schwartz and Greenleaf., 62.

Foss's brother.¹⁵ Foss admonished her not to refuse the call of God, but in an ironic twist, would himself no longer show interest in religious matters.¹⁶

Ellen White has been a controversial figure throughout the history of the Seventh-Day Adventist Church. A prolific writer, she wrote more than sixty books ranging from eschatology to healthful living to Biblical commentaries.¹⁷ To some, she is considered the prophet of the Lord inspired by God to declare the present truth during the waning moments of earth's history. To others, she is considered delusional, a fraud, or mentally ill. Some critics point to her childhood accident where a rock was thrown, and severely injured her face as the root cause of hallucinating these visions and dreams.

Still others asserted to witness Mrs. White in vision. These public visions were said to occur while she was praying or speaking. Witnesses asserted that there was no evidence of her breathing, yet her heartbeat and facial color were normal.¹⁸ Her eyes would remain open, but she was described to be unconscious of her surroundings.¹⁹ At times, she was purported to possess supernatural strength, where in one reported vision, an eighty pound Ellen White held an 18 pound family Bible on her extended left hand for thirty minutes, during the duration of this vision.²⁰ And a long deep inhalation signified the ending of these visions. Amid these reports, many critics living during Ellen White's lifetime discounted them as forms of mesmerism and self-hypnosis.

¹⁵Ibid., 62.

¹⁶Ibid.

¹⁷Bailey, 13.

¹⁸Ibid., 63.

¹⁹Ibid.

²⁰Bailey, 11.

Joseph Bates was one of those skeptics. Bates met James and Ellen White in the spring of 1847. The Whites, on the other hand, did not accept the Sabbath doctrine. But during the fall of 1846, the Whites meticulously studied Bates's pamphlet, *The Seventh Day Sabbath, A Perpetual Sign* and accepted the Sabbath doctrine.²¹ Bates became convinced of Ellen White's prophetic gift when he asserted to witness her in vision. Bates, a formal sea captain, was well versed in astronomy and attempted to strike a conversation with Ellen White where he found her uninformed on the subject. After vision, she gave an astronomical description of objects she saw in vision, leading Bates to deduce that this sudden enlightenment on astronomy could only come from God.²²

It is important to note that White did not introduce or create Adventist doctrines through her asserted visions. Rather, these visions served as confirmation to points of doctrine that were already introduced by other men. Her asserted visions on specific doctrinal points confirmed such matters as Edson and Crosier's writings on the Sanctuary Doctrine and Bates's adherence to the Sabbath as divine truth. In all, Ellen White served as the unifying catalyst in establishing consensus in church doctrines, as the early pioneers of the Seventh-Day Adventist Church believed that she was endowed with the spirit of prophecy.

ESTABLISHING UNITY AMONGST THE FLOCK

Bates, the Whites, and Hiram Edson were in the forefront of promoting the Biblical doctrines they formulated after the disappointment. Simultaneously, dozens of other Adventists throughout New England and western New York arrived at one or more of the same doctrines

²¹Ibid., 65.

²²Ibid.

through their own independent studies.²³ The need for these believers to exchange ideas and to arrive at a unified set of theological doctrines led to a call to organize a conference. Resulting in a push for conferences of the gathering of like-minded believers, similar to the ones held by their Millerite forefathers.

Dubbed “Sabbath Conferences,” the first of these gatherings were held from April 20 to 24, 1848, at a home in Rocky Hill, Connecticut.²⁴ Fifty people attended, with Bates and James White giving the principal addresses. In these conferences, long hours were spent in prayer and intense Bible study. When there was an impasse on a particular point of doctrine, conference participants asserted instances where Ellen White was taken into vision to resolve doctrinal disputes.²⁵

Four Sabbath conferences were held, and at the end of these conferences, Sabbatarian Adventists were in agreement on eight specific points of doctrine. These included the imminent, personal pre-millennial Second Advent of Jesus Christ. In 1844, Christ’s two-fold ministry began in the heavenly sanctuary with the sanctuary’s cleansing. The seventh-day Sabbath was the day of worship. God endowed Ellen White with the gift of prophecy. The duty to proclaim the three angels messages stated in Revelation 14. Conditional immortality and that death equated as a dreamless sleep and not the point where a soul goes to heaven or hell. The timing of the seven last plagues, and the final complete destruction of the wicked after the millennium, and with the formation these theological pillars, these former Millerites were now faced with a new necessity: to organize.

²³Ibid.

²⁴Ibid., 66.

²⁵Ibid.

A distinctive aspect to the rise of the Sabbatarian Adventists was the age of its leaders. Joseph Bates, the elder statesman, was in his fifties when this movement took root. J. N. Andrews, a key Sabbatarian Adventist evangelist who convinced hundreds on the need to observe the seventh-day Sabbath was seventeen when he accepted the message.²⁶ Ellen and James White were in their early twenties. Uriah Smith and Stephen Haskell, who would both author Seventh-day Adventist publications on eschatology, were twenty and nineteen when they accepted the Sabbath message. And J. N. Loughborough, convinced on the Sabbath doctrine by the skillful eloquence of J. N. Andrews, was twenty.

Like William Miller, none of the founders received any formal theological training, all believed that the human mind can grasp the complexities of the Bible through diligent prayer and self-study. James White once wrote, “God has revealed he designs to be understood.”²⁷ Ellen White affirmed, “The Bible contains all the principles that men need to understand in order to be fitted either for this life or for the life to come. And these principles may be understood by all.”²⁸ In all, the majority of the core group of leaders of the early Seventh-Day Advent movement were mere teenagers and wide eyed young adults, not realizing yet that what they had started would culminate in a worldwide Protestant Christian denomination.

CONSOLIDATION AND ORGANIZATION

The year 1850 saw the nation’s political landscape hoping for a band-aid solution to the searing debate over slavery in the form of the Great Compromise of 1850 in January. It also saw

²⁶Ibid., 59.

²⁷Morgan, 21.

²⁸Ellen G. White, *Education*, (Mountain View: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1903), 123.

the admission of California to the union. In November 1850, James White established the *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, a newsletter that espoused the movement's theological doctrines. Like their Millerite forefathers, newsletters and pamphlets served as an effective tool to inculcate Adventist doctrines to the masses. The newsletter also gave prominent Adventist leaders a forum to write articles and to interact with other Adventists through a question and answer column. Current events and politics were covered, often republished from other sources, and in many instances utilized to support the authenticity of Adventist eschatology. The publication would play an important role in articulating the fledgling church's position on various issues and would later become the official publication of the Seventh-Day Adventist Church.²⁹

By 1854, a decade after the Great Disappointment, the national debate over slavery spoke in louder decibels. Sen. Stephen A. Douglas of Illinois sponsored the Kansas-Nebraska Act, where popular sovereignty would determine if slavery be permitted in the newly formed Kansas and Nebraska territories, leading to armed violence in Kansas and locking the course for the nation to engage in civil war.³⁰ Yet, in the midst of a nation seeped in domestic turmoil, Adventists were preoccupied on consolidating their congregations. Ellen White claimed to receive a divinely inspired vision where a "gospel order" was needed, a theme echoed by James White in a series of articles he wrote in the *Review* for the necessity of organization to consolidate and expand the burgeoning movement's evangelistic efforts.³¹ Many early Adventist chapels were the legal property of the believer providing the building site. In fact, when the

²⁹Schwartz and Greenleaf. 72,

³⁰George Brown Tindall and David Shi, *America: A Narrative History, vol. 1*, (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1992), 610.

³¹*Ibid.*, 83.

owner of a lot where an Adventist church was built became disillusioned with the movement, he converted it to a vinegar factory.³² Therefore, the need to organize was a practical one, as the question of legal ownership of property such as church buildings and publication facilities drove the need for incorporation.

By 1857, Battle Creek, Michigan, became the *de facto* headquarters of the movement. As membership increased through evangelist tent meetings, a centralized location to coordinate operations was needed. Battle Creek was an attractive site because of its tolerance for sectarian ideas. In fact, Battle Creek was known as a community of non-conformists of diverse groups ranging from Quakers to Spiritualists to ardent Abolitionists within its city limits.³³ Accepting an invitation of a small group of Adventists in Battle Creek, the Whites built their first home, a \$500 six-room structure, and a church was built with a capacity of 300 worshippers in hopes of hosting the movement's conference for its believers nationwide.³⁴ The movement planted their flag upon Battle Creek, thus becoming the Mecca of the Sabbath believing Adventist movement.

On 1 October 1860, a conference to better organize the movement's congregations was held. This conference included Joseph Bates, James White, J.N. Loughborough, and Uriah Smith as participants. An official name for the movement was discussed. Some of the more popular and sarcastic names people outside of the movement labeled Adventists included "Seventh-day Doorshutters," and "Shut-door Seventh-day Sabbath and Annihilationists."³⁵ Simultaneously, people within the movement labeled themselves "the remnant," "the scattered

³²Ibid., 90.

³³"The History of Battle Creek," City of Battle Creek, Michigan. [<http://ci.battle-creek.mi.us/Community/History.htm>], 25 May 2005.

³⁴Schwartz and Greenleaf, 88.

³⁵Ibid., 91.

flock,” or “the Church of God.”³⁶ In fact, “Church of God” had many advocates, including James White.³⁷ Delegates sought to come up with a name that would capture the theme of the movement’s major theological doctrines. Delegate David Hewitt moved for the adoption of the name Seventh-Day Adventist. Ellen White gave her endorsement: “The name Seventh-Day Adventist carries the true features of our faith in front, and will convict the inquiring mind. Like an arrow from the Lord’s quiver it will wound the transgressors of God’s law, and will lead toward repentance toward God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ.”³⁸ With only one delegate opposing, the name Seventh-Day Adventist was chosen as the organization was on the road to establishment as the United States was to embark on its most bitter domestic crisis in her history, the Civil War.

During the bloody years of the Civil War, the evangelistic efforts of the Seventh-Day Adventist Church were all but paralyzed. William Ingraham, an Adventist evangelist working in Illinois, reported that it was useless to do tent meetings because the people were too immersed in the war.³⁹ J. H. Waggoner and B. F. Snook were arrested in Iowa because of martial law and held until they secured certification of a present occupation and a place of residence.⁴⁰ New York evangelist M. E. Cornell saw his meeting tent co-opted to the U.S. Army as a recruitment center.⁴¹ However, this afforded the movement time to organize and consolidate itself internally,

³⁶Ibid.

³⁷Ibid.

³⁸Ibid., 92.

³⁹Arthur L. White, *Ellen G. White: The Progressive Years, 1862-1876*, vol. 2 (Washington D.C.: Review and Herald Association, 1986), 44.

⁴⁰Ibid.

⁴¹Ibid.

thus establishing a foundation for widespread growth.⁴² The early phases of organization culminated with The Seventh-Day Adventist Publishing Association, the legal entity that published the *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, was formally incorporated to a non-profit organization owned completely by Adventist shareholders.⁴³

By 1863, church membership consisted of 3500 members strictly relegated in the northern United States, from Maine to Minnesota and Missouri, with only thirty ministers to service these congregations.⁴⁴ A three-tier organizational blueprint was developed, consisting of local churches, district or state conferences, and a general conference as the representative body where delegates from all churches can have a voice in policy.⁴⁵ Between May 20-23, 1863, representatives met in Battle Creek, Michigan, and adopted a constitution and elected officers for the General Conference. John Byington, a former Methodist minister and abolitionist, was elected the first General Conference president after James White declined.⁴⁶

However, White along with John Loughborough, was elected to the executive committee, with Uriah Smith as the conference secretary. Of this meeting, Smith wrote, “Perhaps no previous meeting that we have ever enjoyed was characterized by such unity of feeling and harmony of sentiment.”⁴⁷ Indeed, this internal unity was essential as the fledgling church was confronted with a nation in war, and to what extent she was to involve itself, as the destiny of a nation hung in the balance.

⁴²*Lessons in Denominational History*, (Washington D.C.: General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 1944), 144.

⁴³Schwartz and Greenleaf, 92.

⁴⁴*Ibid.*, 95.

⁴⁵*Ibid.*, 92

⁴⁶*Ibid.*, 94.

⁴⁷*Ibid.*

CHAPTER IV

THE STAIN OF SLAVERY: THE ADVENTIST STANCE ON SLAVERY, 1850 TO 1865

ABOLITIONIST LEGACY

As the United States seeped further into crisis over slavery, the vast majority of Adventists agreed with the tenets of abolitionism. A reflection of their Millerite heritage, influential and significant individuals from various reform movements accepted William Miller's apocalyptic message. Joseph Bates organized an anti-slavery society in his hometown before his time was totally immersed to the Millerite movement.¹ But the continual belief of the imminent return of Jesus Christ caused many Adventists to be ambivalent in engaging in political and social activism.

However, prominent church figures actively involved themselves in abolitionism in an individual basis. W. K. Kellogg, one of the incorporators of the church's publishing association and father of famed health reformer and cereal inventor John Harvey Kellogg, used his Michigan farm to harbor fleeing slaves.² John Byington, the first General Conference president, had earlier left the Methodist Church because of its reticence to take a stand against slavery.³ In fact, Byington used his farm in Buck's Bridge, New York as a station for the Underground Railroad, illegally ferrying slaves to Canada. Famed African American abolitionist Sojourner Truth, attended a Millerite camp-meeting in 1843, and would later reside in Battle Creek, Michigan,

¹Ibid., 95.

²Roy Branson, "Ellen G. White-Racist or Champion of Equality?" *Review and Herald*, 9 April 1970, 3.

³Ibid.

near an Adventist college and entertained numerous Seventh-Day Adventist friends.⁴ The church's publication company printed one edition of her biography.⁵

IF YOU HAVE SLAVES, YOU ARE NOT ADVENTIST

With distinct clarity, Ellen White declared that supporting slavery was incongruent to being a Seventh-Day Adventist. In addressing a rare minority of pro-slavery Adventists, White rebuked, "There are a few in the ranks of Sabbathkeepers who sympathize with the slaveholder. When they embraced the truth, they did not leave behind them all the errors they should have left. They need a more thorough draft from the cleansing fountain of truth. Some have brought along with them their old political prejudices, which are not in harmony with the principles of the truth."⁶ With her reproving pen, Ellen White made it clear that toleration for individuals who saw slavery as justified was not an option for professed Adventist believers.

In fact, professed believers who supported slavery were threatened with expulsion from the congregation. In response to a pro-slavery Adventist, Mrs. White wrote, "You have never looked slavery in the right light, and your views of this matter have thrown you on the side of the Rebellion, which was stirred up by Satan and his host. Your views of slavery cannot harmonize with the sacred, important truths for this time. You must yield your views or the truth. Both cannot be cherished in the same heart, for they are at war with each other.... Unless you undo what you have done, it will be the duty of God's people to publicly withdraw their sympathy and

⁴Ibid.

⁵There is debate as to whether Sojourner Truth actually joined the Seventh-Day Adventist Church. Tony Zbaraschuk, the curator of the Adventist Heritage Room at La Sierra University stated that there was no conclusive evidence that Truth was an actual Adventist Church member. A google search found a historical biographical website that asserts that Truth joined the Seventh-Day Adventists (http://tntn.essortment.com/whoissojourn_rkss.htm). The author chooses to exercise caution in asserting Truth's membership unless conclusive evidence is found.

⁶Ellen G. White, *Testimonies to the Church, vol. 1*, (Mountain View: Pacific Press Publishing, 1949), 358.

fellowship from you, in order to save the impression which must go out in regard to us as a people. We must let it be known that we have no such ones in our fellowship that will not walk with them in church capacity.”⁷ Indeed, the call for expulsion is the most extreme form of church discipline, and it appears the church’s prophet had no hesitation to call for this measure for Adventists who supported slavery.

THEY ARE OUR EQUALS

Adventist leaders wrote explicitly of African American as equals to their Anglo counterparts, through the Judea-Christian paradigm God created beings endowed with the freedom of conscience. Of this, Ellen White passionately asserted that God revealed to her that God did not grant “title” or “right” for human beings to hold other human beings as property.⁸ Both African Americans and Whites were free moral agents bestowed by God and that slavery flagrantly violated this divine inalienable right.⁹ She adds, “All heaven beholds with indignation, human beings, the workmanship of God, reduced to the lowest depths of degradation, and placed on a level with the brute creation by their fellow-men. And professed followers of that dear Saviour whose compassion was ever moved as He witnessed human woe, heartily engage in this enormous and grievous sin, and deal in slaves and souls of men.”¹⁰ Through the stroke of her pen, White asserted the equality of the races and argued that the only servitude human beings were to be subjected to was the voluntary surrender of the individual’s will to their Divine Creator God, and no one else.

⁷Ibid., 359, 360.

⁸Ibid., 358.

⁹Ibid.

¹⁰Ibid., “God’s Quarrel with the Nation,” *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, 27 August 1861.

The founders of the church also sought to address the issue of whether it was viable for slaves to integrate themselves with mainstream society, should the institution of slavery be vanquished. In one question-and-answer column, a reader asked James White if someone is a true believer of the Adventist church if they believed slavery a sin, but also supported African Americans to be colonized or sent back to Africa. White replied, “The slaves by right, ought to be free. Colonization, of itself, defines no usage; it might, or it might not, effect the desired object. The idea, however, is inconsistent with freedom.”¹¹ White viewed that the slave should have the decision to be colonized to Africa or remain in the nation. White also saw education as the indispensable remedy for the enculturation of slaves to mainstream society. Of this, he writes, “In my opinion, education and gradual emancipation would be the best for all parties. But who has any hope for such thing?”¹² Thus, James White advocated that the slave was to decide to be colonized or go to Africa. Further, some sort of reparation was advocated, with a stop gap solution being a gradual enculturation to mainstream society through education.

Later, when African Americans were allowed to mobilize and fight for the Federal army, Adventist leaders applauded the move as “appropriate retribution.”¹³ The *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald* reprinted a heroic account of colored troops hunting down Southern insurgents in North Carolina. In an editor’s note, James White states, “What could be more appropriate than that the slaves themselves should be the instruments used to punish the merciless tyrants who have so long ground them to the dust.”¹⁴ White viewed African American military mobilization as just retribution for the cruelty bestowed upon the slave master. The article

¹¹James White, ed., “Questions,” *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, 6 May 1862.

¹²Ibid.

¹³James White, ed., “Justice Awakening,” *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, 26 January 1864.

¹⁴Ibid.

concludes by stating, “An army of 50,000 blacks could march from one end of Rebeldom to the other almost without opposition the terror they would inspire making them invincible.”¹⁵ In all, Adventist periodicals conveyed that African Americans were intelligent equal human beings who are part of the human being, thereby reflecting the abolitionist tents of many of the founders of the early Adventist Church.

Adventist minister Joseph Clarke viewed racism as the byproduct of slavery that caused irreparable harm to the nation’s moral fabric. Clarke writes, “The youth is taught from infancy to despise the colored race, and even now ... the proudest bearing toward, and contempt for, the colored race; scorn, and indignity are heaped upon them; often, too is this manifested toward men of worth and character, merely because of their color.”¹⁶ Clark laments that the byproducts of slavery caused confusion, anarchy, and was “eating out the vital power of the nation.”¹⁷ He fiercely denounced the racism that prevented “virtuous” and “enlightened” men of color from the right to vote, and yet required to pay taxes and also suffer the indignity of their children deprived of education, even in the North.¹⁸ Clarke saw this prejudice as “ridiculous” but bleakly concluded: “The evil is past cure.”¹⁹ Like most Adventist ministers, Clarke saw no human political or social instrumentality could overcome this plight. Uriah Smith expanded Clarke’s argument in providing a “cure” for the nation. Smith wrote that believers could look forward for God “setting upon that kingdom which shall be established in righteousness and endure

¹⁵Ibid..

¹⁶Jospeh Clarke, “Our Country,” *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, 21 July 1863.

¹⁷Ibid.

¹⁸Ibid.

¹⁹Ibid.

forever.”²⁰ With this, the only all-encompassing panacea would be the second coming of Jesus Christ.

Indeed, most Adventists living in the Civil War era believed that some form of slavery would be perpetual till the final advent based on language found in Revelation 6 and Revelation 13 stating of the existence of “bondmen” near the time of the end. Even with the Confederacy vanquished, and the debate of reconstruction begun, a sense of pessimism still existed among prominent Adventists. Of this situation, Uriah Smith wrote, “And in this question, the status of the negro is involved. What rights shall be granted him? With what privileges shall he be clothed? Having helped to free the nation from a terrible rebellion, shall he now be accounted a citizen of that nation? Shall he have the right of suffrage?”²¹ Smith saw that racism was insurmountable. He concluded, “Slavery will be dead only in name. It will still exist in fact. There will still be bondmen in this land, bound in fetters of disfranchisement proscription and prejudice, more galling and oppressive than the iron manacles that have heretofore ... upon their bleeding limbs.”²² Smith echoed a theme traced back to the Millerite movement, that true redress for social ills was the apocalypse.

Like most Seventh-Day Adventists, James White believed that “the Bible is ... to be the standard by which the right or wrong of human conduct must be tested.”²³ With this, White saw the need for slavery to be examined under the theological microscope of the Bible. He wrote a twelve part treatise titled “The Bible No Refuge for Slavery” in *The Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*. Meticulously formulating his arguments from scriptures from both the Old and New

²⁰Uriah Smith, “Traitors in Power,” *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, 4 February 1862.

²¹Uriah Smith, ed., “Is Slavery Dead?” *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, 15 March 1864.

²²Ibid.

²³James White, “The Bible No Refuge for Slavery,” *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, 3 March 1863.

Testaments, James White sought to prove that the Bible was absolute in its stance on slavery, and thus helped articulate the Adventist theological position on slavery

White's foundational argument was that African Americans cannot be considered chattel because they are human beings accountable to a divine power [God], and as such, have the inherent right to learn of this divine power by studying the Bible. White asserts, "The right of property in man cannot exist co-ordinate with the right and obligation to search the scriptures."²⁴ White pointed out that slaves were prohibited from owning a Bible, and thus prohibited from "the command of God to 'search the scriptures.'"²⁵ White argued that human beings could not be considered chattel because the concept itself was a contradiction. He goes on to state that "so that while God requires all men to search the scriptures, no man can rightfully be reduced to a chattel...."²⁶ With repeated emphasis, White emphasized that slavery was in direct contradiction to the inalienable right for a human beings to learn of the Christian God.

White pointed out that the institution of slavery deprived African slaves the time to freely search in the knowledge of God. Of this White states, "But the right of property in a man includes the right to monopolize and dispose of his whole time, so that he cannot possess the right of devoting his time or any part of it the study of scriptures, from which it follows again that the right of slavery is at war with the duties which God has commanded."²⁷ The master having strict control of the slaves' time was an indictment of the violation of inalienable liberties the slave was entitled to. White concludes his opening argument by asserting that permitting slaves to worship freely to the dictates of their conscious would undermine the entire institution

²⁴Ibid., "The Bible No Refuge for Slavery," *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, 3 February 1863.

²⁵Ibid.

²⁶Ibid.

²⁷Ibid.

of slavery. He declared that slaves were entitled the divine imputed right to read the Bible to the “dictates of their own conscience,” and also, to have the power to select their own ministers.²⁸ White passionately felt that the slave also possessed the “inalienable right of all Christians.”²⁹ White adds, “The right of property in man cannot exist without taking away the right of doing the duties and enjoying the privileges of the gospel, and therefore the right of property in man cannot exist as a right, but must be wrong, whenever assumed.”³⁰ With this, White argued that chattel slavery, as practiced by the South was inconsistent to biblical principles because it restricted liberty of conscious and the right to worship one’s maker.

One could argue that James White overlooked instances where plantations allowed slaves to assemble on Sundays, to worship. However the premise of White’s argument saw slaves not given the latitude to study spiritual matters because their time was dictated by their masters and overseers. Indeed, the slave church was subordinate to the plantation system, tightly controlled by either master or overseer.³¹ And the natural byproduct of the plantation system controlling the slave church was that the religion of the slaves was not equal to the religion of the master.³²

Sermons in the slave church sought to indoctrinate the status quo. Former slave Mattie Curtis recounts that “We ain’t had sociables, but we went to church on Sunday and they preached to us that we’d go to hell alive if we sassed our white folks.”³³ In describing a North Carolina preacher, Curtis describes a man who “being a preacher, was suppose to be good but

²⁸Ibid.

²⁹Ibid.

³⁰Ibid.

³¹Thomas J. Durant, Jr., “The Enduring Legacy of the African American Plantation Church,” *The Journal of Negro History*, vol. 80, no. 2 (Spring, 1995), 83.

³²Ibid., 86.

³³William Courtland Johnson, “A Delusive Clothing: Christian Conversion in the Antebellum Slave Trade,” *The Journal of Negro History*, vol. 82, no. 3 (Summer, 1997), 300.

ain't half fed nor clothed his slaves, and he whipped them bad."³⁴ Famed abolitionist Frederick Douglas added, "Most unhesitatingly, that the religion of the South is a mere covering of the most horrid crimes.... For of all the slaveholders with whom I have ever met, religious slaveholders are the worst."³⁵ Further, slaves were prevented from freely exercising their religious rights.

In 1831, North Carolina passed an ordinance that prohibited Blacks, free or slave, from acting "in any manner to officiate as a preacher or teacher in any prayer meeting."³⁶ Fanny Kemble witnessed that two free black preachers were removed from a neighborhood in 1839 in rural Georgia.³⁷ Slaves were also denied access to formal education and the vast majority of slaves were illiterate. Adventist eschatology was based heavily on the study of the Bible complementing it with history to support their doctrines. Thus, supporting James White's assertion that all individuals should be afforded the inalienable opportunity for an intellectual spiritual awareness, and slavery prevented individuals from exercising these individual rights.

White then shifts his series to the theological arguments in regards to the morality of slavery. Like William Miller, White, with no college training, researched this issue exhaustively, utilizing history and word studies from the Hebrew and Greek lexicons from a concordance, articulating the movement's stance that slavery could not be justifiable through the Bible. He declared, "The Bible does not and cannot be made to justify slavery in practice, even if the principle of slavery be found in it, for want of a specific rule to govern the application of the

³⁴Ibid., 301.

³⁵Ibid.

³⁶Ibid.

³⁷Ibid., 303.

principle in reducing it to practice.”³⁸ The premise of White’s argument was that a consistent principle that justified slavery could not be gleaned from the Biblical record. He also stated that Biblical justification for slavery was impossible because the Bible does not define who was entitled to be the master and “who shall be the slave.”³⁹ Capping this argument, White asserts that the Bible does not contain any specific divine law that allows humanity the “right to hold slaves is inherent ... and that each man is at liberty to exercise the right ... to seize upon, hold and control his fellow being.”⁴⁰ Therefore, the absence of a specific divine command permitting slavery a key argument James White used to support his position that slavery could not be justified through the Bible.

White also challenged the common theological premise derived from Genesis 9. 25-26, where Blacks are slaves because they prophetically fulfilled the curse pronounced upon Ham’s son Canaan and his descendents, thus being subjugated to the descendents of Shem, the eldest son of Noah. Of this White points out that “Jews, Arabs and Ishmaelites” were the only people that could prove with certainty that they descended from Shem.⁴¹ White turns the table to this theological argument by boldly declaring the high probability that “the slaveholders of this country” were the “cursed” descendants of Canaan.⁴² He chronicles the history of the Canaanite people, tracing them to the Phoenicians, who colonized Cyprus during the time of the Hebrew Judges, and later expanded into Sicily, Greece, Spain, and Sardina. White deduced, “It is then probably that the Anglo-Saxon race came originally from the Cananites or Phonecians of profane

³⁸ James White, “The Bible No Refuge for Slavery,” *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, 3 March 1863.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

⁴¹ James White, “The Bible No Refuge for Slavery,” *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, 3 March 1863.

⁴² *Ibid.*

history, and these are the people upon whom the curse was pronounced. This presents slaveholders are taking advantage of a curse pronounced upon themselves, as a justification for enslaving another race.”⁴³ Indeed, White’s statements were inflammatory in a time where Eurocentric interpretations of the Bible were common, asserting that White people descended from Canaan and also subject to the curse.

White proceeded to challenge the practicality of justifying that Ham’s descendents were to be enslaved. White writes, “In such case it would justify enslaving the whole race. If the argument proves it right to enslave any part of the race, it proves it right to enslave the whole. It would be right, therefore, to enslave every free colored person in this land, and in every other land; it must be right to plunder Africa of all her sons and daughters until the last descendant of Ham is Chattlized.”⁴⁴ White also points out that the argument Biblically justifying colored slaves falls apart based on the fact that that there are also White and Mixed slaves. White retorts, “But whose descendents are the mixed breed? One third of all the slaves in this country have Anglo-Saxon blood in their veins, and many of them are as white as the fairest of the white. Others have descended from Indians. Are these the children of Canaan upon the assumptions of the arguments? And does the curse pronounced upon Canaan include their enslavement?”⁴⁵

White asserts that American slavery cannot be justified as a manifestation of the curse of Canaan. Of Canaan’s curse, White retorts, “It was not American slavery nor yet anything like it.... The curse was political subjection, political servitude, and not chattel slavery.”⁴⁶ This “political servitude” came in the form of the Israelites vanquishing the Canaanites, after Israel’s

⁴³Ibid.

⁴⁴Ibid.

⁴⁵Ibid.

⁴⁶Ibid.

forty-year trek from Egypt. He states that ancient Israel's victory over the Canaanite tribes were not "analogous to American slavery, nor can they be plead as justification of the system."⁴⁷

Concluding his treatise, White painstakingly traced from the Mosaic code of the Old Testament, to the issues of Paul and Philemon in the New Testament, that slavery was not justifiable through the Bible.

⁴⁷Ibid.

CHAPTER V

POLITICS WILL NOT SAVE THE NATION: ADVENTIST AMBIVALENCE TOWARDS POLITICAL INVOLVEMENT, 1850s TO 1860s

THE LAMB LIKE BEAST

Many Adventist church leaders found it difficult to reconcile the anomaly of a Democracy condoning slavery. Uriah Smith, a prolific writer of Adventist eschatology, pointed out the dichotomy of the Declaration of Independence inalienable right guarantees of “life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness” but simultaneously enslave 3,200,000 human beings, and “rob them of those rights.”¹ Of this blatant double-standard, Smith exclaimed, “In the institution of slavery is more especially manifested, thus far, the dragon spirit that dwells in the heart of this hypocritical nation.”² J.N. Andrews added, “If 'all men are born free and equal,' why then does this power hold three millions of human beings in the bondage of slavery? Why is it that the Negro race is reduced to rank of chattels personal, and bought and sold like brute beasts?”³ Although seeing slavery as a moral evil, few Adventists chose to be involved in nationally prominent abolition movements, viewing social change as fruitless unless there is a spiritual change within the consciousness of humanity.

A significant factor in why most Adventists sought to avoid involvement in this era’s political landscape was because of their continued Millerite belief that Jesus Christ’s return was

¹Uriah Smith, "The Two-Horned Beast-Rev. XIII," *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, 19 May 1857.

²Ibid.

³J. N. Andrews, "The Three Angels of Rev. XIV, 6-12," *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, 3 April 1855.

imminent. Although predicting an exact date ceased, Adventists in this era believed that, based upon their interpretation of the prophecies of the book of Revelations, the United States was coming to its end and this, in turn, would lead to the end of the world.

The pioneers of the Adventist church based their Biblical mission statement upon Revelation 14:6-12, known as the third angel message. As oracles of prophecy, the pioneers believed that they were commissioned to give the world a final warning before the imminent Second Coming. Echoing Charles Fitch's challenge for evangelical Protestants to "come out of Babylon," Adventists saw themselves commissioned to call forth from their Protestant brethren to accept the observance of the seventh day Sabbath to fulfill the text in Revelation 14:12, where the saints "keep the commandments of God" and have the "faith of Jesus."⁴ And subsequently, there would be an impending final crisis where a coalition that includes the Papal authority, "apostatized" American Protestantism, and spiritualists (e.g., those that channel spirits and ghosts), would engage in a final rebellion against God and attack on God's people, before the impending Advent.⁵

Like their Millerite forefathers, the principles of Seventh-Day Adventist eschatology derived from more than 300 years of Protestant historicist interpretation of Bible prophecy. As stated, Historicism views the apocalyptic prophecies of the Bible as part of an advanced chronological outline, explicated through symbolism, a history of a conflict between the followers

⁴Douglas Morgan, "Adventism, Apocalyptic and the Cause of Liberty," *Church History*, vol. 63, no. 2 (June, 1994), 237.

⁵Ibid.

of God and the forces of the Devil, beginning from the time of the biblical writers to the Second Coming of Christ.⁶

With this, Adventist identified the amalgamated beast of ten horns and ten crowns in Revelation 13 as both Pagan and Papal Rome, a view common in Protestant historicist interpretation.⁷ This conclusion can be partially attributed to the fact that Adventists came from various established Protestant denominations. Prominent Protestants from Martin Luther to the seventeenth-century English Reformers, to the American Puritan writers the like of Cotton Mather, John Eliot, and John Cotton all contributed to the formulation of the Adventist eschatological worldview.⁸ These men all contributed to the premise that the terrible beast of horns and crown of Revelation 13 was the two-fold application of the cruelty of imperial Rome evolved to the religious tyranny of the medieval and Reformation-era Papacy.⁹

Further, Adventists in this era saw themselves as the last day “remnant” true church of God before the second coming of Christ. This interpretation was based on Revelation 12 dealing with a woman being persecuted by the dragon who fled to the wilderness. According to Adventist prophetic interpretation, a woman represented a church based upon a text on Ephesians 5:25 where it admonishes male believers of Jesus Christ to love their wives as Christ loves the church, thus utilizing this analogy of a wife to the church as the woman described on the twelfth chapter of Revelation.

⁶Ibid., 236.

⁷Bill Knott, “Writing Against Wrongs: Early Adventists Blistered their Culture for Tolerating Human Slavery,” *Adventist Review*, 28 February 2002, 8.

⁸Ibid.

⁹Ibid.

In addition, Adventists shared with many mainline Protestants who subscribed to the historicist view of Bible prophecy that they were living in an era of prophetic fulfillment. In particular, Revelation 12:6 states, “And the woman fled into the wilderness, where she hath a place prepared of God, that they should feed her there a thousand two hundred *and* threescore days.”¹⁰ This “thousand two hundred *and* threescore days,” or employing the day-year prophetic interpretation, 1260 years was asserted as the time period of Papal tyranny of the Christian world.¹¹ This era asserted to begin in 538 A.D. when Emperor Justinian completely vanquished Arian opposition to the Papacy, and ending on 10 February 1798 with Napoleon’s invasion of the Papal States and the subsequent arrest of Pope Pius VI.¹²

Revelation 13:5 tells of the beast power given power for “forty and two months” that also add up to 1260 days.¹³ This chapter of the Bible described the ten-horn, ten- crown beast suffered a “deadly wound” that be healed.¹⁴ Through this, the wound suffered by this beast represented Napoleon’s removal of Pope Pius VI. But the wound would heal, and the beast with lamb like horns would cause the world to worship the beast with ten heads and ten crowns. Further, a “Mark of the Beast” would be established to both slave and free where anyone who did not receive this mark could not buy nor sell, thereby this beast power will exert total political control.¹⁵

¹⁰Rev. 12.6 KJV.

¹¹The day-year principle of Biblical prophetic interpretation is based on two Biblical texts. Numbers 14:34 where it states, “After the number of the days in which ye searched the land, *even* forty days, each day for a year, shall ye bear your iniquities, *even* forty years, and ye shall know my breach of promise.” And Ezekiel 4:6, “And when thou hast accomplished them, lie again on thy right side, and thou shalt bear the iniquity of the house of Judah forty days: I have appointed thee each dayfor a year.”

¹²*Bible Readings For The Home Circle*, (Review and Herald Publishing Association: London, 1920), 223.

¹³Rev. 13.5 KJV.

¹⁴*Ibid.*, 13.3 KJV.

¹⁵*Ibid.*, 13. 16,17 KJV.

Further, in Revelation 12:17, the dragon would engage in war with the woman, and “make war with the remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ.”¹⁶ Adventists saw that the description of keeping God’s commandments, as themselves; in the context of the Protestant denomination that kept the seventh-day Sabbath based upon the Mosaic Decalogue. Those Protestants, who continue to worship on Sunday, will join the United States and Papal authority in persecuting the Seventh-Day Adventist church before the coming of Jesus Christ.

Adventists believed that observing the Jewish Sabbath was an identifying seal of peculiarity that distinguished them from their Protestant brethren. The result is an intentional alienation from mainstream religious circles, as believers prepared for persecution for keeping the seventh-day Sabbath. Historian Douglas Morgan describes this tension between Adventism and the mainstream, where he writes, “The ... seventh-day sabbatarianism [sic] divided Adventists from non-Adventists at numerous fundamental points: Adventists from Protestants, who sought ‘blue law’ legislation on behalf of *Sunday* observance; Adventists from trade unionists, who ‘conspired’ with Catholics and Protestants for Sunday laws to shorten the work week; Adventists from evolutionists, who destroyed the literal creation week for which the Sabbath served as a memorial.”¹⁷ Seeing that it was their prophetic destiny to be persecuted before their God would deliver them, these early Adventists strived to make a clear demarcation between themselves and the world around them.

Adventist living in this era further exerted their distinction from mainstream society by its eschatological assertion that the United States would be a persecuting power near the end of

¹⁶Ibid., 12.18 KJV.

¹⁷Bulter, 62.

time through its interpretation of the two-horned lamb-like beast that spoke as a dragon described in Revelation 13. Utilizing William Miller's proof text method to prove a truth, a beast in the prophetic vernacular represented a kingdom. This was asserted by using Daniel chapter 7 where various beasts represented kingdoms that would rise throughout world history. The two-horned lamb-like horns of the beast were asserted to symbolize the two foundational principles of the United States, civil and religious power separated upholding liberty to the republic.¹⁸ The lamb-like guise was attributed to a nation that declares of itself a free and democratic nation, but would ultimately speak like a dragon, and be an agent of persecution and oppression of the faithful. James White exclaimed, "How much of the prophecy relating the two-horned beast remains to be fulfilled? It has arisen with its lamb-like horns. Its dragon voice has been heard speaking forth sentiments of oppression, the reverse of its lamb-like profession of freedom and equal rights among all men. We believe his voice is yet to be heard denying the true Christian his right of conscience in the service of God."¹⁹ With the paradigm of the "lamb like beast" firmly established amongst the founders of this faith, the United States was seen as a major player in Adventist eschatology.

In 1853, as the nation was still tense following the fragile Great Compromise of 1850, Uriah Smith wrote a pointed poem that of how the lamb like beast of Revelation 13 represented the United States.

With two horns like a lamb a beast arose-
 So with two leading forms a power has risen,
 Two fundamental principles, than which

¹⁸Morgan, 238.

¹⁹James White, "Revelation Twelve," *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, 8 January 1857.

In all the earth none can be found more mild,
More lamb-like in their outward form and name.

A land of freedom, pillared on the broad

And open basis of equality;

A land reposing 'neath the gentle sway

Of civil and religious liberty.

Lamb-like in form, is there no dragon-voice
Heard in our land? no notes that harshly grate

Upon the ear of mercy, love and truth?

And put humanity to open shame?

Let the united cry of millions tell-

Millions that groan beneath oppression's rod,

Beneath the sin-forged chains of slavery,

Robbed of their rights, to brutes degraded down,

And soul and body bound to other's will-

Let their united cries, and tears, and groans,

That daily rise, and call aloud on Heaven

For vengeance, answer; let the slave reply.

O land of boasted freedom! thou hast given

The lie to all thy loud professions, fair,

Of justice, liberty and equal rights;

And thou hast set a foul and heinous blot

Upon the sacred page of liberty;
 And whilst thou trafficest in souls of men,
 Thou hurl'st defiance, proud, in face of Heaven
 Soon to be answered with avenging doom."²⁰

In all, early Adventist leaders pulled no punches in viewing the United States as a mere facade for democracy.

THE TIME OF THE END DRAWS NEAR

Viewing the United States as a prophetically predicted persecuting power was the fuel that powered Adventist ambivalence towards political involvement. For the responsibility of the Adventist was to declare a warning message to the world, and then wait, until the coming of Jesus Christ to deliver them from this Earth. During the time of the 1856 presidential election, Uriah Smith attempted to justify Adventist reticent to participate in the election to battle the institution of slavery because “our views of prophecy lead us to the conclusion that things will not be bettered.”²¹ Smith asserted that the nation was prophetically destined to oblivion and “do not therefore feel it incumbent upon us to hasten or retard the fulfillment of prophecy.”²² Smith stipulated that the Adventist social responsibility was “to confine our efforts to preparing ourselves, and others as far as in us lies, for the great final issue already pressing upon us -- the revelation of the Son [of] man from heaven, the destruction of all earthly governments, the

²⁰Uriah Smith, "The Warning Voice of Time and Prophecy," *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, 23 June 1853.

²¹Douglas Morgan, *Adventism and the Adventist Republic: The Public Involvement of a Major Apocalyptic Movement*, 26.

²²Ibid.

establishment, of the glorious, universal and eternal kingdom of the King of kings, and the redemption and deliverance of all his subjects.”²³

As tensions mounted in the 1860 presidential election over slavery, the possibility that the United States would cease to exist through secession and war became more and more likely. Like Smith’s admonishment in 1856, Adventist publications sought to remind their fellow believers on the need to focus on the imminent apocalypse, rather than the fierce political dialogue in which the nation was engaged.

In March 1860, William S. Foote in an article in the *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, wrote how the issue of slavery, perpetuated an obsessive “agitation” upon the political and social climate of the nation.²⁴ Foote saw this “agitation” to escalate to become “one of the greatest subjects which is to occupy the minds of our countrymen in and out of our legislative halls.”²⁵ He then rhetorically asks the reader how Adventists should respond to the debate over slavery. Foote responds, admonishing his fellow believers that the crux of the Adventist faith was the anticipation of the imminent return of Jesus Christ. He adds that “if these things are a part of our religious faith, will not our great adversary try to entrap our feet by over-exciting our minds relative to this and other things which are now so much engaging the attention of those who would regulate the affairs of the ‘two horned beast.’”²⁶ Thus, Foote’s article echoed the call for political ambivalence and for Adventists to continue to let the affairs of the world play out to its ultimate prophetic course.

²³Ibid.

²⁴William S. Foote, “Slavery,” *Adventist Review and Sabbath Herald*, 1 March 1860.

²⁵Ibid.

²⁶Ibid.

Foote emphasized that the Adventist spiritual worldview of the imminent apocalypse was of greater importance than to occupy his mind with the temporal subject of slavery. He adds that he had no right to enter politics and “get into discussion with pro-slavery men.”²⁷ Emphasizing his political ambivalence, Foote stated that the nation should “take care of his own business; I should mind my own; I can pray for the oppressed and down trodden; if opportunity offers I can assist them otherwise, but to do anything towards the abolition of slavery.”²⁸ Foote’s article asserted that slavery, although immoral, was a natural byproduct of a sinful world, and would only cease with the Second Coming of Jesus Christ. A sense that the world is about to end, the coming of Christ will be the ultimate panacea of all the ills of this world, so let’s not wrap ourselves with the issues of the day was the mentality of most Adventists living in this era.

Reiterating Smith and Foote, R. F. Cottrell exclaimed that his involvement in the electoral process would have no effect in abolishing slavery. Based on Revelation 13, an apocalyptic prophecy where during “the last great persecution,” both “bond” and “free” would be confronted with the “mark of the beast,” Cottrell, like many Adventists believed that slavery would exist until the second advent of Jesus Christ.²⁹ Of the perpetuity of slavery, Cottrell writes, “Bondmen will exist then till the last-till God interposes to deliver His saints, whether bond or free. My vote then cannot free the slaves; and all apparent progress towards emancipation will only exasperate their masters, and cause an aggravation of those evils it was intended to cure. I cannot, therefore, vote against slavery; neither can I vote for it.”³⁰ Cottrell’s article thus, reflected the apocalyptic

²⁷Ibid.

²⁸Ibid.

²⁹ R. F. Cottrell, "How Shall I Vote," *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, 30 October 1856.

³⁰Ibid.

focus of the Adventist Church and how many believers were uninterested in political involvement.

However, Adventist publications were blunt in how political leaders lacked the moral compass in dismantling the institution of slavery, and that the inevitable result would be a Divine retribution for its tolerance of this institution. In many instances, the *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald* reprinted speeches and articles of prominent politicians and public figures to support this premise. James White, publisher of the *Adventist Review and Sabbath Herald*, reprinted a 29 February 1860 speech by then Senator William H. Seward of New York addressed to the United States Senate. White placed a brief editorial introduction to Seward's speech stating that it "is a striking delineation of the character of this degenerate hypocritical and dragonic nation, and affords a good commentary on Revelation 13, 11."³¹ Seward's speech articulated the hypocrisy of the United States in still tolerating the institution of slavery. He stated, "Did ever the government of a great empire, founded on the rights of human labor, slide away so fast and so far, and moor itself so tenaciously on the basis of capital, and that capital invested in laboring men?"³² Seward also pointed out that nations throughout the world were renouncing slavery. Russia abolishing serfdom, and the emancipation of Africans and Abyssinians within Islamic countries were cited. Seward concludes, "The world, prepossessed in our behalf by our early devotion to the rights of human nature, as no nation every before engaged its respect and sympathies, asks in wonder and amazement, what all this demoralization means?" With this, Seward's speech was utilized to evoke the Adventist view of the United States as the lamb like beast that speaks as a dragon.

³¹ James White ed., "The Degeneracy of the United States," *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, 15 March 1860.

³²Ibid.

Through this theological paradigm, early Adventist ministers and leaders fiercely rebuked those Christian churches that refused to denounce Slavery. Most Adventists saw that rebuking slavery from their pulpits was the extent of their civic duties, seeing the issue in more of a spiritual rather than a social view. When Joseph Bates was chastised for being consumed in preaching the Second Coming and foregoing his involvement in the abolition and temperance causes, he replied that the preaching of Christ's return was the apex to accomplish social reforms. That those preaching the second Advent "must necessarily be advocates of temperance and the abolition of slavery; and those who opposed the doctrine of the second advent could not be very effective laborers in moral reform"³³ He added that more could be accomplished in preaching the second coming than to be committed to case for specific social reforms.³⁴

However, there were those living at that era who thought Adventists should be more proactive in the political process. Anson Byington, a New York relative of the man who would become the first president of the denomination, wrote Uriah Smith expressing his concerns of the lack of political involvements among Adventists in abolitionism.³⁵ Byington recounted described himself as a staunch abolitionist and a loyal *Review* subscriber for "some six or seven years and have been much edified with its contents."³⁶ But Byington felt the *Review* "failed to aid the cause of abolition" and asked to cancel his subscription so he could use that money for the "cause of abolition."³⁷ He added, "I dare not tell the slave that he can afford to be contented in his bondage until the Saviour comes however near

³³Morgan, 27.

³⁴Ibid.

³⁵Knott, 12.

³⁶Anson Byington in *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, 10 March 1859.

³⁷Ibid.

we may believe his coming.... If it was our duty to remember those in bonds as bound with them eighteen hundred years ago, it must be our duty still.... Alas! We saw the slave in prison, but on reading the prophecy that there will be bondmen as well as freemen at Christ's coming, we have excused ourselves from any efforts for his emancipation."³⁸ With this letter, Byington reproved Adventists in being short sighted in not involving themselves with the temporal affairs of the nation.

In response to Byington's concerns, Uriah Smith reiterated that Adventists believed that slavery to be a sin and that the church incessantly sympathized with the plight of the slave. But Smith retorted, "But what is to be done? The tyranny of oppression secludes them from our reach."³⁹ However, Smith also encouraged slaves not to accept the status quo and do all they can to resist "this great evil."⁴⁰ He adds, "And we rejoice when we hear of one of that suffering race escaping beyond the jurisdiction of this dragon-hearted power. But we would not hold out to him a false ground of expectation. We would point him to the coming of the Messiah as his true hope."⁴¹ In rebutting Byington's letter, Smith captured the Adventist position that social ills such as slavery cannot be cured by human effort but by the supernatural return of Jesus Christ.

Perhaps, the extent to where Adventists engaged in social activism over the issue of slavery was the call to disobey the Fugitive Slave Laws, a federal statute instituted from the Compromise of 1850. Penalty for violating this statute encompassed a one thousand dollar fine or six month imprisonment.⁴² Ellen White boldly declared that the law "was in direct opposition

³⁸Ibid.

³⁹Uriah Smith, ed., *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, 10 March 1859.

⁴⁰Ibid.

⁴¹Ibid.

⁴²J. B. Frisbie, "The Fugitive Slave Law of 1850," *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, 11 September

to the teaching of Christ.”⁴³ She further added, “When the laws of men conflict with the Word and law of God, we are to obey the latter, whatever the consequences may be.... The law of our land requiring us to deliver a slave to his master, we are not to obey; and we must abide the consequences of violating this law. The slave is not the property of any man. God is his rightful master, and man has no right to take God's workmanship into his hands, and claim him as his own.”⁴⁴ Prominent Adventists such as Anson Byington’s brother George and Kellogg served as the action to White’s words, harboring fugitive slaves and participating in the Underground Railroad. From this, when civil laws contradict the precepts of Biblical doctrine, Adventist leaders saw their spiritual principles took precedence over obeying laws, even those passed by the federal government.

As the national political landscape grew more polarized, the *Adventist Review and Sabbath Herald* frequently reprinted articles from prominent social and political figures, to support Adventist eschatology through current events. In fact, Uriah Smith admonished readers that the only interest Adventists was to see how politics brought about prophetic fulfillment, and not advocating any particular political ideologies.⁴⁵ Current political events were therefore utilized as an evidential apologetic tool to prove the validity of Adventist eschatology.

In one instance, an article by famed author Harriett Beecher Stowe, from the publication *Independent* was reprinted, complete with an editor’s annotation of how the slave trade was

1860.

⁴³White, 264.

⁴⁴White, *Ellen G. White: The Progressive Years, 1862-1876, vol. 2, 34.*

⁴⁵Morgan, 26.

condoned by various churches, thereby falling under the “beast power” of Revelation 13.⁴⁶ In particular, Stowe indicts the Episcopal Convention of New York and the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions in Boston for not publicly denouncing the slave trade.⁴⁷ Of this Stowe writes, “The history of the slavery question has been such a constant history of such instances ... as to give rise to more unbelief in Christianity as a practical working force, than any other one cause.”⁴⁸ She alleged that slave-ships freely left every week from the port of New York while law enforcement were bribed to turn a blind eye to the illegal trafficking occurring in a Northern free state port. Stowe accused Christians for being culpable for these crimes by “the connivance if not by the money of men who hold seats in our churches and profess to be Christians.”⁴⁹ In this, Stowe’s article is an example of Adventist publications using a prominent national figure to support the movement’s eschatological perspective.

Although being involved in the political process was seen as frivolous, Adventists saw that the church could be an agent for social change by clearly delineating what is right and wrong from their pulpits, thereby influencing the moral conscious of the public. Adventist correspondent John G. Fee declared that it was the responsibility of all churches to upload the standards of right to the public. Fee adds, “In our country the popular church is the exponent of the popular religion, and has immense power in forming public sentiment; and, through the public sentiment the church molds law.”⁵⁰ Fee concluded by stating that it was “criminal for churches to be indifferent or silent in rebuking slavery. The popular churches of the nation

⁴⁶Harriett Beecher Stowe, “The Church and the Slave Trade,” *Adventist Review and Sabbath Herald*, 11 December 1860.

⁴⁷Ibid.

⁴⁸Ibid.

⁴⁹Ibid.

⁵⁰John G. Fee, “The Church, Slavery, and Caste,” *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, 19 February 1861.

determined the national moral compass and their silence would lead to dire consequences. Fee warned, “The people, without correct, moral sentiment, will go on from one degree of vice to another, until current moral sentiment, will go on from one degree of view to another, until at last, despising the church of her heartlessness, formality, and fashion, the masses will plunge into Atheism, violence and bloodshed.”⁵¹ Fee saw that churches that remained silent on slavery contributed to the national crisis as war appeared imminent.

Reiterating Fee’s rebukes, Ellen White, whom Adventists believed to possess the spirit of prophecy warned, “His [God] anger burns against this nation, and especially against the religious bodies who have sanctioned, and have themselves engaged in this terrible merchandise. Such injustice, such oppression, such sufferings, many professed followers of the meek and lowly Jesus can witness with heartless indifference. And many of them can inflict, with hateful satisfaction, all this indescribable agony themselves, and yet dare to worship God. It is solemn mockery....⁵² Thus, churches that condone slavery were viewed to be spiritually corrupt and were not in the side of God in the Adventist theological paradigm.

A little after a month from the momentous date where the first volley of Confederate projectiles seared through the walls of Fort Sumter, C. C. Foote fiercely reiterated that the churches throughout the nation were culpable for the war. Foote spews, “Had the pulpits of the land thundered and lightened and denunciations of slavery as they should, and had the church seconded this testimony, slavery would have fled, ere this, to hide its hideous head in everlasting darkness. But this has not been done. Hence all the blood and all the woes of slavery since the world began, rests on the church of this age. The guilt involved in every tear, every pang, and

⁵¹Ibid.

⁵²Ellen G. White, “God’s Quarrel with the Nation,” *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, 27 August 1861.

every drop of blood, forced from the swollen veins by the knotted scourge, all is in her skirts. Do you ask why? Because there never was so much light abroad on this subject, as now; all the history of slavery is before the church, its wrongs, its cruelties, its darkness, its all---- and yet these are all connived at, or treated with indifference.”⁵³ But as Adventists sought to battle social injustice from a nebulous spiritual realm, the movement had to address how its believers were to deal with the social reality of a nation in Civil War

⁵³C. C. Foote, “The Church and Slavery,” *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, 14 May 1861.

CHAPTER VI

VISIONS OF AN IMPENDING CRISIS: ELLEN WHITE'S PROPHETIC INFLUENCE UPON THE ADVENTIST CHURCH DURING THE CIVIL WAR, EARLY 1860s

DIVINE JUDGEMENT FOR THE NATION

On 6 November 1860, Abraham Lincoln clearly won the presidency, thereby causing tensions between states favoring and opposing slavery to reach its climax. Lincoln's platform included the commitment to stop the expansion of slavery to the territories, and secured the election through a free-state voting majority. South Carolina, in December 1860 unanimously voted to secede from the Union, thereby starting a domino effect of Southern slave holding states that followed suit.¹

In Parkville, Michigan, on Saturday, 12 January 1861, a fateful meeting occurred in that town's Adventist congregation.² The meeting was attended by prominent Adventist leaders, including James and Ellen White, E. J. Waggoner, and J. N. Loughborough. All of them came to dedicate a new church building following a successful Loughborough and J. N. Andrews led evangelistic series in the previous summer³ Loughborough recalls that Ellen White finished addressing the congregation, and sat down on a chair and was taken into vision.⁴ After coming out of her asserted vision, Mrs. White exclaimed, "There is not a person in this house who has

¹Tindall with Shi, 630.

²J.N. Loughborough, *Rise and Progress of the Seventh-day Adventists with Tokens of God's Hand in the Movement*, (Battle Creek: General Conference Association of Seventh-Day Adventists, 1892), 235.

³Arthur L. White, *The Ellen G. White Biography, vol.1* (Hagerstown: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1981), 462.

⁴Ibid.

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.”⁵ With vivid detail, she described vast armies engaged in fierce combat, and the terrible carnage of dead and wounded covering the entire field of battle.⁶ White further warned that the church “would be brought into strait places in consequences of the war, and that it was the duty of all to earnestly pray that wisdom might be given them to know what to do in the trying times before them.”⁷ She ominously concluded that members of this congregation would lose sons in this war.

Critics point out that almost anyone could have predicted what Ellen White asserted to have seen in her vision, based on the political climate of that time. However, when the war started, many Northerners believed that it would end quickly; in fact, President Lincoln initial call for troops, numbered 75,000 with only a ninety day enlistment.⁸ Ellen White saw the impending conflict to result in a long drawn out bloody war. On 1 February 1861, six more Southern states joined the secession culminating with a provisional constitution and a new president, Jefferson Davis.⁹ Indeed, more states were joining the secession.

Be it a vision, trance, or delusion, the notion that something out of the ordinary happened in that Seventh-Day Adventist meeting was talked about in the local Parkville area. Martha V. Ensign a non-Adventist who resided in a nearby town recounts, “This certified I was living in St. Joseph Co., Mich., in January 1861, about six miles from Parkville.... On the 12th of that month,

⁵Ibid.

⁶Ibid., 235,236.

⁷Loughborough, 237.

⁸Schwartz and Greenleaf, 95.

⁹Tindall and Shi, 632.

a number of my neighbors went to Parkville to attend meetings. When they came home, they told me that there was a woman at the meeting that was in a trance, and who said that there was a terrible war coming on the United States; that large armies were going to be raised on both sides, in the South as well as in the North, and there would be many who have suffer in prisons; and pinching want would be felt in many families in consequences of losing husbands, sons, and brothers in the war; and that there were men in the house who would lose sons in that war.”¹⁰

John N. Loughborough recounts meeting an elder of the Parkville congregation who was present during Ellen White’s asserted vision. When asked if the congregation sustained casualties during the war as Mrs. White predicted, the elder immediately recalled five families present who lost sons in battle and could confirm five more besides the ones he mentioned if he had an opportunity to verify it with other members of this church congregation.¹¹ Critics argue that one could easily predict that such a wide range war would result in deaths to any number of congregations. But regardless of what happened in Parkville, be it a vision or delusion, it caused quite a stir, as Adventists who believed in this woman as a prophet braced for the predicted conflict to arise in its terrible manifestation.

On a pre-dawn morning of 12 April 1861, the first shots were fired on the predicted conflict, as volleys of confederate cannon fire battered Fort Sumter.¹² Seven days later, President Lincoln ordered a blockade of southern ports, thereby confirming that war has broken out between the states.¹³ Adventist leaders continued to cry aloud from the sidelines of how the seeds sown have now taken fruit, and war was an inevitable consequence of the United States’

¹⁰Loughborough, 237.

¹¹Ibid., 239.

¹²Tindall and Shi, 638.

¹³Ibid.

hypocritical stance on slavery. O. Nichols castigated Southern politicians such as John C. Calhoun, for decades of Southern resistance to abolishing slavery, thus setting the stage for the war to occur. Wrote Nichols, "It is now admitted that the minions of southern aristocracy and slave interests have dictated the national government for more than forty years; and for at least thirty years, they had a fixed purpose to overthrow American Republicanism, as built upon by the fathers."¹⁴ Nichol adds, "The dragonic spirit of this nation has been in the ascendancy for many years. The two horns-the civil and ecclesinstical rulers--- like a lamb represented the true characteristic of the fathers of American Republicanism."¹⁵ But the church remained steadfast in not directly participating in the conflict.

As secession became reality, and as individuals ranging from highly valued military officers to the mundane farmer asserting their allegiances, the Federal army and the rebel Confederates were ready for their first full scale land battle of this war. Both sides believed in a quick and easy victory. In contrast, Ellen White warned, "I was shown that many do not realize the extent of the evil that has come upon us. They have flattered themselves that the national difficulties would soon be settled, and confusion and war end; but all will be convinced that there is more reality in the matter than was anticipated. Men have looked for the North to strike a blow and end the controversy."¹⁶ President Lincoln believed that a decisive blow could be achieved. He hoped General Irwin McDowell's hastily assembled 37,000 strong army would route outnumbered Confederate forces and quickly march to Richmond, securing victory.¹⁷ As Union forces marched to their destination, their war cry was "On to Richmond" with unbridled

¹⁴ O. Nichols, "The Southern Rebellion," *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, 16 July 1861.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶ Ellen White, "Slavery and War," *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, 27 August 1861.

¹⁷ Tindall and Shi, 645.

enthusiasm.¹⁸ The Confederate forces led by General Pierre Beauergard numbered 23,000 troops with an additional 8340 troops commanded by General Joseph Johnston nearby.¹⁹ The two armies converged near a stream called Bull Run, near Manassas, Virginia.

On a dry, hot say on 21 July 1861, with hundreds of civilian spectators from Washington festively setting up picnics to watch the impending conflict, the two armies engaged in battle.²⁰ The expectation of a quick victory mutated into the reality of the hellish spectacle of war. Federal forces greatly underestimated the Southern resolve. A failed Union charge in the left flank immortalized Confederate officer Thomas Jackson, with the legendary “Stonewall” moniker. McDowell finally ordered a retreat that resulted in utter chaos. Frantic Federal soldiers interspersed with terrified civilians resulting in utter confusion. The battle ended with 4,500 killed, wounded, and captured from both sides.²¹

Some two weeks after this battle, Ellen White asserted to have a divine revelation in regards to both this battle and the war at large. She described how the Federal army swaggered with overconfidence, even recklessness in believing in a quick and easy victory.²² In describing the failed left flank charge she wrote, “The Southern men felt the battle, and in a little while would have been driven back still further. The Northern men were rushing on, although their destruction was very great. Just then an angel descended and waved his hand backward. Instantly there was confusion in the ranks. Instantly there was confusion in the ranks. It appeared to the

¹⁸ Ned Bradford, ed., *Battles and Leaders of the Civil War*, (New York: Hawthorn Books, 1956), 30.

¹⁹*Ibid.*, 29.

²⁰Tindall and Shi, 645.

²¹*Ibid.*, 646.

²²White, *Testimonies to the Church*, vol. 1, 266.

Northern men that their troops were retreating, when it was not so in reality, and a precipitate retreat commenced.”²³

Indeed, several accounts from soldiers who fought in the battle assert that something unexplainable occurred with this failed charge. W. W. Blackford, a Confederate officer who fought in this engagement described the failed left flank charge as “the most extraordinary spectacle I have ever witnessed took place.”²⁴ Blackford described seeing well-formed organized lines of Federal troops poised for attack suddenly mutate to a storm of discord. Blackford recalls, “Where those well-dressed, well-defined lines, with clear spaces between, had been steadily pressing forward, the whole field was a confused swarm of men, like bees, running away as fast as their legs could carry them, with all order and organization abandoned.”²⁵ Thus, Blackford’s account asserts that something extraordinarily unexplainable occurred with the failed Union charge.

Years later, J.N. Loughborough ran into a Mr. Johnson, an asserted Confederate veteran who gave another account on this failed charge. Johnson recalled, "I stood not four rods from General Beauregard when that stampede began. Beauregard had their cannons loaded with chain shot, and was about to fire. He looked toward the advancing host, and cried out: `The Yanks are all retreating. Don't fire the guns.'"²⁶ Johnson added, “Had they fired that charge, they would have mowed everything down before them to the earth.”²⁷ Be it troop incompetence, a fluke, or a miscommunication of orders, Ellen White passionately believed that the final outcome of this

²³Ibid., 266,267.

²⁴Arthur L. White, *Ellen G. White: The Progressive Years, 1862-1876*, vol. 2, 36-37.

²⁵Ibid.

²⁶Ibid. 38.

²⁷Ibid.

battle to be directly attributed to unseen supernatural beings dispatched to implement divine retribution for a nation that she saw that transgressed the law of God.

Echoing Ellen White, most Adventist leaders viewed the Civil War as divine retribution for the nation's ambivalence in abolishing slavery. In fact, President Lincoln himself during his inaugural address stated, "I have no purpose, directly or indirectly, to interfere with the institution of slavery in the States where it exists. I believe I have no lawful right to do so, and I have no inclination to do so."²⁸ Indeed, Lincoln's primary motivation in this war was to preserve the Union, not to abolish slavery. Further, Lincoln ordered Federal officers to cease harboring fugitive slaves escaping to advancing Federal armies.²⁹ This triggered famed abolitionists such as William Lloyd Garrison, Wendell Phillips, and Henry Sumner to throw vicious diatribes towards the ambivalence of the Lincoln Administration.

This ambivalence was sternly addressed in the *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald* where it declared: "That until the North shall cleanse its hands from all the stains of a sin, and take a bold stand of uncompromising opposition to its very existence, and seize upon every opportunity to abolish and crush it out, God cannot ... manifest his power to aid them in the struggle."³⁰ The article also pointed out that slavery was the cause of the war and that "the North is now receiving chastisement at his hands for its complicity of this great evil."³¹ Ellen White writes: "God is punishing this nation for the high crime of slavery. He has the destiny of the nation in his hands. He will punish the South for the sin of slavery, and the North for so long suffering its

²⁸Tindall and Shi, 637.

²⁹Roy Branson, "Ellen G. White-Racist or Champion of Equality?" *Review and Herald*, 9 April 1970, 3.

³⁰James White, ed., "The War, and Its Cause," *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, 12 November 1861.

³¹Ibid.

overreaching and overbearing influences.”³² Adventist minister Joseph Clarke declared, “Well I know, that the North has sinned, and this is the greatest of our sins. We have not abhorred the deeds of the bloody deceitful southern tyrants, but have bowed, and scraped, and truckled meanly to the monstrous system of slavery.”³³ Thus, the war was seen as divine retribution with the judgment set against the United States.

TRAITORS IN THE MIDST

Adventist leaders also questioned the sincerity of the federal government and the motivations of the Federal army in desiring to win the war. Uriah Smith castigated the Union for its “half-hearted efforts made the neglect to follow up advantages gained....”³⁴ James White added, “The North is armed but it is an armed neutrality, rather than an armed crusade. It is marshaled in array of battle, but not for the extermination of its foe.”³⁵ Thus, these early church leaders alleged that the Federal army was giving a mere half-hearted effort and not doing all they can to win the war.

Even more scathing, was Ellen White’s accusations of officers within the Federal army, being traitors. White declared that officers within the Federal army; sympathized with the rebels and despised the antislavery movement.”³⁶ She added “The greatest anxiety now exists among our national men. They are in great perplexity. Pro-slavery men and traitors are in their very

³²Ellen G. White, “Slavery and War,” *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, 27 August 1861.

³³Joseph Clarke, “The War!! The War!!,” *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, 23 September 1862.

³⁴Uriah Smith, “Traitors in Power,” *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, 4 February 1862.

³⁵James White, ed., “Anomalies,” *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, 15 April 1862

³⁶Ellen G. White, *Testimonies to the Church*, vol. 1, 255.

midst, and while they are professedly in favor of the Union, they have an influence in decisions, some of which even favor the South.”³⁷

For a fledgling small religious sect to openly denounce the Lincoln Administration during the time where the president assumed the power to suspend habeas corpus, and those who opposed the President’s policies were subject to martial law appear bold.³⁸ But the fact that mainstream politicians also echoed the church’s stern rebukes may have insulated the church from being considered disloyal to the Union. Accusations that various commanders of the Federal army sympathized with the South were shared by Radical Republicans and abolitionists members of Congress. In fact, key commands, and generals were overwhelmingly opposed to the anti-slavery movement.³⁹ Generals George B. McClellan, Henry W. Halleck, and many other Federal officers expressed dissent towards abolitionism.⁴⁰ Republican Congressman George W. Julian vehemently exclaimed, “Democratic policy, in the year 1861, gave us as commanders of our three great military departments McClellan, Halleck, and Buell, whose military administrations have so terribly cursed the country; while it impressed upon our volunteer forces in the field such officers as Fitz-John Porter, General Nelson, General Stone, and very many more sympathies with the rebels were well known throughout the country.”⁴¹ In fact, a congressional oversight committee called the Committee on the Conduct of the War comprised mostly of Radical Republicans vigorously investigated notions of Southern sympathizes within the ranks of the Federal army.

³⁷Ibid., “Slavery and the War,” *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, 27 August 1861.

³⁸Tindall and Shi, 675-76.

³⁹T. Harry Williams, “The Committee on the Conduct of the War: An Experiment in Civilian Control,” *The Journal of the American Military Institute*, Vol. 3, no. 3 (August 1939), 140.

⁴⁰Ibid.

⁴¹William Whatley Pierson, Jr., “The Committee on the Conduct of the Civil War,” *The American Historical Review*, vol. 23, no. 3 (Apr 1918), 556.

In asserting that Southern sympathies were widespread, the *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald* republished an article from the *New York Tribune* where the 109th Regiment of Illinois Volunteers deserted to Confederate forces.⁴² The report stated that all the officers and men in the regiment with the exception of a Colonel deserted freely. The article also asserted that the men who deserted belonged to a secret society called the Knights of the Golden Circle, a sect that was sympathetic to the Southern cause.⁴³ Further, it alleged that many officers of the Federal army belonged to this secret society.⁴⁴

White also believed that the ineptness of the Federal army was due to her assertion that Union commanding officers practiced spiritualism, the channeling of spirits. Adventists believe when a person dies, that no immortal soul is released from the body. Any paranormal manifestation was seen as being attributed to satanic supernatural forces. Of this, White exclaimed, “Very many men in authority, generals and officers, act in conformity with instructions communicated by spirits. The spirits of devils, professing to be dead warriors and skillful generals, communicate with men in authority and control many of their movements.”⁴⁵ White added that officers channeled spirit they believed to dead soldiers from the past, including those from the Revolutionary War and sought guidance from these paranormal entities.⁴⁶ Perhaps, one of the generals that White may have been referring to was Ethan Allen Hitchcock, chairman of the Army Board, within the War Department, whom President Lincoln and

⁴²“Traitors in Our Army,” *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, 3 February 1863.

⁴³*Ibid.*

⁴⁴*Ibid.*

⁴⁵Ellen G. White, *Testimonies to the Church*, vol. 1, 363-364.

⁴⁶*Ibid.*

Secretary of War Edwin M. Stanton would frequently turn to for counsel.⁴⁷ Hitchcock, had an avid interest in mysticism, spiritualism, and alchemy, and was the grandson of Revolutionary War hero Ethan Allen.⁴⁸ In all, with these bold statements, Ellen White risked being labeled as seditionist, by asserting her claims that the Federal army had traitors within their ranks, and that their commanding officers were being demonically influenced.

Uriah Smith continued the verbal assault towards the Union by reiterating the United States' role in prophecy. In an article quoting such prominent anti-slavery advocates like Henry Clay, Smith asserted how such moral fortitude was from a select few. Of this, Smith wrote, "Compare these sentiments with the blasphemous and insane ravings of pro-slavery demagogues of the present day on this question, the white-washed villainy of many of the pulpits of our land in relation to it, and the strenuous efforts put forth to foster and extend this diabolical system, and mark the contrast. To him who reads the signs of the times, these times are significant. They give us something of an idea of how rapidly the dragonic spirit of the nation has of late years developed itself in accordance with the prophecy of Revelation 13:11."⁴⁹ Smith called out the President himself for not doing all he can to end the institution of slavery. Smith wrote, "He [Lincoln] has to stand up against the prayers of the heart in the free North, and against the prayers of four millions of oppressed and suffering slaves. If he continues to resist all these, in refusing to take these steps which a sound policy, the principles of humanity, and the salvation of the country, demand it must be an infatuation akin to that which of old brought Pharaoh to an

⁴⁷T. Harry Williams, *Lincoln and His Generals*, (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1952), 75.

⁴⁸Ibid.

⁴⁹Uriah Smith, "The Degeneracy of the United States," *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, 17 June 1862.

untimely end.”⁵⁰ Adventist criticisms of this nature were largely unnoticed by the Federal government. But like the ancient Hebrew prophets of old, these Adventist writers felt a divine conviction is calling out the transgressions of their own government and nation, as the future of her existence laid in the balance.

⁵⁰ Ibid., “Letter to the President,” *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, 23 September 1862.

CHAPTER VII

CONSCRIPTION: 1863-1865

PACIFIST ROOTS

The Adventist Church vigorously sought to separate itself from the temporal affairs of the nation, but the reality of a nation at war soon caught the fledgling church and placed its congregation in an important crossroads, to endorse their men to join the Federal army, or to risk the possibility of imprisonment or death. Since the Millerite days, James White was connected with the Non-Resistance Society, writing articles that promoted pacifism.¹ In July of 1848, seven months after hostilities ceased in the Mexican War, James White published a long letter titled “Can War Be a Christian Duty?”² In it, White asserted that Christians were not to participate in any form of war, even a defensive one. White cited Jesus Christ’s injunction to “turn the other cheek.”³ In fact, White wrote, “We are not to use injurious weapons, in defense of our property or persons.”⁴ An 1854 article in the *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald* stated, “A war spirit is abroad, a spirit of hatred and delusion. It is this contaminating influence that we fear- it is the demoralizing influence of familiarity with the ideas of war and bloodshed- it is the

¹Peter Brock, *Pacifism in the United States, From the Colonial Era to the First World War*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1968), 845.

²Ibid.

³Ibid.

⁴Ibid.

unhealthy excitement, the bitter party spirit, that is evil, and causes evil to spread.”⁵ Thus, James White asserted that any martial engagement was forbidden for the Christian.

As casualties mounted for both sides during the Civil War, the federal government considered the possibility of instituting military conscription to augment their ranks. Initially, each state was required to enlist a certain quota of volunteers to replenish the ranks. To entice enlistments, local communities arranged bonuses to be paid to recruits, some going as high as \$100 as more men were needed to fight.⁶ In fact, James White was an active participant in raising funds for attractive bonuses to entice enlistment.⁷ To have a steady stream of volunteers would diminish the need for military conscription, and White felt no moral restraint to contribute funds to pay for bonuses for volunteers who had no religious objections in joining military service. In this, we see the seeds of the Adventist Church pragmatically cooperate with the federal government to protect her interests.

THE CONTROVERSIAL DEBATE

However, Adventist ambivalence towards actual military participation raised suspicions that the church sympathized with the South.⁸ Perhaps, fueling this suspicion was the fierce criticism many Adventist leaders heaped upon the federal government without actually being involved politically. James White, J.P. Kellogg, and other leading Adventists participated in mass meetings for the Battle Creek, Michigan, community. White declared that Adventist young

⁵Lewis Harrison Christian, *The Fruitage of Spiritual Gifts: The Influence and Guidance of Ellen G. White in the Advent Movement*, (Washington D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing, 1947), 91.

⁶Arthur L. White, *Ellen G. White: The Progressive Years, 1862-1876*, vol. 2, 39.

⁷White, 40.

⁸Ron Graybill, “The Perplexing War: Why Adventists Avoided Military Service in the Civil War,” *Insight*, vol. 9, 10 October 1978, 4.

men were not volunteering because they were afraid to serve, and attempted to show their loyalty to the Union by contributing funds for the enlistment bonuses.⁹ Seeing an immediate need to dispel these suspicions and to address the issue of Adventist involvement in the military, White was convinced that something had to be done. On 12 August 1862, White wrote an article to open dialogue to formulate a church consensus on the issue of military involvement and conscription.

James White opened the article stating, “For the past ten years the *Review* has taught that the United States of America were a subject of prophecy, and that slavery is pointed out in the prophetic word as the darkest and most damning sin upon this nation.”¹⁰ White sought to alleviate concerns that Adventists were Southern sympathizers by asserting that those individual Adventists who voted in the election, all cast their votes for Lincoln. He emphatically declared that not one Seventh-Day Adventist “has the least sympathy for secession.”¹¹ In this, White sought to destroy any suspicion of Adventists sympathizing for the rebellion.

White listed three arguments to why Adventists were not actively involved in the war. First, White believed that the institution of slavery would continue till the end of time. He cited a text in Revelation chapter 6 where it states the existence of “bondman” when Jesus Christ makes His apocalyptic return.¹² Through this, he believed that the Civil War would not dismantle the institution of slavery.

Second, White asserted that Adventists being involved in the war would force them to break the Ten Commandments. Specifically, the fourth commandment, stipulating to have a day

⁹White, 40.

¹⁰James White, “The Nation,” *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, 12 August 1862.

¹¹Ibid.

¹²Ibid.

of rest from secular activities on the seventh day and the sixth commandment, that forbids killing. Then White proceeds to add the most controversial statement to this article. “But in the case of drafting,” wrote White, “the government assumes the responsibility of the violation of the law of God, and it would be madness to resist. He who would resist until, in the administration of military law, he was shot down, goes too far, we think in taking the responsibility of suicide.”¹³ Implying that if faced with death, it was permissible for Adventists to be involved militarily, thereby contradicting previous articles advocating separation from the temporal affairs of society.

And finally, White asserted that Adventists were loyal citizens of the nation and would fulfill their civic responsibilities. Of this, White declared, “We are at present enjoying the protection of our civil and religious rights, by the best government under heaven. With the exception of those enactments pressed upon it by the slave power, its laws are good. We may call in question the policy of the present administration.... But whatever we may say of our amiable president, his cabinet, or of military officers it is Christ-like to honor every good law of our land.”¹⁴ White’s statements were a striking about face, to the fierce criticism leveled upon the federal government by Uriah Smith, Clark, and Andrews from earlier Adventist publications. White desperately wanted to emphasize that the Adventist Church took their civic responsibilities seriously and were not a subversive element yearning for the destruction of the federal government.

In reconciling the United States role as a persecuting power in Adventist eschatology with White’s assertion of Adventist adherence to the laws of the land, he added, “Those who

¹³Ibid.

¹⁴Ibid.

despised civil law, should at once pack up and be off for some spot on God's foot-stool where there is no civil law.... When it shall come to this, that civil enactments shall be passed and enforced to drive us from obedience to the law of God, to join those who are living in rebellion against the government of Heaven, see Revelation 13:15-17, then it will be time to stand our chances of martyrdom."¹⁵ White concluded this point by rebuking individuals who sought to avoid a potential military draft by escaping to Canada and Europe, citing their lack of faith upon God to provide for their protection.

The resulting aftermath of this article caused mass confusion and debate amongst Adventist congregations. The dichotomous arguments of asserting obedience to the Ten Commandments yet finding a provision to violate it caused fierce controversy. Most perplexing was that earlier, James White's own wife had called for Adventists to disobey the Fugitive Slave Laws no matter what the consequences, citing that obedience to God took precedence to the laws of man.¹⁶

White sought to try to have it both ways, and attempted to escape with a loophole in an event where laws were passed to force citizens to serve in the military. With this, three factions developed on the issue of military involvement. One faction was the "war hawks," who were few in number but believed in total military participation in order to end slavery, which they deemed a just cause.¹⁷ Another was the pacifist faction, who advocated that Adventists should accept imprisonment or martyrdom rather than participate in any form of armed conflict. And

¹⁵Ibid.

¹⁶Ellen G. White, *Testimonies to the Church, vol. 1*, 360.

¹⁷Schwartz and Greenleaf, 96.

the third faction, the moderates, would only serve if they were permitted not to bear arms or to kill.

Pacifist Adventists were especially angered by White's article. Henry E. Carver asserted that White's article was "apostasy."¹⁸ He asserted that "under no circumstances was it justifiable in a follower of the lamb to use carnal weapons to take the lives of his fellow men."¹⁹ R.F. Contrell, also from the pacifist camp, took a more moderate approach that he conveyed in a subsequent article in the *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*. He argued that "the only question was whether it was [our] duty to decline serving in the army at all that a man's life would be taken because he declined fighting for conscience sake."²⁰ Contrell opted to support James White's assertion that submission was acceptable when faced with the penalty of death, until further divine guidance was revealed. However, he feared that White's article would encourage Adventists to volunteer for military service.

There was one instance where an Adventist believer freely volunteered for military service: and in another, a drafted Adventist stated that James White's article convinced him that it was not wrong to go to war.²¹ Coupled with an incident where two Adventists from Pennsylvania, decided to go forward to serve before any exemptions were granted, upon being drafted.²²

White's article became fuel for the "war hawks" that believed that armed military involved in a war they deemed just as acceptable. J.N. Loughborough agreed whole- heartedly

¹⁸Brock, 854.

¹⁹Ibid.

²⁰Ibid., "The Problems of the Civil War: When Seventh-Day Adventist First faced War," *Adventist Heritage*, (January 1974), 24.

²¹Graybill, 5.

²²Ibid.

with White's article asserting that John the Baptist's statement towards soldiers to "do violence to no man" meant that soldiers should refrain from unnecessary violence such as lust, pillage, and rape.²³ D.T. Bourdeau could not comprehend why "civilized warfare, or capital punishment, are against the sixth commandment."²⁴ B.F. Snook, president of the Iowa Adventist conference and a former pacifist believed that the present conflict was a just war.²⁵ "Dear Brethren," wrote Snook, "let us be united and not resist our government in its struggle for existence. Our neighbors and friends have nearly all gone; and if God allows the lot to fall upon us, let us go and fight in his name."²⁶

Joseph Clarke, one of the most zealous pro-war Adventist ministers articulated his militant idealism of Adventist soldiers joining a just-war a la the ancient Jewish leaders who led their forces under the banner of Jehovah chronicled in the Old Testament. Clarke fancied that Adventist troops were a reflection of those who served under such Biblically revered military figures such as David, Gideon, and Joshua. Clarke gushes, "I have thought of brave, Joshua, and the mighty men of war that arose to deliver the Israel of God, from time to time.... I have wished sometimes that I had it where Joab had Absalom, and almost fancied that the time might come when a regiment of Sabbath keepers would strike this rebellion a staggering blow, in the strength of Him who always help; his valiant people when they kept his statutes."²⁷ Clarke also

²³Ibid., 4.

²⁴Brock, 24.

²⁵Ibid.

²⁶B.F. Snook, "The War and our Duty," *The Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, 14 October 1862.

²⁷Joseph Clarke, "The War!! The War!!," *The Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, 23 September 1862.

conceded that he “felt too deeply” on Adventist military involvement and admitted to have “war fever so high” that his health was affected.²⁸

However, at the end of his article, Clarke took a more prominent moderate shift. He admonished the “brethren” to “stop pestering” James White, and wait for divine counsel upon this issue.²⁹ Clarke affirmed his belief that the church leadership was guided by God through “the gift of prophecy” that was manifested in the ministry of Ellen White.³⁰ Of his implicit faith on church leadership, Clarke exclaimed, “I am willing to abide the counsel of the Lord. Either to stand still and see his salvation, or to fight till my sword cleaves to my hand, or to march around treason as the hosts of Israel did around Jericho.”³¹ Clarke therefore reminded Adventists to wait upon the church’s prophet for divine counsel to settle once and for all, the debate to this issue.

With the “spirit of prophecy” still silent on this issue, James White sought to clarify and restate his position. White sought to reprove both the extreme pacifists and the militarists with another article. He declared that taking up arms does not glorify God, and had the nation obeyed the will of God, there would have been a solution other than the present conflict.³² White exclaimed, “We did not say in case of a military draft, it would be madness to resist. And certainly, no true disciple of non-resistance would resist a military draft ... we have advised no man to go to war. We have struck at that fanaticism which grows out of extreme non-resistance, and have labored to lead our people to seek the Lord and trust in him for deliverance.”³³ White

²⁸Ibid.

²⁹Ibid.

³⁰Ibid.

³¹Ibid.

³²Brock, 25.

³³Ibid.

concluded by stating that there was “no light at the present,” meaning that no divine counsel has yet manifested to his wife, Ellen White.

THE PROPHET STEERS THE COURSE

The belief that Ellen White possessed the “spirit of prophecy” served as a stabilizing consolidating presence whenever Adventists were engaged in debate or division on a particular issue. Believers waited anxiously to see if their prophet would weigh in on this issue. One Mrs. T. M. Steward wrote a letter to Ellen White, seeking her counsel in regards to military conscription. Replying on 19 August 1862, Ellen White asserted that she had no divine revelation on the matter.³⁴ In this letter, White wrote, “I am not fully settled in regard to taking up arms, but this looks consistent to me. I think it would please the enemy [Satan] for us to obstinately refuse to obey the law of our country (when this law is not against our religious faith) and sacrifice our lives. It looks to me that Satan would exult to see us cheaply, for our influence could not have a salutary influence upon beholders, as the death of the martyrs. No, all would think we were served just right, because we would not come to the help of our imperiled country. Were our religious faith at stake, we should cheerfully lay down our lives and suffer for Christ.”³⁵ In contrast to the call to openly violate the Fugitive Slave Laws, Ellen White advocated a more moderate stance, inferring that the fugitive slave laws was indeed intertwined with their religious faith, while this issue was yet to openly violate the tenets of their faith.

In January of 1863 Ellen White wrote a pamphlet that expounding on the divine counsel that believers so anxiously waited for. As any good Victorian era wife, Ellen White first sought to defend her husband from the controversy that stemmed from his article. She asserted that her

³⁴White, *Ellen G. White: The Progressive Years, 1862-1876*, vol. 2, 43.

³⁵Ibid.

husband's "plain statements were distorted," and that "he gave the best light that he then had."³⁶ She pointed out that Adventist ambivalence in the war effort conveyed a perception of sympathizing with the Rebellion, and that the true stance the church had toward slavery and the Rebellion must be publicized. She adds, "There was need of moving with wisdom to turn away the suspicions excited against Sabbathkeepers. We should act with great caution."³⁷ Thus, Ellen White justified her husband's article as a temporary stop gap measure to fill the pressing need of quelling mainstream suspicion towards the movement.

Of participating on the war itself, she wrote, "I was shown that God's people, who are His peculiar treasure, cannot engage in this perplexing war, for it is opposed to every principle of their faith. In the army they cannot obey the truth and at the same time obey the requirements of their officers. There would be a continual violation of conscience. Worldly men are governed by worldly principles. They can appreciate no other. Worldly policy and public opinion comprise the principle of action that governs them and leads them to practice the form of right doing. But God's people cannot be governed by these motives."³⁸ She also sternly denounced Adventist pacifists in Iowa for "fanaticism" and "mistook zeal and fanaticism for conscientiousness. Instead of being guided by reason and sound judgement."³⁹ These Iowa Adventist pacifists openly declared that they would rather be imprisoned or die than be drafted, and petitioned that state's legislature to recognize their position.⁴⁰ Indeed, Ellen White throughout her ministry fiercely denounced Adventists who sought to incite persecution. She added, "Those who feel

³⁶White, *Testimonies to the Church*, vol. 1, 356.

³⁷Ibid.

³⁸Ibid., 361.

³⁹Ibid, 357, 357.

⁴⁰Schwartz and Greenleaf, 97.

that in the fear of God they cannot conscientiously engage in this war will be very quiet, and when interrogated will simply state what they are obliged to say in order to answer the inquirer, and then let it be understood that they have no sympathy with the Rebellion.”⁴¹

Thus the prophet had spoken. That killing and desecrating the Sabbath made military service incongruent for Adventists. To openly call for martyrdom was wrong, and a need to follow the laws of the land as long as it does not conflict with the law of God and to show their disdain for the Confederacy was called for by the prophet.

LOBBYING THE BEAST

Echoing the words of their prophet, Adventist leaders also pointed to the moral depravity of military life as another factor for Adventists not volunteering for military service. James White wrote, “One thing is certain, true believers in the third [angel’s] message would make poor soldiers, unless they first lost the spirit of truth.... The sporting, swearing, and godless appearance of our military camps is painful to those who truly fear God.”⁴² “The camp associations are very corrupt.”⁴³ M.E. Cornell declared, “And the confusion and excitement would be destructive to spirituality. A young man of my acquaintance wrote back that in his company of eighty-one men, there was but one beside himself that did not swear and play cards.”⁴⁴ Attempting to detach themselves from the vices of their surroundings, Adventist leaders asserted that military life was incongruent for a Seventh-Day Adventist believer. To emphasize this stance, the church publicly excommunicated Adventist soldiers who enlisted

⁴¹White, 357.

⁴²James White, “Our Duty in Reference to the War,” *The Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, 16 September 1862.

⁴³Graybill, 5.

⁴⁴Ibid.

voluntarily, illustrating the need for members to find whatever means possible to be excused from an atmosphere that would compromise the ability to obey their religious mandates.⁴⁵

As casualties mounted with each passing day, the federal government did the inevitable, and on 3 March 1863, Congress finally instituted a military draft. All able-bodied males from twenty- to forty-five years of age were subject to this draft. However, two loop-holes provided Adventist men opportunities to avoid the draft. A draftee could be excused from military service if he procured a substitute or purchased a \$300 commutation fee.⁴⁶ Viewed as divine providence, James White and other leaders actively encouraged all church members to contribute financial means to aid brethren who were in financial duress to pay their commutation fees.⁴⁷ Indeed, \$300 was a hefty sum for a church that mainly consisted of craftsmen, farmers, and small-time merchants. But White also warned that these funds should not be an excuse to divert financial support to the church; White admonished, “Should our brethren be drafted, they should if necessary mortgage their property to raise the \$300, rather than to accept means that should go into the Lord's treasury. We would say this even of our ministers.”⁴⁸ Thus, the commutation fees served as a double-edged sword, allowing Adventist men to forego military service, but as the war prolonged, it added strain to a fledgling movement that was still embarking on her first organizational baby steps.

With the enactment of the Emancipation Proclamation on 1 January 1863, the acceptance of African American soldiers to the Federal army, and the watershed Union victory at Gettysburg in early July of 1863, hopes that the war was at its twilight were pervasive. By February of

⁴⁵Schwartz and Greenleaf, 98.

⁴⁶Tindall and Shi, 650.

⁴⁷Schwartz and Greenleaf, 97.

⁴⁸Arthur L. White, *Ellen G. White: The Progressive Years, 1862-1876*, vol. 2, 53.

1864, efforts, mainly from the Quakers, led Congress to amend the conscription law to allow for conscientious objectors that were drafted to serve in a medical capacity.⁴⁹ Seventh-Day Adventists embraced the amendment but continued to utilize the commutation provision. But on 4 July 1864, Congress restricted the commutation provision for conscientious objectors who were members of a pacifist church recognized by the Federal government.⁵⁰ Now the church was faced with what it sought to avoid like the plague; to establish a dialogue with the dreaded “beast power,” in order to be recognized as conscientious objectors.

The July 1864 amendment forced the Adventist Church to make a paradigm shift, as they sought to lobby government officials of their plight. Indeed, necessity brought a willingness to bargain, in order to protect the church’s interests. After a little over a year of incorporation, the Adventist church now had the daunting task of having the federal government recognize such a small infant church body as noncombatants.

Adventist lobbying began at the state level. On 3 August 1864, a trio of Adventist ministers: John Byington, J.N. Loughborough, and George W. Amadon, were chosen to represent the church’s General Conference to approach Governor Austin Blair of Michigan with an official statement requesting the church to be recognized as noncombatants. Michigan was the first state for Adventists to petition because of the high concentration of Adventists that resided there. The letter articulated to Governor Blair that members of the Seventh-Day Adventist Church; based on the supreme moral authority of the Ten Commandments, could not serve in the military and simultaneously comply with obeying their religious convictions,

⁴⁹Schwartz and Greenleaf, 97.

⁵⁰Brock, 26.

particularly the fourth and sixth commandments.⁵¹ It further asserted that Adventists were not seditionists and “are rigidly anti-slavery, loyal to the government, and in sympathy with it against the rebellion.”⁵²

For the church’s sudden proactive stance towards lobbying a civil authority the letter reasoned, “But not having had a long existence as a distinct people, and our organization having but recently been perfected, our sentiments are not yet extensively known. The change in the law renders it necessary that we take a more public stand in the matter.”⁵³ The letter concluded by appealing Governor Blair for the Seventh-Day Adventist Church to be legally recognized as conscientious objectors.⁵⁴ The letter was also accompanied by commendation letters from prominent citizens of Battle Creek, including its mayor, which testifying Adventist civic loyalty and Christian integrity.

A response from Governor Blair arrived swiftly on the same day. “I am satisfied,” exclaimed the Governor, “that the foregoing statement of principles and practices of the Seventh-day Adventists is correct, and that they are entitled to all the immunities secured by law to those who are conscientiously opposed to bearing arms, or engaging in war.”⁵⁵ Similar provisions were presented to the governors in Illinois, Pennsylvania, and Wisconsin. The governors of Pennsylvania and Wisconsin granted the Church a similar reprieve to the one issued from Michigan, while the governor of Illinois stated that the church was still covered by the recent

⁵¹The fourth commandment stipulated that the seventh day of the week called the Sabbath to be kept holy. In this, Adventists believed in refraining in all secular activities such as work, buying and selling, and doing anything that detract from their spiritual experience. The sixth commandment forbid to kill, thus, this commandment provides a direct contradiction to war itself.

⁵²Arthur White, *Ellen G. White: The Progressive Years, 1862-1876*, vol. 2, 100.

⁵³Ibid.

⁵⁴Ibid.

⁵⁵Ibid., 101.

legislation.⁵⁶ Success in the state level set the stage for the church to appeal to the federal government.

As the war ravaged on, the General Conference Committee (the official leadership body of the church) called all members of the church to observe a day of fasting and prayer on 27 August 1864, which fell on the seventh day Sabbath.⁵⁷ Adventists were asked to pray for the end of the war, where years of battle prevented Adventists to proactively evangelize their message. The General Conference also called for members to pray for the plight of the American slave and to ask Divine direction for the church to act “wisely and humbly” in regards to the draft and to orchestrate events to prevent them to be subjugated to conscription.⁵⁸

J. N. Andrews was selected as the church’s emissary to the federal government, and on 29 August 1864, he was sent to Washington to plead for federal recognition as noncombatants. Andrews was an ideal spokesperson both as an esteemed church author and for his ability to articulate and convince others of his point of view. Andrews met with Provost Marshall General James B. Fry of the Federal army. Andrews presented a pamphlet called *The Draft*, which articulated the church’s non-combatant position, along with the letter of affirmation from Governor Blair.⁵⁹ Fry assured Andrews that the Federal government would also recognize Adventists as conscientious objectors. Andrews brought back a communiqué from an adjunct officer to General Fry that stated: “Members of religious denominations, who have been drawn in the draft, and who establish the fact before the Board of Enrollment that they are

⁵⁶Brock, 26.

⁵⁷ The General Conference Committee served as the executive body for the Seventh-Day Adventist Church. The committee consisted of John Byington, president, J.N. Loughborough, George W. Amadon and James White.

⁵⁸White, 103.

⁵⁹Schwartz and Greenleaf, 98.

conscientiously opposed to the bearing of arms, and are prohibited from so doing by their rules and articles of faith, and that their department has been uniformly consistent with their professions, will be assigned to duty in hospitals, or to the care of freedmen, or shall be exempt on payment of \$300, to such persons as the Secretary of War may designate.”⁶⁰ Andrews believed his mission to be successful.

However, Andrews was premature with his optimism, ignorant of the fact that local commanders stigmatized conscientious objectors as pariahs within their ranks. Frequently, Adventist draftees found themselves for immediate assignment to front-line positions, with or without a gun, and found themselves threatened with the guard house.⁶¹ In October of 1864, Andrews wrote an article; that again denounced the United States for condoning slavery, perhaps venting his frustration on the lack of progress made through his lobbying efforts. “The existing wicked rebellion,” Andrews spewed, “is that great national calamity by which the Most High makes our country an example and a warning to all the nations of the earth; and by which he admonishes mankind that punishment is inseparably connected with transgression. The crime ... is one of the most atrocious in the catalog of wicked deeds; involving in American slavery the commission of every foul and abominable act that absolute power in the hands of wicked men, over the helpless, and unfortunate might be expected to cause.”⁶² He added that the North was just as culpable for not doing enough to denounce slavery, and hiding in the veil of political wrangling. He closed with a theological edict that all would ultimately face the judgment of God. Indeed, it appeared that the church’s emissary to the Federal government expressed his

⁶⁰White, 102.

⁶¹Schwartz and Greenleaf, 98.

⁶²J.N. Andrews, “Slavery,” *The Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, 25 October 1864.

bitter disappointment of the current state of Adventist soldiers by resorting to the fierce language used during the pre-war and early war years.

Further apprehension came on 24 January 1865 when President Lincoln issued a call for 300,000 additional draftees to augment the ranks of the Federal army.⁶³ With fear, James White lamented, "If this war continues, God only knows what it will do for even noncombatants. Unless Heaven interposes, they may not always be treated with that respect and mercy which they now receive."⁶⁴ Indeed, the continual need to pay commutation fees and the federal government's call for more men brought an added strain to the fledgling movement. In fact, the Battle Creek Adventist congregation was faced with the possibility of paying \$25,000 commutation fees for its members.⁶⁵ As financial resources became thin, church leaders were faced with a crisis that could threaten their very existence

IF MY PEOPLE PRAY

Heeding James White's advice, the General Conference called for the second Sabbath in February 1865 for a day of fasting and prayer in behalf of Adventist soldiers, and a quick end to the war. Although the tide of the war favored the Union, a continuation of hostilities threatened the very existence of the church. Prophetically, Adventists believed that their message must go worldwide in order to usher in the second advent of Christ, and the reality that the church's existence was in jeopardy arose a urgent desperation for the war to end quickly. By mid-February, the General Conference Committee saw no change on the current state of the war and stated, and if the conflict continued for another six months, bleakly assessed, "we must inevitably

⁶³Schwartz and Greenleaf, 98.

⁶⁴White, 103.

⁶⁵Schwartz and Greenleaf, 98.

lose means, or lose our own numbers, and lose those who would embrace the truth, and lose the attention of the people.”⁶⁶ It added, “We are thus brought, as it plainly appears to us, to a place where if the war continues, we must stop. We repeat it, the war must stop, or our work in spreading the truth must stop. Which shall it be?”⁶⁷ With such a dire assessment, the committee called again for believers to engage in fasting and prayer.

The committee appealed that “all our churches and scattered brethren to set apart four days commencing Wednesday, March 1, and continuing till the close of the following Sabbath, as days of earnest and importunate prayer over this subject. Let business be suspended, and the churches meet at one o'clock on the afternoon of each of the weekdays, and twice on the Sabbath, to pour out their supplications before God.”⁶⁸ The church responded to the call; time would tell if their prayers would be heard.

As conscription forced the church's hand to acquiesce to lobbying the government for recognition as noncombatants, another paradigm shift evident was that the Civil War was no longer viewed as a direct catalyst to the imminent apocalypse. Indeed, the threat that the Adventist Church would logistically collapse even before the prophesied final crisis of tribulation saw a need for prayer to end the war. Theologically, James White asserted that the work of the angel of Revelation 7:2-3 was to call the four angels to continue to hold the four winds of strife, that would lead to devastation until God “sealed” His people, signifying that the preparation was complete to receive the second coming.⁶⁹ Church leaders concluded that many of God's people were not adequately ready and “the horrors connected with the apocalypse must

⁶⁶White, 104.

⁶⁷Ibid.

⁶⁸Ibid, 104, 105.

⁶⁹Morgan, *Adventism and the American Republic: The Public Involvement of a Major Apocalyptic Movement*, 33.

be delayed for a time so that the work of preparing a people for Christ's return can go forward."⁷⁰

On 4 March 1865, President Lincoln gave his second inauguration address, while most of the Adventist church was concluding their four days of prayer and fasting. Ironically, Lincoln himself echoed that the nation was receiving divine judgment for tolerating slavery, a charge many Adventists had openly declared since the 1850s. Lincoln recounts, "Fondly do we hope, fervently do we pray, that this mighty scourge of war may speedily pass away. Yet, if God wills that it continue until all the wealth piled by the bondman's 250 years of unrequited toil shall be sunk, and until every drop of blood drawn with the lash shall be paid by another drawn with the sword, as was said three thousand years ago, so, still it must be said, that the judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether."⁷¹ Lincoln's admission that God judged the nation led to the church to have a more cordial tone towards his administration. As Sherman's forces marched through the South like avenging angels, leaving destruction to its cities, Uriah Smith enthused, "Is not the nation taking a position where God can favor it, and crown its efforts with success? Let the late Union victories, and the rebel disasters, answer.... Let the giant grip which Grant holds upon the demon of rebellion before Petersburg and Richmond, while Sherman, by his triumphant march through the heart of Georgia and South Carolina, deals death blows to its very vitals, answer. . . ."⁷² With a vested interest for the war to end, the church restrained its criticism, towards the federal government, and enthusiastically cheered the momentum of the Federal army.

⁷⁰Ibid.

⁷¹Ibid., 105.

⁷²Ibid., 105, 106.

On 9 April 1865, a mere six weeks after the four days of prayer and fasting, General Robert E. Lee surrendered to General Grant's federal forces, providing the catalyst that ended the Civil War. The church leadership was elated that their prayers were answered. Uriah Smith exclaimed, "While the loyal North is rejoicing in the downfall of Richmond, the signal successes of the Union arms, and the apparent nearness of the complete overthrow of the rebellion, and the consequent peace, none have more reason to rejoice than the commandment-keeping people of God, and none can rejoice more understandingly than they."⁷³ James White wrote, "The holding of the winds, in the suppression of the rebellion, outstripping even our faith in the suddenness of its execution, is opening a wide door before us. Let the thousands of Sabbathkeepers whose prayer ascended two months since for the speedy accomplishment of this work, now so signally answered...."⁷⁴ And in marked contrast to his earlier writings, James White praised the United States as "the best government in this revolted and sin-cursed world."⁷⁵ That the government granted Adventists the privileges of religious liberty, and noncombatant status during the war brought a restrained optimism that allowed the fledgling church time to take root and proselytize its message to the world.

The conscription issue caused the Adventist Church to shift from a view of an imminent apocalypse to pragmatically addressing the needs to stabilize a fledgling movement whose survival was at stake. The church articulated that martial combat and the possibility of not being able to observe their Sabbath properly made military service incongruent to its doctrines. Like

⁷³Ibid.

⁷⁴Ibid.

⁷⁵Morgan, 34.

other pacifist groups the church believed that there was an irreconcilable contradiction in participating in war and the shedding of blood while called to love one's enemy.

Precedence was also established for the church to lobby the Federal government to protect her interests, thus formulating a premise to cooperate with the government as long as doctrine was not compromised. And although ardently waiting for the apocalypse, the church realized that it must also address their civic responsibilities to do what they can to live peaceably in their society. Of this, James White wrote, "here he [The Christian] must stay and act his part until the Prince of Peace shall come and reign."⁷⁶ In this, the church realized its civic responsibilities of the here and now, and now sought to balance it with their belief that the end of the world drew nigh. In all, precedence was established for the church not to incite persecution from the government, but rather to do all they can to prevent persecution until the appointed prophetic time the church believed would occur.

⁷⁶Ibid.

CHAPTER VIII

EPILOGUE

In an era of heightened interest in Christian Protestantism, religious toleration, and social reformation, a small band of peculiar young people in their teens and twenties, along with a middle-aged former sea captain, refused to cling to the “great disappointment” of William Miller’s prophetic prediction of the second advent of Jesus Christ. Through reevaluation of the 22 October 1844 prophetic prediction, this small band concluded that the date was indeed correct, but the event was misinterpreted. Rather than the second coming of Jesus Christ, the world was entering a final phase in her history, a period of investigative judgment to determine who was fit to be taken up with Jesus Christ to heaven. In the midst of one of the most tumultuous times in American history, this fledgling company somehow incorporated and preserved itself, and spawn into what is today called the Seventh-Day Adventist Church, a worldwide movement consisting of eight million members.

In a bit of irony, William Miller indirectly played a role in doing something he sought to avoid, the birth of a new denomination. Miller’s influence on the development of the early Adventist Church was not minimized. Ellen White, the church’s prophet, recounts, “An Upright, honest-hearted farmer, who had been led to doubt the divine authority of the Scriptures, yet who sincerely desired to know the truth, was the man specially chosen of God to lead out in the

proclamation of Christ's second coming.”¹ But White also asserted that Miller was bound for disappointment because he had yet to comprehend all the truth. Of this White states, “Like the first disciples, William Miller and his associates did not, themselves, fully comprehend the import of the message which they bore. Errors that had been long established in the church prevented them from arriving at a correct interpretation of an important point in the prophecy. Therefore, though they proclaimed the message which God had committed to them to be given to the world, yet through a misapprehension of its meaning they suffered disappointment.”² But the church did not deny the important role William Miller played in directing these early church founders in realizing that they lived near the time of the advent. An aversion towards secular education, ambivalence towards partisan politics, and an agreement towards aspects of various reform movements in the mid-nineteenth century all stemmed from the Millerite Movement. As this remnant coalesced from the shattered Millerites, an organic carryover of various Millerite influences was seen in the early Seventh-Day Adventist Church.

Like their Millerite forefathers, the founders of the Seventh-Day Adventist Church believed that the Bible contained absolute truth and that any individual motivated to study, complimented with the belief of divine guidance accessible to anyone who believes, could allow an individual to understand the most difficult passages of this book. The founders of the Adventist Church also had a strong aversion against secular scholarship such as hermeneutics and higher reasoning.

¹Ellen G. White, *The (New, Illustrated) Great Controversy*, (Deland: Laymen of Religious Liberty, Inc., 1990) 371.

²*Ibid.*, 351.

In 1863, James White republished an article written by the *Pittsburg Christian Advocate*, expounding on the dangers of “higher criticism” and the need for ministers to prepare themselves to battle the intellectual communities growing skepticism of the Bible holding absolute truth.³ Even more blunt was Ellen White’s sentiments on American Revolutionary War hero and *Age of Reason* author Thomas Paine, whom she viewed as “one of the vilest and most corrupt of men, one who despised God and His law.”⁴ She adds, “Thomas Paine has passed into his grave, but his works live to curse the world, and those who doubt the truth of God's word will place these infidel productions in the hands of the young and inexperienced, to fill their hearts with the poisonous atmosphere of doubt. The spirit of Satan works through wicked men to carry on his schemes for the ruin of souls.”⁵ Therefore, secular authorities were strongly denounced by the founders.

Ironically, Adventist institutions today have done the opposite. The accreditation of Adventist educational institutions has transformed its colleges and universities to allow required readings from secular philosophers that the founders fiercely denounced. In fact, at La Sierra University, a Seventh-Day Adventist institution in Riverside, California, a quote from Thomas Paine is decorated on a wall in the student lounge.

This shift towards secularism could be traced with the bitter fallout Ellen White had with Dr. John Harvey Kellogg, the inventor of cereal, in the early twentieth century. Kellogg, a major proponent for the church’s advocacy towards health reform, was a major influence in the operations of the Sanitarium and Medical School the church operated in Battle Creek. A highly

³James White, ed., “The World in Miniature,” *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, 28 July 1863.

⁴Ellen G. White, *Early Writings*, (Washington D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing, 1882), 89.

⁵*Ibid.*, *Messages to Young People*, (Washington D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing, 1930), 85.

educated and well read man possessed a disdain towards Adventists ministers for their lack of formal education.⁶ And to question a woman with only a third grade education was inevitable, regardless if others saw her as a prophet. White and Kellogg bitterly clashed. One point they fiercely disagreed on was Kellogg's call for a mammoth centralization and consolidation of Adventist institutions to specific areas similar to the Mormon presence in Salt Lake City. White counseled for smaller institutions interspersed throughout the nation. Kellogg was also a proponent of pantheism, a belief that God was like an energy field that was everywhere a la the Jedi force concept in *Star Wars*. Ultimately, Kellogg challenged White's authority as a prophet and in 1907 left the church.⁷

Although removed from church membership, the specter of Kellogg's influence still haunts the church today. Kellogg's advocacy for a centralized presence of Adventist institutions can be seen with the distinct Adventist presence in such places as Glendale, Loma Linda, Berrien Springs, and Tacoma Park. Challenging the authority of the church's prophet opened the floodgates of skepticism towards the writings of Ellen White. For years, Ellen White served as a consolidating influence especially, when disagreements arose within the church leadership. The challenge that Ellen White was not divinely inspired opened the door for postmodern dialogue and analysis within the church; thereby casting doubt among both clergy and laity that church doctrines were absolute truth.

On 27 October 1979, Desmond Ford, one of the leading theologians of the Adventist Church publicly challenged the validity of the Sanctuary Doctrine at a theological forum at Pacific Union College. Having widespread backing, he was nonetheless dismissed thereby

⁶Schwartz and Greenleaf, 264.

⁷Morgan, 61.

precipitating a crisis in the church. Ford's assertions had a devastating effect on church doctrinal unity. Members of the church publicly threw away books by Ellen White, various congregations split, some churches seceded from the denomination, and both clergy and laymen left the church altogether.⁸ In 2002, Samuel Bacchochi, a leading Adventist theologian became critical of traditional Adventist eschatological interpretation asserting that Islam and not the Papacy was the persecuting power in the last days. But one thing is certain, the Adventist Church today is no longer inclined to the sectarian peculiar inclinations of its founders, as a church of farmers and merchants has given way to a church leadership that is distinctly white-collar and formally educated. Thus, a movement that originated with the premise that men of all classes had access of attaining absolute truth through the study of the Bible has turned to a church, highly educated, and in the midst of reevaluating their assertion of absolute truth being relevant in a postmodern age.

Like their Millerite forefathers, the Adventist pioneers believed in avoiding themselves in partisan politics, believing that involvement in constant partisan wrangling would divert the church's focus in their mission to declare the soon Advent of Christ. This aversion towards publicly staking claim to the partisan political debate has had a lasting impact upon the church. For much of the latter end of the nineteenth century, Ellen White largely articulated the Adventist position of political non-involvement. She wrote, "God has warned His people not to become absorbed in politics. We cannot bear the sign of God as His commandment-keeping

⁸Schwartz and Greenleaf, 634.

people, if we mingle with the strife of the world. We are not to give our minds to political issues. God's people are walking contrary to His will when they mix up with politics.”⁹

In sharp contrast to the evangelical Christians of today, the Adventist church continues to make a conscious effort to be publicly uninvolved in partisan political debate. Even in such hot button moral issues such as abortion, the church sought to avoid aligning itself with a partisan coalition. Because of the high value it places in religious liberty, the church believes that “the church does not serve as a conscience for individuals, but it does provide moral guidance.”¹⁰ The church established guidelines on this issue by stipulating that abortion should not be used for birth control or gender selection but can be a moral option when it involves the jeopardy of the mother's health, rape or incest, or severe deformity of the fetus.¹¹

The church's ambivalence in the abortion debates reveals its suspicions towards the coalition between Catholics and the Protestant Religious Right, as agents that seek to threaten the separation of church and state. Indeed, the church vigorously opposed prayer in public schools seeing it as a threat towards religious liberty.

In regards towards voting and religious liberty, Ellen White counseled, “The Lord would have His people bury political questions. On these themes silence is eloquence. We cannot with safety vote for political parties; for we do not know whom we are voting for. We cannot with safety take part in any political scheme. We cannot labor to please men who will use their influence to repress religious liberty, and to set in operation oppressive measures....” In all, both

⁹Ellen G. White, *Manuscript Releases, Vol. 3*, (Review and Herald Publishing: Washington D.C., 1990), 41.

¹⁰ “Guidelines on Abortion,” Seventh-Day Adventist Official Website,” [http://www.adventist.org/beliefs/guidelines/main_guide1.html.] 25 May 2005.

¹¹Morgan, 202.

the Millerite Movement and the early founders during the Civil War era had a lasting imprint in the church's refusal for overt involvement in politics.

With prominent members of the early Adventist Church such as Joseph Bates, who were former Millerites part of the abolition, temperance, and nonresistance movements, the early church fiercely denounced slavery and possessed a progressive view on the issue of race. During the Reconstruction era, the Adventist Church was active in evangelizing African Americans in the South. R.M. Kilgore, a former captain in the United States Army during the Civil War, along with C.O. Taylor, an old Millerite preacher spearheaded these evangelistic efforts in the 1870s.¹²

Ellen White was a strong proponent for evangelizing of African Americans. In addressing the church leadership body, the General Conference in 21 March 1891, she appealed, "The color of the skin does not determine character in the heavenly courts."¹³ Added White, "The Lord's eye is upon all His creatures; He loves them all, and makes no difference between white and black, except that he has a special, tender pity for those who are called to bear a greater burden than others."¹⁴ White called for missionary workers, both White and Black to be trained to go to the South and evangelize this neglected field. She rebuked, "Sin rests upon us as a church because we have not made a greater effort for the salvation of souls among the colored people."¹⁵ This passionate call was heeded by White's son W.C. White who assembled an evangelistic team and took a steamship called the *Morning Star*, down the Mississippi River establishing companies and congregations specifically for African Americans.

¹²Schwartz and Greenleaf, 226, 227.

¹³Ibid., 228.

¹⁴Ellen G. White, *The Southern Work*, (Hagerstown: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 2004), 12.

¹⁵Greenleaf and Schwartz, 228.

However, Adventist ministers had difficulty comprehending Southern attitudes towards race. The General Conference in 1877 and 1885 debated segregated congregations but believed the need for integrated churches based upon the premise that “God was not respecter of persons.”¹⁶ Charles M. Kinney, a former Virginian slave was the first African American ordained an Adventist minister. He believed that integration was viable only when African American believers were few in number. But if African American Adventists were enough to start a congregation, a separate church should be organized specifically for African Americans, and be given equal standing with White churches within the local conference.¹⁷ Eventually, the reality of Jim Crow caused the church to acquiesce and to establish segregated congregations.

The early Adventist pioneers progressive view of race did not immune the church to racism in subsequent years. When faced with evangelizing the South, the church struggled with balancing their conviction that all races were equal in the sight of God with the reality that Southern Whites held bitter contempt towards African Americans. The church was concerned that integrated churches would alienate opportunities for White Southerners to join the Seventh-Day Adventist Church. Of this Ellen White counseled, “In regard to white and colored people worshiping in the same building, this cannot be followed as a general custom with profit to either party--especially in the South.... This is particularly necessary in the South in order that the work for the white people may be carried on without serious hindrance.”¹⁸ She adds, “Let the colored believers be provided with neat, tasteful houses of worship. Let them be shown that this is done not to exclude them from worshiping with white people, because they are black, but in order that

¹⁶Ibid.

¹⁷Ibid.

¹⁸Ellen G. White, *Testimonies to the Church*, vol. 9 (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1948), 206.

the progress of the truth may be advanced. Let them understand that this plan is to be followed until the Lord shows us a better way. The colored members of ability and experience should be encouraged to lead the services of their own people; and their voices are to be heard in the representative assemblies.”¹⁹ Unfortunately, the pragmatic counsel of Ellen White in addressing a particular time and place gave way to decades of segregation in Adventist schools and hospitals.²⁰ With this, addressing the institutional racism within the church was largely avoided until the mid-twentieth century.

By the mid-1940s, separate African American conferences were organized, seeking to address the growing frustration among African American ministers who felt excluded from leadership responsibilities within the church hierarchy.²¹ These so-called regional conferences exist today, and have expanded to include various racial minorities, under the premise that this type of organization could address the specific and unique need of the particular racial group these conferences were established to serve.²²

In the 1960s, during the height of Civil Rights Movement, the church discouraged its members to involve itself in this movement. Seeing activist clergy involved in politics again harkened towards the fear of religious power seeking to merge with the state. Adventist historian Francis Nichol saw that the Civil Rights Movement’s utilization of boycotts and marches a contradiction to the Adventist preference for a “more quiet and perhaps indirect approach.”²³ In fact, in 1963, General Conference president R.R. Figuhr censured an African American

¹⁹Ibid., 206, 207.

²⁰Morgan, 159.

²¹Ibid.

²²In the Southern California Conference of Seventh-Day Adventists, specific regional conferences are organized for African Americans, Hispanics, Asian-American/ Pacific Islanders, and Anglo racial groups.

²³Ibid.

Adventist leader for allowing a NAACP meeting to take place at an African American Adventist Church in Topeka, Kansas, citing the NAACP had a reputation of “disturbing the peace between Colored and Whites.”²⁴ But prominent African American ministers like Charles D. Brooks and E.E. Cleveland called for the church to be proactive in civil rights; Cleveland going as far as serving as a field organizer for the 1968 Poor People’s March on Washington.

In this, a sense of history repeating itself could be seen. As the early Adventist pioneers wrestled with how active they should commit to the abolition of slavery, so too was the issue of how to address the Civil Rights Movement. And like the church founders, the church was reticent to involve itself in mainstream social movements. Echoing the premise that the transformation of society can only come through a conversion to Jesus Christ and not engaging in controversial political issues, and the ultimate solution was the second advent of Jesus Christ.²⁵

Although the progressive spirit of race relations was quieted in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, African Americans have made a profound contribution to the growth of the church. African American evangelists such as Byron Spears, E. E. Cleveland, Charles Bradford, and Charles D. Brooks have baptized tens of thousands of all races around the world to the Adventist Church. In 1954, Cleveland was the first African American appointed to a General Conference position that oversaw the whole church body.²⁶ While in 1979, Bradford served as president of the North American Division within the church’s General Conference for an eleven

²⁴Ibid., 246.

²⁵Ibid., 160.

²⁶Ibid., 161.

year term.²⁷ In 1995, African American membership in North America numbered 220,000 constituting a fourth of the division, with tithe exceeding \$90,000,000.²⁸ Perhaps, these contributions serve as a legacy of the early church's abolition influence and Ellen White's passionate encouragement for the church to evangelize African Americans during the reconstruction era. With this, the African American presence to the Adventist Church in North America had made a significant imprint in ministry in this region.

The influence of temperance and nonresistance ideologies were additional reform movement aspects that influenced the early Adventist Church. The abolition and temperance inclinations of both William Miller and Joseph Bates carried over to the early church, as they advocated the avoidance of both alcohol and tobacco. In 1863, Ellen White, after asserting another vision, called the church to embrace health reform. In her writings, she passionately advocated a dairy free vegetarian diet, the utilization of hydrotherapy, and the use of natural remedies. Historian Peter Brock argues that Adventist pacifism has its roots from William Lloyd Garrison's New England non-resistant movement, a likely prospect with many Millerites and later Seventh-Day Adventists coming from a mid-nineteenth century reform movement ideological pedigree.²⁹

In 1867, the Seventh-Day Adventist General Conference session reiterated the church's stance that combat duty was inconsistent to its faith. The General Conference declared, "Resolved, That it is the judgment of this Conference, that the bearing of arms, or engaging in war, is a direct violation of the teachings of our Savior and of the spirit and letter of the law of

²⁷Stephen Chavez, "BRAD," *Adventist Review*, February 2000, 10.

²⁸Schwartz and Greenleaf, 502.

²⁹Brock, *Pacifism in the United States, From the Colonial Era to the First World*, 844.

God.”³⁰ With this declaration, the church faithfully adhered to its stance on pacifism. During the Spanish-American War, the church remained steadfast in its stance towards pacifism. In the midst of cries of nationalism, and the call to Christianize “heathen” nations, the church went against other mainline protestant voices in warning its members not to be caught up in “war fever.”³¹ Twelve days after the United States entered the war, President George A. Irwin preached, ““We have no business whatever to become aroused and stirred by the spirit [of war] that is abroad in the land.”³² He articulated that “Christian patriotism” was reserved for the “heavenly kingdom” and not any earthly nation, thus echoing the voices of Uriah Smith and J.N. Andrews who stated a similar premise during the Civil War.

As the United States entered World War I, the church again was faced with the prospect of military conscription. Adventists in other nations were severely persecuted for their noncombatant stance. Russian Adventists in the early-twentieth century received harsh treatment for refusing to carry arms, with one account of an Adventist receiving severe floggings while in the penal section of the army.³³ British Seventh-Day Adventist soldiers were imprisoned for refusing to bear arms or to work on the Sabbath. In North America, the Seventh-Day Adventist leadership again sought to articulate a position as the specter of war loomed again.

Meeting in Huntsville, Alabama, on April of 1917, church leaders vigorously debated the issues at hand. By the end of the meeting, the church affirmed their civic loyalty to the nation and stated that “we be required to serve our country only in such capacity as will not violate our

³⁰Douglas Morgan, “Between Pacifism and Patriotism: Helping Students think about Military Options,” *The Adventist Review Online Edition*, 28 August 2003, <http://www.adventistreview.org/2003-1535/story5.html>.

³¹Ibid.

³²Ibid.

³³Ibid.

conscientious obedience to the law of God as contained in the decalogue, interpreted in the teachings of Christ, and exemplified in His life."³⁴ With this affirmation, the church reiterated the stance that if Adventists are required for military service, they be considered conscientious objectors.

In all, the twentieth century saw a shift in attitude among Adventists in regards to military service. Nineteenth century Adventists adhered to pacifism, although they did their best to accommodate the state without compromising their religious principles. But the twentieth century, with such moral threats as Hitler, the holocaust, and other atrocities, led many Adventists to consider a just-war stance where many felt the responsibility to be part of the military, albeit still retaining their conscientious objection status. Historian Douglas Morgan asserts, "Twentieth-century Adventists tended to shift the priority to the Christian's patriotic duty to the nation-state, and sought ways to fulfill that duty within their religious scruples."³⁵ Indeed, individual Adventists were recognized for serving with distinction in the twentieth century. In World War II, Desmond Doss, a conscientious objector Adventist medic was awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor by President Harry Truman for rescuing seventy-five wounded American troops in Okinawa in the midst of heavy enemy fire.³⁶ During the Reagan Administration, Terry Johnson became the first Adventist to serve in the White House as a member of the Air Force Honor Guard. And in 2003, Barry Black, a Seventh-Day Adventist minister who served in the United States Navy as a Rear Admiral and the chief of navy chaplains

³⁴Ibid.

³⁵Ibid.

³⁶ "The Story," [<http://www.desmonddoss.com/>.] 25 May 2005.

became the chaplain of the United States Senate. In marked contrast to the pioneers, members of the Adventist Church today have become more amenable to military service.

By the end of the twentieth century, Adventists who served in the military would commonly forego conscientious objector status and commit to actual combat service. During the First Gulf War in 1991, an estimated 2,000 to 2,500 Seventh-Day Adventists served in the Persian Gulf region, with a large majority in combat roles.³⁷ In 2003, historian Douglas Morgan stated that the majority of Adventists serving in the military bear arms.³⁸ With many Adventists today apathetic or ignorant of the early history of the church and its doctrines, a definite shift has occurred from the church's pacifist inclinations in the nineteenth century to today.

Officially, the church still adheres to the non-combatant tradition. In a very recent case, the church provided legal counsel to Joel Klimkewicz, a Marine who re-enlisted to the corps in 2003 after becoming a Seventh-Day Adventist, and subsequently attempted to declare status as a conscientious objector, which the corps rejected. Klimkewicz was court martialed for seven months in the Camp Lejeune's brig and received a rank reduction and dishonorable discharge for refusing to draw a weapon at a training exercise in preparation for deployment to Iraq. But gone are the days of the early church, where it deprived membership to Adventists who volunteered for military service.³⁹ With increased apathy among laity towards the church's doctrine and history, the church although supporting a noncombatant stance has left it up to the individual to freely choose to bear arms for military service.

³⁷<http://www.adventistreview.org/2003-1535/story5.html>.

³⁸Ibid.

³⁹Schwartz and Greenleaf, 98.

A lasting legacy of the Civil War conscription issue was the church's willingness to lobby the government to promote and preserve her interests. In 1888, Sen. Henry W. Blair of New Hampshire introduced the Sunday Rest Bill to congress.⁴⁰ The proposed law called for the closing of businesses and the cessation of labor on Sunday, with violators facing civil penalties. This bill was supported by Cardinal Gibbon, the chief Roman Catholic spokesman in the United States, along with a diverse coalition of organized labor and mainstream Protestant Christian groups.

Ellen White ardently counseled the church to be vocal on the issue of religious liberty. She admonished, "We are not doing the will of God if we sit in quietude, doing nothing to preserve liberty of conscience. Fervent, effectual prayer should be ascending to heaven that this calamity may be deferred until we can accomplish the work which has so long been neglected."⁴¹ She added, "We cannot labor to please men who will use their influence to repress religious liberty and to set in operation oppressive measures to lead or compel their fellow men to keep Sunday as the Sabbath."⁴² The Church heeded her counsel. Two years before the Blair bill was introduced, the church published a monthly journal called, *The American Sentinel*, devoted solely to the issue of religious liberty. And in the tradition of J. N. Andrews's trip to Washington to lobby the federal government on the issues of conscription, the articulate and dynamic Alonzo T. Jones, led a delegation to argue against Blair's bill.⁴³

Jones testified before the Senate Committee on Education and Labor in December 1888, and a few months later against a proposed constitutional amendment to Christianize public

⁴⁰Ibid., 243.

⁴¹Ellen G. White, *Last Day Events*, (Nampa: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1992), 127.

⁴²Ibid., 128.

⁴³Morgan, *Adventism and the American Republic: The Public Involvement of a Major Apocalyptic Movement*, 49.

schools.⁴⁴ Successful in his arguments, Jones generated significant media attention to his contribution in defeating these bills.⁴⁵ Gaining the respect of the opposition, Senator Blair remembered Jones as a man of “great ability and evident sincerity.”⁴⁶ Thus, Jones congressional testimony illustrated the church’s vigorous lobbying for the separation of church and state and religious liberty for over a hundred years.⁴⁷

The Adventist Church continues its effort to lobby the federal government in regards to the separation of church and state. The church has rallied against school prayers, vouchers for parochial schools, and various faith-based initiatives that the current Bush administration is fond of promoting. Continuing the legacy of *The American Sentinel*, the church currently publishes *Liberty* magazine, a periodical directed towards the legal and political community. *Liberty* also has the distinction of being the only religious liberty magazine published by an incorporated denomination.⁴⁸ In 1985, the editor of *Liberty* asserted that the church’s world headquarters had six officials assigned to the issues of religious liberty; while the nation’s twelve leading Protestant denominations had not one assigned in this area.⁴⁹ From J. N. Andrews, to A. T. Jones, to the Adventist attorneys who continue to lobby for the separation of church and state in the twenty-first century, the lobbying that started in the Civil War era provided a successful legacy for the Adventist Church to advocate the government to preserve its interests.

From a movement founded by a band of young farmers and merchants with little formal education concentrated in the northeastern United States, awaiting the imminent advent of Christ,

⁴⁴Ibid.

⁴⁵Ibid.

⁴⁶Ibid.

⁴⁷Ibid., 2.

⁴⁸Ibid.

⁴⁹Ibid.

to a worldwide church operating a sophisticated network of schools, universities, hospitals and churches, the Seventh-Day Adventist Church today is profoundly different from the time of that the church's founding during the backdrop of the Civil War. When the church was first established, it wore its sectarian and peculiar distinctiveness as a badge of honor. Of this, Ellen White wrote, "Seventh-Day Adventists have been chosen by God as a peculiar people separate from the world."⁵⁰ The urgent anticipation of the imminence of the Second Coming fueled the early church's non-conformity towards mainstream society.

But the second coming has yet to occur and a move to shed the church's sectarian roots to gain acceptance in the Christian community as a mainline denomination was committed. Adventist schools were accredited, their theology self-criticized, and their universities transformed into a bastion for liberal arts education and a forum of postmodern thought. Incidents that would perhaps shock the early pioneers have come about in rapid succession. In 1977, Bert Beach, the director of religious liberty in the General Conference and the official church observer for the World Council of Churches, attended a conference hosted by the Vatican and gave the Pope John Paul II a medallion of the General Conference along with book on Adventist doctrines.⁵¹ Clearly a sense of being part of the mainstream Christian community rather than being separate and distinct was evident. In October of 1995, Brennan Manning, a former priest and devout Roman Catholic conducted a week of spiritual revival for students at Pacific Union College: an Adventist institution nestled in the Napa Valley.⁵² In 2005, there have

⁵⁰White, *Last Day Events*, 45.

⁵¹Ron Adams, "Bert B. Beach: Adventist Statesman," *Adventist Review*, 8 November 2001, 11, 12.

⁵²The author of this thesis attended Pacific Union College at this time and attended this week of spiritual revival.

been rumblings of a proposed name change, removing “Seventh-Day” from Adventist to prevent offending other denominations in the Christian community.

The writings of Ellen White have been criticized, as laity and clergy alike have questioned her asserted prophetic gift, with some resorting to public book burnings of her books. And by casting doubt upon Ellen White as a prophet, the church no longer had a luxury of utilizing her as a consolidating presence when debate within the church arose, thus plunging the church into an identity crisis. With most Adventists serving in the military bearing arms an example and symptom of the growing apathy towards the doctrines developed by the original founders.

However, aspects of the early church’s legacy remain intact. The contribution of African Americans to the church in North America, the aversion towards partisan politics, and to lobby the government to protect their interests remain. But as the church addresses the theological pluralism of the twenty-first century, the sectarian characteristics that the early church held so dear is beginning to erode. Indeed the church appears to conform to the world it so aggressively sought to separate from during the Civil War era. But in the midst ideological turmoil, there still remains a vocal minority that has called for the church to remain consistent to the doctrines established by the early church. Ellen White once wrote, “The church may appear as about to fall, but it does not fall.”⁵³ In all, time will determine if her prophecy comes true, and time will issue the verdict whether the Adventist Church will continue its course of shedding its sectarian peculiarity or reverse back to reclaim its uniqueness in anticipating the second Advent in the midst of global uncertainty.

⁵³White., 180,

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